



UM President Donna Shalala (center) and SG President Mike Johnston (2nd from left) attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for a new parking garage that both the administration and SG worked on to complete.

Perfect Partners

SG and administration can be allies

By Risa G. Merl, senior editorial assistant

Building a good working relationship between Student Government and administrators takes time, effort, and dedication. But having a first-rate relationship with your administration will mean projects get accomplished more quickly, students have a stronger voice, and SG has another source of funding for large events.

At the **University of Kentucky** and the **University of Miami** in Florida, the SG and administrations have cultivated a wonderful partnership where they work together for the good of the school and get real results.

The Answer Is Yes

Your school president has just agreed to let you block off a campus and city street to throw a massive pep rally. On top of that, the administration is funding a Halloween party. And by the way, the president himself is paying out of pocket for the next Valentine's Day ball. It may feel like you've entered some parallel universe where the answer is always "yes," but you've actually just had a glance at some of UK's recent successes. "My wife and I like to tell the students what we tell our own children: the answer is always 'yes' if we can possibly do it," says Lee Todd, UK president.

At UK, the SG and the administration have a relationship based on mutual respect. "The SG and our president couldn't have a

better or more productive relationship," says T.J. Litafik, UK press secretary. "We've been able to accomplish so much in terms of getting things done for students on campus."

Let the Good Times Roll

According to Litafik, over the past few years, UK had suffered with a bout of "lifeless campus." SG proposed the idea of a giant street party and Wildcats pep rally before last year's football game against the **University of Florida** Gators. SG President Tim Robinson asked for permission to close off a main campus street for this event. Not only was Todd willing to endorse the plan, but he promptly talked to the mayor and ensured that campus security could handle the expected crowds. Everything was put into place, and the event, "Gator Roast," drew in 7,000 students. "These pep rallies are just one example of events that we've made happen that hadn't happened on campus for at least a dozen years," Todd says.

A New Attitude

SG's good relationship with Todd flows throughout the rest of the administration. The SG chief-of-staff meets regularly with the senior vice president for administration and the director of food services. "From the top down it's, 'What can we do to help?' I've never been told 'no,'" Robinson says.

Talk to Me!

At UM, communication and accessibility are the keys to a successful working relationship between SG and the administration. "There's a very open communica-

tion system here," says Richard Walker, director of student life and SG advisor.

A strong proponent of this open-door policy is Dr. Patricia Whitely, vice president for student affairs. "I have my pager and cell phone that the SG president calls me on 24 hours a day, and we solve problems collectively as they arise," Whitely says.

Students First

SG President Mike Johnston describes UM President Donna Shalala as being very proactive. "She places immediate and high priority on the needs and concerns of students," Johnston says. UM wanted to implement a new program, "Ibis Ride," that would transport students from campus to Coconut Grove, a popular nightspot. For nearly two years, Johnston and SG worked to gather statistics, communicate with administration, and allocate the program's funds. "At the first meeting we had with Dr. Shalala, she said, 'Let's make it happen,'" Johnston says. The money for the program was allocated the following week.

The Big Pay Off

Former UM SG president and reigning Florida College Student of the Year Jose Diaz was introduced to a student who served on the board of trustees at another school. Diaz knew that having a student as a full voting member on the board is almost unprecedented at a private institution. In a meeting with Shalala, Diaz brought up his idea to implement a student member on the UM board. After months of research and lobbying, Diaz and Whitely put the framework together, and Shalala submitted the proposal to the full board. Now, the students at UM have a voice on the board of trustees. "The board was so impressed with the SG president and other student leaders that they welcomed the student interaction," Whitely says.

Self Help

An SG's success directly benefits students. In turn, these successes directly benefit the entire institution. "I think it only benefits the university to talk with students and take their suggestions to make it a better place to get an education," Walker says. **SL**

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As a New SG President...

- 1. Meet and greet.** "The first thing is to sit down with the outgoing president and SG advisor," says Tim Robinson, UK's SG president. "Find out who all the key people are that you'll need to know."
- 2. Put your best face forward.** "Immediately schedule appointments to meet with key people face-to-face. It's important to get to know them personally before you ask for something."
- 3. "Thank you" in advance.** "Go back again, or send them a card, and tell them how much you appreciate them meeting with you."
- 4. Secretary's day.** "Build a relationship with the secretaries or schedulers. A lot of times this is who'll control access to the person you want to reach."

Learn more about UK's and UM's success at www.studentleader.com