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Candidates running for positions within Radford's Student Government Association (SGA) got a chance to voice their opinions and argue their platforms at a debate on Monday, March 21 in the Bonnie auditorium.

"I think there were some great responses tonight... I think it's great that every opinion is being heard," said Colby Bender, current SGA president and debate moderator.

With 13 spots up for grabs next year, ranging from college representatives for the senate up to the presidential and vice presidential seats, Radford's SGA is poised for some serious change and plenty of new faces this fall.

Food options on campus, unifying student organizations, wifi reliability, and student outreach were top conversation points in the debates.

"I do think we need to increase our effort, and put forth a better effort, to expand our food options on campus," said Brock Barnes, a sophomore history and social science major running for the at-large senator seat.

Barnes also discussed wifi capabilities on campus, touching on the issue of dropped connections and slow speed as a major concern for many students.

"I personally think there's a lot we can do to increase the speed, and increase the reliability," said Barnes.

Barnes spoke from personal experience, saying that just before the debate, his internet connection dropped out during a quiz that he would now have to ask his professor to re-open. Barnes asked anyone who had a similar experience on campus to raise their hands - about half of the students in attendance said they had.

Kendall Mallory, a freshman majoring in political science, took a more serious tone on the issue of food options on campus. As a freshman senator, Mallory said he has been working to set up a food voucher system for students in need - a program he hopes to continue fighting for if elected as at-large senator.

"There's a lot of hunger on campus, and there's also homelessness," said Mallory, "and those are two issues I want to tackle."

"I'll never criticize, condemn, or complain about any concerns or ideas that you have about campus," said Daniel Yoon, another candidate for at-large senator.

Throughout the debate, Yoon stressed that he would always be open to student input, and advocated for more open communication between the SGA and the student body over issues that matter.

Wyatt Toehlke, also running for the at-large senator position, actually said that he did not plan to win this election - he said his primary goal was to speak at the debate and advocate for the majority of the student population on issues like alcohol policies on campus, sports funding cuts, and using the power of the SGA effectively.

"At the interest meeting we all had to attend, the SGA was talking about their big achievement last year. That achievement was a sidewalk that they built at COBE - excuse me, ladies and gentlemen, but screw that sidewalk," said Toehlke, arguing that Radford's student government had not used its resources as effectively as possible.

The candidates for vice president, Julianna Stanley and Aaron Sarmiento, spoke at length about sexual assault on campus, since the vice president of the SGA also oversees Radford's Consent Campaign.

"I want to end sexual assault here at Radford. The statistic is too high, and change starts with us," said Stanley, while also proposing the creation of a separate committee for the Consent Campaign that reaches beyond the SGA and brings students from other campus organizations to the conversation.

Sarmiento also advocated for a dedicated Consent Campaign council, and also spoke about getting other clubs and organizations more involved in SGA.

"I think the consent forum is crucial to all college campuses, and people shouldn't be afraid to step up and talk about their issues, or their personal experiences," said Sarmiento.

The presidential candidates spoke on issues like campus unity and inclusion, running the SGA more efficiently, counseling services, and giving students more entertainment options on campus to serve as alternatives to drinking.

Describing herself as a non-traditional student, Debbie Robinson explained that she first came to Radford University as a parent and how the support of the student body led her to become a student - and this year, motivated her to run for SGA president.

"I set down what I thought would be temporary roots in Radford, and then I met you, the student body. You welcomed me with vitality I never thought possible... you gave me new life, now it's time for me to give back to you," said Robinson, current the secretary of community services for the SGA.

Robinson advocated for more advertisement of campus events to get students more involved and called on younger students to use their expertise in technology to reach out.

“My first goal is to bring back the original, traditional-style Quadfest, with music, games, talent shows, arts and crafts, and some heavily competitive sports events,” said Debbie Robinson, current secretary of community services for the SGA.

Robinson also touched on counseling services at Radford - recollecting on how 70 students canceled counseling appointments last September, while another 58 students did not show up for the appointments they had made.

“That tells me that there’s a great number of students who are on the fence about counseling services, and may need assistance,” said Robinson.

Jacinda Jones, current vice president of the SGA, spoke at length about student unity and getting more students involved around campus.

“I think we should have a student government week, filled with activities and events you can do with your student government representatives,” said Jones. She also advocated for a Meet Your Representative event, a free dinner to facilitate discussion between students and the SGA.

“The role as student body president is not only to run your organization well, but to make sure you’re advocating for all the students at the university,” said Jones.

Jones also said she would like to make the diversity coordinator within the SGA an elected position; currently, the diversity coordinators are appointed to by the SGA itself.

“This way, students get to vote for who they want to represent them,” she said.

Dr. Irvin Clark, dean of students, came to hear students speak their minds at the debate and said he was confident that next year’s SGA would be successful after hearing from the candidates.

“Knowing the type of talent that we have at this campus, I’d say that next year’s SGA is going to do very well,” said Clark.

The election itself will be held March 28 through 31, during which the SGA will have a table open in the Bonnie between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. each day for students to cast their vote.

To get involved with the SGA or for more information on future campaign events, contact the SGA by email at [sga@radford.edu](mailto:sga@radford.edu) or stop by their office upstairs in the Bonnie.