CANDIDATE STATEMENTS

2009-10 Executive Board
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President
I am very excited about the opportunity to serve as President of the Student Senate and, if elected, will take the position very seriously. I’ve found my experience on Senate in the past two years very rewarding and have truly enjoyed working with its committed and diverse members. I take pride in our accomplishments and believe that in the next year, we can build on our momentum and do even more to actively shape and maximize the CLS experience.

My priorities:

An open and friendly Senate: One of the primary responsibilities of the president is cultivating a productive environment and I believe I have both the perspective and temperament to do this. We all join the Student Senate with a bevy of ideas for how to improve the school. As president I will make sure that I personally reach out to every single Senator and have us goal-set as a body very early on in the school year. I hope to foster a strong sense of inclusiveness to encourage initiative and commitment. Senate is not and should not be solely about meeting attendance. Regarding meetings, however, I am committed to efficiently-run meetings characterized by a high level of decorum. While we are a deliberative body that takes up many substantial issues, I think our effectiveness will only be enhanced if our heated and lively discourse is occasionally sprinkled with sweet pleasantries. My experience on executive board last year convinced me that maximum transparency between the executive board, full Senate, and student body is essential if we’re all going to have the necessary information to make good decisions.

Promoting student interests with the Administration: Advocating for student interests with the administration and faculty is a crucial responsibility of the Senate. I think last year’s Senate made a lot of valuable progress in setting up regular lines of communication with the administration by establishing meetings with Dean Schizer and reaching out to Dean Moroni. As president, I would see to it that these relationships are fostered so that we can bring concrete agenda items to the attention of high level administrators and have a say in the decisions that effect student life and academics. The results of the student body survey are a huge asset for this new Senate. Now that we have more information about where student
interests lie, we can hit the ground running and effectively advocate for student interests with greater focus and legitimacy. These are some of the things I would like to see us focus on:

- Improving Career Services
- Improving Legal Practice Workshop
- Encouraging more faculty feedback on performance
- Improving Lenfest Café
- Making sure a student voice is present at the table for important decisions regarding:
  - Grading policy
  - Selection of deans
  - Budget cuts

Many of these items can be managed through our standing committees, however I would encourage the formation of ad hoc committees (like this year’s Student Amenities Taskforce) to take on discrete projects and establish execution plans.

**Connecting with the larger student body:** Another area I would like to see us focus on is enhancing the Senate’s connection to the student body. It’s a huge problem that a large portion of the student body doesn’t know what Student Senate does. I think a lot of benefits would flow from doing more outreach and a positive PR campaign of sorts for the Student Senate. The more people think of us as a resource and a body that is open to their ideas, the better we’ll be able to serve them. I suggest more high visibility office hours, extensive outreach during orientation, and publicizing a policy that lets people know that not only can they reach out to the Senators they happen to know, but they should also email the Student Senate with their concerns.

**My experience:** In addition to serving on the executive board, in my time on Senate I’ve chaired the community action committee and served on the budget, social, graduation, and student grading committees. I’m familiar with the Senate Constitution and Bylaws and I have working relationships with the relevant administrators in the school. In addition, I served as president of APALSA this last year, which gave me the valuable experience of running a student group and managing a large budget.

If elected, I promise to serve the Senate to the best of my ability. I always welcome suggestions and would very much appreciate your support on Tuesday.
David Peters for President

Student Senate has faced two perennial challenges:

1. Gaining a better voice for students with the administration, and
2. Showing the student body that we can serve their needs and effectively represent their interests.

They are intertwined. Student satisfaction depends, in some part, on the quality of student life – which is linked in many respects to the responsiveness of the administration. Surmounting these challenges – or improving upon the work done by prior Executive Boards – is the natural goal of any Student Senate President. I believe that next year we can work together to effectively achieve both goals.

In my capacities as executive board member this year, and as senate IT co-chairman last year, I have worked effectively with administrators to advance student interests. Last year, our colleague Ben Brickner and I successfully petitioned for firstname.lastname e-mail addresses, double-sided printing, color printing, and several other IT improvements. This year, I worked with Ben, the IT Committee, and the rest of the executive board to pitch an improved e-mail system (LawCal) to both student leaders and administrators. I have developed working relationships with most key administrators, and have had a dialogue with Dean Schizer about student life that began the spring before my 1L year.

