

COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

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Students confer on need for activism on campus

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Over 100 students from 20 northeastern colleges discussed how they can effect public policy on contemporary issues at the Students Tackling Issues of the New Generation (STING) conference held at Barnard College last Saturday.

In the opening remarks, Manhattan Borough President Ruth Messinger spoke of the importance of student activism, especially among women and minorities. Messinger said students could pro-

duce changes in two ways.

“Everyone should exercise the right to vote. It is a citizen skill ...Secondly, everyone should help other people to vote and to help others to be active,” Messinger said.

This generation has more of a burden than past generations because of its inheritance of old issues on top of new problems, such as AIDS and homelessness, Messinger said.

A panel of students and faculty members discussed the history of student activism at the conference,

comparing this generation with that of the '60s.

“We should look back on the '60s not to copy what we see, but to see what we can learn,” said Barnard Professor of Political Science Michael Delli Carpini.

Delli Carpini also said students have a difficult time gaining media attention because there are fewer college-age students in this generation and student activism is old news.

The conference included six workshops in which students discussed what they were doing on their own campuses and what they could do at the inter-campus level.

Leigh Fairchild, BC '92, president of the Barnard Student Government Association, said she saw definite efforts at the conference to address AIDS, sexual harassment, and race relations.

“One really good idea that came up was to do an AIDS dance-a-thon in coordination with STING on the same day at the same time on 25 different campuses. This would definitely gain media attention and subsequently effect public policy,” Fairchild said.

Some students found the best aspect about the day was not the

new ideas they generated but the ability to learn what other students are doing at other schools.

“I really found the panel on sexual harassment to be interesting because a lot of schools have rape crisis centers in place and we don’t. The information I learned was good for me to bring back because we just had a rape,” said Jennifer Billig, president of the Student Government Association at Pratt Institute.

“Different colleges are doing different things. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. We can use what other colleges are doing as resources,” said Wellesley College student Ria Spencer.