

V I E W P O I N T S

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Students: Be Proactive, Affect Campus Change



By **KERI ANN FLACCOMIO**
Managing Editor

Rutgers-New Brunswick might have the only NCAA Division I football stadium in the New York/New Jersey metro region, but it doesn't have the close-knit community atmosphere and one-on-one relationships that define Ramapo College.

At Ramapo, our professors know our names and provide individualized feedback. They teach classes of 25-35 students at a time, making lectures and discussions more personalized and interactive than lessons addressing hundreds of students at a time.

In the 2011 edition of "America's Best Colleges," U.S. News and World Report ranked Ramapo 25th among the Best Regional Universities in the North, and in the 2010 "100 Best Values in Public Colleges," Kiplinger's Personal Finance ranked Ramapo among the nation's most respected state and regional institutions.

We have top-quality residence halls and unique opportunities for students to take advantage of both on and off campus.

So why are people making such an effort to point out every negative aspect of our school? Why are people looking to transfer to other institutions like Rutgers just because they don't like the policies and social life at Ramapo?

Every school has room to improve, and I admit that Ramapo is no exception, but for a student body that's so concerned with what's lacking, it seems there isn't much of an effort to

work toward change.

While there are plenty of people who are satisfied with Ramapo, there are just as many who criticize the administration and student representatives for not knowing what the student body wants and not promoting a positive atmosphere on our campus.

Almost every department on campus has some form of an advisory board or focus group, and I'm sure those that don't would be more than willing to consider suggestions from any member of the campus community. Why not use these opportunities to make our voices heard and communicate with our administrators?

Other things people have been saying include: Ramapo has no school spirit, Ramapo is a suitcase school because there is nothing to do here and Ramapo crossed the line by implementing the "ridiculous" new alcohol and

guest policies.

As far as school spirit is concerned, Ramapo has 20 accomplished sports teams, which play home and away games throughout the fall and spring semesters, as well as competitive cheerleading and dance teams. How many people complaining about the lack of school spirit on campus have actually gone to those games to support and boost the morale of our athletes?

Groups such as the Ramapo Rowdies have promoted school spirit on campus by wearing T-shirts and body paint to the games and cheering their peers on as they aim to score. This month also kicked off Maroon Mondays every week in the Student Center from noon until 1:30 p.m., giving students free chances to win prizes for wearing Ramapo gear and showing school spirit.

If more people made similar

To the Editor,

As a fellow science major at Ramapo College, I appreciate the article, "Ramapo Receives \$1.6M for New Biology Wing," written by staff writers Matthew Danko and Melanie Orinski, from the Oct. 7, 2010 issue of "The Ramapo News."

Considering that science majors are popular in the college, especially nursing majors, this grant is well-appreciated by many. Although the grant is specifically tending toward biology majors, I believe that the grant will essentially help all science students due to the general improvements that will be made in G-wing, including providing a common research area, open to all science majors.

Thank you,
Kimberly Graney

To the Editor:

As a reader of a newspaper that is getting better and better every edition (all my compliments), I write in order to express my point of view about the article on page 3, "RAMAPO T-shirts: Statement making or Insulting?" written by Rebecca Penhaker.

It is well known that the policy of our school had a drastic change this year and I agree that students, especially over 21, can find all this too restrictive and probably done without the collaboration of the students as part of the school administration.

In this context I don't find offensive at all the contesting T-shirt Rama-No, that ingeniously some guys came out with. Nothing offensive is written there — it is a funny, visual, nonviolent way to show an idea, literally carrying your idea on you and exposing it to every single component of campus life, from professors to public safety to other students, making a clear statement: I don't like the new policy.

Having the possibility to express ideas is a basic right of our civilization and I think this T-shirt way to do it is just smart, different and not violent or insulting, but actually a genuine way for students to show their points of view.

Sincerely,
Giuliano Rizzola

Submit a letter to the editor:
editor.rcnjnews@ramapo.edu

1Step Hosts Campus Discussion on Sustainability Organization Suggests Small Ways Students Can Help

By **MARISSA TORR**
SLF Member

When 1Step was unable to locate a link for a webcast for campus sustainability day, two members saved the day by improvising in front of the group and talking about different ways to make campuses across the country more sustainable.

Paul Coraggio, founder of 1Step and Noah Luogameno, facilities liaison, guided the discussion on Wednesday rather than watch the webcast, titled "Empowering A Low Carbon Movement On College Campuses."

What Works Now

"Go cold turkey" requires students turn off and unplug all appliances before leaving for Thanksgiving break.

