

Freshman senators focus on the future

BY CARRIE ARTHUR
Staff Writer

Now that the freshman class has survived its first semester, cemented Spring schedules and partied through self-selection/pledging on Patterson Court, many freshmen are reflecting on their first semester of the "Davidson experience." Instrumental in directing this experience, the freshman SGA senators — President Jehan Shamsid-Deen, Dane Erickson, Travis Harp, Allen Lee, and Monica Martinez — are also evaluating their first semester.

As with all freshmen, first semester was a period of adjustment for these SGA reps.

Erickson explained that "like every other freshman across the country, we were feeling our way out." Part of this adjustment included the loss of one freshman senator, Hayes Permar. Permar's position was left void until this Wednesday's SGA meeting, at which Mike Brady assumed this vacancy.

Despite that setback, Erickson felt that "we represented the freshman class well." Harp confirms that the period of adjustment is now over: "The senators are now pretty accustomed to what's going on."

The senators did accomplish a lot for their first semester. They were members of committees, including the publicity committee and the polling and response committee that handled the poll about students' opinions of

sororities. Allen Lee is the chair of COMA, the Council on Minority Affairs, which plans Diversity Week.

Race relations has been an integral issue facing the SGA. Harp feels that one of the most important accomplishments of the SGA was the creation of "open dialogue on race with Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Diversity Week, and the African American Film Fest."

Deen agrees that the revival of COMA is an important success of the

SGA. She "loves Davidson" and wants "to see it be all that it can be." Deen feels that people should "appreciate the diversity at Davidson and take advantage of it" as well as work to increase it.

Lee wants to see greater diversity so that Davidson can "grow in the sense that it brings people together." He believes that more communication is

In Erickson's opinion, the sorority issue was the "biggest theme of first semester." Deen was "amazed" at the efficient, "very accurate representation of the student body" in the SGA's poll. Lee was impressed with the SGA's "very exhaustive efforts to insure that everyone was included."

While the polling could have be-

Freshman/Sophomore Mixer, which was extremely successful, and are planning a Freshman Bowl-a-Rama.

Erickson explained that they want to plan different functions involving only the freshman class so that the class can bond before people become too busy. The senators plan to become more connected with the freshmen

life."

Harp is concerned with the "interest issue." He fears that the SGA "doesn't reach a large part of the student body with what's going on" and it "causes people not to be interested." Harp continues that "most people don't really understand or care what goes on with the SGA on a day-to-day basis."

He feels that the lack of concern is "not only the fault of the apathetic people but also the SGA, because it needs to make more of an effort." Harp wants "to get everyone involved in elections — to run and to vote."

Erickson is working on the beginning stages of two projects: fixing the water pressure changes in the showers and increasing the amount of weight equipment in Baker Sports Complex.

Erickson is forming committees and is talking to people from the power plant about the showers, but the dormitories are very old so the problem may be hard to fix. Erickson is also talking to the athletic director and forming committees to deal with the shortage of weights. In his opinion, the equipment at Baker is not enough for all of the varsity athletes (except the football players who have their own room) and the entire student body.

Deen, Erickson, Harp, and Lee are all optimistic about the future and about the SGA. As Deen observes, "The SGA is conducive to making change on campus." She thinks that there will be some "very interesting bills" presented during this semester.

Harp is also looking toward the next big challenge — the transition to a new SGA president. Erickson echoes their optimism and expresses his satisfaction. "A better group (of freshman SGA senators) couldn't have been picked."

Monica Martinez was not available for comment.



◆ Freshman senators (left to right): Dane Erickson, Allen Lee, Mike Brady, and Travis Harp. (Not pictured: Jehan Shamsid-Deen and Monica Martinez.)

necessary to create unity. "There are a lot of freshmen intimidated in meeting people from different backgrounds and interests," said Lee.

The senators hope to increase freshman unity with class activities. In order to accomplish this goal, Lee encourages people to speak out. "We're here to help," said Lee.

Deen, Erickson, and Lee also believe that the polling of sororities was very important.

come unpleasant, Lee feels that the SGA did "a superb job" of being impartial.

Deen was also impressed with the efforts to streamline the SGA. Due to the efforts of the senior class president, the SGA's perspective on bills has become more positive and efficient.

Looking toward the future, the senators are planning, as Deen puts it, "to do so much more" despite their limited budget. The senators have already started off the semester with the

through e-mail and voice-mail listings. With the listings, Deen hopes to "make sure that the freshmen know what's going on."

