

# Jacob Reimer



▼ New College of the  
University of South Florida

▼ Fourth-year student in Natural Sciences

Jacob Reimer believes every human has an equally valuable role to play. “Leadership only entails a set of responsibilities. It doesn’t necessarily involve any inherent authority,” says Reimer, 22. “Not everyone can be involved in running an organization. The people making decisions about student government aren’t doing anything more important than the people who are holed up in their rooms working on their theses.”

As co-president of the New College Student Alliance, Reimer runs Town Meetings called by students to discuss issues or request funding. “It places a lot of power in the individual student’s hands,” says Reimer. “I’m starting to see the role of co-president as a facilitator and information provider rather than single-handedly being responsible for decisions.” Alliance officials help facilitate building projects such as the new student-designed Four Winds Cafe where Reimer works.

The “part of my brain that really likes to organize” leads Reimer to get involved. “I like to work behind the scenes,” he says. Reimer has revitalized the campus radio station, helped



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coordinate two Palm Court Party charity fund raisers, and established the world-news column “Outside the Ivory Tower” in *The Catalyst* campus newspaper. Reimer subsidizes his financial aid package with summer-job income and a student government stipend.

When confronting conflict, Reimer is a solution-oriented mediator. “If there’s an argument over principles, I don’t get involved. I’d rather concentrate on actions that can be taken,” says Reimer, who reasons that the only way moral arguments can end is to allow

differing opinions to coexist. “Asking people for specific suggestions immediately takes away the emotional drive and creates an atmosphere where resolutions can be achieved.”

Raised on a small farm in Pennsylvania, Reimer says he doesn’t leave campus much, nor does he own a car or watch TV — except for an occasional *Simpsons* episode. “The school’s so small, it tends to become a world in itself,” he says. At one point, Reimer took a semester off to drive solo across the U.S. in a \$400 car painted with blue stars and white stripes. With no destination in mind, Reimer ended up in Montreal, Chicago, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Seattle, where he took a boat to Alaska. Down the road, Reimer sees himself perhaps involved in an alternative energy project or in design science to influence society’s quality of life by encouraging humans to make deliberate choices about their material environment.

Fascinated by the idea of community, Reimer lives in “the slum” of New College, an older dorm designed to facilitate communal living. As an active participant in his community, Reimer isn’t frustrated by what traditional campus leaders might call student apathy. “What I do feel more and more a responsibility to do, is to try to trust that if people are provided with the information and opportunity to make decisions about the school, that a sense of self-determination will develop,” Reimer says. “My job as co-president is to provide as many opportunities for creative involvement as possible.” 🐦