

[< Back](#) | [Home](#)



Spotlight on the Colby Republicans

By: Chelsea Eakin

Posted: 4/13/07

The Colby Republicans have grown in membership this year, from a small pool of students to over twenty-five active members, according to current leaders Nathaniel Betz '09 and Ralph Kettell '09. "We grew from almost nothing to the flagship chapter of the Maine College Republicans," Betz said.

The Colby Republicans are a chapter of the Maine College Republicans, a group which itself has grown in the past few years. "There was a massive restructuring in '02-'03," said Kettell, who serves as the Communications Director for the Maine College Republicans. "This year one area we've improved in even further is that we hired five field representatives for elections...but the basic footing has been there for the past year."

Betz and Kettell have made an effort to reorganize the Colby Republicans since taking charge of the club in the spring of 2006. As first-year students, Betz and Kettell said it took them a considerable amount of searching to find that there was a conservative club on campus. "When we did find the club, we found just a few people discussing constitutional details, not pursuing any active membership or election-related participation, and with broken ties to the Maine College Republicans, our parent organization," Betz said.

The majority of active members this year are first-year students. "I joined Colby Republicans because I was looking to find other people with conservative views," Victoria Gonzalez '10 said. "And I was pleasantly surprised to find how active the club is." Upperclassmen have also become more active with the club. "This year I have become very involved with the Colby Republicans," Brad Cantor '08 said. "I would attribute my increased involvement this year to the club's outstanding management, organization and member enthusiasm which has been strong throughout the year."

"I think the campus was ready for something like this," said Betz, who approximates that around 30 percent of the student body have conservative leanings. "A lot of moderate students slightly left of center come up to us and eventually join because they feel the campus is and has been so far left in the past that they want to do something about that," Kettell said. "It's not just conservatives that have been embracing [the club], it's been moderates who want to bring balance back to the campus."

With last fall being election season, the club was more active than usual, holding organized club meetings every two weeks and helping candidates through phone banks and literature drops on a regular basis. The relationship between the College Democrats and the College Republicans saw some tension during election season, though for the most part the two clubs keep to themselves. "It's Colby College, none of us are running for office, we try and keep it as civil as possible," College Democrat and Communications Director for the Maine College Democrats Josh Handelman '07 said. The leaders of

both clubs occasionally debate face-to-face on the weekly FOX television show "Youth in Politics," filmed in Portland. As of January, the Colby Democrats have taken on the main leadership roles within the Maine College Democrats, a group which according to Handelman has generally been run by Bowdoin College students in the past. Henry Beck '09 and Chris Appel '08 serve as President and Vice President of the Maine College Democrats, respectively, and Merle Eisenberg '07 serves as Political Affairs Director.

Although election season has passed, the College Republicans are making an effort to remain active and are in the process of booking two speakers to visit the College next month. The club is also in the process of starting a community service program with the Waterville library to help students with homework.

The weekend of Mar. 1st, ten Colby Republicans attended the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, D.C. At CPAC, the largest annual gathering of conservative activists in the United States, students listened to various speeches, networked with other College Republican chapters and were given the chance to meet famous conservatives and Republican politicians. "What I found most interesting is that every speaker seemed to distance themselves from President Bush," Cantor said. "It seems the Republican Party is trying to fit the mold of Ronald Reagan rather than George W. Bush. Contrary to popular belief, modern-day republicanism is still more about small government, tax reform and capitalism, not religious ideals."

"It became very clear to me during CPAC that the Maine College Republicans is an institution and Colby Republicans are a big contribution to that," Gonzalez said.

Betz and Kettell hope to keep the club's momentum going. "We want to pass on the torch and not become a one hit wonder," Betz said. "We're planning on fostering future leadership abilities to younger people coming in. We're only here for four years so naturally we want things to be better when we leave than when we found them and the next person will make it better than we did."

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the March 23, 2007 online edition of the Echo.

© Copyright 2008 The Colby Echo