

Davien Fernandes-Jones

▼ Miami-Dade CC-North ▼ 3.69 GPA
▼ Sophomore in Social Science

“When I know I touch other people and help them find their purpose, then I know I’m living my purpose,” says Davien P.

Fernandes-Jones, 20. “I see a connectedness to everybody—whatever I do will affect someone else later on.”

Now near the end of his second term as SGA president, Fernandes-Jones originally ran for the top office after serving as an appointed governmental relations director. “I was a little skeptical about it,” he says. “In high school, I ran and I lost by a little bit of votes.” The confidence-boosting win jump-started Fernandes-Jones’ campus activism. “It’s just an abundance of happiness that would go through me, because it’s like I have the ability to make change,” he says.

Fernandes-Jones says his biggest accomplishments during his first year as president in 1998-99 were creating an on-line book-swap and opening up access to the wellness center to all students. His team also established “Lyric Lounge” for students to read poetry, sing, or rap in a low-lit room with refreshments, balloons, and incense. “Because of our diversity, everyone can relate to it,” he says.



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Though Fernandes-Jones was prepared to step down at the end of his first term, his student peers urged him to run again. “I declared my candidacy on the last day,” says Fernandes-Jones, who won unopposed and has focused this year on uniting student groups. “Last year, I don’t think we were able to pull everyone together as close as we did this year.”

In addition to serving as SGA president, Fernandes-Jones is one of two student reps on the District Board of Trustees, is an enhanced Phi Theta Kappan, and writes for the *Falcon*

Times newspaper. He also visits local high schools to recruit for the college’s honors program. “A lot of people have notions that community college is the 13th grade,” says Fernandes-Jones, who supports himself with an honors scholarship, a book grant, and a part-time job. “I show them the other side—how much opportunity there is.” In the community, Fernandes-Jones has worked with the homeless with the Miami Rescue Mission, collected toys, clothes, and school supplies for the needy, and tutored at-risk children.

A team-oriented leader, Fernandes-Jones values the part each member plays in the group’s success. “It’s like a puzzle, and all of us complement one another,” he says. “There’s never a hierarchy in importance, but sometimes there’s a hierarchy in responsibility.”

Fernandes-Jones credits his parents and siblings for teaching him to lead. “My family is everything,” he says. “They’ve been coaches, motivators, people who have inspired me and taught me to inspire others.” Last August, Fernandes-Jones and his sister Jenee traveled to Trinidad to meet with government leaders about incorporating service through education. Their visit got national news coverage, and the two continue to monitor their pilot program.

When he’s grooming upcoming leaders, Fernandes-Jones helps them bring out the potential they already have. “I know that’s how I got on my road to involvement—other people saw what I couldn’t see in myself.”

Gary Slossberg

▼ University of Florida ▼ 4.0 GPA
▼ Graduate Student in Political Science

Creating more social harmony isn’t too lofty a goal for Gary Slossberg. “I’m an idealist,” says the 22-year-old. Calling his loss last year in the race for student body president a “blessing in disguise,” Slossberg’s spent his final year at UF as an advocate for gay rights and the prevention of sexual assault against women. “This year has brought me closer to issues that affect people in a real way,” he says. “I’ve become a feminist, as weird as that may sound, since I’m a guy.”

One of only four men in CARE, a group of 20 peer educators who speak to classes and student groups about sexual assault, harassment, and rape, Slossberg says he takes satisfaction in becoming part of the solution rather than the problem. “Sexual assault is a crime about power and control,” he says. “When we dehumanize people the way we do, it encourages that culture. We need to make a conscious effort to speak out against that—both women and men.”

Slossberg says his experience as past president of the Jewish Student Union and the Inter-Residence Hall Association has allowed him to “lead from a membership perspective” in CARE. “It’s interesting to go



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back to being a member again,” he says. “It’s more you lead by example in the simplest sense. You don’t have a stage from which to speak, yet you can create one through the things you do, and people notice that.”

As hall director in the “communal” Buckman Hall, one of UF’s two cooperative living facilities, Slossberg supervises a staff of five and balances the roles of disciplinarian and confidante for his resident peers. “I need to play supervisor if rules are being violated, but I always try first to advise them, encourage them,

and make suggestions,” says Slossberg, who supports himself with scholarships and his employment through the Division of Housing.

In the community, Slossberg has coached a YMCA tee-ball team, worked with the homeless and with abused boys during Alternative Service Breaks, and volunteered for Dance Marathon. He also serves as the student member on the Regional Transit System Citizens’ Advisory Board and UF’s Committee on Sexism and Homophobia.

To keep the underdog’s issues on SG’s agenda, Slossberg continues his role in campus politics as chair of the Vision Party. “It’s interesting that we’ve been a force to be reckoned with despite the fact that we’re underfunded and we have less manpower, whereas the other parties have a guaranteed base of support from the Greek system,” he says. “You don’t have to go with what’s popular to be successful. You can do what’s right and not popular, and still be successful.”

A principle-centered leader, Slossberg says the biggest problem with contemporary politicians is their lack of focus on constituents’ needs. “People are too concerned with what’s going to get them the right resume line or the right recognition, when they should be concerned with the people they are elected to serve,” says Slossberg, who will attend law school in the fall and eventually plans to run for public office. “I believe that leaders are people who inspire others to do greater things than they normally thought were possible.”