

DECISION 2014



HUNTER CONTI • TAYLOR DILLON • PETER ROTHPLETZ

On Thursday, March 6th, the junior class selected the three candidates for Student Body President for 2014-2015. Speeches were on Monday, March 24th, and the vote will be held on Wednesday, April 2nd. Who will you choose?

Dr. Jones Answers Questions about Student Government

By MARK STRAKHMAN (IV)

With the Student Body President elections coming up, I decided to sit down with Dr. Jones, the Faculty Advisor to Student Government, to get an inside look on the campaign process as well as insight into what those elected actually do.

First, she affirmed that any junior is allowed to run for student body president. Furthermore, no experience is needed to run for the position. All juniors who choose to run speak in front of their grade in a primary of sorts. The grade then selects three candidates whom they believe have the ability to properly represent them. These three candidates are those who you saw speak in front of the high school on the day we returned to break.

According to Dr. Jones, the student body president

“should be on the more serious side, but that depends on the student. A student should be who he or she is. A student shouldn’t change his or her



personality to run. However, they should realize that they are the public face of the school.”

What the student government accomplishes is solely a result of the president’s determination to get things

done. Usually, the student government organizes the four dances of the year. If the representatives want to plan other activities, they are free to do so. The student government is “responsible for pumping up school spirit.”

Many candidates promise to reform academic and school policies, yet that is often not accomplished. According to Dr. Jones, “The student government does not have much power by itself. However, it does have the ability to advise the administration on policy changes. The administration would listen to the representatives, but it does take a lot of work to change something major.”

Looking forward to next year, Dr. Jones said that she is looking to forward to seeing how candidates keep their word, and if they follow through on their promises.

Current Student Body President Akshay Rao Offers Advice

By AKSHAY RAO (VI)

This school year has flown by faster than I could have ever imagined. It feels like only yesterday I began my presidency with a speech at Convocation about our community and the passion, pride and trust I witnessed in the members of our small yet enduring student body. Since then, as Pingry’s Student Body President, I have had many memorable experiences, like lighting the Winter Festival candle, speaking to the freshman class about the importance of time management, and planning our many annual events.

As I look back on my time as Student Body President, I am sad that it is all coming to an end. However, I am comforted by the knowledge that I will forever cherish each and every memory of that experience. Reflecting on my time as President, I remember the accomplishments of Student Government, the challenges we faced, and above all, trying to make a difference at Pingry.

Student Government has had a significant number of successes this past school year. From last year’s Spring Fling to the Presidential Elections, which are currently underway, all Student Government events have maintained their typical excitement. When conflicts arose while scheduling Spring Fling, we were able to move it to the last day of final exams. The “Summer Fling” proved very popular among students and may even become a new Pingry tradition.

This year, winter was



packed with bitter temperatures and exhausting snowstorms, taking a toll on students and faculty alike. I recall it beginning to snow on the weekend of the Snowball Dance, but we still managed to have a fantastic turnout, with attendance trumping those of years past. We were also able to coordinate a second spirit week to alleviate the stress students and teachers experienced during the grueling special schedules to make up for snow days. This second spirit week gave our community the extra push it needed to complete academic responsibilities before spring break. Finally, Student Government passed a new provision approving electronic voting during Student Government elections. Electronic voting will be used in all elections starting next year, cutting out the inefficiencies of paper ballots,

as well as contributing to our school’s environmental sustainability efforts. My time as Student Body president has been incredible, and I am so proud and honored to have had the opportunity to hold the office. I would like to give a special thanks to Dr. Jones and Dean Markenson, who have provided me with guidance and support through every step of my presidency. I could not have made it through the year without them. Furthermore, I would like to thank the student body, Student Government representatives and officers, my classmates, faculty members, and the administration for all their support. I am sad that my time as president is winding down, but I am confident my successor will do a fantastic job next year. I wish all the candidates the best of luck in the election.

 **The Pingry Record** VOLUME CXL
SBP ELECTION EDITION

Assistant Editors Matt Fromm Abhiram Karuppur Lori Kim	Editor-in-Chief Ben Kaminoff	Photo Editor Rachel Davis
Layout Editor Abhiram Karuppur	Copy Editors Abby Bauer Anna Butrico Mark Shtrakhman Charlotte Zee	Faculty Advisor Dr. Susan Dineen

All rights reserved. All contents © 2014 The Pingry Record. Printed on recycled paper. Please recycle after use.

