



Taking their stands

By Yael Kohen and Hanna LoPatin ★ Daily Staff Reporters

Presidential candidates agree that the low political participation rate among young people is startling, but each one is looking for his own way of connecting with a demographic many analysts have described as alienated.

Higher education, affirmative action and abortion are issues important to the 18 to 25-year-old age group that politicians have attempted to tackle. As Republicans and Democrats battle it out in state primaries and caucuses to secure their party's nomination, reinstituting civic engagement has been widely discussed.

Although low student participation has been portrayed as a relatively new phenomenon, it has been a problem for well over a decade.

When asked why students today tend to be apathetic towards politics, University assistant political science Prof. Margaret Howard said, "Right now? How about forever?"

"It's a transition period of your life," Howard said. "If you're a full-time student, you put on blinders to everything else."

Voters between the ages of 18 and 25 have lower turnout at the polls than any other demographic, Howard said. Usually not until settling down with a job and a family does someone take an interest in participating in the "story of America."

With Tuesday's Michigan Republican primary in a position to determine the fate of White House hopefuls George W. Bush, John McCain and Alan Keyes and the March 11 Democratic caucus approaching, some candidates are bringing the issues of higher education, affirmative action and abortion to the table.

The high prices of higher education makes attending college an unreachable dream for many lower-income families and their children.

Higher education

Although the GOP candidates have rarely focused their discussions on higher education, each has mildly addressed the issue by tagging it to their broader fiscal policies.

Last year the Clinton administration announced a \$3 trillion surplus in the federal budget, leaving the candidates to battle out the best way to spend — or save — the surplus.

But Republicans and Democrats have bumped heads over where to funnel the surplus funds especially in terms of education.

Howard said she attributes this to the fact that while Republicans push for the localization of school control, Democrats tend to push for more federal regulations.

Vice President Al Gore recently endorsed Clinton's \$31 billion proposal to increase accessibility to higher education. The plan includes a \$30 billion College Opportunity Tax Cut that would give families up to \$2,800 in tax cuts or credit on up to \$10,000 in tuition payments. The plan also includes \$1 billion to provide funds to increase Pell Grants, Work



John McCain
Arizona Senator
Republican

Abortion: Pro-life except in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is in danger.

Affirmative Action: Believes racial and ethnic diversity is important.

Higher ed: Supports equal access for all Americans. Has backed the Pell Grant and other education financial incentives.

Taxes: \$86 billion cut.

Gore's plan expands upon current programs to allow parents to invest in their child's higher education free of state taxes for in-state schools. He would like to see these investments free from federal taxes as well, Gore spokesman Douglas Hattaway said.

The proposal would permit students to choose schools from all participating states, Hattaway said. Gore also proposed creating a special savings account for higher education and job training, Hattaway said.

Meanwhile, Bradley's proposal would allow students to pay back loans at a percentage based on their future income.

"It's a very important step that would allow students to choose a career according to desire," Ludecke said.

Bradley's "Teach to Reach" program would give scholarship money and loan forgiveness to people teaching in "high-need areas" — specifically rural and inner-city schools — and who have expertise in subjects for which teachers are scarce.

Republicans have focused on differing priorities that would in turn affect higher education.

Bush has made cutting taxes his top priority. The Texas governor has proposed a \$483 billion tax cut, claiming that with such a surplus it is time to return the money to the taxpayers.

By lowering income taxes, Bush's proposed cut would allow taxpayers to put aside more money for college tuition and paying off student loans, Lasher said.

In an effort to make higher education more affordable, Bush has proposed an increase the Education Savings Accounts from \$500 to \$5,000. This increase would allow families earning up to \$150,000 to withdraw \$5,000 tax-free for educational purposes.



Al Gore
Vice President
Democrat

Abortion: Pro-choice in all cases.

Affirmative Action: Firmly believes it expands opportunities.

Higher ed: Supports and expands Clinton's college opportunity tax-cut program

Taxes: Targets tax relief to lower classes and intends to spend budget surplus on debt and saving social security.

Study and other grant programs.

Former New Jersey senator Bill Bradley has not announced his stance on Clinton's proposal, Bradley campaign spokeswoman Kristen Ludecke said. Bradley has made student loans his main focus for higher education access, she said.

In addition to the College Opportunity Tax Cut, Gore proposed a national tuition savings plan during a campaign swing through southeastern Michigan last week.

McCain's proposed tax cut is not nearly as large as that supported by Bush. The Arizona senator has made it his fiscal priority to begin paying off the \$5.6 trillion national debt.

McCain has not developed a formal higher education plan, but he does support increasing access to colleges and universities, McCain's Michigan Campaign Chair John Schwarz said.

McCain who supports an increase in the Pell Grant, wants to make a policy that offers "as open access as possible to higher education," said Schwarz, a Republican state senator from Battle Creek.

McCain has backed the establishment of various other programs, such as the lifetime tuition tax credit and the HOPE scholarship which allows students to claim a tax credit on educational expenses.

Affirmative action is another higher education policy in the national and local spotlights, as some universities across the country, including the University of Michigan, have had their admissions policies challenged.

Bush announced his support for a Texas plan to eliminate affirmative action from colleges and universities and implement the Texas 10 Percent Plan, which he has termed "affirmative access."

This plan admits high school students in the top 10 percent of their graduating class into the school of their choice.

"Every single person has a fair shot," Bush's national campaign spokesman Scott McClellan said.

McClellan said Bush is opposed to affirmative action because he does not believe in quotas, saying they accentuate differences and cause hostilities among all races and ethnic backgrounds.

But not all Republicans are opposed to affirmative action.

McCain would not repeal the use of affirmative action policies at public universities, Schwarz said.

