

# ASUO

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to a person who wanted to change things.

"That trip taught me a lot about people," Bowen said. "It changed my priorities and changed what I wanted to do (at the University). I had always been progressive and I've always been involved."

The next school year Bowen became very involved with student government and student programs, and as ASUO programs director was able to meet with many of the students who were involved with campus politics.

"I heard all the things that students wanted to change," Bowen said, "and I began to understand the people that were involved in different issues."

Collins Puente began her activism as a member of MEChA and worked her way into a position as co-director of the program. She then went on to become a student senator and ASUO multicultural advocate.

"I love to know as much as possible and to be involved as much as possible," Collins Puente said.

She grew up with parents who were very active in political issues such as the anti-nuclear movement and issues dealing with Guatemala, the country where she was born and where much of her family still lives.

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When winter term came around last school year, the usual question was being asked around the ASUO office: "So who's running?"

Bowen answered the call because he believed he and the students (mainly those in the student unions) could work well together.

The second question that people began asking in winter was, "Why did he pick her?"

Bowen asked one of the most controversial and outspoken students at the University to be his running mate: Collins Puente.



Eric Bowen and Diana Collins Puente speak at the ASUO debates during last spring's student government elections.

"She had always been controversial and she isolated a lot of people. But I liked her politics," Bowen said. "It was not going to be easy sailing ... it never is."

"I hesitated," said Collins Puente about running for the ASUO Executive. "I wanted to make sure that I was the best person for the job and I worried about running against Leslie (Warren, who ran for ASUO president). My concern was that the election would polarize the students because the two campaigns had similar stances."

This meant that even small divisions in opinion would have to be turned into huge gulfs if voters were going to understand the differences between the candidates.

Very few people, if any, would have been able to predict the depths to which the elections would sink.

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On April 14, the front-page headline in the *Emerald* read: "Candidate may have violated ASUO rules."

"That week was the hardest time in the campaign," Bowen said. "The issue was not doing us and the students any good."

Collins Puente agreed. "Personally it was very painful," she said. "I had to make the distinction between what could be expected in a political race, and what was personal."

Soon, most of campus knew

## ACCENT ON

# ERIC BOWEN

AGE: 22  
 MAJOR: Political Science  
 FAVORITE DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT: High Street  
 SPARE-TIME ACTIVITIES: Soccer and reading  
 TRAVEL EXPERIENCE: Southern Europe and North Africa

## ACCENT ON

# DIANA COLLINS PUENTE

AGE: 21  
 MAJOR: Sociology  
 FAVORITE DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT: High Street  
 SPARE-TIME ACTIVITIES: Reading and writing  
 ACCENT: "I have a wonderful Mom."

that Collins Puente had received a stipend from the ASUO for her multicultural advocate position, but because she was not enrolled as a full-time student, she was ineligible to collect such funds.

Neither Bowen or Collins Puente believe that the "news leak" was in any way an organized effort by the other candidates. Yet, they both believe it was an attempt to smear the campaign.

"It was totally politically motivated," Collins Puente said. "But I knew that Leslie had nothing to do with it. She approached me later and expressed her anger at the situation."

Both Bowen and Collins Puente said the issue could have been a legitimate concern, but disagree on the way it was done.

"There wasn't enough difference in our stands on the issues, so (the stipend problem) was the only way to set us apart," Bowen said.

However, the matter did not stop the campaign from winning a majority in the spring elections. The Bowen/Collins Puente campaign was not over yet.

Several people expressed concern about how the ballots were counted and were pushing for a re-count or even a new election.

"I think (not calling a re-election) was in the best interest of

the students and all the candidates, who would have to go through the election process again," Collins Puente said.

Bowen was even considering calling it quits if he and Collins Puente would have to go through the election again.

In the end the elections were validated and the election of Bowen and Collins Puente was official.

Yet, the chaos was not over.

Then, ASUO President Bobby Lee announced he was resigning on May 18 in order to work on the trouble-ridden Incidental Fee Committee in an effort to move things along more quickly and efficiently.

Bowen says he found out that he was going to have to take over the office two hours before the announcement was made.

Even though Bowen felt pressured to go through with it, he said it was the best thing to do in order to get things back on the right track.

As for this school year, the big issues for the ASUO Executive will be the upcoming state elections and the sales tax proposal, the multicultural curriculum that will come before the University Assembly some time this year, the changes at the ASUO Women's Center, campus safety and access to education issues.

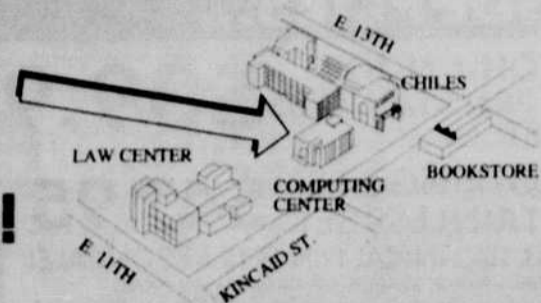
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