

A letter from the president

Gerard Dash

Davidson College is currently experiencing a period of great change. We have officially begun implementing areas of the College's Strategic Plan, we are actively involved in a search for the next President of Davidson College, and Davidson is in the process of visibly showcasing its commitment to diversity with qualitative features, such as the Multicultural House.

The Davidson College Student Government Association is experiencing change of its own. The SGA is currently in a debate over the composition of our Senate. Questions of representation, more specifically, what it means to be represented in SGA and how to go about representing each student, have been brought to the table for debate. Efficiency is a priority for the SGA, but the question of how do we become more efficient without losing a particular value is where the true debate lies. The argument over perspective and the value in having senators from different organizations and backgrounds has been brought to light.

In our bylaws, "the SGA" is synonymous with "the student body". By saying that the SGA should represent and listen to the voices of the students, it literally translates to the student body should represent and listen to the voices of the students. One of SGA's fundamental goals and beliefs is "to provide a mechanism for recognizing the collective voice of the students," and to fulfill that goal, the student body must make sure that all perspectives and viewpoints are honored when making important decisions. It is important that we do not focus on the size of the in SGA numbers, but that we ensure the voices of all students are being heard by the individuals responsible for making educated decisions.

Members of the student body have started petitions to bring the debate about representation directly to the

students. Students will have the opportunity to let their voice be heard through a vote in an upcoming referendum on this issue. The SGA represents the student body and the student body should have the final say in how they would like to be represented in student government.

This year's SGA administration will not only focus on making the Senate become more efficient through changes in structure, but will also be focusing on creating effective policies and enhancing student life. Academics will be given much more focus this year and the SGA will work hard to build relationships and strong channels of communication with faculty and the administration. In order to create positive change on campus in the area of academics, collaboration between students and educators must take place.

The SGA will also focus on improving everyday student life through the addition of printers in key locations, such as the Union, Chambers, and down-the-hill. Campus safety will continue to be a priority of the SGA and we will work with Campus Police on repairing emergency phones and reviewing the lighting in parking lots and walkways.

There has also been an increasing demand for affordable local food on campus and the SGA will continue to encourage dialogue between the administration and the students interested in this as well.

Improving the quality of life on a campus that is already advanced in so many areas is not an easy task. As SGA President, I look forward to serving my fellow members of Davidson College faithfully and representing them in all capacities. I believe that each and every one of us has the power to improve our society and to create positive change in a world needs strong leaders like us.

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The necessity of discussion

Alex Kowaleski

In the past few weeks, Davidson's student government has engaged in a long, passionate debate over whether to reform the composition of student government, and if so, whether to adjust the current structure or to create an entirely new structure in which all senators are elected from their classes. I am in favor of the more comprehensive reform plan, believing it the fairest to all individuals. Nevertheless I recognize that both the other plan and the plan to keep the SGA the way it is currently composed have important merits.

Long after debate ended, while relaxing in the Union, a fellow senator (and friend) made a point that

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I found incredibly profound. "I think," she said, "this was over so much more than student government." Indeed she is correct. The heated debate over proposed changes to the student government is only a symptom of more widespread issues festering within Davidson, primarily concerning race and other forms of diversity.

As the recent editorial on STRIDE and the passionate responses it elicited indicate, diversity is clearly still a big issue at Davidson. Having a healthy debate on diversity will not be easy, but I increasingly feel that it is necessary so that the many members of the student body can understand the perspectives from which their peers come. What I suggest is a series of discussions, led by students, without any preconditions. The only

assumption to these discussions is that every student must treat every other participant with respect.

One thing I fear is that many students are afraid

"...let us engage in this necessary dialogue to further our understanding and empathy for each other, and by doing so make our community more open, more united, and therefore stronger."

of voicing their sincere and heartfelt opinions for fear of being labeled as racist or intolerant and therefore condemned. I know of many students who believe that Davidson's pursuit of diversity has gone too far, and that it is placing diversity over academic excellence and therefore harming its core mission. I know these people. They are not monsters or racists. They are decent, caring men and women. Others believe that a continued pursuit of diversity is necessary to promote academic excellence and equality. I know these people. They are decent human beings. They are not trying to advance the focus on diversity for trivial reasons, but due to a deep-seated conviction that making diversity a priority brings strength. In the forums I suggest, these students, and those who vehemently disagree with them, would have the opportunity to exchange their opinions in a civilized manner that brings light, rather than heat, to each student's convictions and beliefs for the best way to move the college forward.

So, with very different opinions on diversity at Davidson, yet a shared love for the college and respect for each other, let us engage in this necessary dialogue to further our understanding and empathy for each other, and by doing so make our community more open, more united, and therefore stronger.

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Being a feminist in the year 2011

May Thu Khine

"May is a feminist. She also lives at the Eco-house." "What a catch."

Said my guy friend. In case you did not notice, he was being sarcastic.

Being a feminist. What an awful thing to be. These angry "bra-burning," "man-hating" women. They don't appreciate it when you hold doors for them, or help carry the groceries. And boys, doesn't it just suck having to pay for dinner when you go on a date with one of those feminists?

Many of my lady friends also tell me that they do not identify themselves as feminists, because they believe in traditional gender roles, because they like men, because they want to have kids and have a nice family, because they believe men and women are equal...

Wait a minute.

Men and women are equal? Didn't that idea emerge fundamentally from the hard work of generations of feminists?

Every day, men and women who believe in personal liberty and egalitarian principles tell me that feminists are scary, radical and extreme. But you are definitely missing the point if you have just reduced a whole notion of feminism down to holding doors and carrying the groceries.

In its simplest form, feminism strives for the political, economic and social equality between the sexes. However, people often forget that there are multiple schools of thoughts among feminists themselves. Even though feminism aims at equality and justice overall, feminists disagree over what constitutes sexism and how to react to it. For instance, Carol Adams, a self-identified second-wave feminist and a prominent eco-feminist, may view meat-eating as a

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form of cultural oppression, while a liberal feminist could not care less. Like most abstract concepts, feminism paints a more nuanced picture than what most people care to find out.

On a related note, let me publicly declare that as a self-identified feminist, I like nice guys. I really do. Like a lot of other "normal" women, I also enjoy being shown appreciation and care, or cooking and knitting. If a woman aspires to be a housewife and a mother, there is nothing in the feminist egalitarianism that bans her from doing so. But if a woman wants to be part of the workforce, or even serve in the military, she should be able to do so, without straining herself in double-day shifts. In many ways, feminism comes down to creating a social space for men and women to exercise freedom, instead of advocating for a fixed way of living or a total reversal of gender roles.

Feminism provides a social space for women and men to make informed choices, and a political discourse to realize these choices.

My peer college-aged women and men today do not identify themselves as "feminists" while enjoying all the liberty that the feminist movement has earned us. In fact, today's feminists are ridiculed. We owe it to the generations of feminists before us that women can now study in a university, work, travel, and negotiate with men. Men, too, can now enjoy greater social freedom to interact with women. They can cook and spend time with kids without having to defend themselves or their manliness.

Not everyone can be or wants to be labeled as a feminist. However, one should be able to stand up to the rights of women without feeling apologetic. Scorning the feminist movement while embracing its fundamental beliefs is hypocritical and insincere at best.

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