Hunter Conti

IN HIS OWN WORDS...

I can't believe my time at Pingry has gone by this fast. It seems like only yesterday I walked into school on my first day of freshman year, or even my first day of sixth grade. I've had a ton of great moments throughout my five and a half years at Pingry, yet on graduation day, I'd hate to regret not having had a big enough influence on our school community.

Unfortunately, for the past couple years it has seemed like Student Government has not been fulfilling this role. We have hosted some great dances, but I feel like Student Government has fallen into the form of a three-time-a-year event planner, rather than a day to day influence on the lives of students.

I want to change that. With a new Student Government-run assembly, consistent bi-weekly stress relievers, and the reinforcement of an online test scheduling calendar, I plan to better integrate Student Government into the lives of everyone at Pingry.

For the past three years, I have been the vice-president of my grade, and I have the experience and knowledge of how Student Government works to accomplish my goals for Pingry. The Student Body President is the greatest representer of the student

body and I am ready to accept and excel in the job if I am elected.

As Student Body President, I would strive to achieve my goal of seamlessly integrating Student Government into the lives of Pingry students. One way I will do this is by not only hosting major events and dances like Homecoming, Spring Fling, Sophresh, and Snowball, but also having small bi-weekly or monthly events, in which Student Government provides a minor stress reliever for the school during community time. This could be as simple as having punch and cookies during Wednesday's morning flex, if only as a mid-week picker-upper. Additionally, this could be done by organizing pick-up, "3-on-3" basketball tournaments or ultimate frisbee games on certain Friday CPs during the summer or winter months. Most importantly, ideas for stress relievers will be created by the student body, not just Student Government.

On another note, last year an online calendar was created to reduce the collision of tests on the week before breaks and semester endings, with the hope of reducing student stress. Unfortunately, the week before spring break this year was swamped with assignments, but I barely had any tests



or papers due two weeks before break. And I know that for some students, the difficulty of these weeks was swapped. I want to reinforce the implementation of this online calendar and promote the use of it for two weeks before each break or semester completion. That way, students will not get bogged down on one day before break while having to deal with other activities like sports, clubs, and SATs.

In addition to the events mentioned above, I would like to add two more large events. Like the students who ran for president last year, I do believe we should reinstate field day. I would also like to create and reserve a time slot for a Student Government-run assembly in which the student body could vote on what to do. Assembly themes could range from having a high school hypnotist show to a

CANDIDATE SURVEY

FAVORITE...

Movie: "The Prestige"
Song: "Pennies From Heaven" by Louis Prima
Subject: Math or Physics
City: Rome
TV Show: "The Walking Dead"
Place to Shop: The Pingry Bookstore
Pick Up Line: "I lost my phone number, can I have yours?"
Teacher: Mr. Shilts
Word: Fergalicious

PICK ONE

Boxers or Briefs?: Briefs
MSNBC or FOX?: FOX
Calling or Texting?: Calling
Panera or Starbucks?: Panera, they have Mac 'n' Cheese
Facebook or Twitter?: Facebook

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

If I could switch places with anyone for a day, I'd be... Adedire Fakorede (VI)
My favorite app is... Sochi 2014 Slopestyle Skiing
My most embarrassing moment was... when I was in first grade and during a rehearsal for the nativity scene for the Christmas concert, I peed my pants on stage.
My Guilty Pleasure Is... Girl Scouts Samoa Cookies

minute-to-win-it/gameshow themed assembly.

With all these ideas and my stern determination, I believe I can change the way Student Government affects

the school and make it an integral part of the community. I would love if I could get the chance to be your president next year.

Vote Hunter Conti!

Taylor Dillon

IN HIS OWN WORDS...

I'm running for Student Body President because I want the next school year to be as fun and low-stress as possible. I want to better involve the student body with what Student Government accomplishes, and I also aim to add to Pingry's school-wide activities.

When I came into the sixth grade at Pingry, my academic life changed immensely. However, the change in my social environment was even greater. In the years I have attended Pingry, this environment has given me a new perspective on how I can contribute to the school and has helped me to better understand the community's long-standing goal: Not only should the students at Pingry develop and pursue their own passions, but they should also learn from and support others' interests.

