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Inexperience in senate not concerning to SGA leadership

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Two new SGA senate members, sophomores Samuel Bork (left) and Luke Anderson (right), attend a senate meeting in Anspach Hall on Feb. 8, 2016.

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Eleven new members have been added to the Student Government Association senate this semester.

During the fall 2015 semester, the senate had 20 members; two sophomores and two freshman. This semester, the senate has 19 members and eight are underclassmen. Between those two semesters, the presence of underclassmen in the senate has increased by 22 percent.

That number is consistent with past years, said SGA President Chuck Mahone.

"When students are starting out their (first semester of) freshman, even sophomore year, they aren't really sure what their passions are or where they want to invest their time," Mahone said. "Depending with how many individuals we elect during our senate elections in the spring (semester), there may not be any positions open in (the senate during) the fall, so there's no opportunity for (underclassmen) to get involved."



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(http://www.searingcastlewaterpark.com?utm_source=ts0&utm_medium=wallpaper-ad&utm_campaign=&expand=auto#auto) Senators represent an academic college, giving students a mouthpiece to voice their opinions or frustrations. After talking to students they represent, a senator decides to draft legislation and try to bring it before the SGA house and senate. A senator must also undertake a semester-long project. (ht utr ad

Those running for a senate position for the fall 2016 semester will be announced Monday, March 21 at the SGA general board meeting. Deadlines for the position had to be extended as a result "not even having a competitive race" for the applicants Mahone said.

The commitment of a senator

SGA Vice President Maggie Blackmer said with more underclassmen comes a greater understanding of what the "campus community" is passionate about or what they'd like to see.

"Underclassmen tend to live on campus, so they know more about what's going on on campus. They're able to talk with residence hall (assemblies) and see what students are saying," she said. "With upperclassmen, most of them live off campus so they're potentially not as in the know."

Blackmer said the reason underclassmen don't join the Senate until either partway through freshman year or during sophomore year is because of the large time commitment.

The underclassman increase is neither positive nor negative, Mahone said. He views the increase of underclassmen as a way for SGA to revitalize itself.

"When (underclassmen) are in the Senate, it gives (SGA) the ability to look at problems with a fresh new set of eyes and see things we might not have thought before," he said. "At the same time, those students don't really have the experience or connections available to have that change happen. This is why it's so important we have a mixed Senate of students (of all grades)."

Being an underclassman senator

Sophomore senator Boomer Wingard said because most colleges across campus "speak with a unified voice," whether a senator is from the college they represent shouldn't matter.

"It's preferable to represent (the college you are a part of) if you can, but in certain cases there are no more seats opened to be filled (for representing an academic college) even though a senator would still like to do their best to represent (CMU)," he said. "It's not necessarily a part of that college that college go (unrepresented)."

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(http://www.springsoclaw.com/college-of-humanities-and-social-and-behavioral-sciences/2016/03/16/inexperience-in-senate-not-concerning-to-sga-leadership) and has no declared major, but is considering pursuing political science. He said being in the classroom and around the students and professors he speaks for helps him understand what the college needs. (ht utr ad


"If you were to be a senator for the College of Communication and Fine Arts, then you would be responsible for representing those students," Mahone said. "You'd need to work on projects that either directly benefit those students or somehow benefit CMU's campus as a whole."

Most of the time, senators represent the college their major resides in, or at least one they are passionate about, said Senate Leader Rebecca Detroyer. She allows each senator to write down the top three academic colleges they want to represent. Then, based on who she feels will best represent the college, she assigns senators to their position.

"I talk to student (senators) based on their priorities. Usually if someone is a (College of Communications and Fine Arts) major but a CHSBS minor, they'll fall under at least one of those two (colleges to represent)," Detroyer said.

Students who were senators last semester received priority in choosing a college to represent.

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