

10 Tennessee State SGA Leaders Are Gone

Contributed by Ashleigh Taylor -- Black College Wire
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Grades, jobs cause new officers to vacate positions

Ten SGA officials at Tennessee State University have abandoned their positions voluntarily or involuntarily for the current school year and a special election has been scheduled to fill their positions.

As previously reported in The Meter, president and vice president-elects Jennifer Williams and Danny Glover were disqualified from holding office for academic reasons. In addition, three representatives at large, senior class president, sophomore class president, sophomore class representative and two graduate class representatives have been involuntarily or voluntarily removed from their respective positions. "This is the first time both positions of president and vice president have not met post certification," said Robert Myles, director of Student Activities. "However, this situation is nothing new to the university."

According to the TSU Student Handbook in which the SGA Constitution is printed, "all student-elects must meet a mandated post certification requirement, which includes attaining a total of 90 credit hours during the campaign semester and receiving a minimum grade point average of 2.5 overall."

Article I, section 12 states the same requirements for House of Delegates members.

Two former student-elects admit to resigning from their posts to focus on other endeavors.

"After SEC week, I was offered various positions at WTST," said former senior class president Melvin Williams, a senior psychology major from Memphis. "I realized I was not as passionate about being senior class president as I am about my career."

After serving as the University Honors Council president in 2008-2009, Williams sought the senior class president position. However, over the summer, he realized his calling was not SGA but a career in the entertainment industry. "Really make sure that (SGA) is something you are passionate about," Williams said. Former representative at large, Charity Ward, does not credit the state of SGA for her decision to vacate her position.

She explained how several musical opportunities would open up for her this year and she would rather work diligently as a member than half-heartedly otherwise.

She further explained that SGA is in need of a strong leader who does not need a "million people standing behind them."

Mike Bethea admitted to not meeting post-certification requirements and could not serve as sophomore class president after earning a 'D' in a chemistry course.

Bethea also said he was fully aware of the certification requirements.

"I didn't know that if you took a class again during the summer it would drop the hours and not count," said Bethea, a sophomore electrical engineering major from Lexington, S.C.

Bethea did have high hopes of running for the position again in special elections, but Dean Myles confirmed he could not.

"I am not disappointed in the people, but the lost of great leadership," said sophomore business information systems major, Justin Ellis from Indianapolis. "I strongly believe the people elected were right for the job."

Spring SGA candidates used t-shirts, pencils, cups and free food as staples in their promise to lead TSU to greatness.

Along with giveaways, candidates often recruited fellow students as campaign team members.

"I just don't think it is right for the candidates to waste our time campaigning and not serve in the position," said sophomore biology major Ashley Anderson from Jackson, Tenn. Students admit that they are disgusted at the alleged popularity contest disguised as student elections.

"If you weren't dedicated about the position why run?" said sophomore mass communications major, Miranda Clay, from Chattanooga. "I believe many people ran just to be running, (and) look where that got us."

Veterans accustomed to the "TSU popularity contest" encourage students to understand each position carefully and the magnitude it will have.

Recent alumna Adrienne Stewart finds the recent vacancies embarrassing for the university and may sour for freshman students interest in SGA.

She also said she believes students who choose not to run for leadership positions showcase a "lack of school spirit."

"Running unopposed is worse than not running at all," said Stewart, a recent graduate from Memphis. "Leadership begins by example."

2008-2009 SGA President Patrick Walker-Reese, who ran unopposed, predicted that SGA will "bounce back" from their current deflated state if there are valuable candidates that run for the positions.

"Running unopposed can be a good and bad thing," said Walker-Reese, a history major from Nashville.

The possibility of an alternative puts the state of student affairs solely in the hands of the administration.

Until a president has been elected SGA is expected to come to a standstill.

"Hopefully we have students running for these positions during special elections," Myles said. "If the positions are not filled we must find an alternative."

Reservations for away games, financial decisions concerning the student body and day-to-day decisions can only be decided by the SGA President.

Presumably, the vice president would assume the role. In this case, recently selected Speaker of the House, Brittney Brooks, is the interim president until further notice.

Senior history major Patrick Calvin said Greek-lettered affiliation elitism and a failure to prioritize caused the elected SGA officials to lose their positions.

Calvin said he strongly believes that student-elects ride on the coattails of popularized National Pan-Hellenic Council association.

"Greek life carries this façade that can blind your matriculation in college," said Calvin, a member of the Beta Omicron chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and Nashville native. "There is a motive to 'run the yard,' but Greeks forget to help the yard."

Williams, Glover and former SGA representatives Blake Nathan , Vernon Walker and Zachary Joyner were all recently initiated into Greek-lettered organizations during the 2008-2009 school year.

Williams is a member of the Alpha Chi Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc.; Glover and Nathan belong to the Alpha Theta Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.; Walker and Joyner are members of the Beta Omicron Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

According to Calvin, forgetting to help the university proves that student leaders chose selfishness over selflessness. "They are thieves that robbed TSU of great leadership," said Calvin.

A nomination convention for special elections has been scheduled for Sept. 6.

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Ashleigh Taylor writes for The Meter, the Tennessee State University student newspaper, which originally published a version of this article.