Through my experiences on Student Government, Blue Key, and Honor Board, I have realized how Pingry "ticks" and recognized the goals of both the administration and student body. As Student Body President, I would like to bridge the gap between the two sections of our community in order to fulfill the needs of both the students and faculty during their time at Pingry.

Equally as important, I want the students to bond with each other. Through established school events, like our seasonal dances, and newly founded

events, like a school-wide Field Day, I plan to make each student's experience at Pingry as interactive, fun, and involved as it can be.

In past years, Pingry hosted a school-wide Field Day, when the Lower School would come to the Basking Ridge campus and the entire student body would enjoy a fun-filled day together. While I was not a part of Pingry at that time, some of my friends who attended the Lower School have expressed how much they miss this discontinued Pingry tradition. Bringing Field Day back would provide students with an interactive activity to help take their minds off of the stressful academic environment.

I want to get the entire student body involved in making changes here at Pingry. It is Student Government's responsibility to represent the students and take everyone's ideas into account. In other words, Student Government should be a group of students working toward a common goal that benefits the entire community, not just the seven students elected per grade. If elected, I will allow the student body to voice what they would like Student Government to achieve through anonymous online surveys each month.

Every student should feel support in his or her area of interest. Spreading news about sporting events, the play and musical, or even an out-of-school interest will be one of my top priorities



next year. From fans on the sidelines to friends in the audience, I believe that the Pingry community should come together and focus on what's important: supporting each other.

I also believe that school should be as enjoyable as possible. I will be up at the podium with a joke or story every Monday morning to take the stress off the week ahead, and I promise to make school dances worthwhile. I will let the student

body provide input on the themes of the dances and then do my best to make these themes a reality.

Lastly, I want each and every student, whether they are a freshman or a senior, to feel comfortable approaching me. I may be 6'3" but I'm known to be a 'gentle giant.' Here at Pingry, I've made a wide variety of friends from all grades. Even though I don't play a sport and am not involved in the play or musical, I have a mix of close friends who are all involved

CANDIDATE SURVEY

FAVORITE...

Movie: "Airplane"
Song: "Ignition (Remix)" by R. Kelly
Subject: Math
City: Orlando, Florida
TV Show: "Teen Wolf"
Place to Shop: CVS
Pick Up Line: "Are you the square root of 2?...Cuz you got me feeling irrational."
Teacher: Mags
Word: Thyme

PICK ONE

Boxers or Briefs?: Boxers
MSNBC or FOX?: I like to get both perspectives
Calling or Texting?: Texting
Panera or Starbucks?: Panera
Facebook or Twitter?: Facebook

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

If I could switch places with anyone for a day, I'd be... Dr. Moore
My favorite app is... SnapChat
My most embarrassing moment was... in 7th grade, on the first day of class, Ms. Jangaard called me 'Tracy' by accident.
My Guilty Pleasure Is... Tates' Cookies

in athletics and the performing arts here at Pingry. Feel free to voice your ideas for Student Government to me because I'm

always here to listen. I want to make the 2014-2015 school year the best it can be. Vote Taylor Dillon for Student Body President!

Peter Rothpletz

IN HIS OWN WORDS...

It's a hard concept to wrap your head around: selling yourself as an individual in no more than 750 words. It's made even more complicated when you're running for public office. You want to radiate a sense of confidence while still coming off as relatable.

Unfortunately, I'm not a member of SAC, a master party planner, or someone who has attended Pingry for his entire life. You see, I'm not any of the things that usually go hand in hand with candidacy for Student Body President. All I have to run on is a decent speaking ability and a proven track record. As the President of my class for the last three years, I've gained the experience needed to manage a successful Student Government and delivered on my promises. In addition to the expected responsibilities of planning social events and balancing the budget, I spearheaded Student Government relief efforts for those who were displaced by Hurricane Isaac and Syria's civil war, began an awareness campaign focused on the arising later-life effects of bullying, and spent the past year working to change school safety protocol to ensure that everyone feels secure inside Pingry's walls.

As you might be able to tell, I can be pretty intense. I'm the Hillary Clinton of this race: experienced, socially awkward, and deceptively aggressive like

a baby rhinoceros. However, just because I take the responsibilities handed down to me seriously doesn't mean I'm in any way out of touch with the student body. I'm very realistic! I can recognize the fact that I'm not the most entertaining person in the world, which is why I plan to completely shakeup morning meetings. You shouldn't be forced to listen to the Student Body President preach the announcements every Monday for ten minutes. Instead, I plan to have the comedians of the school takeover.

