

Who Makes The Grade?

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Democratic agenda" —

President Adam Kreisel

Founded: 1932

Membership: 800 chapters. They estimate 80,000 members.

Funding: Fund-raising events, private individual donations, and \$50-per-chapter annual dues.

After Lyndon Johnson banished the College Democrats from the Democratic flock in 1967 (for opposing the Vietnam War), the CDs did very little for 20 years.

But they started reviving in the late '80s, organizing for Al Gore's presidential campaign. Although their peak activity was in the 1992 elections, they have stayed busy since then.

According to figures collected from chapters, the CDs, as leaders of the Vote for a Change coalitions on college campuses, registered more than 500,000 people to vote in 1992. They claim 60,000 CDs worked on 1992 local, state and national campaigns.

And since the election, according to their figures, they've generated more than 20,000 phone calls and 3,500 letters in support of Clinton's economic package and national service initiative.

To be sure, sending in a "letter" of support isn't like scratching out a heartfelt missive to your senator — these letters are actually tear-off postcards at the bottom of monthly legislative bulletins with pre-printed messages and signature blanks.

But they took a more forceful approach in their Washington convention in June 1993, when they lobbied more than 100 Congressional members. President Adam Kreisel, a 22-year-old senior at Trinity College in Connecticut, says they targeted senators to move for a vote on the national service bill, which was being filibustered by certain Republicans.

Although the CDs' national staff attend meetings twice a week with the Democratic National Committee, Kreisel says they get zero funding from the DNC. (The DNC does provide them with occasional lodging on trips and helps them fund-raise.)

This year, they're gearing up for local and statewide elections and supporting Clinton's health care package.

What you'll be doing if you join:

Working on local campaigns. Hosting speakers. Mailing pre-printed letters from legislative bulletins to members of Congress in support of Clinton's health care plan.

Grade: B+ They're well-organized and they haven't sat on their butts since Clinton was elected.

For more information, call (202) 479-5189. E-mail address: 73303.3036@Compuserve

United States Student Association

Focus: "Giving students the means to receive higher education" — Vice President Stephanie Arellano

Founded: 1978

Membership: 350 campuses.

Funding: Dues from member schools, which range from \$400 to \$1,000 per year. Schools belonging to USSA through direct referenda must pay 50 cents per student per semester. They also take foundation grants and individual donations.

It's like your student government — but get this... they actually do something. USSA is a student lobbying group that claims to represent 3.5 million students. Schools are members through their student governments or state student associations.

Working with members and staff of the House and Senate Appropriations committees, they've lobbied on these issues:

- last spring, to restore funding for state student incentive grants, which were in danger of losing \$72.4 million to help fund a job creation bill.

- since the early '80s, for direct lending, a policy in which the government administers student loans. Direct lending passed Congress last July, and USSA representatives are the only voices for students on the regulations committee for direct lending.

- last spring and summer, for Clinton's national community service initiative. They specifically pushed for an option to serve part-time, options for students with disabilities and for health care and child care provisions for participants.

- for the past three years, for the Violence Against Women Act, which contains an amendment on campus safety. (They've organized nationwide phone banks to support the measure.)

They're also pushing for the bipartisan Jeffords Amendment, which would increase the percentage of the federal budget spent on education (now at 2 percent) by 1 percent every year until it reaches 10 percent of the federal budget. To keep members abreast of national legislation, USSA provides a legislative hotline at (202) 347-7273.

So when it comes to issues like federal financial aid for students, USSA represents its members pretty well. But, since they're supported by student fees, they've been criticized for taking sides on divisive issues — for instance, they advocate access to abortion (they support the Freedom of Choice Act) and they have condemned the ROTC's scholarship ban against gay students.

Some schools are "referenda

schools," at which students must vote for their schools to join. But student governments at Iowa State U. and James Madison U. in Virginia, which are not referenda schools, have voted to withdraw membership in USSA because of their controversial stances.

"Any organization that [Iowa State] is going to be a member of should not be taking a stand on things like abortion," says Denis Klein, governing student body president at Iowa State. "Those issues are very personal, and to come out and say that Iowa State supports either side would be a mistake."

President Tchiyuka Cornelius, a 25-year-old graduate of the U. of Buffalo in New York, says that these issues are not USSA's main focus. And, he notes, "Within every organization you never have 100 percent agreement on 100 percent of the items."

Although USSA makes an active effort to represent women, gays and lesbians, and racial and ethnic minorities, they were criticized for holding closed caucuses for these groups at past national conventions.

Vice President Stephanie Arellano, a 25-year-old graduate of Eastern Michigan U., defends the closed caucuses, saying, "Students wrote this legislation within USSA and voted to put it in our constitution [to allow closed caucuses]."

What you'll be doing if your school joins USSA: Unless you're in student government, you'll just be paying student fee money. But you'll be represented on Capitol Hill.

Grade: B USSA is a powerful voice for student aid funding in Washington, and they're a good information resource for student governments. But they lose points for supporting divisive issues with student fees.

For more information, call (202) 347-USSA. E-mail address: usa@ccc.org

David Rheingold, The Michigan Daily, U. of Michigan, contributed to this report.

United We Stand America

Focus: "Deficit reduction and campaign finance reform" — National Collegiate Director Lee Pepper

Founded: January 1993

Membership: 140 campus chapters, 87 of which are university-recognized. UWSA won't disclose the number of student members or national members, but national membership is generally estimated at 2 million.

Funding: College chapters must fund themselves, as UWSA requires no member dues from college chapters. Until September 1993, founder and Chairman Ross Perot funded

UWSA's operating costs, but since then, operating costs have been funded by \$15 member dues. Perot pays some advertising costs.

They've been called "Ross Perot's new army" by *Newsweek* and "Perotland" by *Time*, but members of United We Stand America say the only campaign they're running is for the country.

"[Perot] does afford us a lot of recognition," says National Collegiate Director Lee Pepper, a 24-year-old graduate of the U. of Tennessee. "But Ross Perot is just one aspect of our organization."

Although members insist that UWSA is not a third party, they're organizing conventions in each state to write constitutions, and UWSA officials and Perot say the group will be a "swing vote" in this year's Congressional and Senate elections.

But how do student members fit into the picture? Since student "members" don't have to pay the \$15 membership fee that national members do, they don't necessarily get voting privileges or representation in some statewide conventions. (Some states do let campus representatives vote at conventions, and in Ohio a student sits on the state board of directors.)

"We're trying to expand our numbers," Pepper says. "If you go to a college campus and charge money, you'll exclude a lot of people."

Campus chapters should "inform students on critical issues" and "give students a voice in the national arena," according to the student mission statement. Does this translate into action? Take a look at what they've done:

- U. of Southern California: last spring, hosted a visit from Perot. (Chairman Mike Church, a senior, estimates attendance at 3,500.)

- U. of North Carolina: last fall, held "wave campaigns" in which members held signs in the community urging cutting of the deficit.

- Miami U. of Ohio: last fall, organized campus debates about NAFTA.

So, the student chapters do seem to be educating students on certain issues. But the jury's still out on whether they give students a national voice. If they're serious about this, why aren't student chapters required to pay dues and given full voting privileges? They'd probably fork over the 15 bucks for adequate representation.

What you'll be doing if you join:

Hosting debates on health care. Organizing campus visits from Perot.

Grade: B- The national organization could make a mean swing vote in 1994 — let's just hope that students are invited along for the ride.

For more information, call 1-800-333-UWSA.