

# DECISION 2007



JAY SOGLIUZZO • JESSICA WESTERMAN • RICKY ZACHARIAS

On February 2, the junior class selected three candidates from a field of seven. Two weeks later, the finalists gave their speeches during Upper School assembly. The vote will be held on Friday, February 27, 2007. Who will you pick to be next year's Student Body President?

*Personal Statements on Pages 2-3*

## Being Student Body President: My Experiences at the Helm

## Student Government Undergoes Changes to Improve Productivity

By DAN DAVIDSON (VI)

The Student Body Presidency continues to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. It is very exciting to see the election process begin once again, although it is also sad to think that the election of one of these three great candidates will signify the end of my tenure. I'd like to express my thoughts on the job and on what type of person I believe is best for the role of Student Body President because I think it is important for students, and perhaps even more important for candidates, to be informed in the period leading up to the election.

Being Student Body President is extremely difficult—this is a simple fact that everyone needs to know. Talking to past Student Body Presidents, I know that I am not alone in my opinion. Let me give you an example to illustrate how the system routinely takes idealistic and enthusiastic juniors and turns them into cynics, frustrated with their inability to accomplish their lofty goals.

Going into this year I had a comprehensive plan for revitalizing recycling in our school. Not to be arrogant, but it was pretty awesome. It took me a few weeks and a few meetings with various people to shape it into a finished project. Then, in a Green Committee meeting a few weeks ago, I was plainly told that no recycling can occur until the next school year because of contract issues that need to be ironed out. So much for my hard work. And unfortunately, the Student

Body President wields only so much power. If there can't be recycling, there can't be recycling—there are no ways around it.

Sadly, the role of Student Body President entails many of these scenarios and few substantial victories. Nevertheless, one should neither give up hope nor stop caring about who is the student leader of the school. Electing worthy students to the position will ensure a maximization of results, even if these results are less substantial than the lofty changes that students often hope for or expect.

Given the difficulties surrounding the office, one must first reevaluate how candidates for the position are judged. Ideals are a critical factor, but must be looked at in perspective. It is important for a Student Body President to want to achieve great things, or else the frustrating sense of powerlessness of the job will immobilize him or her.

At the same time, a successful Student Body President must remain down-to-earth. It is acceptable for candidates to be idealists, but not if idealism inhibits their ability to make progress through seemingly small changes that don't live up to their high standards. Thus the Student Body should look for candidates who have both grand ideals and an understanding that "sweating the small stuff" is critical to have success as president.

Given the fact that the Student Body President wields little substantive power, it is important to vote for someone who you feel possesses

strong leadership qualities. If nothing else, the Student Body President is the most visible student leader on campus, and thus it is important to have the role filled by someone who can actually lead. Without firm leadership at the top of the Student Government hierarchy, it becomes even harder for Student Government to perform.

Student Body Presidents must do two things to be successful: work with what they have and stress visibility. It is no secret that the position is grander in title than actual power. Those who fill the position must therefore be willing to use the small power that they do have; they cannot become aggravated by their inability to effect massive change and give up on the process.

Being a visible figure around school is also extremely important. As leader of the student body, it is important to bolster school spirit by enthusiastically attending school events, games, performances, etc. A Student Body President can be much more effective by doing the small things that are within the scope of the office and doing them very well than by trying to overachieve.

The path towards an increasingly active and effective Student Government depends on two things: students choosing leaders well and these leaders following through for their peers. Re-evaluating the expectations that we put on our leaders and that they put on themselves is a critical step in this process.

By DARINA SHTRAKHMAN (V)

As the annual Student Body President election rolls around again, it is time for the class representatives and advisors of Student Government to reflect on their successes, failures, and plans for next year.

Student Government, which is currently comprised of two major committees (Current Issues and C.O.A.S.T.), has worked hard to implement changes this school year.

In the past, Student Government had weekly meetings on Mondays, which posed a problem because many students have music and sports commitments during Monday conference periods. This year, they have started meeting on Thursday at 5:30 whenever an issue comes up.

The Current Issues committee has also been renamed the "Student Activism" committee.

Instead of just having one advisor, Student Government now has two others in addition to Mr. Anthony Bowes, the main advisor: Mr. Fred Hedengren and Mr. Ted Corvino.

Student Government has also gotten rid of the Secretary and Treasurer positions this year, leaving only presidents, vice presidents, and representatives.

As senior representative Catherine Chong put it, not all of the reforms have worked out for the best. Small subcommittees were supposed to be more independent and proactive, tackling specific issues, but nobody took the initiative to actually get things done.

