

# 'Hawks flock to election programs

*During the run-up to November's historic election, the staff at KU's Dole Institute of Politics made the most of their opportunity to engage a record number of students through a barrage of campaign-related programs. It worked.*

**T** Tyler Holmes may not be your typical KU freshman. During his first semester, he turned up at the Dole Institute for every evening program, pizza-and-politics party and study group meeting — Democratic and Republican. Our staff is committed to maximizing student interest in politics, but it got to the point where I started to worry about Tyler's school work and social life. Turns out, he was himself a candidate for state representative in Kansas' 28th district!

Now that's civic engagement. But Tyler had plenty of company. We offered more than 30 different campaign-related programs that drew hundreds of new students and community members to our iconic building on west campus.

The semester began with an outdoor picnic and live music, followed by a get-acquainted program with this semester's Dole Fellows. Afterward, the students (Tyler included) didn't want to leave. We knew then that we had two special fellows.

Every semester, with support from KU Endowment, we bring two Dole Fellows, political experts, to Lawrence for an extended stay. In choosing the fellows, we look for hands-on experience, enthusiasm for public service and the potential to invigorate student interest in politics. Each fellow leads a public, eight-week, not-for-credit study group based on a topic of his or her expertise.

Both fellows invite guests to the study groups, most from Washington, including pollsters, fundraisers,



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members of the media, even political lawyers. (Sometimes I think Midwest Airlines should give us a kickback!) Often we're able to use the study group guests — who, this fall, have included legendary columnist Jack Germond, Republican pollster Whit Ayres and former "Crossfire" host Bill Press — for evening programs, as well.

We do our best to keep things balanced and bipartisan at the Dole Institute, so our 2008 fellows were Ray Strother, a Democratic political consultant who has produced some of the most important political ads of the past 30 years, and top GOP strategist Joe Gaylord, who was the mastermind behind the Republican takeover of the House of Representatives in 1994. Their topics focused on political communication and developing successful campaign strategies.

Donors, including our thriving Friends of the Dole Institute, help us carry out our mission to inform,

educate and inspire the next generation of public servants — like Tyler. He lost his bid for the Kansas House to the popular incumbent, but he took a quarter of the votes — quite impressive for his first campaign. I'm pretty sure he's in this for the long haul. We're proud to be a resource for Tyler, KU and people everywhere who want to be more involved in the politics of our community, state and nation.

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