

Students react to board ruling

BY AMY KINGSLEY
STAFF WRITER

After the controversies surrounding last-minute campaign violations, students will have a new perspective on the student body president election as they log on to Student Central and cast their ballots for a third time next Tuesday.

In the wake of Tuesday's Board of Elections decision, students had varying opinions on the fairness of the punishment, the trustworthiness of the candidates and the prospect of another week of campaigning.

The allegations and the decision of the board have shaken many students' trust in both candidates. "I think after this whole thing, both candidates' reputations are slightly damaged," sophomore Joyce Yang said.

Many said the controversy revealed the cutthroat personalities of the candidates.

"I would trust them with running student government, but I probably wouldn't want to be friends with them," said Megan White, a sophomore education major.

Despite the uproar, many students said they will not change their vote in Tuesday's election. Staunch supporters of both Calabria and West said they were

vindicated by the board's decision.

However, a few undecided voters said the violations would change their vote. The elections board's decision to penalize only West caused some students to have less faith in her.

"Obviously, both of their integrity is in question," said Anna Hartzog, a sophomore journalism major. "But I'm leaning to trusting Calabria more."

But Lizzie Carr, a junior psychology major, said that although she didn't vote in the runoff election, she thinks that the elections board unfairly punished West and plans on voting for her next week. "She got punished for the actions of her boyfriend," she said.

Many students said the board came to the fairest possible decision regarding the allegations.

"I think it was a good decision," said Georgia Alwon-Mount, a freshman majoring in biology. "Everything was kind of unclear. Nobody really understands completely what happened."

Others said they believe that one or both of the candidates should have been disqualified.

"If there were all these violations, why weren't candidates disqualified?" asked Justin Carpenter, a sophomore majoring in political science.

Opinion differed about whether

"I would trust them with running student government, but I probably wouldn't want to be friends with them."

MEGHAN WHITE, SOPHOMORE

the candidates were aware of the activities investigated by the board last week.

"I don't think they were doing it with malicious intent," Alwon-Mount said. "I don't think they knew about it."

Some supporters of both Calabria and West said they tried to keep an open mind throughout the controversy.

"There were violations, but they seem to be minor," said senior business major Diane Green. "I don't think the candidates knew about them."

Alternately, some said they believed that West's boyfriend, UNC alumnus Alistair Cooper, should have better heeded the election rules.

"I felt like he should have known better," White said about Cooper's actions. "It was very arrogant of him to think he wouldn't get caught."

Fatigue with the election process and dismay that the student body president has yet to be elected dominated discussion of

another runoff.

"Elections get kind of annoying," said Matt Taylor, a junior majoring in journalism and political science.

A couple of students expressed extreme contempt for the election process.

"I had no interest in student government before, and I have even less now," said Brett Clippingdale, a junior majoring in computer science and French.

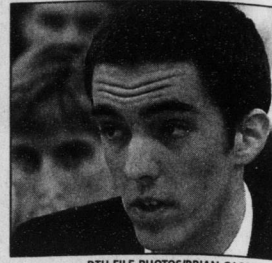
Although some students said the increased publicity will keep students interested in the election, most said turnout likely will be low.

"Asking people to vote three times for the same candidate is a bit much," White said.

For many students, the events of the last week have cast a pall on the office of student body president.

Sophomore journalism major Matthew Pyrtle said, "Whoever wins, this presidency is going to be marked by controversy."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.



Candidates Lily West (left) and Matt Calabria testify during the Board of Elections hearing Tuesday night. The BOE ruled to hold a second election.

Board releases ruling rationale

Cites strong evidence against West

BY BROOK R. CORWIN
UNIVERSITY EDITOR

Since it postponed certification of the results of the Feb. 17 runoff election for student body president last week, the Board of Elections has fielded numerous allegations against the campaigns of candidates Matt Calabria and Lily West. But after weeklong investigation that comprised 42 written testimonies, at least 8 hours of deliberations and a two-hour open hearing, the board ruled Tuesday night that only one-hour's worth of actions from a single UNC alum were directly responsible for casting the race in doubt.