Next year, together we will work hard to bring student concerns to the administration, focusing on issues that appeared in our recent survey as well as concerns that come up during Senate meetings and in casual conversations with our constituents. Free coffee, a replacement for Lenfest Café, reform of the 1L writing/research curriculum, and improved resource for public-interest or government-oriented students are just a few of the things that come to mind – and I believe I am the candidate best suited to lead the Senate and bring these things to fruition.

Achieving these goals will be one important step in heightening the role that Senate plays in improving student life. We can take other steps as well – increasing both the breadth and quality of Senate social events, working with student groups to figure out ways Senate can make their, and our, lives easier – to improve our efficacy as a representative body dedicated to advancing the interests of students.

As Treasurer this year and Budget Committee member last year, I have worked hard to better allocate student group funding. During my tenure, we have made better use of technology – live spreadsheets during our budget meetings, an electronic funding request form, other electronic paperwork – to serve both the ends of the Senate (more efficient budget meetings) and the ends of group leaders (a fairer, more transparent process). This is not to say that the changes I devised and implemented were perfect; rather, I worked to incrementally build on the improvements made by other recent treasurers with the expectation that the next treasurer will continue to tinker with the process.

Together we can build on the accomplishments of past Senates and work to accomplish even more next year than we did this year. I would be honored to serve as your President.
Vice President
Lauren Bragin for Vice President

I see VP as a two-part commitment, first to the e-board and second to the Social Committee. If elected, I will devote equal energy and effort to both. My primary goal as an e-board member would be to improve accessibility to and the flow of information from the administration. I think it would be hugely helpful, for example for the admin to prepare a binder for 1Ls with information about deadlines, course offerings, journals, externships, the pro-bono and writing requirements etc.. I also plan to focus on and hopefully improve the school’s response to the current economic crisis. For example, as many of you know, law school tuition is generally set based on prospected salaries at graduation; with firms cutting back on hiring and deferring start dates, CLS should reexamine the cost of tuition and actively look for ways to cut student costs, especially rent. Since the public interest job market is growing ever tighter as students are funneled away from the private sector, we should also continue to encourage CPIL to give summer funding to a wider variety of summer positions.

As most of you know, I took a very active role on the Social Committee this year. Aditi, Gillian and I planned and executed the Halloween party in its entirety, an event that drew the largest Columbia crowd of any activity other than Barrister’s. I also spearheaded and did all the publicity for the Heartbreakers Ball, suggested and implemented the use of Champagne at the 1L end of semester party, arranged for all of the flower arrangements at Barrister’s and assisted at a number of other events. My biggest goal for Social Committee next year is to incorporate more activities that will appeal to the entire student body. Those of you that have attended the majority of Social events this year can attest to the fact that the crowd is largely the same. I think it’s extremely important to plan inclusive events that will draw a diverse group of students, rather than just the same beer drinking or club going bunch. For example, we could have a weekly themed event similar to Underground Keg, but not necessarily alcohol-centric. One week could be a salsa class and sangria, another week we could have a French film screening and fondue party or a “Beer, Brats and Football (aka: soccer)” night. We could even do a “murder mystery” night.
I also hope to incorporate more “cultural” activates like the trip to the Apollo Theater. Since it’s difficult to get students to attend things that are off campus, we could sponsor some speakers. Since we’ve expressed an interest in reducing stress, we could hire someone to teach a meditation or stretching class. We could also hold some arts & crafts type events where an instructor lectures on how to channel stress creatively. Even if each event only draws a small group, the idea is that they will all appeal to different people so that a wider variety of people participate in more of our events overall. Going off the success of Dean’s Cup, we could initiate our own intra-grad school sports competition. I thought the cook off was a particularly great event because it’s inclusive of families and people who don’t drink, so in that vein we could plan an apple picking trip in the early Fall. We could also team up with the Community Action Committee to plan something like making cards for sick children.

