

Young Reflects on His Year as SBP: Unexpected Trials, Some Successes

By Kara Eide
Staff Writer

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DTH/Katie Riggan
Student Body
President Justin

Young packs his desk Monday afternoon as his term comes to a close with tonight's inauguration of Jen Daum.

"I would say a 9.8."

On a scale of one to 10, that's how Justin Young rated his student body presidential term.

What happened to the other 0.2? "Tuition, parking and Qatar," he said.

Young, who hands his office over to Student Body President-elect Jen Daum today, said his greatest strength as president was representing the student body.

He said he thought he was in tune with a majority of the campus community -- which is why he said he feels so badly about the issues that didn't result in the most positive outcome for students.

Young said the issue he was most disappointed about was the tuition increase passed last month by the UNC-system Board of Governors. "It stinks," he said. "I don't think there's any way around that."

Young worked actively with the tuition issue, serving as co-chairman of the Task Force on Tuition to draft a recommendation for the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees. Young and other student leaders tried to promote student presence at the January BOT meeting where trustees voted on the task force's proposal. Despite their efforts, only about 40 students attended, a turnout Young said he was displeased with.

Young and Mikisha Brown, president of the Graduate and Professional Student Federation, also raised several student concerns at the meeting, although the BOT voted to send the task force's recommendation on to the BOG.

Young said the frustrating things about this year were the problems, such as tuition, that surfaced unexpectedly.

"Some of the things we wanted to work on fell by the wayside, but that happens when you have tuition increases and the threat of a night parking system waiting in the wings and breathing down your neck," he said.

Some of Young's major platform goals, such as the establishment of the Student Empowerment Endowment grant fund, promotion of off-campus Internet access and work on campus race relations and minority affairs, also were pushed aside for more pressing issues.

Little concrete progress was made in these areas, apart from Young's donation of his stipend to the endowment and the creation of a Cabinet position to address minority affairs.

Despite the eventful term, those who worked with Young said he handled the position well.

"This was a tough year," said Provost Robert Shelton, mentioning the tuition debate as an example of the difficulties Young faced. "Justin was able to keep the broad perspective of the University's best interests in mind, while still representing the student's interest."

Shelton also said Young did a solid job interacting with administrators.

"He had his views, and we didn't always agree, but he always tried to move the agenda forward instead of being an obstructionist," he said.

Like Young, Student Body Vice President Rudy Kleysteuber said he thought Young's biggest disappointment was the outcome of the tuition proposal.

Kleysteuber also lamented the number of issues that cropped up and took attention away from achieving platform goals. "There was a lot more that he could have done, but that can be attributed in a large part to the glut of other issues that reared their respective heads."

Young said he thought his biggest flaw was an inability to maintain adequate organization within student government. "I don't think I was firm enough internally, within our Cabinet, in getting people to move on certain issues," he said. "Sometimes I was a little soft."

But Young said he is proud of the heightened attention students are giving to legislative involvement, especially through the Carolina Lobby Corps organization, one of his platform promises.

The legacy he said he leaves is a strengthened student voice, referring to Thursday's BOT rejection of the night parking proposal as a key victory.

Overall, Young saw the student body presidential experience as a fun and special opportunity to represent students, despite the high level of responsibility.

"Even though I got beat up a little bit, there are very valuable lessons to learn in the process," he said. "It can be an overwhelming thing, but I think I turned that around and made the position an empowering thing."

The University Editor can be reached at udesk@unc.edu.