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Students grapple with issues as USSA congress gets underway.

Olum challenges student delegates to halt arms race

By Julie Shippen
Of the Emerald

Participants in the 37th annual United States Student Association congress barely had time to unpack their bags and begin grappling with conference issues before receiving a tall order from University Pres. Paul Olum.

During his brief welcome to the approximately 258-member audience in Carson Hall on Saturday evening, Olum urged congress attendees to place efforts to stop the nuclear arms race at the top of their agenda, as he believes it must come first before all other issues.

"It really dominates everything because if we're going to solve all the other problems in the world, we have to stay alive to do it," he said. "The nuclear arms

"One must continue to work on the problems of hunger, poverty and human rights, but transcending everything is the importance of keeping this world going."

—Paul Olum

race has gotten to a point of such insanity, almost hopeless insanity, that we must stop it if we're even to have the time to solve all the problems of the rest of the world."

Olum recalled his earlier pre-World War II years in college as a period full of complicated issues, such as the Nazi and Soviet movements, but lacking in organized student involvement.

"At that time, formal student government never did anything at all," he said. "It certainly never took an action, never stood for anything, never took a role in anything."

Olum commended the recent record of the University's student government and expressed his hopes that the current office might follow its suit, thus avoiding the pattern of student apathy that occurred in the late 1930s.

"My view is very strong, as it was in those days, that it's crucially important for student groups to become concerned about what's happening in the world and try to do something about it," Olum said.

Olum cited the work of campus-activists in the late 60s and early 70s as one example of how an organized student-movement can be effective. Although many of these efforts born of "terribly important, new ideas" died, those that survived went on to play an important part in world affairs, he said.

"One should not forget that it was the activities of student groups on campus — through all the frustrations, with all the problems, with all the disrepute — that played an absolutely major role in bringing the Vietnam War to an end," Olum said. "Without the student activities, it would not have happened as early as it did."

Olum encouraged those working in current student governments to continue this success in other areas, whether it be working for student aid on the local level or dealing with the crises in Central America or South Africa. But as their highest priority, students should work to end the nuclear race, he said.

"One must continue to work on the problems of hunger, poverty and human rights, but transcending everything is the importance of keeping this world going," he said. "I believe very strongly that students can play a major role."



United State Student Association delegates from around the country took a break from their busy schedule Sunday at a barbecue dinner under fair weather.

Task force emphasizes environment

By Jacquie Long
Of the Emerald

Environmental issues may be rising on the United States Student Association's list of priorities as a result of environmental caucus and task force meetings held Sunday.

The task force headed by Doug Norlen, Survival Center director, is on the USSA congress agenda for the first time this year and hopes to elect a representative to the USSA board of directors.

"Environmental issues are important politically; USSA needs to expand its base to cover these issues," Norlen said.

Caucus members pointed out environmental problems of particular importance to their areas of the country and then discussed a variety of universal issues. Participants found several problems to be common priorities nationally, including the effects of acid rain, deforestation, toxic waste dumps and extinction of wildlife species.

Deforestation of rain forests gained particular attention during the discussion and Norlen pointed out that international conglomerates have been logging the forests for more cattle-grazing land.

"If the nukes don't get us by the year 2010, deforestation of our rain forests will," Norlen

said.

Acid rain was also a major part of the discussion and several participants pointed out that Europe's Black Forest was already dying from its effects. Norlen compared the problem to a car on its way over a cliff.

"The passengers aren't dead yet, but they're damn sure going to be," he said, adding that the problem could have been solved a few years ago.

Steven Ramseur, a delegate from Lane Community College, said this is not the only problem that should have been handled years ago.

"There's been a struggle as to whether a lot of organizations, including USSA, should even address these issues. But we represent higher education; we're a center for the birth of ideas and can have a positive benefit for the world," Ramseur said.

The task force plans to submit an amendment to the USSA board that begins with a general statement of concerns and goes on to specific goals and policies for the organization. Norlen said the caucus's goal is to integrate environmental issues with USSA's political platform.

"These issues are not complex at all; they just need some political attention," he said.

Even single votes count, delegates say

By Julie Shippen
Of the Emerald

Individual votes really do count and in surprising ways, say delegates of the United States Student Association congress who directed the hour-long workshop on voter registration held Sunday at the Law Center.

Designed to review voter registration systems and proven strategies for registering student voters, the session was highlighted by a presentation of interesting and often astonishing instances where just a few thousand additional votes would have reversed the results of various elections.

Among the sobering tallies outlined by facilitator Todd Baker, chair of the Ohio Student Association now attending Kent State University, was a listing of state names and the number of votes that gave Pres. Ronald Reagan his victory over former Pres. Jimmy Carter in 1980 in those states, and the number of unregistered black voters for each state that could have possibly made a difference in the end vote count.