I’m really eager to take on the position of Vice President and hope that you will elect me. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me personally.
Friends, it has been a great year, and I am looking forward to continuing our good work next fall -- I gladly accept my nomination for candidacy for the office of vice president.

If you would like to know about the work I have done this year, I would encourage you to speak with the Grad Chairs and this year's two vp's, Will and Kahlil.

Most of my work for senate has been with the Social and Graduation Committees. I am happy with the work Social Committee has done this year -- next year, I think we could expand our programming even further, and hopefully continue programs that take advantage of New York's offerings.

Another priority of mine will be to expand public interest summer funding to judicial clerks.

Beyond that, I see increased communication with the administration as a priority, as well as getting our buildings services in order, especially the cleaning services and Lenfest Cafe.

If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thanks, and best of luck to all the candidates!

Andrew McCormick
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Treasurer
Hello CLS Senators,

I have decided to run for the Executive Board because I have enjoyed my first year on the Senate quite a bit, and I have a few ideas about how we can better serve our classmates, our school, and our own organization. You may have noticed that I have been nominated for both Parliamentarian and Treasurer; I would work hard to fulfill the duties of either office and to improve on what we have already accomplished. I have innovative ideas for both positions, though in the interest of being candid I have a very slight personal preference for the office of Parliamentarian (due to its importance to the group recognition process). However, I would be honored to serve the Senate and the CLS community in either capacity.

This year I served on both the Budget Committee and the Social Committee, where I was a primary planner of the Halloween Party and responsible for the venue at Barristers’ Ball. My time on the Budget Committee taught me a lot about the way CLS works, and what the student body expects from its Senate. The opportunity to directly serve the groups I was assigned to represent was particularly rewarding, and I look forward to continuing with this commitment next year.

The person who serves as Treasurer must be comfortable handling a budget of more than $300,000, as well as staying abreast of expenditures by every committee on the Senate. In the past I have served as the treasurer for four separate student organizations, as well as being a member of the committee responsible for allocating money to student groups at my undergrad. As the captain of my Model United Nations team, I handled a yearly budget in excess of $100,000, and I am both accustomed to this level of accountability and comfortable with it.
As Treasurer my first and foremost goal would be to make certain that our budget balanced at the end of the year; however, in my view there is more to the office than this single responsibility. The Treasurer heads the committee responsible for allocating money to every one of our student groups, and in this capacity communication is incredibly important. If elected as Treasurer, I will seek to facilitate communication between the Budget Committee and the student groups we serve, and to make this process as smooth and standardized as possible. This spring we received a smaller number of funding requests than usual, so next year’s committee will need to communicate with other student leaders to avoid disappointment and facilitate responsible planning of activities for the fall semester. It will also be my goal to standardize the amounts of money that we allocate for certain types of events, and to make this information readily available to student groups. The committee has already arrived at a de facto agreement over allocations for certain types of events, but making these guidelines public can help avoid some of the confusion experienced by groups when allocations come out.

In short, I believe that we can use communication to increase both efficacy and satisfaction with the budget process, and that this will benefit student groups as well as the liaisons assigned to work with them. I am dedicated to being courteous, open, and easily accessible to my fellow senators and to the entire community, and I hope that you will consider giving me your vote for Treasurer. Thank you for your time!

Gillian Horton
Oscar Loui for Treasurer

Hello! I accept the nomination and hereby submit my candidacy for the office of Treasurer. I would like to get more involved with Student Senate by taking on active role on the Executive Board, and I believe that I would make a great Treasurer. After serving on the Budget Committee this past year, I saw firsthand how the allocation and budget process works. David did a great job as Treasurer this year, and I believe that I can build on all the efficiency he’s built into this new streamlined process. Serving as Budget Liaison this year, I gained experience balancing the needs of student groups with the constraints of the overall budget. I look forward to serving the Senate and the student body in a more expansive and engaging role next year. Thank you for your consideration!
Secretary
Oscar Loui for Secretary