The sustainability project also did not work out as planned.

On the upside, many Student Government members agree that this year was very successful. The Dirty Jersey Homecoming Dance had a great attendance rate, as did the new winter dance, Snowball.

Student Government members were also successful in getting

sweatpants to be allowed on Dress Down Days again.

Bowes said he hopes that representatives "continue to try to take Student Government outside the realm of dances and social events. These are great, but I think we can be doing some more substantive work. I would love to see some real aggressive brainstorming on how we can improve Pingry. I would love to see some Student Government members visit some other top independent and boarding schools and see what the Student Governments at those schools are doing. What initiatives are students working on at Lawrenceville? Exeter? Horace Mann?"

He added that the election is earlier this year "only because

they happened late last year. You may just say that I was learning the system and the calendar was extremely full last year."

"I do believe that the longer the students have between speeches by finalists and the ultimate vote is better (within the guidelines of the Constitution). I think this gives students time to talk to the candidates, and have a dialogue with their friends and classmates about what and who will be best for the school. This should not be a quick decision, but one that is well informed and in the school's best interest," Bowes said.

For now, everyone is waiting to see who becomes Student Body President and gets to lead the school in achieving those initiatives.

## Inside The Record



M. Skiba (V)

Mr. Bowes introduced the candidates before they delivered their speeches on Tuesday, February 13.

### In Their Own Words

Presidential candidates Jay Sogliuzzo, Jessica Westerman, and Ricky Zacharias write about their contributions to Pingry and their campaign platforms. P. 2-3

### Gender Matters. Or Does It?

A female Student Body President has not been elected in 13 years. Should we take that into account as we vote? P. 4

### Tall, Dark, and Handsome

Students from different forms discuss what they look for in the perfect Student Body President. P. 4

### If I'd Made the Cut...

The three juniors who were not selected by their classmates in the primary to run for Student Body President share what they would have stood for during the campaign. P. 2



"Psst - what's the answer?"

By MATT LAUD (VI)

## If I Had Not Lost the Junior Primary Election...

We asked the four primary candidates who didn't make it what they would have pushed for if elected Student Body President.



**SCOTT BISSINGER**

"I would have moved the cafeteria to the other side of the school."



**BOBBY BLATT**

"I would have changed everything."



**TANNER COMBIAS**

"It's a secret."



**DAN WEINIGER**

"I would have Hawaiian Punch water fountains."



### The Pingry Record

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## Ricky Zacharias

### IN HIS OWN WORDS...

All of your hopes and fears have collided, and in the dust and the smoke and the wreckage, out I walk. Surprised? Don't be. I'm here to stay.

I'm Richard Rae Zacharias, and I'm pumped (as always) for election time. It's a time of bitter rivalries, cunning debate, and sweet, sweet public bribery. Stomachs are the silent majority here, no doubt. Nevertheless, I'm in for the long haul, and if that means delivering a little rational thought on the side, I'll cope.

I know Pingry pretty golly-darned well. Besides regular high school attendance (please, don't remind me), I've done three fall plays, two musicals (including this year's current production), and two seasons of spring track. But I know this school better than that.

Since coming in eighth grade, I've made some close friends with fellow students, but also with a few teachers who pretend to like me. And why should I have stopped there? I've ventured into the business, maintenance, development, and alumni offices to find a couple of friendly people. Connections like these are key in the fast-paced industry of Student Government, where good networking means the difference between allowing jeans and booty pants (Truth? Exaggeration? Metaphor? You decide!).

I also reckon I've explored more territory on this campus than the majority of the student body, both inside and out. It's not all that sketchy; I'm just the kind of guy who has looked through a good deal of the old yearbooks and examined nearly all of the photos on the walls.

So maybe I've sat up in the

library listening to old vinyls of the Buttondowns from the early 1960s, and I've crept around the woods at dusk, and I've probably already looked around whatever staircase or closet you think you might have discovered. Whatever...

Okay, that actually sounds super sketchy. Fair. Nevertheless, it's indicative of my natural sense of curiosity and involvement. I like to be involved around school. Outside of class, I've tried my hand at everything from entering the speech competition to writing for The Record to performing with SAC to announcing a football game to being Big Blue to creating a short-lived semi-secretive society. Student Government is just a natural extension of this.

But enough about you; let's talk about me.