Campuses across America, including Ramapo College, have been holding energy competitions in which utility bills are compared in each residence hall during the months of November and February. Ramapo has been participating since 2008. This has been a particularly successful ini-

tiative.

"Give and Go" is a program in which students can donate their books, clothing and food on move-out day. Instead of these items being thrown away, they are given to those in need. At the end of each semester, multiple Ramapo vans are filled with items.

Most of the ideas presented at the discussion were simple and convenient, but they need to be advertised.

"We have to bring minds together, get people to act on these messages," Luogameno said. "The biggest problem is that there's a lot happening, but not many people know what's going on. It takes a lot of people with a lot of devotion."

What We Used to Do

There used to be student-run gardens at Ramapo and more than 20 different clubs related to sustainability. Today, however, there is only one garden behind the Redwood apartment in the College Park Apartments and one club — 1Step — that advocates

for sustainability.

At the same time, there are now the Sustainable Living Facilities (SLFs), a program in which students are living "green lifestyles," according to the Ramapo Green website.

There is also the Sharp Sustainability Education Center now.

Still, some feel that still more can be done.

"We've been trying to make discussions, but to get people in the same room takes months of planning," Coraggio said. "It has to come from the students. We have the power to bring about change. We have the ideas, we just need everyone working together for the same cause."

What We Can Do

Advocates on campus are looking into providing residents with solar hot water in the next few years. If this is installed, the sun would be used to heat water. This initiative would save on utilities and gas costs.

Another idea is painting the rooves white. In doing so, it

would reflect more sunlight and decrease the amount of air conditioning needed.

Members of 1Step suggested at the discussion that artistically-inclined students could decorate recycling bins to make them more noticeable. A recycling bin could then be put next to every garbage can on campus.

There's always the classic idea of carpooling. The website Nuride.com encourages this green method of transportation by allowing people to document their rides and earn points that they can trade in for Amazon gift cards. Commuters can even put up their schedules in order to find people to carpool with.

"We have an umbrella: Ramapo Green," Coraggio said. "The rain is coming down; red tape, environmental and political issues, climate change. Everyone's out in the rain getting wet. We have to get everyone under the umbrella. We need people to hold it up."

For more information, visit www.ramapo.edu/ramapogreen.

They Asked, He Told: Dan Choi Visits

continued from page 1

affects of the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy actually causes an individual," Winter said.

Opening the event, Kat McGee, assistant director and coordinator of the women's center, encouraged the crowd to be aware of the link between these deaths and Lt. Dan Choi's effort to serve openly and proudly in the military.

"I have been following the recent policy changes this past week and I am interested to hear what he has to say," Amanda Abbott, freshman said.

Lt. Choi was welcomed with vibrant applause, showing gratitude and encouragement from the Ramapo community.

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell is dead!" yelled Choi, revving up the crowd even further. However, at the time of Choi's speech, he was unaware that a federal judge in California awarded the government a temporary stay, reversing a worldwide injunction against enforcing the "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Choi described his experience in the Middle East.

"I was serving in Baghdad, Iraq, area known as the triangle of death, a welting 130 degrees."

"The discrimination is so bad, the Shia against the Sunni, that the Shia leaders tell people that they can hide who they are, times were hard, better you live and have a job and friends-God will forgive you," Choi said.

Choi also described the moment he decided to come out.

"I finally fell in love, and I understood what I never allowed myself to understand before. All you need is love and love is all you need." Choi said.

Choi explained that finding a partner made him a better leader and solidier, he has someone to support him.

"How do I go back to Iraq under Don't Ask Don't Tell?"

Some students feel that their experience in the military was a different one than Choi's and therefore they are interested to listen to a varying experience.

"I was in ROTC freshman year and it was very cultural. In my experience people were very accepting and tolerant, it's interesting to hear about his different experience," said junior Doug O'Connor.

Choi explained that the moment he decided to 'come out' was considered crazy.

"People say I am creating a wedge, shaking things up. How long do we have to wait when we know what is right? A conflict exists between the American promise and the American reality," Choi said.

"Crazy is to do nothing in the face of this," he said.

References were made to Clementi, Zach Harrington, Billy Lucas, Asher Brown, and Seth Walsh- all young adults, some as young as 13-years-old, that have recently taken their own lives, victims of gay-bashing.

"To those people who said to me, maybe it's not the right time right now: How many people need to die until we can stand up and make it known to people, courage is not crazy," Choi said.

The speaker wanted to make clear that the LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender) movement is a Civil Right's movement.

