SGA elections spark debate

Controversy gripped Holy Cross’ Student Government Association (SGA) this week, prompting the group to hold an emergency meeting Tuesday night. The meeting was held to deal with problems that have arisen in the annual SGA co-chair elections, and quickly became a hot topic of debate lasting for nearly two hours. SGA co-chair elections were slated to begin with a primary Wednesday in order to eliminate two of the four running pairs, but were postponed in order to deal with the controversy. The debate surrounded the status of candidate Helen Shin ’03, who changed her running mate twice after submitting the mandatory letter of intent and petition with 50 student signatures.

Shin’s first two running mates, Paul Burke ’03 and Brendan Cohn ’03 both dropped out of the running race, leaving Shin alone after her documents ensuring eligibility had been submitted. Consequently Shin took on a third running mate, Edward Kendall ’03, but submitted his name after the deadline had passed.

The emergency meeting on Tuesday was held to determine how to handle Shin and Kendall’s status in the election. Questions arose as to whether Shin should be disqualified or whether she and Kendall should face a deduction in votes at the end of the election if they were permitted to run. SGA’s judicial council, headed by Jenna Grant ’04, originally decided to disqualify Shan and Kendall to participate in the election under a ten percent vote deduction. Shin, who felt that this decision was unfair, filed an appeal with SGA to overturn the judicial council’s decision. When Shin filed an appeal over the judicial council’s decision, it went before the judicial council itself, rather than to the Senate, a mistake that sparked the emergency meeting. Under the SGA constitution, the judicial committee cannot overturn their own decision.

Grant admitted making a rash decision in imposing a ten percent vote deduction rather than disqualifying Shin and Kendall. She commented, “We made a rushed decision. It was a bad choice.” Now that the issue is out of the hands of the judicial committee, Grant’s wishes to disqualify the pair are irrelevant. Many who attended the heated SGA meeting Tuesday night pointed out loopholes and flaws in the SGA constitution. There seem to be no guidelines pertaining to a candidate changing her running mate during the election, which fails to answer questions in this situation. When asked for comment on the issue, Jacqueline Peterson, Dean of Students, offered that she felt there were “things we could do for clarity and ease in the constitution,” but that this is “not a constitutional problem, but rather a procedural problem.”

The point was also raised that Shin should not be held responsible for the actions of her original two running mates, and should not be penalized for the fact that they dropped out of the election. The issue is clearly not as black and white as whether or not Shin can or cannot change her running mate. The problem centers rather on the way in which the changes were handled by both the candidates and the SGA judicial council.

A central point to the debate surrounded the status of the signatures on Shin’s candidate petition. She secured fifty six signatures, as was required, but the petition was filed before Kendall was her running mate.

Thomas page 5

Rausch ’03 delivers Vanicelli lecture

Marianne Rausch ’03 gave the annual Vanicelli lecture last Wednesday, Apr. 3. The topic of both her address and thesis was the failures of the public housing system. She proposed possible solutions for the problems that plague people living within the low-income, subsidized housing program Hope VI, developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Rausch says, “My thesis was two-pronged. I attempted to prove that Hope VI is a failure as an assistance program designed to improve the lives of America’s low-income population; it makes the lives of most people it touches more difficult. The second half of my research was dedicated to looking for ways to bring the program more in line with its stated goals.”

The program, developed by Maryland senator Barbara Mikulski, seems to be a good one in theory, aiming to replace old and dilapidated public housing with new townhouse style buildings and providing support services for those in need, such as drug and alcohol counseling, child care and aid in finding meaningful employment. Gradually, however, people who were forced from the old, worn buildings, found that only twelve percent would be granted housing in the new buildings being erected in the cities where Hope VI was being implemented. The rest of the residents were displaced to the streets. HUD officials had told them before the rebuilding process started that all of the Supreme Court's mandate was proving to be ineffective. HUD wanted to integrate residents of higher income status into the building, mixing income and creating community. Similarly, even the lucky 12 percent that were granted housing were having problems as well. HUD was not making good on the social service programs they promised and Hope VI management was proving to be ineffective. The first flagship program of HUD, that “implies the need for major

Shin’s status, page 3

The Crusader

VOLUME LXXVII, NUMBER 7 COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS, WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS APRIL 12, 2002

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