

# *SGA Report on Student Communications*

The SGA Senate meeting on the issue of student communications was productive and informative. The SGA feels that the college has come a long way with its communication systems. The introduction of the new e-mail accounts powered by G-mail has made a significant difference. Students are more likely to check this account and use it regularly. Matt Green, Director of Student Communications reported that 70% of all Columbia G-mail accounts are regularly checked. If this trend holds up, this system will accomplish the overall goal of keeping a consistent line of communication open with students.

While there have been improvements to the OASIS website that have made it more user friendly, the system simply has a bad reputation among students. There continue to be regular complaints about the system's slowness and the frequency of glitches, errors, or crashes. Whether or not OASIS has been improved, the impression of ineffectiveness remains with many Columbia students. The SGA hesitates to call for any drastic changes to OASIS but is aware of a significant amount of money paid by students in the form of Registration Fees that funds the unpopular system. This is an issue the SGA may look into further at a future time.

The most exciting aspect of student communications is the soon to be unveiled "Loop" community portal. The potential for this site to be the ultimate forum for all things relevant to Columbia students is tremendous. As an SGA, we must make it a priority to continue sharing ideas and thoughts with Student Communications officials at the college. Since everyone at the college will have access to this site and members will have the ability to customize their pages, this resource can attract everyone and thus disperse important information. Students must continue to have a voice in its design to ensure it works well for their needs.

SGA members submitted several ideas to effectively roll out this new tool so everyone is aware of it. From parties, to T-shirts, to giveaways, the SGA is committed to working with other student organizations and Student Communications to effectively introduce this new resource. SGA Senators have also suggested including a portion of the New Millennium Studies class be dedicated to the Loop training and using UPASS distribution as a means to communicate the message.

The full impact of the recent changes and the future changes in communication with students will not be immediately known. It will take another class of incoming freshman who will start their Columbia career immersed in these new tools to evaluate their effectiveness. The SGA is optimistic about the future of Student Communications and willing to work with its current state.

With thousands of commuter students and no central gathering space, online communications takes on an added importance. A campus center facility will likely close whatever communications gap remains in the future. As the college continues to grow beyond its

current enrollment of 12,000 students, it becomes imperative that they have a central gathering location in which to socialize, collaborate, and communicate in a more personal way.

The SGA is grateful to Norman Alexandroff, director of Student Communications; Matt Green, director of On-line Student Communications; and Kari Sommers, Assistant Dean of Student Life for attending the SGA meeting on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in order to address the concerns of the Senate and Columbia students. The SGA looks forward to working with them again in the future.