The first thing you should know is that underneath my care-free, quiet, and chill attitude, I'm very easily irked, agitated, and annoyed, and that's the best thing for you. Fortunately or not, we all seem to acclimate ourselves to our daily nuisances because nobody wants to be a pest. Student Government, however, is practically designed to work against this, and it is my goal to facilitate the destruction of the torturous daily minutia that just adds straw to our camels' backs. That is not to say that we're unable to make major change, only that it is extremely difficult when possible.

All the same, I'm up for the destruction of Tuesday as a concept and a day, along with the installment of permanent t-shirt throwers in the gym. Delicious cafeteria food and drinks that please everybody? Let's not go



insane. Baby steps.

My experience in Student Government has been primarily with the Student Activism Committee, which is concerned with making these changes, but I certainly haven't forgotten the important other half of our duties: fostering general entertainment and recreation with events. Though we got rock-solid support for our events this year, keeping a fresh lineup and high attendance is essential. I'm committed to dancing all over Winterfest's still warm grave as we explore the realm of everything else. For instance, this year I spearheaded an effort to have a junior class trip, but soon I'll be getting to work trying to plan one for senior year.

In the Pingry environment, I've seen that it is vital to stay ahead of the game but also that an important consideration is advice. I've done my best to consult the people who

honestly have better experience than I, and I consider their guidance crucial.

So what has Ricky Z really got to offer? Pingry knowledge and wisdom that span from the dance studio to the pool, and downstairs too. Friends in literally high places (the library!), and other friends in figuratively high places (other people!). Commitment to athletics and the drama program, along with music and the arts. I concede that I am a dull presenter and have horrible stage fright, but I am working on getting better at reading announcements in front of an audience.

And that's me. Student body president is a responsibility that requires a good deal of visible labor and much more behind the scenes, but I'm up for the whole job. I hope that you'll join your friends in thinking straightforward and voting Z.

### CANDIDATE SURVEY

#### FAVORITE...

**Movie:** The Big Lebowski or Seven Samurai  
**Album/Artist:** "The College Dropout" by Kanye; Ben Folds  
**Publication:** The Onion  
**Sports Team:** Cubs  
**Comedian:** Mitch Hedberg  
**Place to Shop:** Bill's Army Navy  
**Foreign Country:** Côte d'Ivoire (funny no matter how you say it)  
**Word:** "conflagration" I know, bummer; Still, it's awesome.  
**Animal:** I didn't clamber to the top of the food chain to love animals, and I don't eat what I love, nor vice versa.

#### THIS OR THAT?

**Mac or PC?** Mac  
**Pool or Hot Tub?** You tell me.  
**Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert?** Stewart. In the end, news is funnier  
**Record or Vital Signs?** I read the Times in the library.  
**Chinese or Japanese?** Like choosing which parent I love more

#### COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

**If I were a cafeteria item, I would be...**omelet. I think we all know why. I think we all know the dirty, dirty reasons why.

**If I could skip school for one day, I would...**save orphans from falling debris.

**The most embarrassing CD I own is...**I found an old Jane Fonda workout album in a trash behind Scotti's.

# Jessica Westerman

## IN HER OWN WORDS...

Writing this, I'm hunched uncomfortably over a notebook in a folding chair, breathing in the heavy smell of chlorine on the pool deck at the Cougar Invitational Swim Meet. I'm surrounded by boys in speedos; this is somewhat distracting. Unfortunately, such is the plight of a swimmer-turned-candidate on an approaching deadline. Through it, I must persevere.

I began my stint on Stud Gov sophomore year, during which, I'll admit, I was little more than an extra observer at meetings and maybe an additional hand at event cleanup.

This year, I decided to take a stand. I took an active part in the planning, decorating, and overall production of Homecoming (though I cannot take credit for the theme), as well as the big push for our first-ever Snowball. With the great success of these events, I was encouraged to do even more. So now, you're reading this article: my attempt at doing "more." Slip a note in my mailbox, Jessica Westerman, Form V, to let me know what you think.

We all knew this year would be a doozy when, in those first few weeks of autumn, the senior class roster shrunk noticeably and almost overnight. The words on everybody's lips: Honor Code.

With the events of recent weeks, the same chatter has resurfaced, along with threats of rumored punishment: revocation of senior privileges, the end of peer leadership, and relentless torture in the Chokey. It has become quite clear that what we need is an entirely new approach to the system. We need to instill honor before its absence even becomes a problem. My solution: an all-school signing of our Honor Code pledges at Convocation.

As Student Body President, I would implement the signing during the academic year's

opening ceremonies. After a brief introduction to the code and its principles, a student or teacher might read it aloud, then each of us would sign our names on the dotted lines and pass them on down to our advisors.

