Campus Controversy - USNSA

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Abstract

The United States National Student Association is a confederation of college student bodies represented through their student governments. On August 31, 1955, the membership included 281 schools, with 581,777 students. USNSA is organized on a national and regional basis. Activities in the United States are planned primarily on a regional basis, and the national organization is concerned more with international activities...
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Nineteen regional chairmen as voting members and the national officers as non-voting members comprise the National Executive Committee. Between meetings of the National Congress, it is the interim policy making body of NSA.

Individual national officers visit various campuses, of both member and non-member schools, speaking to student governments and discussing campus problems in relation to similar problems throughout the country.

Some direct services of the national organization include the Student Government Information Service (SGIS), publications mailed to campuses, and International Programming Projects.

SGIS provides for the exchange of information on handling student activities. The report for 1954-1955 says, “An average of ten to fifteen requests arrive each week from member schools . . . At least two-thirds of the requests require research in the files . . .”

Mailings to campuses include such Association publications as the News, the Student Government Bulletin, more
specialized publications, and also material distributed but not published by the Association.

International Programming Projects have included USNSA Book Weeks, support of the World University Service, and such projects as summer travel abroad for American students. Since 1948, tours for low cost travel have been planned in cooperation with national unions of students in such countries as Europe, the Middle East, Canada and Mexico.

— Editor

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Negative Affirmation

When one hears the term “negative criticism,” one is led to believe that the parties holding such views are violently opposed to something. Let it be understood, we are not in violent objection to the United States National Student Association. Using our own terminology, it may be said that we are giving it our negative affirmation.

To us, the USNSA is the vehicle for the exchange of ideas and information between students and student organizations on United States college campuses. Furthermore, this Association represents the strongest student union in the United States.

USNSA on other campuses, in other regions, and on the national scale, is a thriving organization — and a beneficial one to its member schools. On the national level, for example, it has executed successful lobbies for draft deferment of college students until graduation and a federal income tax exemption for parents of college students making
more than $600 per year. At Iowa State, however, its purposes and even its very existence have been vague.

As we see it, the major weakness of the National Student Association at Iowa State has been the failure of Cardinal Guild to carry out the programs designed for the local level by the NSA. More than this, the enthusiasm expressed at the national level by members definitely seems to be lacking on the local scene.

Is this failure due to the lack of information about NSA on the part of the local student government? As we all know, it is difficult to become enthused about carrying out the policies of an organization with which we ourselves are not familiar. It is even more difficult to convince others of the benefits offered by this organization if we ourselves are not acquainted with them. Perhaps a concerted effort on the part of the local student governing body to acquaint its members with the purposes and benefits of the NSA would better enable these members to disseminate information to the student body.

Is the failure of the NSA on this campus due to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Cardinal Guild? We think it is! If a referendum were to be taken tomorrow, how many students on this campus would be able to vote, "Yes, I know what USNSA stands for, what it is doing nationally, what it is doing on this campus, and the benefits that can be derived from membership?" We're sure you'll agree that not many students would be able to so vote. It is in this area, then, that an extraordinarily large amount of work has never been done — and yet needs to be done if the Association is going to pay its way for the students of this college.

Another question we feel necessary is: "How many campus organizations have been contacted by the local student governing body in regard to the services the USNSA can offer to them?" Before we can use this organization (for which we pay a yearly fee of $100) we must be informed of its existence and the services it is capable of performing, we must know what needs of our own can be satisfied by the NSA, and we must have information of its activities.

We feel it essential to provide student organizations with current information about our national student government.
For this reason, we suggest that a member or representative of our local student governing body distribute a quarterly letter to all campus organizations. This letter would inform the groups of all pertinent publications available at the national office in Philadelphia. This form letter could also include specific suggestions taken from NSA materials for each individual organization.

Secondly, we feel that more frequent visits by USNSA national officers would create favorable local publicity and help to close the gap of ignorance.

Other suggestions are:

- A booth designated especially for USNSA at the annual activities carnival.
- An all-college meeting, rally, or coffee hour for club and organization presidents as a means of informing them of USNSA functions.
- Social pressure applied by informed members of organizations upon their presidents for more action and help from the USNSA.
- A more active attempt to promote the USNSA by the chairman of the student governing body's committee on this subject, with more support from the Cardinal Guild public relations chairman.

USNSA is practically non-functional on the Iowa State College campus at the present time. We do not necessarily assert that the afore-mentioned methods are sure-fire ways of making this organization functional, but we are definitely certain that they are a step in the right direction.

As a final recommendation, we feel the Cardinal Guild should act during the remainder of the school year either to improve the present status of USNSA on our campus or to drop the organization entirely. The easiest path to tread would lead to its disappearance. We feel, however, that this move would imply a lack of leadership on the part of Cardinal Guild. USNSA has much to offer ISC.

— Larry Campbell, Ag. Sr.