The senators also have their individual concerns. Lee has worked to increase diversity and unity with COMA.

Deen wants to "continue to increase freshman pride and involvement" even though "the freshmen are generally active in every facet of Davidson

Orr challenges students and faculty with his suggestions

BY JESSICA GOODSON
Senior Staff Writer

Approximately 15 students and faculty convened Friday afternoon with Oberlin College's Dr. David Orr to discuss the development of an environmental studies major. They also talked about the incorporation of his criteria for ecological design in the new student union, and the "greening" of the Davidson campus in general.

A discussion followed Orr's speech on Thursday night, in which he outlined the aesthetic, pedagogical, and economic benefits of environmentally sound construction.

Through a collaborative effort, it has been the goal of Oberlin College to construct a building using non-toxic and recycled materials. These materials produce more energy than they use, shed no waste, actively utilize solar energy, and in some way, produce a positive cash flow.

Orr presented two arguments in favor of the prompt introduction of an environmental studies major, as opposed to a minor or concentration in the area. "Your generation faces unprecedented changes," said Orr. He emphasized collegiate level academics as a means for preparing for this future. Orr felt that "the education we owe you should be calibrated to fit the challenges you will face in your lifetime."

"This (environmental decline) will be everything in every career," he predicted. "It will affect

you for the rest of your life, and you can be either relatively competent or relatively incompetent when facing it. It will not escape you, but your education will help you navigate that future productively.

"There is a certain critical mass of courses and experiences that we want to wrap together into the environmental studies," Orr said. "A minor is a step in the right direction," he admitted, "but it's easy to take that step and have that be the final step."

According to Orr, several things need to happen before the formation of a major can occur. This includes a coherent, systematic poll of faculty, staff, and students, then gauging perspective student interest in environmental studies and seeking viable sources of funding.

Former chair of the Environmental Action Coalition (EAC) Amanda Walker expressed concern that, in reality, there was not enough student involvement at Davidson. In her opinion, in order for these types of projects to go forward, there needs to be an increase in student focus on environmental projects and concerns. "I would like to see everyone involved, everyone feeling like they have a stake in it," she said.

"We have to be willing to look at a longer time line," said Ruth Pittard, speaking from experience as the Assistant Dean for Community Service. "It took us 19 years to get recycling here, and I was here at the beginning and the end."

She approaches these new proposals cautiously. "In this case, we may not know what our cycle is yet. We have a lot of things converging. I look forward to looking back and thinking this was a 15-year cycle.

"The most important thing is to make sure there are people who will provide consistency and encouragement throughout the cycle," emphasized Pittard.

Orr also suggested that the EAC coordinate with the community, involving businesses around Davidson. He also advised that it bring in students and specialists from other colleges like Middlebury and Oberlin in order to get a feel for already established curriculums.

Orr proposed that taking things that we already do well on campus and developing curriculum around those was also a productive avenue to explore. He also suggested that the EAC conduct a campus-wide environmental audit which would scrutinize everything which goes into the campus and all the by-products which leave it.

Davidson College already has a service learning program that involves active research, an internship program which could potentially embrace environmental specialists, and a receptive community. Each of these could assist in the realization of the goals and suggestions set forth by Orr.

The EAC challenged President Bobby Vagt to begin taking some steps towards a greater envi-

ronmental awareness on the Davidson College campus. Seeming to resonate with the idea, Vagt has identified conservation of energy as a feasible means of cutting the budget over the next ten years. As Assistant Professor of English Annie Ingram put it, "this is an enormously inefficient place."

Orr acknowledged that ecological design can be expensive up front, but what you save in the years that follow makes it cost-effective in the long run.

"Fifteen years ago Walter Simpson was a philosophy student at the University of New York at Buffalo," said Orr. "Walter challenged the University to reduce energy and he became their first Energy Officer. They told him they'd pay him how much he could save them. He now saves them nine million dollars a year. And that is a cascade amount; it rises every year."

As for the new student union, "start with a positive attitude," said Orr. "Think, 'this is doable.' Make this a collaborative project with a school like Yale. Bring in outside consultants. This is front-page of New York times material. It is good press for Davidson. It creates sizzle and momentum because you've got tangible, high profile things happening."

With plans for the new Union in preliminary stages, now is the time for action, said Orr. "Don't assume because you're 19, 20, 21, or 22 years old that you can't make changes. Nonsense."