



ASUC OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

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*** PRESS RELEASE ***

ASUC President Delivers State of the Association Address; Calls for 'continued change'

Berkeley — ASUC President Van Nguyen delivered the following speech to the ASUC Senate on Wednesday, February 6, 2008:

Last semester, I talked to you about change... something that has been getting a lot of attention these days.

When I talked about change, I talked about the need to fundamentally change the way we look at how we engage students here at the ASUC.

I talked about the need to revive a spirit of idealism, to be able to tackle the REAL issues that students face on an everyday basis like affordability, resources to promote academic success, and diversity.

I talked about the need to change the way we view the ASUC as an institution and organization that can do more than put on events. We can put on events that have significance on a campus level, but promote the active engagement of Berkeley students outside the UC Berkeley campus.

I talked about how we needed to rebuild trust between the student body and the ASUC.

I said if we would do this by transforming the way we look at governance and our role as elected officials. To not be bogged down with the daily bureaucratic work of the ASUC but to actively outreach to more communities to get them involved. We would build trust by making concrete improvements in peoples lives so that students could see the power that we have on this campus.

To build trust, I talked about needing to create an inclusive environment in the ASUC. This



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meant several things. It meant hiring qualified and hardworking people in the ASUC executive offices that reflect the communities here at Cal. It meant that this senate would make student groups feel supported and appreciated, not that they were begging for OUR money.

I said that if we did not begin to engage students in a very real way, the ASUC would be faced with some real challenges. These challenges include the idea that the ASUC is irrelevant to the student body. The ASUC is not made up of 25 elected officers, dozens of appointed officials, staff, and interns, but we are without a shadow of a doubt in the business of students and helping student groups thrive.

I ran on a message of change last year, but that message of change would have meant nothing if we weren't able to deliver on it.

Today, three weeks late, I am proud to say to you honorable members of the ASUC that we continue to deliver on this message of change that students voted for last Spring.

The state of the association is strong and thriving, but we still have a lot of work to do.

The ASUC has been at the forefront of several huge programs that have benefited students. We have worked on the Multicultural Center, Activism Right There Festival, Spring Welcome Week, the Book Swap, Lower Sproul Redevelopment, the Count Me In Campaign, lowering student fees by \$145,000, and so much more.

In this upcoming semester, our mission will be the same: we will work for change by working on issues of affordability, diversity, access, and community building at UC Berkeley.

The Multicultural Center is something that the ASUC must prioritize. This semester, I have had the opportunity to travel all across the country to check out different campuses, and from small elite institutions to huge state schools, and local community colleges, UC Berkeley is among one of the few institutions of higher learning that still does not have a MCC. If we prioritize diversity, multiculturalism, and building community, we must make sure a FAIR deal is negotiated between the University and the ASUC. I will continue to work to ensure that the MCC is a priority of the ASUC.

However, it is my strong opinion that there will be no Multicultural Center in the near foreseeable future without a strong commitment for Lower Sproul Redevelopment. As I have updated this body time and time again, we are waiting to see whether or not the University will show its commitment to students by funding planning money for Lower Sproul redevelopment. Several senators, Executive Vice President Allbright, GA President Daniels and myself have worked tirelessly to make sure that we kept Eshleman safe and that the University is committed to a new vision for Lower Sproul redevelopment.

Last year, the students voted to implement a fee for The Green Initiative Fund to utilize the ingenuity of students to develop sustainable projects all across campus. That needs to get off



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the ground and I will begin to work with the ASUC sustainability team, the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Sustainability in order to get that off the ground.

We must focus on diversity. In the wake of debilitating budget cuts this year by a governor, the number of students that are admitted to Cal will undoubtedly dwindle. It remains to be seen what impact that will have on students of color and diversity here at Cal, but the office of the president will continue to create reports, meet with administrators and organize with communities to increase representation of marginalized peoples on this campus.

As I have spent a semester in office, I can honestly tell you all that it is been an extremely exciting, humbling, and emotionally gut-wrenching experience, but an experience that I wouldn't trade. And as I've had time to think during my winter break about the ASUC, I began to think of the immense challenges that this association faces. I came up with this:

Becoming irrelevant is the greatest challenge that the ASUC faces. I am convinced that we are not just any other student government. We are relevant to students. because they have entrusted us to allocate 1.5 million dollars to various student activity. However, that is not our strength. Our strength is not in our money, because it pales in comparison to the 2.5 billion dollars that the University generates. Our power is in us, the students... and we should never forget that. Our greatest asset is the student body. In this last semester, I challenge this Association to fight to stay relevant. Relevant to students, to faculty, to the administration, and to our community.

Thank you.

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