This is just one of the many ideas I have to improve the social side of life at Pingry and to promote camaraderie throughout the community. Field Day was an event that could always bring the student body closer together, and it's a shame that it still has not been revived. I also want to continue to support the spirit initiatives for all the different aspects of the school. To me, nothing symbolizes Pingry's sense of community more than a few hundred students cheering on our athletes in blue and white or the Drama productions being completely sold-out.

I also plan to make several changes in the academic side of life at Pingry. We've all come to learn that finals are nothing more than a test of a person's memorization skills rather than a truly effective way to measure comprehension. While I realize that the exams are necessary,



steps can be taken to reduce the impact they have on students' stress levels and GPAs. Beyond that, I want to further open up the line of communication between a student and his or her teachers. If someone is feeling overwhelmed with work or is facing a difficult time at home, he or she shouldn't hesitate to express this to the people who, above all else, want to see them succeed.

This past February, I was

lucky enough to be selected as one of the six finalists in the Robert H. LeBow '58 Oratorical Competition. In the six minutes that I was allotted, I tried to explain my philosophy that the world favors those who are the most willing to work for the changes they want to see occur. I understand that it's not enough to simply talk about your ideas; you need to take action. As a candidate, I have three years of experience in Student Govern-

CANDIDATE SURVEY

FAVORITE...

Movie: "The Dark Knight"
Song: The Law and Order Theme Song
Subject: History
City: Bikini Bottom
TV Show: The Real Housewives of...any city
Place to Shop: Victoria's Secret
Pick Up Line: "Do you want to know what my shirt is made of? Boyfriend material."
Teacher: Mr. Miyagi
Word: Optional

PICK ONE

Boxers or Briefs?: Boxers
MSNBC or FOX?: Bill O'Reilly is my life after all
Calling or Texting?: Calling
Panera or Starbucks?: Panera
Facebook or Twitter?: Facebook

COMPLETE THE SENTENCE

If I could switch places with anyone for a day, I'd be... Oprah Winfrey
My favorite app is... Tinder
My most embarrassing moment was... when I called my eighth grade English teacher "mom" in front of the entire class.
My Guilty Pleasure Is... Duck Dynasty

ment and working for my class; what's more important, though, is that I took full advantage of every opportunity to better life at Pingry. Vote Peter Rothpletz for Student Body President!

Commentary: How Student Government Can Improve Pingry

Student Government Should Appeal to the Whole Student Body

By ABHIRAM KARUPPUR (IV)

In my three years at Pingry, the only visible effect of Student Government I

dances are the only forms of activities that appeal to high school students. In many other high schools, student governments hold

have a Field Day, a day when the Lower and Upper Schools combine for a day of fun and camaraderie. While it is obvious that it will not happen this year, I would like to see Field Day revived for next year, as it truly serves as a unifying force within the Pingry community. Incoming freshmen who might be unfamiliar with school-wide dances would better bond with the student body through events such as Field Day or performances. Large community events such as these will help strengthen Student Government's role in the community and would help make Student Government appealing to more students.

When I initially came to Pingry, I expected Student Government to be involved with administrative decisions and to voice the students' opinions before school policies were implemented. However, this aspect of Student Government appears to be non-existent. When the new schedule and 1:1 were implemented, the student body was not asked to give an opinion or voice their thoughts on the matter. Student Government didn't step in and voice concerns to the administration, and if they did, the student body had no knowledge of it.

What Could Student Government Accomplish?

By MATT FROMM (V)

"Student Government does nothing," a certain Pingry idiom goes. There are few topics in this school that provoke as wide an array of opinions as the subject of Student Government and its role in our community. Ask an administrator and he or she will suggest that our elected representatives exert a powerful impact on life at Pingry. Ask a disgruntled candidate who lost a campaign and he or she will insist that our elected officials barely deserve their own titles. The truth, to be honest, lies somewhere in between.

Like all governments, Pingry's elected body has a

varying role in school life, a "sliding spectrum," if you will. When we need it, the Student Body President might request that Mr. Conard allow us to wear shorts on a particularly warm March day.