In South Carolina, for example, the Democrats were defeated by 11,456 votes, Baker said. That margin becomes increasingly narrow when compared to the 292,000 unregistered black voters who had the potential to keep Carter in office for another four years, he said. In addition, the black vote represents just one segment of the total population, he added.

Another situation that makes a powerful argument against the belief that single votes don't make a difference was the race for the U. S. presidency in 1960 between former Presidents Richard Nixon

and John F. Kennedy. Baker said that only 7,000 more electoral votes would have put Nixon in office instead of Kennedy.

A similar case was seen in 1976, where Baker said a shift of 8,000 popular votes in the states of Hawaii and Ohio would have given Ford an electoral majority, electing him instead of Jimmy Carter.

In non-presidential races, he cited an election where 2 percent or less of the vote decided nine of the 34 U.S. Senate races in 1980, with Republicans winning seven of those nine.

"It was on the strength of these that the Republicans captured the Senate, with 53 to 47 (seats)," he said. "Between 1980 and 1982, the Republicans captured 14 of 17 seats, again decided by 2 percent or less."

A second example of a race won by the Republicans Baker believed might have been dramatically different if more voters had participated in it was the 1982 race for the U.S. House of Representatives. He said a shift in 44,000 votes would have reversed the results in 20 of those races.

"If a somewhat larger number of people who had not been registered had been registered to vote, they could have had a significant impact," Baker added.

Proving that "small town" votes carry just as much weight as those from New York or San Francisco, Baker referred to the instance in which with "the strength of 3,000 votes from a very obscure, central Ohio district, the democrats won control of the state Senate."

A final case showing the power of otherwise-inactive voters was the Ohio governor's election in 1978. Baker said

the challenger, Richard Celeste, lost to the incumbent governor, James Rhodes, by 10,000 votes. Although that figure appears sizable, there are potentially 10 million voters in Ohio, Baker said, making Celeste's defeat a matter of one-half of 1 percent.

General voting habits were also discussed at the workshop, such as the tendency of those in a higher-income bracket to regularly vote, Baker said. For example, 70 percent of people with an annual income of \$25,000 or more consistently turn out at the polls. Of those in the \$10,000 and under bracket, only 25 percent vote, he said.

Education appears to have an effect on voter numbers as well, Baker said. Of those with a college degree, 81 percent vote. Only 51 percent of people with a grade school education, however, are likely to vote, he added.

Baker and other workshop speakers stressed the need to get as many unregistered voters signed-up for the coming election. Although women and blacks are expected to turn out in higher numbers than ever before this year, Baker said that 36 percent of the American population is still unregistered, representing more than 60 million people.

The student unions represented at the USSA congress, coming from San Diego to New Hampshire, shared their different strategies on registering students at their campuses, including handing out forms at class-registration periods and athletic events, holding five-minute "rap sessions" at the start of classes, and sponsoring parties where students will be asked to register.

Student voting bloc is one of nation's strongest

By Jacquie Long
Of the Emerald

Unifying the student vote could mean the election of Walter Mondale in November, according to speakers at a United States Student Association general session held Sunday morning.

Student leaders from different areas of the country spoke at the session, all of whom expressed an anti-Reagan attitude and stressed the importance of student voters in the 1984 election.

"We've got no choice but to have a major impact on the upcoming election, but we've got to get that average student to vote," said Gary Brickman, Mondale Youth Coordinator.

Steve Girsky, president of the College Youth Democrats of America, said that students form a larger voting bloc than several of the large labor groups in the country, including steel workers, coal miners, auto workers, farmers and garment workers.

"We as students are larger than all those groups put together, and I dare anyone to tell us that we are not one of the potentially strongest voting blocs in



Graphic courtesy of USSA

America today," Girsky said.

Girsky went on to warn of the dangers of student apathy during elections, stressing the particular importance of student voters in 1984.

"If you ever wondered what it's like to sleep through a class or sleep through a test one morning, look what happened when we slept through the election of 1980," Girsky said.

Girsky drew applause at a few points in his speech, particularly when speaking of Pres. Reagan's "broken promises."

Greg Moore, USSA President, also spoke at the session, mentioning ways to increase student voter registration and the importance of a unified vote from campus to campus.

"There's only one way to win this election," Moore said, "and USSA needs to take an active role in waking up the campaign."

The end of the session included comments from the audience that were somewhat less idealistic, however.

"Isn't Mondale a little overrated?" asked a delegate from State University of New York at Stony Brook. "Can he be that much better than what we've got now?"

More USSA sessions on student government's role in voting and campaigning continue through Wednesday evening.

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