



Tuesday, November 23, 2004

Panel examines election outcome

By *Rebecca Wyatt*, OU Web Writer

More than 100 Oakland University students, faculty, staff and community members attended a lively panel discussion on Nov. 19. "Decision 2004: The Campaign Round Up," a part of the **Celebrating Liberal Arts Presidential Leadership** theme, was the second panel of its type hosted by OU.

The panel featured Chuck Stokes from WXYZ Channel 7 News; Mark Hornbeck from The Detroit News; Ed Sarpolus of EPIC/MRA, a leading research firm in Michigan; and Rich Robinson from the Michigan Campaign Finance Network.

"We picked them (the panelists) because we know they provide terrific content," said David Dulio, assistant professor of political science. "They did not disappoint."

The panelist discussed the outcome of the presidential election and the factors that played into it.

"Kerry did not have a vision for America," Sarpolus said, adding that Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts, had a battle going up against Bush because "governors win elections, not senators."

Many thought the war in Iraq would cost Bush the election, but Sarpolus believes it worked in Bush's favor.

"War presidents don't lose," he said.

Both Stokes and Hornbeck think the lack of voter affection for Kerry cost him the election.

"It's all about delivery, and Kerry couldn't do that the way Clinton did," Stokes said. "The democrats just didn't pick a star."

Hornbeck explained there were no strong democratic players so they went with Kerry because he was a war veteran and had the most experience on foreign policy.

Some of the panelist said Kerry's image caused many voters to question his strength as a leader and that his image of having an inconsistent stance was the first impression some people had of him, which influenced their votes.

"Flip-flopping was a big issue because it portrayed Kerry as a weak leader," Sarpolus said, adding Kerry's lack of response to negative attacks created doubt with voters.

While Bush won the election, the panelist agreed he did make mistakes on the campaign trail. Bush didn't exhibit any visible humility and he didn't focus on domestic issues, Sarpolus said.

The panelists also agreed Kerry did do some good things through his bid for the presidency.

He was successful in attracting the young voters, small business owners and the educated, white male votes, which was a first for the Democratic Party, Sarpolus said, adding that Kerry's success at the Democratic National Convention and during the debates kept him alive in the election.

Overall, this year's campaign was not like any in the past, Stokes said, adding that both campaigns were highly orchestrated and coordinated, however, neither candidate spent much time interacting with the undecided voters in town hall meetings or through one-on-one interviews with the media.

"I don't think we (the media) had access to the candidates like we have had in the past," Stokes said. "That's how the campaigns wanted it."

Colin Messing, an OU freshman, has attended many of the current events panels held by OU and the pre-election panel. This was the first year he was able to vote, and while he has always had an interest in politics, this year he followed them more closely. He said he came to the event because the other panels gave him real insight when it came to the election.

"They brought out issues the news doesn't bring up," Messing said.

Mike McGuinness, student body vice president, agrees that events like this help students understand the election process and what can be built up.

"This event was important to understand what has happened and why these things happened," McGuinness said.

The panel served as an opportunity for the university to reach out to the community and contribute to the university's mission, Dulio said, adding that events like this bring a very diverse group of people together to learn about democracy and elections.

"I was delighted to have the turnout we had," he said. "It wasn't just students but people from outside the university that come to see what we have to offer at OU."

SUMMARY

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