

Received by the Regents

April 15, 2010

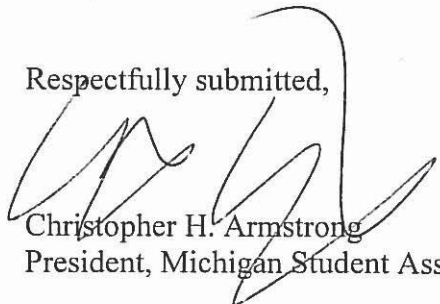
**The University of Michigan
Regents' Communication**

ITEM FOR INFORMATION

Subject: Michigan Student Assembly Report

Attached is a report with an update of the projects and initiatives of the Michigan Student Assembly.

Respectfully submitted,



Christopher H. Armstrong
President, Michigan Student Assembly

April 2010

M UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

MICHIGAN STUDENT ASSEMBLY

Chris Armstrong, President Jason Raymond, Vice President

President Coleman, Regents, and Executive Officers,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Chris Armstrong, and I am the newly elected President of the Michigan Student Assembly. This is truly an honor to speak to you all today, and an honor to be elected student body president. We ran on a platform of building community and promoting advocacy on campus, and I fully intend to serve the student body with these goals in mind.

Our Platform. My Vice President, Jason Raymond, and I ran on a platform of advocating for the student body and the many diverse communities that it represents. Among others, issues we look forward to address this year include:

- Implementing Saturday night dining in the Residence Halls.
- Creating a gender neutral housing option for incoming students.
- Reforming the student organization funding process.

Over the past two months, our campaign has garnered much student, community, and media attention. With voter turnout at over 14%, the highest in a decade, students are excited and energized with the message of our campaign. As the first openly gay president of the Michigan Student Assembly, our success has reached local, state, and even national news outlets. Recent articles by The Advocate and the Detroit Free Press have spurred additional enthusiasm and interest in our new agenda for MSA.

New All-Campus Constitution. The March 2010 elections included the successful passage of a new all-campus constitution written by Students for Progressive Governance, a student organization on campus. Among other reforms, the new constitution includes the creation of a University Council to unify subsidiary student governments on campus (LS&A Student Government, Rackham Student Government, etc.). Furthermore, the new constitution provides clearer divisions of power between the Central Student Judiciary, the Michigan Student Assembly, and the MSA Executive Board. We will fully transition MSA from the new to old constitution by the November 2010 elections.

Gender-Neutral Housing Survey. In March, Housing sent a survey to students living in the Residence Halls to gauge interest in a gender-neutral housing option. The survey was crafted by student representatives from the LGBT Commission of MSA, the Gender-Neutral Housing Student Campaign of the ACLU, and the Residence Halls Association. The survey responses were overwhelmingly positive. From the survey data, we can soundly say that students want a gender-neutral housing option. With the help of the Residence Halls Association and University Housing, we will continue moving forward with this initiative.

Prohibiting University Exams on National Election Days. The MSA Voice Your Vote Commission (VYV) is working on an initiative that will prohibit University exams on national election days. Last month, the Assembly passed a resolution calling for a letter to be sent to the Board of Regents and all University academic unit departments in support of the initiative. Please

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Chris Armstrong, President Jason Raymond, Vice President

see attached for a copy of the letter and the MSA resolution. We look forward to working with the Office of the Provost and others to ensure the consideration of this proposal.

Revamping MSA's Funding Process – Student Organization Forum. In April, MSA will hold a forum with student organizations to explore ways to revamp, update, and standardize the student organization funding process. Appropriating money to student organizations is one of MSA's primary functions on campus. Proposed reforms include an online funding application, clearer funding guidelines, and more consistent funding recommendations. MSA will also explore ways to better coordinate appropriations with LS&A Student Government and other student governments on campus.

Campus Safety – Laptop Registration. Over the past two months, Chair and Vice-Chair of the MSA Campus Safety Commission Josh Buoy and Stephanie Hamel have successfully promoted the Department of Public Safety's laptop registration program to students. After registering their laptops online through the DPS website, students receive two stickers to place on their laptop, which serve as a visible theft deterrent. After the efforts of the Campus Safety Commission, the number of registrants more than doubled to over 1050 students. Currently, the commission is working with the Office of New Student Programs to train Freshman Orientation leaders about the program.

Diversity Affairs Select Committee. The Diversity Affairs Select Committee will be meeting with Vice President Royster Harper to discuss protocol regarding the reporting of bias incidents in the Residence Halls. Many students have complained that the current protocol is inadequate and unfair to the students reporting these incidents. The meeting will discuss the current process, repair its broken areas, and adopt strategies for increasing the awareness of the reporting options for students, faculty, and staff on campus. We thank Vice President Harper for agreeing to meet with MSA on this issue.

Earth Week. In celebration of the 40th Annual Earth Week, the MSA Environmental Issues Commission (EIC) held a Diag Day with both student and national organizations to raise awareness of environmental issues and green initiatives taking place on campus. In addition, EIC hosted a sustainable fashion show to exhibit organic and fair-trade clothiers for environmentally conscious students.

MSA Sponsored Spring Concert. On Tuesday, March 30th at the Power Center, MSA and Big Ticket Productions (BTP) sponsored and delivered a Spring concert to students featuring artists Big Sean, Clipse, and Wale. Due to MSA and BTP sponsorship, student tickets were heavily subsidized. Over 1300 students attended the concert.

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Chris Armstrong, President

Jason Raymond, Vice President

Board of Regents,

The United States Constitution guarantees the right to vote for all adult citizens, a right frequently made inaccessible to the student population. Due to this fact, we ask that you please eliminate exams on national election days across all academic departments to increase student voter accessibility and support the crucial right of students to vote.

Exams on Election Day have historically posed problems to students trying to cast their ballot. On November 4th, 2008, students waited up to three hours in line before they could vote. Some even needed to leave voting sites before casting their votes because of previously scheduled exams. In fact, the University's voting conditions in 2008 were poor enough to draw the public attention of Rock the Vote; they used Michigan as an example of exams lowering student turnout.

Students are a marginalized voting population who already face countless obstacles in their attempts to register and vote. Since students move frequently between residences, are often first-time voters, and regularly maintain permanent addresses at their families' homes, they are commonly deterred from exercising their constitutional right to vote. Allowing exams to be scheduled on national election days only further disenfranchises students.

On March 9, 2010, the Michigan Student Assembly unanimously passed a resolution in support of eliminating exams on national election days. We urge you to act in all students' best interests and help to eliminate exams on national election days for every academic department on campus.

Sincerely,

Abhishek Mahanti, *Michigan Student Assembly President*

Josh Strazanac, *Voice Your Vote Commission Chair*

John Lin, *Academic Affairs Commission Chair*

Josh Buoy, *Campus Safety Commission Chair*

On behalf of the Michigan Student Assembly.
Please see attached for a copy of the resolution.

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