

Political forum educates students

Lydia Emily Bashaw
Matt Ostergren
The Clackamas Print

More than 150 students gathered in front of the Bill Brod Community Center yesterday to listen to four speech team members and one faculty member discuss the factual sides of the political campaign.

Speech instructor Kerrie Hughes, along with Associated Student Government, political science instructor Dean Darris and the Clackamas Speech and Debate team hosted a two-hour event dedicated to educating and motivating students in the current political election. The goal was to help students understand both the Republican and Democratic political platforms.

"I have been involved in politics for the last few years," said Jay Sabin, one of the Democratic debaters. "I feel that when I'm more involved, I'm more motivated. (Politicians) speak in languages we don't understand. I wanted to speak in a language we (students) understand."

The event began with the four debaters – two representing the Republicans and two representing the Democrats – explaining both platforms of the presidential candidates Republican John McCain and Democrat Barack Obama. Sabin and Taylor Hamann formed the Democratic panel while Byron Bartlett and Stephanie Bacheoder represented the Republican side. The discussion included the current economic crisis, taxes, health care, education and defense spending.

However, some students felt that the debate team was just restating the same information in the same manner as the televised debates.

"I turn on the T.V. and get the same things, only with a bigger crowd cheering," said first-term student Dave Ross.

Between the debate and the forum, Hughes stated the importance of students researching on their own, voting and feeding into their desire to learn more.

In the second portion, Darris led a question and answer session for anyone present. Students fielded questions regarding nonpartisan voting, national debt and campaign spending. Darris fired back

with facts to help the crowd understand. He also used humor to get his ideas across, such as an anecdote of an episode of "The Simpsons."

"All the greatest philosophy is in cartoons," said Darris, referring to the political satire in the episode featuring Homer's abduction by aliens just prior to the Clinton-Dole presidential election in 1996.

He also stated that the election is about more than just the presidency, with important races in Congress and the various state legislatures.

However, it was obvious that his greatest goal was to get people thinking and questioning politics on their own.

"With education and clarity comes knowledge," said Darris.

Students' opinions were mixed, with some showing more enthusiasm than others.

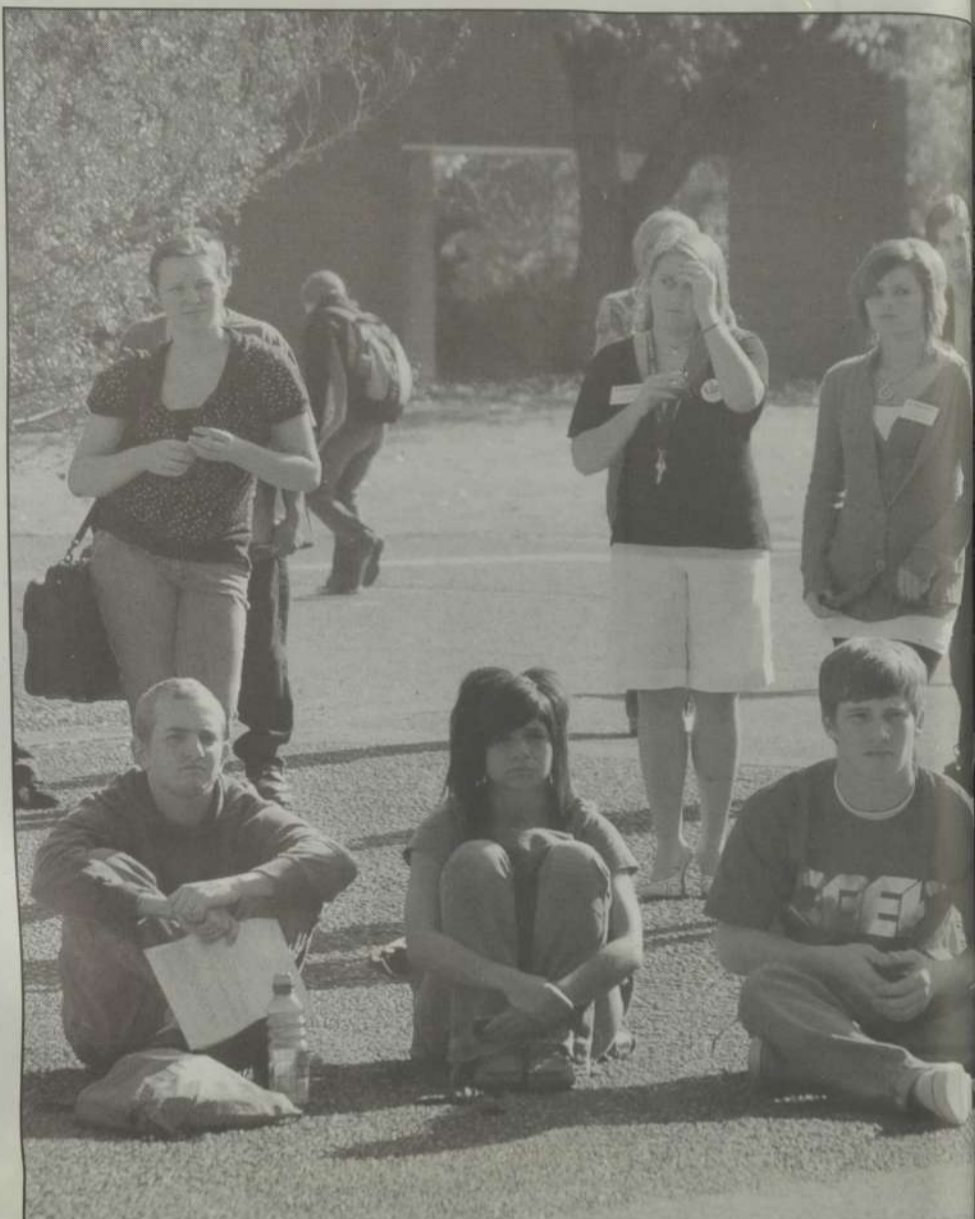
"I was tired of watching the presidential debates because all they do is slander each other. That's no real way to debate," said student Daniel Birch.

The overall attitude of the event was best summed up by Birch when he shared his desire to learn more.

"I wish they would actually teach (politics) in the classes," said Birch. "Not only do the homework, but go online and do the research. This is your future."

"I turn on the T.V. and get the same information, only with a bigger crowd cheering."

Dave Ross
Student



All photos by Lydia Emily Bashaw

A group of students sits and listens as the debaters discuss which tax plan will affect



LEFT: Speech and Debate Team members, Taylor Hamann and Jay Sabin wait for their turn to speak about Democrat on education. RIGHT: Instructor Dean Darris answers a student's question on defense spending.



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