In a total of about six minutes, the entire campus would gain a deeper feeling of ownership and respect for the Honor Code without having it jammed down our throats. In addition, it would save everyone the trouble of having to keep track of his or her own pledges—you know it got lost mere days after it came in the mail, and there's no way you're ever finding it again.

As we rolled into the cold winter months, boys dusted off their North Faces and girls stepped into their Uggs (along with some of the boys, as well). However, there seemed to be something vital missing from our daily routines: hot chocolate. Once a cafeteria favorite, those packets of sweet cocoa goodness went inexplicably missing this year.

From what I've gathered, the main reason for their removal was their tendency to leave chocolatey rings inside our mugs every morning, making cleanup harder than it had to be. I've spoken with Tom from our cafeteria, and he says bringing back the hot chocolate is "no problemo." What he asks is for us to return the mugs to the conveyor belt quickly, before the mix has a chance to clump in the bottom of the mug.

As Student Body President, I would fully endorse this endeavor. A simple habit to change, it will allow all of us to enjoy this sweet pick-me-up in the mornings. Consider it done.

With the long, dreary days of winter also came the long, dreary nights. Happily, we discovered this year that the greatest way to fill these nights is with a semi-formal event and tons of event



pictures. (For those who have yet to see them, both Mrs. McGrath and Mr. Jenkins have some fabulous shots from Snowball on their screensavers.)

With the success of the Snowball, I fully anticipate next year's shindig to live up to our high expectations. As a strong supporter of dances and formal functions of all kinds, I feel that the ideas of an underclassmen dance or an additional all-school soiree are definite possibilities.

When the spring finally comes and notebooks are spilling over with handouts, we are reminded of a fourth campaign issue: recycling. Pingry's nearly non-existent recycling program has failed to resolve some very simple problems. We can cut our paper usage literally in half by double-siding assignment sheets, history documents, and class notes.

In fact, my catchy new slogan "Pingry Pride: Let's Double-Side" sums this idea up very nicely. With simple three-step instruction sheets hung above each department's copier, users would be reminded to take an extra seven seconds to save some paper. We

can also make the recycling bins more clearly labeled and accessible throughout the school. I will personally volunteer my time to ensure recyclable materials reach the right location every afternoon.

None of these propositions are particularly ambitious; all they require is some initiative and willingness to work hard to see them through to completion. More frequent, succinct, and productive Stud Gov meetings (sorry, Dan) and more of a dialogue with students during assembly would help to achieve this.

I've got a pretty good track record with hard work: Honors Bio freshman year, bonus homework points from Mr. Jaqua as a sophomore, and, most recently, a feat of absolute stupidity in volunteering to write and deliver two speeches in front of the entire assembly in less than fourteen days. Talk about commitment.

In closing, I'd really like to be your president. I think I could do great things for the school, and have a lot of fun doing them. I promise, girls really don't have cooties.

## CANDIDATE SURVEY

### FAVORITE...

**Movie:** "The Notebook" (it's a girl thing)  
**Album/Artist:** The Fray, "How to Save a Life"  
**Publication:** Cosmopolitan  
**Sports Team:** Rutgers football...I'm a sucker for the underdog.  
**Comedian:** Ellen DeGeneres  
**Place to Shop:** Free People  
**Foreign Country:** Djibouti. Never been. Must be the mystery of it.  
**Word:** parka  
**Animal:** Goldfish. I've had between 15 and 20 since age four.

### THIS OR THAT?

**Mac or PC?** PC  
**Pool or Hot Tub?** Hot Tub. No contest.  
**Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert?** Jon Stewart.  
**Record or Vital Signs?** Record.  
**Chinese or Japanese?** Chinese, even though I'm chopstick impaired.

### COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

**If I were a cafeteria item, I would be...** those tiny, individually wrapped saltine crackers. They're the perfect snack.  
**If I could skip school for one day, I would...** alternately nap and watch Grey's Anatomy DVDs.  
**The most embarrassing CD I own is...** Lou Bega, Mambo #5. Classy.

## IN HIS OWN WORDS...

I love The Price is Right. I try to watch it whenever I can. The simple brilliance of Bob Barker and his antics is the kind of insightful stroke of genius that keeps a kid like me up at night, wondering if I'll ever be so lucky, or so talented, to come up with something even remotely comparable.