"He looks at affirmative action as a good policy and fait accompli in the fate of this country," Schwarz said. "This is the most diverse society in the world and its one of the things that makes

America great."

Bush's brother, Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, is trying to rid the state of affirmative action through his One Florida Initiative.

Both Bradley and Gore have come out to publicly decry the Florida governor's efforts.

Bradley "must cast a net as wide as possible," Ludecke said.

Gore is committed "to continuing to expand opportunities for everybody, and affirmative action is a way to do it," Hattaway said.

George W. Bush
Texas Governor
Republican

Abortion: Pro-life except in cases of rape, incest and when the life of the mother is in danger.

Affirmative action: Opposes the uses of quotas and racial preferences. Supports "affirmative access"

Higher ed: Tax cuts and increase in Education Savings Accounts for more tuition money to be put aside.

Taxes: \$486 billion cut.

Abortion

Although many debate whether abortion should be a political issue at all, it has grabbed the attention of many voters and caused much heated debate among the candidates themselves.

Ludecke said she believes that a Republican in office could potentially change the status quo with the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*.

"There are a lot of things at stake in this election," Ludecke said. The next president must be "a Democrat with a commitment to pro-choice consistently through the years."

Both McCain and Bush have come out as pro-life supporters who have declared exceptions in cases of rape, incest and danger for life of the mother, but they have not discussed their inclinations to name pro-life judges to the Supreme Court.

Although McCain has declared himself to be pro-life, Schwarz said McCain "would not propose or support to repeal *Roe v. Wade*." McCain "opposes abortion personally," Schwarz said.

Bush was forced to come out on his anti-abortion stand by magazine editor Steve Forbes in last month's GOP Presidential Debate at Calvin College in Grand Rapids.

Forbes, who dropped out of the race last week, challenged Bush to affirm that he would only appoint pro-life Supreme Court justices and choose a pro-life running mate. Bush announced that he is in fact pro-life but declined to commit himself to a pro-life running mate and anti-abortion justices.

Tension among Democrats has heated up as well, with the two candidates sparring over their past abortion policies.

Last month Bradley attacked Gore, claiming that the vice president's past stances have not always been pro-choice.

Of Bradley, Ludecke said, "He is the only Democratic candidate who has been pro-choice his entire candidacy."

But Hattaway said despite the attacks, there is no difference between the two Democrats on the abortion issue.

"Senator Bradley is creating distinctions that don't exist," Hattaway said, adding that the National Abortion Reproduction Rights Action League, a premier pro-choice organization, endorsed Gore on Tuesday.

"Women are quite aware that this is the most pro-choice administration," Hattaway said, referring to the Clinton White House.

Bill Bradley
Former N.J. senator
Democrat

Abortion: Pro-choice and claims to be the only candidate to be consistently so.

Affirmative action: Decries anti-affirmative action measures.

Higher ed: Proposes to make participating colleges free from federal taxes.

Taxes: Aims to lower taxes for the lower and middle classes.

pro-choice organization, endorsed Gore on Tuesday.

"Women are quite aware that this is the most pro-choice administration," Hattaway said, referring to the Clinton White House.

enthusiasm a student can bring to a campaign," he said. "The person who mobilizes the student population will win because 90 percent of them don't vote."

This is something of which campus political leaders are well aware.

Students for Gore co-Chairman Michael Masters said it is difficult to recruit students but maintains he is committed to the cause.

"It is difficult in general to get people interested, but because of the caliber of the candidates people have been interested. I have run across actions ranging from 'how many hours a day can I work' to 'no thanks, I'm late for class,'" he said.

Masters said more than 150 people are on the Students for Gore e-mail list.

Students for McCain co-Chairman Trent Thompson said he is pleased with the number of students who have come to him asking to join the Arizona senator's campaign.

"People are usually receptive," he said, attributing McCain's popularity on campus to the way the student organization is run.

"We want to empower students ... to do their own projects — have ownership," Thompson said.

Thompson said between 200 and 300 people are on the Students for McCain e-mail list.

Politicians have employed various tactics to get students involved in their campaigns.

Political science Prof. Hanes Walton recalled the tactics politicians used when he was in college.

"Initially, people had to do a number of things to get students involved. There wasn't a mass movement to attract students," Walton said.

He said one of the ways in which politicians tried to attract stu-

dents was to invite them from his all-male college to the all-female college across the street for a political rally.

"There were all these little unique things to get students involved," Walton added.

Students critical to winning race

By Jeremy W. Peters
Daily Staff Reporter

Political leaders on campus will admit that motivating students is not always easy. Even at a school as politically active as the University, students can be fairly apathetic to the electoral process.

In an attempt to rally students for their cause, campus leaders for the presidential campaigns have made their presence visible through activities including a candidate fair and a debate among representatives from the candidates' student organizations.

But do groups like these actually have an effect on student voter turnout?

Traditionally, the number of students who actually vote is very low.

Political science emeritus Prof. Samuel Eldersveld, a former Ann Arbor mayor, conducted research in the early 1980s that revealed only about 6 percent of undergraduate students vote.

The most politically active period on campus, Eldersveld said yesterday, was in the early 1970s when students were heavily involved in pressing national issues like the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights movement.

During these years, two students were elected to the Ann Arbor City Council. Since there are only 11 seats on the City Council, Eldersveld said, the students were able to alter the shape of Ann Arbor politics.

"With their Human Rights Party ... they changed the agenda of politics here," he said.

Eldersveld was quick to point out that underestimating the student population is not a mistake presidential candidates should make.

"Any candidate would be foolish to turn away the kind of

"Any candidate would be foolish to turn away the kind of enthusiasm a student can bring to a campaign."

— Samuel Eldersveld
Political science professor emeritus



Political science emeritus Prof. Samuel Eldersveld speaks about the primary race in the Michigan Union last night.