

Murray State University Alliance

SGA Presidential Candidate Questionnaire

Murray State University



Murray State University (MSU) Alliance is a registered student organization that supports the needs of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students. As a student organization, Alliance is highly interested in each SGA Presidential candidate's viewpoints on issues that concern us, not only issues in fairness and diversity, but also as a student organization in general. Please answer the following questions in the amount of detail that you feel is necessary, and return to Anthony Jones, MSU Alliance Secretary, at anthony.jones@murraystate.edu by April 16th at 5:00 PM. Your responses will be communicated to our membership, as well as any other interested students, for informational purposes only. As an organization, we are not seeking to endorse or advance any specific candidate over another. Thank you in advance for your participation!

General Information:

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1. Recently, the MSU Board of Regents included the term "sexual orientation" in the University non-discrimination policy, bringing MSU in line with every other public University in the Commonwealth on this issue. Do you support this change? Why or why not?

Yes, I supported the change – it seemed necessary. I did so because I believe that sexual orientation is not exempt from the prejudice that permeates a campus and that it was deserving of the same protections afforded race, gender, and other protected classifications.

2. MSU Alliance, as a student organization, has been assigned a Senator as part of the core groups system. However, typically that Senator, this year and in past years, has been almost impossible to reach, with actual group visits being very infrequent. This causes many members of our group to feel unrepresented on the SGA. It also causes our group to tend to have to find solutions to issues on its own that could easily be handled through the resources of SGA. What would you do to improve this system to better increase representation of student organizations like Alliance within SGA?

Part of my platform is upgrade the corps group system because of the reasons you have just mentioned – that many groups go unrepresented or weakly represented. I would establish a “Student Organization Committee” in SGA that would help organization not only with their questions and concerns (in regards to SGA, but also offer a subsidy for advertising for club events.

3. Many members of Alliance have expressed concern that the view of diversity on campus is strictly limited to race, excluding sex, gender, ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation. While there are many organizations in place to support these diverse people, there is no centralized place for these groups to unite and discuss common issues facing them. There also seems to be a lack of recognition or support of students other than students of varying race. What initiatives would you take to alleviate this problem?

Race often seems to be the sole concern of “diversity.” I think it is viewed as such because it is legally given special rights via Affirmative Action and therefore is, in effect, a special group. The answer, for me, is not to extend more privileges to other diverse minorities, but rather, to eliminate the unfair playing field that Affirmative Action creates. I support equality. Not special rights.

4. As SGA President, you also serve as the student Regent on the Board of Regents. Would you be able to vote for or against an issue in which the students have clearly spoken their opinion on (with or without a vote from the SGA Senate), even if it went against your own personal viewpoint?

As President I believe I am elected through the will of the people to interpret the public concern but also to exercise my judgment on the issues. I would not be a rubber stamp of the mass opinion. Rather, I would use my best judgment, in consideration of the opinions of the student body, and vote my

consciences.

5. In the current SLIP fund system, SGA provides grants of \$250 to student organizations as reimbursements for expenses in producing events. However, money is not always the most needed resource for a student organization. Are there any other areas of support that you feel that SGA could contribute to student organizations?

In conjunction with my plan for an improved corps group system in the SGA Senate is the idea that advertising and communication within clubs should be an integral part of their relationship with SGA as a whole. Improving the SLIP fund may be a step in the right directions, but I believe that flipping the representative roles in the Senate could be a better option: Instead of a Senator being assigned a group to visit (which they sometimes, more often ignore), a student organization would send one of their own members to sit on an SGA Committee just for Student Organizations. That way all organizations can tackle common problems faced by their group with the full support of the SGA.

6. A major issue that has been raised this year in the state legislature is Domestic Partner benefits for public Universities in the Commonwealth. Currently, the University of Louisville offers such benefits, as does the University of Kentucky. Although this issue is not one that directly impacts Murray State at the present time, do you feel that these healthcare benefits are a positive or a negative issue for a University?

Well, I'd really need an example to answer this. It's a bit of a slippery issue. For instance, if a Professor was gay and had a partner who he was essentially taking care of at home, and that professor passed away, I think it is appropriate that his pension could go to that partner. But defining legally the definition of 'partner' could be pretty hazy. To simplify, I think that all people should be afforded this same benefit, therefore I have a positive view of the issue. However, there may be an economic angle of this issue as well. I'm sorry if this response is too vague.

7. Recently, a lawsuit was filed against the University of the Cumberlands, a private, religious University in eastern Kentucky, to block state funding from being appropriated for the construction and operation of a pharmacy school. This issue concerns Alliance for two reasons. Alliance does not feel that any private University should receive state money, when such a pharmacy school could be constructed and operated by one of the public Universities (such as Murray). Alliance is also concerned because The University of the Cumberlands has a history of expelling its students because they are gay. This appropriation was recently ruled as being unconstitutional; however, the University is appealing the decision. As a potential student body President and Regent, do you feel that such money should be rerouted to a public University?

Public funds should go to public schools, period. Private institutions should raise their own funds or open to the public.

Thanks for the opportunity to address these questions. Responding to Student Organizations and helping them develop is a primary concern of my candidacy. I apologize if some of these answers were rushed, and I hope the spelling is all correct. I wish the Alliance all the best of luck in the coming year as it begins a new administration in an exciting time both local and nationally.

Aaron Butler