Unfortunately, there are certain things you just cannot do as President of the Student Body. If you expect me to top The Price is Right—in all its glory—then you have the wrong kid. If you want me to make every day a Friday, use your head and realize that it's impossible. I'm not going to try and get elected by making outrageous promises like improving American foreign policy or getting you a date. Instead, I'm going to try hard and strive to do what is necessary, to improve grievances, and to find concrete ways to bring back the things we love the most about this school.

I'm talking about tastier drinks. What's the story with this flavored water we have now? Who approved that one? I'd like some brand-names we recognize—I'll fight for Coke and Pepsi, but if it comes down to it, I'll settle on Sunny D, not only for its taste but also for its ability to bring back childhood memories. At the very least we should bring back what we had before: tasty, relatively healthy alternatives to milk and water.

I'm talking about letting people wear the clothes they want. I don't mean short skirts and skimpy tank tops because those would hurt the Pingry name and be a distraction. I refuse to stand idly by while students make criticisms that go unnoticed. Perhaps letting us wear shorts in the fall when it's actually warm out? If we're going to learn, we're going to have to be comfortable. It's hard taking the logarithm of an inverse sine function or reading Emily Dickinson in a pool of your own salty sweat.

I'm talking about better assemblies. Without Mr. Neiswender's inspirational quotes every Monday morning I'm practically losing the will to live.

I'm talking about letting you talk. Hosting an open forum, a simple Q&A where student government and the administration can take the pulse of the student body—see what's going right, what's going wrong, what needs to be fixed or improved.

Like I said, it's the practical stuff. These are the kinds of things that could be implemented in relatively short order with measurable results. Does reworking Monday morning assemblies to include funny videos help or hurt student morale? Will bringing back tasty drinks to the cafeteria make kids happier? Will people actually bring complaints to an open forum?

# Jay Sogliuzzo



Will the administration take it seriously? Will the ideas actually encourage action? I'm not sure about any of these questions, but I'd like to ask them. I'd like to try them out.

I'd like to move away from a Student Government that gets bogged down in month-long proposals and create one that efficiently collects input from the students and resolves to do something about it. I'd like a Student Government that accounts for its own changes, that gauges reactions and consequences after the fact to ensure every move we make is actually accomplishing something.

I know that most of us don't care about what happens behind closed doors in Student Government meetings. But I also know that what happens there affects the simple pleasures we take for granted and decides the future of the ones we don't have. As Student Body President, I'd like to bridge that gap and get the students more involved. I want to make sure that the sort of things I talked about above—better food, more comfortable clothes, better events, shorter and more entertaining assemblies—actually happen. If we attend this school, we should at least have a say in how it is run.

## CANDIDATE SURVEY

### FAVORITE...

**Movie:** Heavyweights  
**Album/Artist:** IceWagon Flu  
**Publication:** Nickelodeon Magazine  
**Sports Team:** London Silly Nannies  
**Comedian:** Dane Cook  
**Place to Shop:** Livingston Mall  
**Foreign Country:** Kazakhstan  
**Word:** Gazebo  
**Animal:** Tapir/Blue-Footed Booby

### THIS OR THAT?

**Mac or PC?** Both, I'm just that kind of guy.  
**Pool or Hot Tub?** Hot Tub  
**Jon Stewart or Stephen Colbert?** Jon Stewart  
**Record or Vital Signs?** Record  
**Chinese or Japanese?** Japanese

### COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

**If I were a cafeteria item, I would be...** a cucumber tea sandwich or humus stuffed pita.  
**If I could skip school for one day, I would...** watch the Price Is Right.  
**The most embarrassing CD I own is...** Will Smith's Willenium.

## What Do You Look For in a Student Body President?



**DIAMOND McCLINTOCK (III)**

*"It all depends on personality."*



**BIFF PARKER-MAGYAR (V)**

*"Write-in Meredith Skiba.  
I'm not kidding."*



**JULIAN QUINTANILLA (VI)**

*"I rate them on a  
1-10 sexiness scale. Dan  
Davidson was a 6. "*



**BRIAN SOZANSKY (V)**

*"A good student's body."*



**KATE DREYFUSS (III)**

*"Confidence."*

## What Impact, if Any, Does Gender Have on Your Vote?



**JP PATRIZIO (V)**

*"I'm indifferent to the  
situation until the Student  
Body President has actual  
power."*



**ZACH RING (IV)**

*"It will not have an impact  
on my vote whatsoever."*



**NAYANTARA JOSHI (III)**

*"No, it doesn't have an  
impact."*



**GODFREY BEST (IV)**

*"No, it doesn't."*



**HALLIE BIANCO (V)**

*"I really just care about who  
would best lead our school."*