Hailing from different parties, incoming SGA Big Three to tackle university improvement

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In the first split election in eight years, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette student body elected two Reach candidates and a Connect Party president as the new Big Three, among other college senators, in the annual Student Government Association elections on March 28-29.

The Big Three is composed of the SGA president, vice president and treasurer. These students, along with elected senators, represent the student body to administration, pioneer student-oriented projects and policy and appropriate funds to students and organizations from a budget.

SGA President Elect Chandler Harris, of the Connect Party, is a junior majoring in organizational communication and a member of Delta Delta Delta sorority.

"Some goals I have in mind would be to make sure students understand the role of SGA and what we do for the university," Harris said. "I remember when I was a freshman I was asked to run for freshman senator and I didn’t really know what that entailed."

Harris said she wants to place a copy machine and printer in the Student Union next to the information desk for student use, and to start alumni-run student workshops for post-graduation knowledge, such as tax filing and finding adequate housing.

Harris added she is an advocate for Greek Life.

“We have one of the best Greek (programs) in the state, in my opinion. I like the cohesiveness of our Greek community and I like that we use our voices as a positive outlet rather than what you normally hear from Greek Life,” she said.

Harris is also a member of the Hunger Task Force, which is a committee in charge of implementing a food pantry on campus, and the Office of Orientation, in which she was a tour guide for Admissions and a SOUL camp counselor. She said these organizations have given her the ability to delegate, something she thinks is important part of being SGA President.

“I think it’s a lot of work for one person, and I’m definitely not capable (of doing it alone). That’s why we have a big senate and I have the Big Three. The role of the president, I think, should be mainly to delegate,” Harris said.

Harris added she intends to represent the college of Liberal Arts during her presidency.

“Because my major is organizational communication ... (it) focuses on leadership skills and communication skills. I would use that to connect everyone in my college specifically and then hopefully from there, connect the other colleges too,” Harris said.

Harris said she is not worried about the party divide between herself and the rest of the Big Three, who are both aligned with Reach, because she trusts SGA Vice President Elect Anna Paddock and SGA Treasurer Elect Reece Walker as individuals.

Paddock said she also has confidence in Harris as a president.

“I think (both candidates) would have brought something great to the table, and I think it is going to be a great year in spite of (the party divide),” she said.

Walker said he also has faith in Harris.

“I think she’s going to do a great job,” he said. “A lot of ideas that Connect had were great ideas.”

Paddock is a sophomore majoring in civil engineering and a member of Kappa Delta Sorority. She hopes to raise SGA student awareness during her term.

“I believe that students know what SGA is, but I don’t think they really know where to go or who to contact to make a stand for TOPS, higher ed

Vermilion staff report

Students from around the University of Louisiana System will hold an event at the state capitol to emphasize the importance of investing in higher education and the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students.

The event, UL System Day, will bring together students from schools, including the University of Louisiana at Monroe, Louisiana Tech and Southeastern Louisiana University and feature demonstrations from mascots and spirit groups, academic program exhibits and university performances and remarks by officials.

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whenever they have concerns, thoughts or ideas. I'd really like to clarify that a lot more and definitely have a connection between the various committees on SGA, the students and the administration," Paddock said.

Paddock also said she wants to "forge relationships" between herself and UL Lafayette administration over the summer to make meetings "easier."

"Not only am I going to be fully dedicated to this position, but I'm also here to grow and learn as well," Paddock said, adding she hopes to grow as a person as students learn more about SGA.

Paddock said she hopes to expand her representation beyond the College of Engineering, as she feels her time as an engineering senator was her chance to focus on her college. She is a member of American Society of Civil Engineers and the Louisiana Engineering Society.

"I don't want to be strictly representing engineering," she said. "I really would like people to know I represent engineering ... but I'm here for all of the colleges and anyone who needs a voice."

Paddock said she thinks the party split between Harris, of Connect, and Walker, of Reach, and herself will take time to work through.

"The Big Three ... all ran on different ideas and priorities. So we just have to get together and reconfigure those ideas and priorities," Paddock said. "I wouldn't say I'm concerned, it's just going to take time. I think we all ran knowing we had a specific job to do."

Paddock grew up in Lafayette and said dancing with the Lafayette Ballet Theatre taught her time management and dedication.

"I don't want to spread myself too thin, but I think that it actually helps me to manage my time more wisely," she said.

Harris said she has confidence in Paddock as a vice president.

"When Anna went through (Greek) recruitment, I really enjoyed hearing the great things about her," she said. "I've watched Anna grow as a student and leader ... I'm really excited to work with her and get to know her more because I think she's a great person."

Walker is a junior majoring in mechanical engineering and said he hopes to make his job as treasurer more efficient.

"The funding that we already have implemented, I want to see that used it its fullest extent," Walker said, adding he hopes to have budget reports "fully automated" to save time this coming academic year.

Walker explained "fully automated" annual budget reports would use a reusable template in which variables, such as the total number of students at UL Lafayette, could be put through a system to generate the budget report automatically.

"Each time (former treasurer Kristopher Harrison) had to do it ... they would do the report all over again from scratch. Well, if we just had a blank template where you could enter in the number of students you had, it would take out of a lot of the time the treasurers spend making the budget each year," Walker said.

Walker added although the puny split this election was a surprise, he's ready to move on from elections.

"Of course it's going to be weird," he said, "but I'm ready to put elections behind us and actually start working to make the university a better place."

Although Walker is in the College of Engineering, and a member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Louisiana Engineering Society and the Alternative Energy center, he said he aims to represent all colleges equally in his position.

"Of course being an engineering major, I'm more familiar with the problems and where we're going to need funding in engineering, but being SGA Treasurer, I hope to represent all of the colleges as equally as possible," he said.

Last summer, Walker had to do an audit for a Crowley location of Alternative Energy, which he said he thinks gave him useful experience for the office of treasurer.

Harris said she thinks she can communicate well with Walker.

"I think Reece is brilliant and has amazing ideas. I think he and I are going to get along really well considering we are both avid communicators. I can tell that he and I are going to have a lot of good conversations; we share a lot of the same views," Harris said.