The lieutenant had the audience repeat three simple words: "I am somebody."

The saying was coined by some of the greatest Civil Right's movement leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. The crowd repeated the words, until they were instructed to stand up and say them as loudly as they could.

"You are somebody, and when you say it you are not just saying it for yourself- your saying it so somebody else can hear it," Choi said.

Recent media stories have shed light on the population of queer students that feel alone and helpless.

"In light of all the recent LGBT tragedies I am here to educate myself, as a peer facilitator, I am raising my awareness so that I can be a better help to students," Tom Santhosh, sophomore, said.

"With current discrimination still rampant and an average of eight suicides a week is normal, the next generation will look you in the eye and say, did you do something?" Choi said.

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Students Should Highlight Positives, Influence Change

continued from page 7

instead of wearing T-shirts saying, "Rama-No! Banning Fun Since 2010," maybe there would be more visible school spirit on campus. There's nothing wrong with poking fun at an issue, as the Ramapo Football Shirt fundraiser did last semester — labeling Ramapo football as "undefeated since 1992" — but there doesn't seem to be much gained in knocking our school pride.

Ramapo does have a bit of a reputation for being a "suitcase school," but people forget that one reason the parking lots clear out on weekends is because half of the student population consists of commuters. While some students who live in the area do go home on weekends, others take advantage of the numerous trips and events organized by Student Activities, going to comedy clubs, museums and Broadway plays. People come from all over the world to visit New York City, and Ramapo students can make the trip by bus for only \$6.

In addition, events unique to Ramapo such as Oktoberfest and Midnight Madness are held annually for the purpose of showing school spirit.

Recently, the modifications to the alcohol and guest policies on campus have become issues for concern. Some students have gone so far as looking into trans-

ferring out of Ramapo. Isn't that a bit extreme? The new policies aren't much more excessive than they were before, and are similar to the policies at other state institutions.

Even so, the administration has allowed students to voice their opinions in an open forum and through a focus group. Our views are more likely to be considered on a campus of 5,700 students than on one of over 29,000. Changes won't happen overnight, but administrators have commended students with viewpoints on both sides of the issue who have been well spoken and professional about stating their concerns.

The bottom line is that while Ramapo has positive and negative aspects, as does any other school, the majority of us tend to accentuate the areas in which our school may be lacking and fail to look at those in which our school is excelling. Everyone wants to see more school pride and wants to see change, but only a few seem to be willing to affect it and recognize it.

Instead of complaining that Ramapo needs to be less reactive, we as a student body need to be more proactive in mobilizing to create and support the kind of campus community we want to see.

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Second Annual Food Drive Held 'Just Because It's October'

By SAMANTHA ULLRICH

Staff Writer

This year alone, 37 million Americans are relying on emergency food distribution systems for daily meals, according to the Hunger in America 2010 study conducted by Feeding America.

The Ebony Women for Social Change are holding their second annual "Just Because It's October" food drive this week. Members will be dorm-storming residence halls to collect nonperishable food donations, all of which will be donated to Eva's Kitchen in Paterson, New Jersey.

Close to 1,000 cans were collected last year, and this year's goal is to surpass that amount with the help of the Ramapo community. The members of Ebony Women will be knocking on dorm room doors every day this week to collect cans and food for those less fortunate.

The mission of the Ebony Women is to promote social change, both in and out of Ramapo College, while giving back to the community. Their annual food drive is only one of many ways they give back.

"One of the things we feel people do need, and always will need, are opportunities to have resources that everybody is given on a daily basis," Laurice Dukes, vice president of Ebony Women for Social Change, said.

The name "Just Because It's October" was chosen because of the Ebony Women's mission to give back for no specific reason. They feel that people less fortunate should be supported even when it's not the holiday season.

"Usually people do food drives in November or around Christmas, but we didn't want to do it just because of the holidays, we wanted to do it just because we want to give back to the community," Dukes said.

The food will be donated to Eva's Kitchen again this year, a nearby soup kitchen, whose mission is "to feed

the hungry, shelter the homeless, treat the addicted and provide free medical and dental care to the poor with respect for the human dignity of each individual."

"When donating the food to a social service organization, we must know that they are willing to serve the community. Eva's Village is a well known community-based organization that serves children, single parents, family, women and men that needs assistance or transition living," Dukes said.

Students are encouraged to support this event and donate any nonperishable food items.

"We did a food drive at my high school every year and donated to Eva's Kitchen as well. I think this event is for a very important cause," junior Anthony Yodice said.

All students are welcome to attend the food delivery on Oct. 23.

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