Project Topic:

Addressing student debt and the rising cost of higher education.

Project Overview:

The cost of higher education has been steadily increasing for decades, and issues of funding from both the federal and state governments produce a higher price tag and significantly larger debt for students. In Kentucky, the state government has cut funding to the major institutions fourteen times in the last thirteen years. Our project will focus on raising campus and state-wide awareness of the problem and possible solutions while connecting with local and state politicians to produce the best possible outcome for struggling students.

Events/Initiatives:

1. The Louisville Cardinal. By utilizing our widely read student newspaper, we will bring about wider recognition of the problems and solutions of a university wide budget. If students recognize the power of their voice in the debate, both on campus and at the ballot box, we believe we can lead groups of students to face this challenge head on. The newspaper can publish op-eds we write, pieces written by University officials who recognize the growing problems, and compilations of articles from other Kentucky public institutions to form a state-wide union.

2. University of Louisville Student Government Association: Debt Talks. We both hold prominent positions within our University SGA. Victoria is the President of the College of Art & Sciences. She also serves as the Speakers of the Senate. Kevin is the Research Specialist for the Executive Staff. Through these positions, we can utilize the resources of SGA to plan and execute events on campus and state-wide. The public institutions in Kentucky participate annually in the Rally for Higher Education in Frankfort to show lawmakers that students care about funding of education in Kentucky.

3. Elections Have Consequences, A conversation with students and faculty about the real impact of a vote. The goal is to encourage responsibility in civic life and a better educated populace. Examining the results of elections from popular candidates and “failed” promises.

4. Statewide Campaign Event, Forming a coalition with other Kentucky and consortium schools for a statewide event focusing on student needs and the Kentucky budget. We hope to attract a diverse audience from Kentucky public institutions for a great conversation among elected officials, university representatives, and students. Common issues among similar universities can be addressed in this forum and presented to policymakers.

(Major) Measurable Goals:
1. The first goal will simply be to introduce discussion of ways to manage and decrease student debt. Accessibility to options is the key to this proposal.

2. Collaborating with universities in the area with similar issues and concerns. Higher education is something that is becoming increasingly inaccessible to all Kentuckians. The issue of funding is not just a concern for the University of Louisville, but for every university in the state that requires aid.

3. Our end goal is to create a flight plan for managing and avoiding large amounts of student debt. Having a step by step procedure that our students have access to will be the key in helping our plan get off the ground.

**How will you collaborate with consortium schools?**

College affordability is an issue that can affect every student at one level or another. Among the consortium schools, we are seeking allies who will provide either proven programs for successful funding proposals to state government or institutions that will join in the rally in Washington to fight for student-friendly legislation. Coalitions are being built across the country, and the University of Louisville and its students would be honored to participate with student leaders at consortium schools.