

# Student has prepared for SGA president position since freshman year

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Jack Hesser, president of Student Government Association and senior microbiology and botany major, was originally hesitant to join SGA, but he wanted to join in order to increase his chances at becoming a resident assistant. He got involved his freshman year, as chair of the student services committee. *DN PHOTO BREANNA DAUGHERTY*

By [Breanna Daugherty](#)

*Editor's note: Sophie Gordon is currently the press secretary of SGA, but was not at the time she wrote this story.*

This year's Student Government Association president has been preparing for the position since he was a freshman at Ball State. Now in his last semester as president, Jack Hesser and his slate have already accomplished many of their original platform points.

At first, Hesser, president and senior microbiology and botany major, was hesitant to join SGA because his father had participated in SGA in college, and Hesser didn't want to follow his exact footsteps. What landed Hesser in SGA was his goal of becoming a resident assistant.

In order to better qualify to be an RA, Hesser was told he should join DeHority's Hall Council. When he tried to find a position that would fit his schedule, however, the only one that worked was SGA representative.

## Freshman Year

During his freshman year, Hesser was chair of the student services committee and was active in the organization. Hesser said he wrote 20 pieces of legislation, eight of which were senate resolutions, such as students receiving an email when a hold is put on their account and installation of a drainage system between Bracken Library and Pruis Hall.

He also began working more closely with Richu Aby, the current SGA vice president.

Hesser said he, Aby, Bryan Kubel and Kyle Pierce were the most involved freshmen in SGA and had casually discussed running together.

"Me and [Hesser] talked about it freshman year, and we didn't talk about which position, we just said that we wanted it," Aby said. "I told him that was I thinking vice president because I like senate more, and he was like, 'Good, because I'm thinking president.'"

Aby and Hesser first met at orientation in 2012. They then participated in C.L.A.S.S. (Cardinal Leadership and Service Seminar) together during the summer. But once courses began, they didn't see much of one another until the first senate meeting.

“It was funny because after that, we’d show up at ... all the same organizations, and I would support him in all of his different events and he would support me in my different events,” Aby said. “It was a very collaborative friendship, I think. If he needed me, I would step in for him, and I needed him, he would come and help me out. ... It was God telling us we had to be friends.”

Aby and Hesser also worked together to campaign for Spark Forward, the 2013-14 executive slate, during the 2013 SGA election season. Hesser said he had entertained the idea of running for SGA slate before, but helping with this campaign solidified his decision.

“SGA is so much more important than we give it credit for,” Hesser said. “There’s so many amazing opportunities within student government to enact positive change, and not enough senators and executive members were taking advantage of it. That’s when ... SGA really became my focus and my passion.”

Gary Pavlechko, Hesser’s Honors professor from freshman year, said Hesser was encouraging and involved everyone in class discussions.

“I believe in the 25 years I have been here — and I have taught classes for almost every academic semester for multiple departments — I would say that Jack Hesser is the most influential student for the advancement of Ball State that I have encountered,” Pavlechko said.

### **Sophomore Year**

Hesser continued to immerse himself in SGA when he served on the Homecoming steering committee and became pro tempore of SGA as a sophomore.

“What a learning curve,” Hesser said. “I definitely floundered for like the first month or so just because being any of these five executive board positions requires a lot of time, energy and a lot of background knowledge on how this university operates and senate committees and things, and I didn’t have that sophomore year. ... I had to learn fast.”

During this year, Hesser started Blitz Week. He was able to get every senator to write legislation.

“[Hesser]’s leadership style is very well thought out,” Aby said. “You just can’t wake up one day with that kind of experience.”

He also became friends with then-sophomore Austin Acel. Hesser said he and Acel used to have “Accent Fridays,” where they would go to restaurants and speak in accents the entire night, then go back and watch Lifetime movies. One of these Fridays, Acel complained about how little he believed SGA did, something that echoes the general population of Ball State.

“I remember turning to him and being like, ‘Would you want to do SGA?’” Hesser said.

Hesser said Acel was unsure about whether he had time to serve on SGA at first, but he eventually agreed.

“I think something [Hesser] does really well is he’s very passionate about what he does and he’s so good with his words that he entices you to be also very passionate about it,” Acel said.

Hesser and Acel agreed they would not run for the following year, when they could serve as juniors, because they had other projects they were working on.

At this point, Hesser had begun thinking of with whom he would want to run on a slate. He assumed Aby would be vice president, Acel would be treasurer and Rachel Podnar, currently a

senior journalism major, would be secretary. Podnar decided against running and suggested Hesser ask Meagan Mullen, currently a senior interpersonal communication major. Hesser considered the suggestion and decided to ask Mullen because they had worked on DeHority's Hall Council together and helped plan different activities.

"I didn't want to systematically pick people," Hesser said. "I wanted people I had worked well with ... in the past."

At the end of sophomore year, the slate was finalized. Hesser called everyone to an 8 a.m. meeting, and Aby, Acel and Mullen met their running mates.

"They didn't actually know who else was on the slate," Hesser said. "It was a cute reveal."

The slate continued to meet every Friday at 8 a.m., and the members gained more experience in their respective areas. Mullen became treasurer of RHA, and Acel served as secretary of his fraternity. Hesser and Aby continued to serve on SGA.

"My thing from the beginning was I wanted to be able to walk in on day one and be able to do the job," Hesser said. "I didn't want there to be as much of a learning curve."

Hesser had been gathering a list of around 350 platform points, which the team narrowed down to around 150. Minimal research was done on all 150 points, but the team ultimately settled on 21 points that Hesser and Aby decided they wouldn't be able to accomplish as just senators on SGA.

Some platform points from the beginning stuck, such as the alumni leader reunion, freshman mentorship program and phone charging stations.

"It was the four of us doing all of this research and really putting the time in," Hesser said. "We really tried to keep things on the [down low]."

### **Junior Year**

While the slate continued to prepare for the election season, Hesser served as general chair for Homecoming. He also served as the on-campus caucus chair for SGA. He did not serve on the executive board, but Hesser said he was able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the board because he had served on it previously. This led his slate to create a list of initiatives they wanted to implement in SGA itself, such as the in-senate retreat.

Then came campaign season, and the Atlas slate was ready.

"I think the greatest compliment that the student body at Ball State University could pay [Hesser] was to elect him and his party to SGA," Pavlechko said.

Atlas accomplished more than 80 percent of its platform during the Fall Semester, and Hesser said he is looking forward to creating more change before graduating in the spring.

"If there's an opportunity to make something better, I'm going to jump in and take full advantage of it and try to make the best of the situation," Hesser said. "I see opportunities, not for self gain, but for the benefit they pose for both the organization and campus community."