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Feb. 25, 1999 Contact: Bob Aaron, 309/556-3181

IWU Political Science Major Uses Savvy to Win Election

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.—He's a political science major in college and already successful on the campaign trail, winning the presidency of Illinois Wesleyan University's Student Senate in a hard-fought Feb. 10 election.

Harold E. Gauthier—a junior from Lynwood, Ill., and a graduate of Thornton Fractional South High School in Lansing, Ill.—won 59 percent of the vote in a three-way race.

Gauthier tallied 409 votes, compared to 207 votes for Mike Jozwik and 75 votes for Dave Malcom. Jozwik is a junior majoring in business administration from Orland Park, Ill. Malcom is a junior majoring in business administration from Buffalo Grove, Ill.

As president, Gauthier heads a student government organization responsible for parceling out \$250,000-a-year in student activity fees to support various student clubs and organizations, as well as bringing top-notch professionals to campus to speak on subjects ranging from politics and science to music and literature.

His 1999-2000 term of office began on Sunday, Feb. 21.

Experience Counts

Gauthier, who was Student Senate vice president in 1998-99, has been active in IWU's student government since 1996, when he was a freshman senator. He also has served on the Financial Advisory Board, which allocates the quarter-million dollars in student activity fees; the Strategic Planning Committee, and was a Senator of the Year nominee in 1997-98.

Gauthier's campaign theme focused on his widespread student government experience.

"I've had three years in the Student Senate," he said, "and I've served on the Executive Board. I know how the Senate is organized."

He also was very conscious of the fact that his presidential term will stretch into the next century. Consequently, one of his campaign slogans was "a leader for the 21st century."

Goals as President

As Student Senate president, Gauthier wants to focus his administration on plans for renovating IWU's Memorial Student Center or constructing a new student activities building.

"This would make the student experience so much more enjoyable on campus," Gauthier said. "It would help interaction among faculty, students, the administration, special interest groups, and student government."

Campaign Techniques

Gauthier employed several successful campaign techniques, ranging from debates to talking to as many students as possible one-on-one. The IWU student body, he said, respected this approach to retail politics.

One campaign technique he employed was using a photo of himself as a cute and cuddly three-year-old on campaign posters campuswide. Gauthier credits his mother, Francine, with the idea

of using the snapshot.

Referring to his political career, Gauthier said: "I have lots of support from my parents. The two of them are great." Consequently, another Gauthier campaign slogan was "do it for mama."

Gauthier's mother teaches business education at Chicago's Hubbard High School; his father, Henry, is a manager for the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA).

Lessons Learned

Running for Student Senate president taught Gauthier some important lessons.

"I learned a lot about people in general," he said, "and concerns that were unique to them. They wanted someone to talk to and they wanted some situations rectified."

He also saw some important links between his experience campaigning and what he's learned studying political science, particularly a course in American political campaigns and elections, taught by Tari Renner, associate professor and chair of political science.

"In that course," Gauthier said, "there were a lot of insights into why people come out to vote. The university is a small microcosm of U.S. society."

"People are motivated to vote," he explained, "if they believe they have ownership. Students have to feel that the Student Senate is their organization and they are welcome to participate in it."

"We have to give voters," Gauthier added, "a sense that we are capable of doing the job to make it worth voting. That's why I campaigned on what I had done as vice president—developing the student handbook and working on the recycling program—to show that I can get things done."

"It's an important function of government," Gauthier said, "to get back to constituents and to make their lives better on campus."

Gauthier's interest in political science focuses on the notion of establishing systems to help people. He likes to study systems—for example, those involving education or welfare—to analyze how they succeed or fail.

Long-term, Gauthier is setting his sights on a career in public relations.

"I haven't decided which aspect I want to go into," he explained. "It might be politics or in the corporate world. I'm interested in how information is expressed—that is, in forms where it's easy for people to understand."

Running Track, Record Set

Gauthier's extra-curricular interests go far beyond student government. As a member of IWU's track and field team, he set a new school record in the triple jump last month. Gauthier's jump was 49 feet, 3.25 inches, eclipsing the old record of 47 feet, 11 inches.

He has run track since the sixth grade.

"It's fun for me," he explained. "I go out and do it for release. Once I'm on the track, I run until I can't run anymore. I leave the stress of the day on the track."

Previously, he qualified for the NCAA Division III indoor and outdoor national track and field championship, where he finished fifth in both competitions. The indoor nationals were at Brandeis University in Waltham, Mass., where he competed against 100-200 student athletes; the outdoor nationals were at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minn., where there were about 300 contestants.

As Gauthier eyes the indoor track championship next month, he is ranked No. 2 on the

performance list. He hopes to compete in the 4x4 mile relay. IWU competes in NCAA Division III.

About IWU

IWU, founded in 1850, enrolls about 2,000 students in a College of Liberal Arts, and individual schools of Music, Theatre Arts, Art, and Nursing. Since 1994, these facilities have been added to the IWU campus: a \$15 million athletics and recreation center, a \$25 million science center, a \$6.8 million residence hall, and a \$5.1 million Center for Liberal Arts.

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