F. Steele (V)

Student Government can move things quickly through the legislative ringer and enact change in just a few hours. For example, the Stu-

However, longer, more drawn-out change is difficult to organize and even more difficult to implement, which might explain why there are rarely major overhauls coming from Student Government. Some argue that there simply isn't enough motivation to bring significant change to school life, since every idea from Student Government must first be detailed and reviewed by an infinite number of "bodies" and "committees" before actually reaching fruition.

Similarly, Student Government did not express the student body's opinion on charging stations, the new Tech Lab, or the interior design. A panel of faculty members and administrators made these decisions, not Student Government representatives who could have communicated students' concerns and opinions about the proposed changes.

The real issue, though, is that we often elect candidates who dress up Student Government's role as a proud and honorable body that moves the school forward in an always-positive direction and relentlessly strives for the greater good of all Pingry. If that statement sounded like an advertisement, it is. There's no doubt that a "politically correct" article would effectively serve to reinforce that notion, but I don't believe that statement to be true. The reality, in my mind, is that

Continued on page 4



C. Zee (VI)

have seen in the community is that they plan dances. While Spring Fling and So-phresh have positive effects on the community, Student Government is not doing nearly enough to represent the entire student body.

The Pingry Student Government webpage states that the Student Government should "coordinate, oversee, and provide student activities." This description makes no mention of the word "dances," yet Student Government assumes that

fundraisers and host entertainers, movie nights, and other events that appeal to a broad range of the student body. Dances only appeal to a portion of the student body, and students like myself, who don't attend these events, feel disconnected from Student Government. If Student Government is supposed to represent the student body as a whole, why does it only cater to only a portion of the school?

Last year, Student Government suggested that we

Whose Speech Did You Enjoy Most and Why?



STEPHANIE LIPPER (VI)

"Peter's because he interacted with the audience the best!"



RUSSELL BECKERMAN (V)

"I thought it was fun how Hunter told everyone to do the wave."



EMILY NILSEN (V)

"Peter's because he engaged the audience."



JACKSON HOIT AND TOMMY WESTERHOLD (IV)

"Taylor because he was really funny!"



NEEL SAMBAMURTHY (III)

"Hunter Conti energized the crowd!"



JOSH GREER (III)

"Taylor Dillon's because he was a combination of serious and funny."

What Would You Like Stud. Gov. to Focus on Next Year?



ANDY ALDER (VI)

"I think next year's stud gov should focus on bringing the community closer together."



AIGNER MIZZELLE (VI)

"School spirit!"



CONNOR BEARD (III) AND JAZMIN PALMER (IV)

"We would like to have an awesome lunch menu every single day with larger portions!"



BRANDON BECKFORD (IV)

"Creating a field day or a way to bring the grades closer together."

Special thanks to Dr. Jones for advising Student Government!

Commentary: How Student Government Can Improve Pingry

What Should Student Government Focus On?

Continued from Page 3

By MATT FROMM (V)

Student Government sometimes acts more as an event planning committee than a true governing body. Governing the school becomes more a matter of "Do we have enough balloons for the SoPhresh dance?" than "Can we fix the leaky windows to keep the rooms warm?"

The problem also lies in the student body. It seems as though our school thinks more about Student Government during the election cycle than at any other time during the academic year. While other schools' elected representatives act similarly

to public officials and control the day-to-day lives of their electorates, our student government often falls by the wayside a few weeks after their election.

Once that happens, the "event committee" takes full form, and any hope for major change dies with it. It seems strange to put planning for Prom ahead of improvements to school life—I'd rather see air conditioning, "stress reliever" activities, and other ideas that could feasibly bring the Pingry community closer together rather than just claim to do so.

Since there is no "Free-

dom of Information Act" here, we can't specifically outline why Student Government seems to take a minimized role in school life. But a trend becomes evident when we ask, "What specific changes have Student Government implemented in our community?"

A helpful way to clear up that ambiguity might be to publish an official list at the end of each quarter, or four times per school year, that explicitly summarizes what Student Government has accomplished during each quarter of school. If that list were made publicly available, anyone at Pingry would

be able to see the change—or lack thereof—that our elected members have sponsored.

It should be noted that we have a great number of intelligent and gifted people in this community who are capable of ameliorating problems and making Student Government a more relevant part of school life. Ultimately, it would benefit both our administration and student body to move that government in a more productive direction. After all, if technological and academic progress is so critical to the Pingry experience, shouldn't governmental progress be as well?