Nov. 10, 2020

Students start nonpartisan political dialogue during classroom election

Through the 2020 ranks of pandemic and political mayhem, a new student organization was born at Georgia College. It was a chance for students to use their voices to disrupt the Owen–Harper–positive pole–opposite—and still remain civil and polite. What is a public liberal arts education, after all, if not the open dialogue?

That’s what senior Michael Haug was looking for last winter, as he was studying for the Critical Thinking course. He also partnered with Dr. Brandy Kennedy’s Public Opinion class to discuss the political climate and various voting systems. Burgess has found that it’s important to group members having similar ideas and foster open and robust discussions. She wants to partner with the political science department, so in the future, the club is educational and spurs more young adults to vote. People always say, “This year, it’s going to happen. The young will go out and vote. But, at that time, he said, “We keep dropping the ball.”

As a young person, it’s really frustrating, especially with the kind of deteriora- tion we’ve seen in American politics. It’s really frustrating for young people just tuning in,” said Haug. “But if we don’t like the way political discourse is, we don’t like the way the presidential debates went: if we don’t like the options that are in front of us—if it’s our responsibility to get engaged and fix that. People told Burgess a nonpartisan political club wouldn’t work. They said discussions would be too much like the 2019 political atmosphere. Haug thought they might be right. Politics has become a ‘join or die kind of thing. Either be on my side or be against me,” he said.

But, it turns out, Burgess’ Georgia college students can discuss political issues more easily in small settings, including social media. Burgess has been vested with “a kind of mandate,” Haug said. The recent discussion on criminal justice reform had “less of a consensus tone,” she said. “We don’t condone any kind of hate speech or a group mentality. That’s a huge rule, and we’re really serious about it.”

“You can call somebody’s idea any name under the sun and we’re not going to get too upset. We might have some colorful language to do it, that’s ok as long as it isn’t aimed at any person,” said Haug. “But we keep dropping the ball.”

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Michael Haug, Georgia Political Society’s acting president, has been a voice in a quagmire of possible pitfalls. But Burgess is optimistic. “We’re building an organization from scratch.”

“Working here, I’ve become aware of her as an individual,” said Haug. “It’s kind of a thrill,” Burgess said. “I’ve taken this deep sense of belonging. I hope our group can be a model for our fellow students and, frankly, for our parents, as well. It’s going to happen. The young will go out and vote. But, at that time, he said, “We keep dropping the ball.”

It effectively proved that political discourse can be diverse—even in the most unlikely of settings. It’s more apparent than ever. The importance of dialogue is more apparent than ever. The Georgia Political Society can act as a healing catalyst in months to come.

Haug said, “But never ever will we allow it in the Georgia Political Society to try and paint the other side as evil or in some way fundamentally bad, because they’re not. They’re our fellow students. And, if you find their ideas reprehensible, then you can explain to them why they’re wrong in a civil manner.”

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It’s a tough row to be interested in politics,” said Haug. “But we keep dropping the ball.”

It’s a mess to know that your fellow students are getting their ideas from TV shows and the internet. That’s why it’s so much fun doing this Georgia Political Society, because “I’m talking to everyone.”

Young Democratic Socialists of America. There was Bobcat Votes, an organization that would focus on the presidential election earnestly got underway. On campus, he thought they might be right. Politics has become a ‘join or die kind of thing. Either be on my side or be against me,” he said. “It’s going to happen. The young will go out and vote. But, at that time, he said, “We keep dropping the ball.”

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