Hi everyone! I decided to accept the nomination and run for Secretary because I’d like to get more involved with Student Senate by taking on active role on the Executive Board. I believe that I would make a great Secretary because I would be very organized, responsible, and diligent in carrying out my duties. I have discussed the obligations and responsibilities of the office with Jessica and I feel that I am capable of fulfilling all of them. I served on the Community Action committee with her, and I feel that I could chair the committee effectively. I have had extensive experience in correspondence and maintaining records from my leadership roles during my undergraduate career and my summer stints at a law firm back in Hawaii. I would embrace the opportunity to serve the Senate and student body at large and promise to faithfully execute (or execute...faithfully as per CJ Roberts) the office of Secretary. Thanks!
Parliamentarian
Andrew Gradman for Parliamentarian

What’s a parliamentarian? He/she doesn’t just read the rules; he/she lays a groundwork for consensus. Consensus requires respect, and a feeling of being respected. If you elect me as your parliamentarian and to your executive board, I will strive to run the voting process so that everyone feels respected. Even when she/he is in the minority.

We can all learn to work better with one another. Though widely known for my juvenile practical jokes and disruptive postings on Eben Moglen’s Wiki, I have a professional side. On this side also resides my sincere respect for your talents, your hard work, and the commitment you are showing as senators. You deserve a productive and respectful deliberative environment. This year’s executive board did a fantastic job creating that environment; sometimes they learned on the job. In doing so, they showed me why the job is worthwhile.

You also deserve an Executive Board that will devote its time and effort to executing your goals. I will work responsibly, cordially, and devotedly alongside my boardmates. Aside from STLR, this would be my sole extracurricular position next year, and I plan to do it well.
Hello CLS Senators,

I have decided to run for the office of Parliamentarian because I have enjoyed my first year on the Senate quite a bit, and I have a few ideas about how we can better serve our classmates, our school, and our own organization.

I've served in leadership positions for most of my life, and was active in numerous organizations throughout my college career. I appreciate the importance of courtesy, and of promoting an environment in which all members of the Senate feel comfortable expressing ideas and engaging in debate. As the Parliamentarian is responsible for interpreting the By-Laws and the Constitution, a polite and moderate approach is essential. Further, if elected I promise to bring a detailed knowledge of our laws and guidelines to the table, and to use this in order to move meetings along and utilize your time most effectively.

The Parliamentarian also presides over the Student Organization Recognition Commission, and in this capacity I hope to make changes to the process through which groups gain recognition- and with this several hundred dollars apiece in core funding every semester. This aspect of the position is of particular interest to me, as it addresses an aspect of our operations that may not be sustainable over the long term.

There has recently been concern over the large number of student groups at CLS, and I would like to take a thoughtful look at this issue and come up with more concrete guidelines for new and existing organizations. As a member of the Budget Committee I was able to observe firsthand how the Student Activities Budget has been affected by the increasing number of groups, and while I recognize that a diverse array of organizations adds value to the CLS community, as Parliamentarian I hope to move the Recognition Commission in the direction of more specific guidelines for recognition. I would like to find ways in which we can retain the value imparted by a wide array of student organizations,
while encouraging groups with a similar focus to consolidate, and requiring a minimum amount of activity every semester before allocating core funding. Group recognition has been a growing concern of mine, and if elected as Parliamentarian, I will take an active role in reforming this process.

I appreciate your time, and I hope that you will consider voting for me for your Parliamentarian. I hope to increase my involvement in the Senate and the CLS community, and I encourage you to contact me at grh2119@columbia.edu with any ideas or questions you may have. Thank you!

Gillian Horton
Erik Lindemann for Parliamentarian

I would be honored to serve the Senate and the Law School Student Body in the office of Parliamentarian. In carrying out my duties, I will assist the President in running efficient and effective meetings. Drawing on my background experience in wardroom and executive briefs while in the military, I intend to use the Rules of Procedure modified for fair and open discussion while maintaining expediency as a major priority. This would include allowing for more informal discussions where appropriate, as well as encouraging a rational basis standard in questioning work already scrutinized closely by committee. As an Executive Board member, in engaging with the Administration, I aim to capitalize on the Senate's enormous untapped potential for political power. Given the uncertainties in this economy and inspired by nationwide political change, I believe in taking a diplomatic but aggressive approach in asserting our interests and making our voices heard.

Sincerely,

Erik Lindemann
Columbia Law School
J.D. expected 2011

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