The board released the full rationale of its decision Wednesday.

The board ruled that a preponderance of evidence indicated that Alistair Cooper, West's boyfriend, maliciously solicited votes in the Undergraduate Library computer lab in the final hour before the polls closed on election day.

The decision's rationale states that because Cooper is not a student, deciding the election based on his actions alone would be an injustice to the concept of student self-governance. "While the board found the actions of a certain West campaigner to be reprehensible, student government will not change its course because of the actions of one nonstudent," the rationale states.

The board defended its ruling based on the detailed testimony of several witnesses unaffiliated with either campaign. Computer records obtained by the board prove that Cooper logged into the computer next to one such witness, senior Barbara Herrmann, at the time she cast a vote for West. Herrmann's testimony gives an explicit account of Cooper posing as an exchange student who pressured her into voting for West.

In Tuesday's public hearing, West

was unable to provide evidence to defend Cooper, saying she did not know for sure what took place in the lab and took Cooper's word on faith.

A number of other allegations were also considered at the hearing, but none were supported by factual evidence, said BOE Chairwoman Melissa Anderson.

Among these were two allegations against the Calabria campaign for illegal political solicitation — campaigning within 50 feet or visible sight of a computer lab — outside Davis Library and the Undergraduate Library.

Anderson said Calabria was able to defend the allegations successfully through the presentation of photos and detailed measurements that proved it was impossible for a violation to have occurred.

But Calabria, the board ruled, could not supply such factual evidence supporting the two other charges against West's campaign: using Cooper as an illegal campaign worker and illegal political solicitation in the Carolina Union.

The charge of illegal political solicitation was dropped and Cooper was ruled to be advancing the West campaign only on the night of the election.

Less than two hours after the board's announcement Tuesday, the Calabria campaign filed an allegation, accusing the West campaign of negative campaigning.

But Anderson said Wednesday that she quickly dismissed the charges, which involved a student's Instant Messenger profile. She said the board only will consider seriously allegations with strong evidence that are in direct violation of the Student Code. "I'm looking at the letter of the law," she said. "It has to be a clear violation."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

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n't realize his mistake until after the election. He e-mailed Anderson the morning after the runoff election to notify her of the incident.

"It was just my fault, I did something stupid," he said. "I take responsibility."

Anderson said only she has access to the vote tallies through her

Onyen and password. She provided this information to board members so they could access the vote counts and make sure the campaign ran smoothly while she was out.

"I am the only new member on the board, so I am not as clear about policies," Sidden said. "He should have not been in the office, but I didn't even think about it at the time."

An e-mail was sent to the

American Civil Liberties Union listserv at 6:17 p.m. that night, encouraging members to vote for West because of a six-vote margin.

"I don't know if it was substantiated, but I just wanted to let the membership know what I was hearing and that it would be a close election," said Tom Filopoulos, co-president of the ACLU, who sent the e-mail.

Although Anderson said she

thought the vote counts were secure during the last election, she will keep her password to herself during next Tuesday's race.

"It is unfortunate that this happened," she said. "But somehow little mistakes happen, and they shouldn't get blown out of proportion."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

CORRECTION

The front page memorial piece for Robert Kirkpatrick that ran in Wednesday's paper neglected to mention that he also is survived by a son, Robert G. Kirkpatrick III, a member of UNC's class of 1993.

To report an error contact Managing Editor Daniel Thigpen at dthigpen@email.unc.edu.

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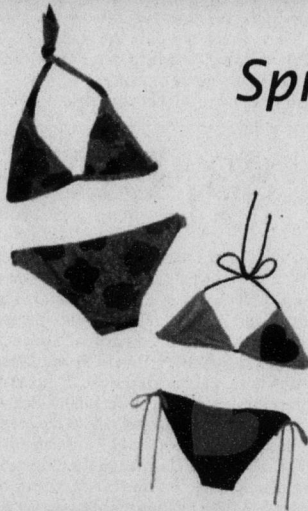
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