

Letter To The Editor: SGA Emphasizes Communication

Dear Editor,

I am writing in response to the P.O. box of the last issue of *The Salemite*. To begin with I am having a rather bitter-sweet reaction to the letter. On the one hand I am disappointed that people are perceiving SGA officers as members of the "Round Table." Obviously this points out that no matter how hard SGA is trying this year to make a real effort at improving communication, there are members of the student body who are not getting the information they feel they need. On the other hand, however, I am honestly glad that people are at least speaking out, and thus they are using the campus newspaper for its intended purpose-to give information on a wide variety of issues to the entire student body.

I do think that a brief explanation of what SGA has been doing this year, and where it has come from would help put the P.O. Box letter into context. First of all SGA really started at ground zero this year in terms of precedents for communication. For instance, in years past, Presidents of SGA never even informed members of Executive Board what had gone on in faculty meetings or individual meetings with administrators. "Mum" was really the word. SGA this year felt this was one tradition worth breaking.

Consequently, we began the year by breaking ground. No student government officers, outside of Honor Council have ever met with transfer students...this year, we had informal dinner meeting with them.

No one has ever explained what the Honor Code really means to Salem students with the ADP's...long overdue, Mary Poole talked to the entering non-traditional age student population at the opening of school about self-scheduled exams and honor here. Along these same lines, since I have been here no one from student government has formally thanked the class reps to all the student-faculty committees, nor has anyone even generally explained to them their duties and responsibilities on these committees. SGA did this last spring with the upper classmen and this fall with the freshmen.

SGA uses polls to find out what large groups of the student body are thinking on certain issues. These poll results do not simply get calculated and lay dormant in a file cabinet. Every administrator on this campus receives the poll with all the results and comments. As well, SGA uses these results to chart the next attack zone, if you will, from the information students give us. Another way SGA channels information is by posting committee and board minutes on the SGA bulletin board in the Refectory. Now I know it's not exciting reading, but it is a good source of information. As well, SGA has tried to make the SGA meetings brief, but well worth student's time. These meetings are no longer mere announcement sessions, but contain valuable information from the administration and SGA officers. Finally, SGA has begun office hours for students, faculty, and staff to ask questions, give suggestions, and voice

complaints. SGA has also tried to work closely with *The Salemite* so that "hot issues" on campus get press coverage either by an SGA officer or a staff writer.

There are several examples this year of where SGA has responded to student concerns in a very immediate and concrete way. SGA was able to do so, because students voiced concerns and asked questions. For instance, Dean Johnson was informed at an early date, by myself and by the poll results, that people were very upset about the Infirmary closing. She responded by offering to come to each dorm and allow students to ask questions. In addition, because of concern in recent years with the ADP Program, SGA worked with members of the administration to compose a fact sheet on the program and held three question and answer sessions so that students could finally get the real story. There is now a committee in place to look into one of the issues over academic awards that came out of these sessions. Finally, because of poll results and just general complaining, several SGA officers told Steve Wright about many students' misconceptions about parking, etc. He also responded, and is in the process of "touring" dorms answering questions, and hearing complaints on parking and tickets.

In addition to these things, Interdorm and Honor Council have really tried to promote campus unity and spirit this year. The Jack-o-Lantern and T-shirt contests, as sponsored by Interdorm, have

been huge successes in pulling dorms together on specific projects. Honor Council is in the process of having the class honor code scrolls framed to be hung somewhere on campus. We all signed them, it seems like a good idea to display them.

I could go on and on, and I am sure you are wishing I would stop, but let me just say that none of these things are monumental and none of these things are earth shattering, but they are truly essential if Student Government here at Salem is ever to truly reach her potential. At Opening Convocation this fall, on behalf of SGA, I challenged everyone "to talk to us, listen to us, and act with us." SGA is not merely a group of officers, nor is it merely students, but it is both, and it takes both working together to get anything accomplished.

In conclusion, I am truly grateful that the author of the P.O. Box letter has found an avenue to express her feelings through *The Salemite*. In doing so she has pointed out an area of weakness that for all of SGA's efforts, there are still students who are not getting information. All I can ask of the entire student body is that you do take some responsibility for finding out information, and SGA will keep trying to make sure that information is accessible. Finally, talk to your officers, they can not know a thing if the students don't tell them.

Fondly,
Ginger Saunders
President, SGA

Letter To The Editor: Response To Athletics

Dear Editor,

This letter is to answer, as well as elaborate on, Ms. McEwen's question to Susan Cheshire in the last issue of *The Salemite*. Ms. Cheshire's opinion of why students transfer from Salem was based on the same things that every other good reporter's opinion is based on. First, being present at the scene of the situation in question. I have seen Ms. Cheshire at several volleyball games and tennis matches throughout the years. Therefore, she is quite capable of evaluating the student's enthusiasm in supporting as well as participating in these events. This also makes her knowledgeable of the schools they're competing against and how intense that competition is. Secondly, a good reporter forms an opinion by listening to other people's opinions on the given situation. Ms. Cheshire has done this also. Being very concerned about Salem's well-being, she has discussed many of Salem's problems with a wide variety of students in order to derive solutions, bringing us to the point of her article which was why students transfer, not the under-developed athletic department. You see Ms. McEwen, that when one isolates six words from an essay of approximately 1,100, one perverts the point of the essay. Ms. Cheshire's point, as I interpreted it, was that Salem's athletic program doesn't convince women to attend or to remain at Salem if they are unsatisfied with other aspects of Salem life. Being so small, this is true of many clubs on campus. A fully developed club is a stepping stone to a career in the particular area in which the club is involved. And although our clubs do provide these stepping stones to a certain degree, they aren't on the same levels for the most part as

bigger universities. For example, consider Salem's SGA (before anything is stated, I would like to make it perfectly clear that I have the highest respect and admiration for this organization and this example is not meant to undermine it in any way). If a president of SGA wanted to run for a political office at some point in the future, being president of the student government at Duke or Chapel Hill would be much more impressive initially than being president of the Salem College SGA. This is not meant to demean Salem, for her small numbers are very instrumental in enabling her to be a member of the more elite institutions for higher education, but the bigger schools are more visible. As far as the athletic department is concerned, it's fine in relation to Salem's size but it's not a stepping stone into professional sports such as Duke or Chapel Hill might be. Likewise, this is not meant to demean Salem's athletic department but simply to put it into perspective. We do have wonderful facilities and a good percentage of participation, but we don't have the clout to persuade women who want to participate in sports on a very serious, possibly career oriented level to attend or remain at Salem.

Therefore, even though Ms. Cheshire isn't directly involved in sports, I think that from her personal observations and contact with a variety of students, she was adequately informed to write her article and I wholeheartedly agree with her opinions as I think she intended them to be interpreted.

Sincerely,

A former Athlete