

Two men with little experience get elected to top ASUN spots

# Involving the Uninvolved

by Gwen Tietgen

Just by looking at Joel Schafer's and Riley Peterson's credentials, one wouldn't expect them to be high-ranking leaders in student government.

But they hope their unexpected success prompts other students to follow their lead.

Schafer, ASUN president, and Peterson, ASUN first vice president, are the first two non-greeks to take the top ASUN executive positions since 1978.

"There's a lot more ceremonial stuff than I expected, like going to meetings and dinners," Schafer said.

Before winning the runoff election March 8, Schafer and Peterson had been strangers to involvement on campus.

Now, the tables have turned, and Schafer and Peterson are trying to think of ways to get more students involved.

Schafer said since he's been in office, he has had some people apply for ASUN positions who probably wouldn't have.

Vincent Cogley, a freshman mechanical engineering major, is

one of those people.

With Schafer's encouragement, Cogley applied to be a Government Liaison Committee lobbyist.

"When I was being interviewed (by Schafer), I felt like I was being interviewed by one of my peers," Cogley said.

"I'm very encouraged by Joel's work ethic, and I think what he lacks in experience, he makes up for in hard work."

Peterson said just by being in office, he and Schafer are breaking a lot of stereotypes that might encourage more people to get involved.

Peterson said he has fresh perspective about what it is like to walk into the Association of the Students of the University of Nebraska office for the first time, so he knows what the average student might feel like.

"I felt like I shouldn't be in here," Peterson said, sitting in his new vice presidential office.

"The approachability (of the ASUN office) has been poor in the past, and it's not something you can fix in two months, but hopefully after 11 months, it will change."

In their campaign, Schafer and

*"The approachability has been poor in the past ... but hopefully after 11 months, it will change."*

**Riley Peterson**  
ASUN first vice president



FIRST VICE PRESIDENT Riley Peterson (right) and president Joel Schafer (center) celebrate their victory on election night, March 8. Josh Wolfe/DN

Peterson emphasized planning a new freshman orientation, increasing a sense of community on campus, offering online voting for campus elections, starting a shadow senator program and targeting students who traditionally don't have a voice in student government.

Schafer and Peterson's election has had a varied impact on students.

Some said they still don't know what ASUN is, some said it wouldn't have an effect, and others said it had a big effect.

Ashleigh Hartman, a senior prephysician's assistant major, said she doesn't see an active student government.

"I know ASUN is the student

government, but I don't know what they do," Hartman said.

Jeff Knieval, a senior sociology major, said he would be more likely to get involved now that Schafer is in office than he would have been before.

Omran Malik, a sophomore computer science major, said many international students he knows are more concerned with their studies, but they do need more representation.

"(International students) need more representation on campus because it doesn't exist," Malik said.

One element of Schafer and Peterson's campaign platform was to implement a shadow senator program, specifically to involve interna-

tional students in ASUN.

Peterson, who is working with the shadow senator program, said implementing the program isn't going to be easy.

"We're trying to work with it, but it's going to be harder than we thought," Peterson said.

Jeri Jensen, a sophomore secondary education major, summed up Schafer and Peterson's status.

"Initially, I think people were attracted to (Schafer) since he wasn't greek, and because it was a change, and that's what people wanted," Jensen said.

"But now that he is in office, what he does in office is what is going to make people be involved."

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