

State of the Association Address 2012

Good evening to all Senators, administrators, faculty, Executive Board, and all members of the Association. Welcome to the second annual State of the Association address. We are here tonight to hear from the Class Presidents and the President of the Student Government Association, to take time to highlight the accomplishments of the student government and chart a course for future plans and successes. We are here to bring attention to the groups and individuals that continue to improve and shape this campus and this institution, to encourage leaders of the University, and to galvanize new ones to make Colgate University and Hamilton a great place to spend four years.

During my tenure as President, I have been dedicated to improving the function of SGA and the Budget Allocations Committee to better serve all student groups. This year, with the help of Treasurer Jake Caldwell, we presented the first overhaul of the BAC, and Speaker of the Senate Sam Flood rewrote the Bylaws and Constitution this summer. Both initiatives, coupled with the work of the Government Affairs Committee and the Senate, have set a new course for SGA with strong fundamentals in our governing documents, and have charted a new path towards efficiency and transparency.

Joe and I have taken the often-cited lack of transparency of SGA to heart this year, as we strive to have every student know how we, the Executive Board, and the Senate operate. We have increased accountability in Executive Board meetings and Senate meetings, and with the help of Webmaster Sam Weisbarth, we have set up the first functioning SGA website in half a decade where we publish our minutes and Bills. Finally, we have followed through on this commitment with our second Fireside Chat, mandated office hours, and dissolved payments for SGA Executives. I can confidently say that the SGA has never been more open and progressive. My administration will not be opaque to the people we serve.

Although we have high expectations and have made substantial improvements in the last three months, it is crucial that this body continues to remain the preeminent group on campus that can echo the will of the student body, forge University-community relations, and promote the importance of co-curricular organizations as part of the Colgate experience. I believe we can do this, and do this well, by developing leadership through the SGA Publicity Council and Student Leadership Team headed up by Senior Policy Coordinator Amy-Elise McBeth and Vice-President Joe Trapp. I believe we are taking the right steps to improve issues of alcohol policy and drinking culture on our campus, led by Senior Policy Coordinator Ali Berkman, Student Life Policy Coordinator Colin Cowles, Senator James Speight, and Liaison Albert Raminfar. It is the business of government to be a good government, and I can say without a doubt that the SGA is on its way to fulfilling that axiom.

One of the best parts about this organization is its ability to be responsive to the needs of the student body; filling that difficult role has been the most impressive component of the Student Government this year. For the first time, we subsidized rides to the Syracuse Airport. In a week, we will send the first delegation of Student Government members to a conference at Williams College, where they will garner a better understanding of how student governments at other schools improve

their campuses. Additionally, the External Affairs Committee of Senate is forging a path to make students accountable for their actions downtown. Fostering a more cohesive University and Town dynamic has been the cornerstone of our administration, and we are unrelenting in this pursuit. I am fortunate to have attended a number of meetings with Mayor Miller, Trustee Sam Cooper, Chief of Police Rick Gifford, and a number of village residents. We as Colgate Students will never forget that, although the University sits atop this hill, we are deeply intertwined with the village. We will work to remedy the Friday and Saturday night issues caused by our peers that disrupt the great relationship between us. The SGA will not forget: we are one community and one village. As long as I am in office, this sentiment will remain.

Also unwavering is the impact that the SGA can make on our Campus Community. In response to the appalling and homophobic epithets made during Coming-Out-Week, the Senate and I brought a unanimously-passed Resolution to a discussion in the Women's Studies Center. So far, this has been my proudest moment as the President of SGA. This organization often works in the background of student organizations, but occasionally – together—we join to speak on behalf of every student in the Association. Occasionally, we join to voice the conscience of the Colgate student. This administration and this school will not tolerate such acts of hate towards any person or group in our community, and I am proud that the SGA made that stand and sent that message.

I must also thank CLSI Director Michael Maningas and Denise Upton for leading the hundred Colgate University groups. Despite an overwhelming task, their efforts have been indispensable to our Association: forwarding our project to hang the Flags in Frank (which will be up by the end of the semester), supplying information and funding resources to the Budget Allocations Committee and group events, and working over the summer to resurrect Welcome Back Week, which was a great success.

I cannot say enough that the *State of the Association* is good. We have made unprecedented strides to have an efficient Senate, affect positive change with community relations, perform as a transparent body, respond to the needs of our fellow students, and counter events that shake, but not undermine, the spirit of our great University. This *State of the Association* emphasizes our continuing commitments; however, our work is not over, our role is not decreasing, our influence is not dwindling. With an even greater level of intensity, let us further solidify ourselves as the agents of change and purveyors of progress. Let us continue to be the Student Government Association that is the hub for campus organizations and the voice of the Colgate Student body.

Thank you for joining us,

Matthew Ford

President, Colgate Student Government Association