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NKU student voting a record

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

NKU's student government association just had its biggest voter turnout in the most contested election in the school's history.

Alyse Bender, a Fort Thomas junior double-majoring in communications and political science, is the new SGA president.

Bender earned 566 votes of the 1,126 cast.

Last election, only 750 students voted in the SGA election.

Thirty-one students competed for the SGA's 15 senate seats. In the last election, 14 students vied for the 15 seats.

"I believe that interest in SGA has increased because more students are realizing that SGA is a valuable and resourceful avenue that is well respected by the administration and can, therefore, successfully address and accomplish student concerns," Bender said.

Bender believes a proposed prohibition on "chalking" was one factor that contributed to voter turnout. Chalking is announcing events or advocating political positions by writing on the sidewalks with chalk.

Some students felt it was an eyesore while others thought it was a valid form of expression on campus.

A referendum in favor of allowing chalking as a form of free expression was supported by 729 students, with 320 voting against.

Bender also believes old-fashioned campaigning helped bring out student voters.

"I spent countless hours going around campus approaching people individually, visiting classes including the law school, going to every residential room on campus, hanging up numerous flyers, handing out hand bills and making numerous phone calls and Facebook messages," Bender said. "My goal was to be all over the place and encourage as many students as I could to vote."

The senate's top vote-getter was junior Spanish major Elizabeth Osborne of Villa Hills.

"The No. 1 reason for the increase in voter turnout is the increase in the students' interest in SGA," Osborne said. "This increased interest has led to more diverse students running in the elections, and that brings more voters out as well."

Bender said her top goal is to "increase trust in SGA and make the image of SGA positive."

Her initiative for doing that is to offer a monthly "Pizza and Politics" forum.

"I want the students to understand we represent them," Bender said. "This will be an opportunity for all students to voice and discuss their concerns with SGA senators and the SGA executive team."

Osborne backs the idea and thinks it "would be a good and more informal way of getting the students' opinions."

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