The Michigan Daily

STUDENT GOVERNMENT

LSA SG candidate profile: Wang-McKillop ticket

by Michal Ruprecht
March 18, 2019

As students gear up for the University of Michigan's Student Government elections on March 27 and 28, The Daily sat down with LSA presidential and vice presidential candidates to talk platforms, vision and plans. In this installment, we profile the Wang-McKillop ticket.

LSA junior Brian Wang, the LSA presidential candidate, and LSA sophomore Mary McKillop, the LSA vice presidential candidate, both got involved with LSA Student Government during their first year on campus.

Wang said he enjoys helping other students understand what the University has to offer. He credited his inspiration for running to Pharmacy student Ibtihal Makki, who encouraged Wang to run for president last year.

"(Makki) reached out to me last year hoping I was going to run for president, but I told her I was a sophomore," Wang said. "I was a little too young (and) I still wanted to get more experience, but this year when I was considering to run, I definitely reflected back on that text … I took it as a compliment. It was one of the largest reasons why I decided to run."

When Wang was looking for a running mate, he said he wanted to find someone who was passionate about student government and experienced in dealing with a variety of situations.

"I think one of the reasons why I asked Mary to run with me is because I saw her passion for how well she connected with other students that she was bringing into our organization," Wang said. "I really liked the way she handled herself, handled the situations that came up, addressed the issues that our new representatives faced, and just overall was a great presence and resource for these other students and kids who want to get involved and came in with, you know, open minds and just really want to try and understand what we're about."

McKillop said she enjoys asking students what they would like to see happen and she strives to improve her leadership style by asking others what she could do better.

"I guess my inspiration to run for vice president started when I became the chair of the appointments committee because originally I was only the (vice) chair of the Internal Review Committee," McKillop said. "When Brian asked me to run with him to be vice president, I knew that I could step up and do it because of what I had been doing as the chair of the appointments committee and also I was just really excited to be able to be a part of bringing LSA to the next level of representing students' interests."

Wang said he would describe his leadership style as constructive and democratic.

"I think most of my experience that I've gained for the last three years has really come from listening to other people," Wang said. "I was a vice chair for a few committees for a year and a half, and the best way I learned and contributed was listening to other people and seeing what they had to say, because as a first-year student, you come in here with very little knowledge of how the University runs."

The campaign's platform is broken down into three main points: accessibility on campus, academics and student life.

On the accessibility point, McKillop said the candidates hope to implement iClicker and calculator rentals for students because some students can't afford to buy those materials.

McKillop said the idea of fixed tuition rates is also an important part of accessibility. Fixed tuition is when a student pays the same tuition from year to year without any increases. Wang said implementing this idea will make it easier for students to attend the University. McKillop added that the principle has been implemented at George Washington University and the new tuition would be proposed to be the average between under division and upper division tuition. According to the **U.S. Census Bureau**, average household income

increased by 1.8 percent from 2016 to 2017. In 2018, the University **announced** a 2.9 to 3.9 percent increase in tuition for the following year.

"When people come here, they don't know how much they'll be paying in three years," McKillop said. "The average income in the United States doesn't change that much from year to year, but tuition does … and so it's very much an issue of accessibility because people who are of a lower socioeconomic status are the most affected by an increase in tuition."

In their academics point, the candidates would like to increase transparency in departmental grading in large classes. McKillop said the coursework in classes like Economics 101 can be vastly different depending on the professor, which can impact students' grades.

In addition, they would like to add more details from course evaluations to Academic Reporting Tools so students can get a better understanding of the class.

"Once you are mid-class or at the end of your class, you get reminders repeatedly about filling out course evaluations, but most of the information is only for the benefit of professors and students don't get to see it," McKillop said. "Some of it was released with the implementation of ART 2.0, which you can find on the Course Guide with grade distributions and things, but we would like to see more of them because there are 27 possible questions to be asked on the course evaluation (and) we'd like to see more of the questions released so students will be able to better gauge which courses fit with their needs."

In their student life section, Wang and McKillop said they would like to expand the recreational sports waiver program for students of lower socioeconomic status. They would also like to expand and improve CAPS functions.

Wang said there is a shortage of CAPS counselors and office locations.

"The solution we included in our platform was at least working with CAPS to provide a more informational email and sessions to increase other students' knowledge and awareness that CAPS is a resource that they can use," Wang said. "Also, expanding that resource for more students especially to use it and de-stigmatizing the feeling about using CAPS (is necessary) because it's definitely an important resource, especially in this time in our lives as growing adults and students."

In addition to their party platform, which can be found on their **Facebook** page, McKillop said she hopes to promote a more diverse student government.

"In order to maintain a government that works for students and represents the interests of students, we need people who are of different backgrounds, or else it just becomes an echo chamber," McKillop said.

McKillop said she plans during the campaign to focus a lot on accessibility because she's noticed that students of lower socioeconomic status face many barriers to attending the University.

"I think that this University makes it hard to attend here for some students of lower socioeconomic status," McKillop said. "One of the biggest things we can work on is definitely making sure that everyone feels welcome here and is able to attend here without too many hindrances to their attendance."

Wang added he plans to learn from the **mistakes** made in the past to improve how student government works. Wang mentioned the CSG **Campus Affordability Guide** and how some students called it "out of touch" as an example of a mistake made by student government.

"We've seen a lot of stuff between the two of us about what goes right in student government and in the University and what can go wrong," Wang said. "We want to learn from those mistakes … (and) present things and be as transparent as possible but also as accessible as possible."