

College-age workers bolster campaigns

By Matt Berger
College Press Exchange

WASHINGTON — As the New Hampshire scheduling director for Dan Quayle's presidential campaign, Kelleigh Domanigie is a vital staff member. She sets the former vice president's daily calendar and coordinates field operations in six counties.

But when she's not a major political operative in the first primary state, the 21-year-old is back at Boston College where she is a senior.

"It's not how old you are, it's how hard you work," said Ms. Domanigie, who received offers from four campaigns.

"All that matters is you show you can do the job."

In the world of presidential politics, college students are taking bigger and bigger roles. Though still in school, many are veterans of previous state and local races and are primed for the next step.

All the major White House contenders for 2000 have college students on staff, and not just for balloon drops and phone banks. Many of these upstarts bring computer and high-tech skills that some seasoned political professionals from a different generation lack.

Student workers historically have been a staple of campaigns, though some candidates, such as Robert F. Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy, drew far more to their cause. In addition to gaining experience, loyal staffers - even young ones - who pick the right ticket can position themselves for a White House job. Some of today's biggest political names got their start as college politicians. President Clinton worked his first presidential campaign for George McGovern in Texas before graduating from Yale Law School.

Karl Rove, Texas Gov. George W. Bush's chief presidential campaign strategist, got his political feet wet running for College Republican national chairman in 1973. And Lamar Alexander, another GOP 2000 candidate, was a young worker for presidential candidate Richard Nixon.

This season's students aren't waiting for the

torch to be passed; they're grabbing for it.

"I think I've proven myself," said Domanigie, who has worked for candidates since 1992, when her mother was New Hampshire scheduler for GOP presidential hopeful Pat Buchanan. "I get treated with respect wherever I go."

Stephen Mandelbaum does, too. A George Washington University senior, he keeps candidate Elizabeth Dole's web site current, a task many other campaigns have assigned to professionals. Legions of young political activists flocked to Washington recently for the college Republican and Democratic conventions, held a week apart. As presidential candidates made speeches inside ballrooms, students crammed the hallways trying to woo their undecided peers.

At the College Democrats' meeting a few blocks from the Capitol last week, Carolyn Lee, a 20-year-old Oregonian, was recruiting for Vice President Al Gore's presidential campaign. One of 70 unpaid Gore interns, she spearheaded his push for volunteers at the convention.

"Our interns handle real projects and put on real events," said Lee, who is a political desk assistant for the Midwest and New Hampshire.

She transferred from the University of Oregon to work in Washington where she attends George Washington University. In addition to carrying a full class load this fall, Lee plans to work 25 hours a week for Gore, serve as political affairs director for her school's College Democrats, write her senior thesis and get ready for law school.

"You make it work," she said. "If I had to cut back on things, Gore would be the last thing I'd stop because it's becoming a large part of my life."

Though they were not yet born when the Watergate complex became a symbol of the GOP's darkest moment, College Republicans gathered there earlier this month to offer their views on the party's future.

In a crowded hallway, well-dressed youth debated gun control and family values. Above the din, a cell phone rang. After everyone

paused to check his or her pockets, the conversations continued.

Amid the bustle, Dmitri Smirenski stood next to a monitor showing a video of Alan Keyes, a long-shot GOP contender.

At 21, Smirenski is national coordinator for Students for Keyes 2000. He said young people on staff can motivate a campaign.

"Students provide the energy, the restless enthusiasm that adults just can't maintain," Smirenski said. "We provide the spark and the backbone. We convince (the staff) that they can do it too."

The candidates are well aware of youth power. "You have the enthusiasm, the passion, the energy," Elizabeth Dole, another GOP candidate, told the College Republicans. "It would be a privilege to work with you on my team."

Jason Recher, a 20-year-old field representative for the Bush effort, said he is working for more than just the experience.

"I'm sick and tired of youth being apathetic in politics," Recher said. He said he was angered when MTV asked Clinton in 1994 whether he wore boxers or briefs, because it suggested all young people cared about was underwear.

"To me, that was a shame," Recher said. "It's our future on the line and we are wasting it away with questions like that."

Overall, many students have not used their political power.

According to the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate, 38.8 percent of eligible voters between 18 to 24 cast ballots in 1992, compared with 55.2 percent of those of all ages. In 1996, 28 percent of young voters took part, compared with 49 percent of all voters.

For Recher, who attends Boston College two days a week and campaigns in his native New Hampshire the five others, seeing has meant believing.

He says he was struck by the power presidential candidates have over people.

"It's like Elvis coming into the room," he said.

Veteran fliers discuss cause of Kennedy's crash

By Phil Long and Marika Lynch
College Press Exchange

MIAMI — If John Kennedy Jr. had tried to make a night flight from Miami over the Atlantic to the Bahamas, the Federal Aviation Administration would have told him "no." The Bahamas and many other countries do not allow night flights over water by pilots with Kennedy's level of training.

Pilots say one reason for the rule is that it can be unsafe for fliers, relying solely on their own senses and not sophisticated aviation instruments, to fly at night over darkened expanses, including water.

There is no prohibition on fly-

ing from the U.S. mainland to an island like Martha's Vineyard.

Though no one knows for sure what caused Kennedy's 1995 Piper Saratoga to crash off Martha's Vineyard, Friday night, discussion of the crash by veteran pilots always includes the theory: "spatial disorientation."

It can happen when the mind loses the critical visual cues that help keep balance and orientation. The conditions Kennedy faced Friday night were right for causing problems: He was over the water, at night, with visibility at Martha's Vineyard five miles with haze, which could have obscured the horizon and any lights.

Veteran Key West, Fla., pilot Fred Cabanas knows the condi-

tions Kennedy was flying into.

"I think he just lost his orientation, which way was up, because it's black as hell at night over the water," Cabanas said.

"If I took you out at night and we went flying 50 miles north of Key West - it's pitch black," said Cabanas, who has been flying for 30 years and has 17,000 hours in the cockpit. "If you are not watching your instruments, and you aren't comfortable with what's going on in the cockpit, you are going to get in trouble. If you are right side up your body will tell you its upside down. It's a common thing."

When that happens, he has to rely on the airplane's critical instruments.

Without a visual reference, like a horizon, or lights, added former Eastern pilot Bill Jordan said, "you could have the sense that the plane is doing one thing and it is really doing something else. That is the beginning of vertigo."

Loss of spatial orientation can cause inexperienced pilots to over-correct for an imagined problem, sometimes sending the aircraft out of control, Jordan said.

Kennedy trained at FlightSafe International, regarded as one of the toughest and best flight schools in the world.

But he was not "instrument rated," meaning not qualified to fly an airplane solely by referring to the instruments, as airliner pilots do.

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