**Getting more direct**

By

**Published:** Wednesday, March 29, 2006

**Updated:** Sunday, September 7, 2008

Now is the time to act. There's no more time left to gauge student opinion, which some fear may lean toward apathy. Now, we must embrace the concept of direct elections, and, more importantly, we must institute direct elections in the Student Government Association (SGA).

In the editorial last week, the News addressed one of the possible impediments to direct elections: the recent tumultuous history of the SGA. A stream of e-mail from many members (which served mostly as FYIs and were not to be published), some of whom were involved in the noted events, made it clear that this SGA is determined to let bygones be bygones, and take the final step toward fully engaging the campus in its most crucial decision. With a willing and optimistic SGA, the stage is set for the plan to finally come to fruition.

For over three decades, this group has debated giving the students a choice in who leads them. And yet it is still unknown whether future leaders will be decided by a select group of senators or the common student. Uncertain senators fret over whether students would be knowledgeable enough in the candidates’ skills to make an informed decision. Will it come down to a popularity vote like student council president in high school? Or, worse, would they just randomly pick a name? Or not vote at all?

These fears are moot. The students know the importance of these elections. More than 5,000 students serve in a campus group, according to Northeastern’s Web site. While that’s only between 30 and 40 percent of the student body, these are the students who will definitely vote. These are the ones who need the SGA to advance their own groups, too.

No matter how big or small the group, the members are aware of their peer groups and how to get things done, much of which circles back to the SGA. If they need money, they have to go to the Budget Review Committee, the financial affairs branch of SGA. The group has a (hopefully increasing) number of special interest senators, which give smaller groups a direct voice in SGA Senate meetings. Student government also partners with many other groups to program campus events.

Plus, a key initiative of the SGA is to work directly for individual students, not just the groups. So, even then, they may be able to wrangle some unaffiliated student votes to get a healthy turnout to their initial direct election.

These are names and faces students do know. If the members of the SGA question their group’s visibility, then they aren’t trusting themselves enough in the breadth of their power. There’s no use or need for self-doubt now; this is a group that has proven it can get the job done and get its name, or names, out to the students. The foundation for direct elections is established; students are in touch with the SGA and vice versa.

Plus, the timing couldn't be better. With the current reliance of the common student on the Internet, and with Northeastern driving students toward the myNEU portal by way of NUTV and increased features like NU Pay, the possibility of allowing students to cast their votes online is alluring. Not only will this undoubtedly increase the number of voting students, especially in comparison to an offline, wait-in-line system which would have been likely had direct elections been implemented in past years, it will ensure that the news of elections reaches nearly every student - or at least those checking their myNEU e-mail accounts.
It's time to make this happen. The SGA has talked about direct elections for much too long. They can trust the students to vote. The students can trust the SGA to lead them. They can trust the system of voting to be efficient. Now the SGA must decide to give that power to the students, and allow them to decide who's in charge. There's no sense in putting this off any longer.