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Wake Forest debate team members Thomas Loquvam (left) and Jarrod Atchison (right) participate in a mock presidential debate Sunday. Moderating is debate coach Ross K. Smith.

Contest has students talking politics

Classes, Web sites and events aim at making the upcoming presidential debate a more meaningful experience for students.

BY PAUL GARBER

Staff Writer

WINSTON-SALEM — Wake Forest seniors Thomas Loquvam and Jarrod Atchison disagreed on all the issues during a mock presidential debate Sunday.

Playing the role of Vice President Al Gore, Loquvam attacked Gov. George W. Bush's plans for education and the environment. Atchison, playing the role of Bush, said Gore's plans give power to politicians at the expense of the people.

But after the mock debate, Loquvam and Atchison found lots of common ground when discussing the impact tonight's real presidential debate already has had on Wake Forest and its students. In short, it has made students get

informed and take a stand, they said.

"It abruptly forced everyone to get involved in the election," and has been the focus point of most classes, including business, religion and philosophy classes, Atchison said.

"It has galvanized a lot of interest in politics," Loquvam said.

Through a series of debate-related classes, Web sites, and events such as the mock debate, Wake Forest students are getting a close look at how presidential politics work.

"There's been more political discussions in the last two weeks than in my previous four years on campus," said Heath Bumgardner, a senior from Freeport, Maine.

Bumgardner is one of three student moderators for an online political discussion site, launched through a university partnership with Opinioneering Corp. Visitors to the site can discuss previous debates or weigh in on issues such as the importance of third-party candidates.

"For young people, one of the

problems is they don't feel involved in politics and don't feel politicians listen to them," Bumgardner said. "This is a great way for young people to express their opinions and hopefully create a dialogue with the candidates."

The Internet address is www.opioneering.com/wfu.

Bumgardner, who is also president of the school's College Democrats, said he hasn't done any class work in a week, but the chance to participate in a once-in-a-lifetime event is worth catching up on schoolwork later.

Jonathan Hall, a senior from Greensboro, listened last week as classmate Tish Harrison led a discussion on lessons learned from the 1988 presidential debate.

Hall and Harrison are students in associate professor Allan Loudin's class, "Great Teachers: Presidential Debate," one of three debate-related classes offered by the university. Loudin is also the director of the school's nationally recognized debate team.

The class examines past debates and ways that the candidates have

used — or failed to use — the debates to improve their personal appeal among voters.

"I'm seeing the debate in a whole different way now," Hall said.

Hall said the debate has caused some disruptions on campus — parking has become difficult, and students must carry their IDs at all times — but the experience has been worth it.

"There's been a lot of excitement around campus," he said. "It's a great experience."

Sarah Poupolos said she has never been very interested in economics, but her freshman seminar, "A Way of Thinking about Presidential Debates," has challenged her to consider the importance of economic factors such as campaign finance in elections.

"I've learned that the best way to learn is to consider as many perspectives as possible," said Poupolos, who plans to vote for Bush.

"Now, I feel like when I vote I'll make the right decision based on all that I've learned about the campaign," she said.

Students host mock debate

By Ruth Bivans

Old Gold and Black Reporter

A Mock Presidential Debate, hosted by the debate team on Oct. 8, offered a more amusing version of the debate issues.

The mock debate was held in the Annenberg Forum in Carswell Hall. Seniors Thomas Loquvam and Jarrod Atchison took on the personas of Vice President Al Gore and Gov. George W. Bush, respectively. Ross Smith, the debate coach, played Jim Lehrer and moderated the "debate."

The debate was held in the same format that was expected of the actual Presidential Debate, with one slight deviation. Students from Hornet's Nest Elementary School in Charlotte supplied most of the questions that were addressed by the "candidates."

The first question of the evening was "Why do you want to be President?" Loquvam (Gore) answered first, citing the successes of the Clinton administration during the last eight years.

"This administration has done a great job, but it hasn't done enough," Loquvam said.

Atchison (Bush) addressed this question in a slightly different

manner.

He stated that the real reason he wants to be President is because he wants the history book writers to look upon the "success of the 20th Century and then see the great leadership of the 21st."

The issue of education seemed to be a prevailing topic in the debate. Loquvam argued that more funding for public schools was what was needed. He consistently berated Atchison for his school voucher plan, saying that it would only take away much needed money from public schools.

Atchison, on the other hand, maintained that more funding does nothing for schools if it isn't put to good use.

He argued that private school vouchers would force public schools to become more competitive, academically. Parents would be given the option of placing their children in private schools that are more competitive, if the public school system isn't challenging enough.

"I'm not going to bring up fuzzy math, but I will bring up the vice president's fuzzy logic," Atchison said.

The issue of military spending

was also touched on. Loquvam stated that Bush's tax cut won't leave enough money for an increase in military spending and that Gore's plan would increase funding for technological research.

Atchison immediately criticized Gore's plan by saying that what is really needed is a pay increase for the servicemen and competitive benefits that would make the military seem more appealing as a career choice.

"What good is it to have technological advances if there is no one to utilize them?" Atchison asked.

The entire debate was sprinkled with good-natured jabs at each of the candidates. Both Loquvam and Atchison were educated on the issues and the views of both Gore and Bush.

"I think they did a great job," said Allan Loudon, an associate professor of communications and the director of debate. "It was great that the students could produce this."

Atchison, along with fellow debate team member Lotz, won first place at the University of Northern Iowa's Ulrich Season Opener Sept. 18-20.