

Student Speaker Should Be Eliminated. Vote Evan for Speaker!



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On April 13, Cardozo will have its annual Student Speak-Off to determine the student speaker at graduation. You should vote for me. I'm the Best.

I could give many types of speeches at graduation. I could use the opportunity to lecture Yeshiva University President Richard Joel about his unrepentant and insulting public positions towards gay students. I could put my deemed Abedesqueness to the test with a speech so full of pop culture references it would require annotations — a veritable Ulysses if James Joyce had spent his formative years in the era of instant otaku rather than developing his odd fetishes. (Seriously, if you haven't read his love letters, do it now). I could beg the audience for a job.

And these would all be entertaining reasons to elect me as student speaker. But it is not the reason I argue now. Rather, vote for me for student speaker, because I will not give a speech.

The position of student speaker is unnecessary and we should eliminate it.

Student speakers used to provide an important student perspective on law school, justifying the large captive audience. But in a time when it is so easy to reach people through other media, a student speaker seems like a waste of time in an already long graduation service.

We now live in the age of the Internet and social media, where communicating with the masses is so simple it can be done in 140 characters via phone from a toilet stall. With so many options for communication, a student speaker simply isn't special. Students can express their opinions and views ad nauseum through blogs and YouTube videos, so there is little justification for taking time from graduation to provide a megaphone for someone who could have already expressed his or her view a thousand times over in dozens of media formats.

Yes, at times bloggers and YouTube video diarists are dismissed as narcissists desperate for attention. But if this is true, then the narcissism shouldn't change just because a speech is in person rather than over a webcam. And at least YouTube diarists don't force people to sit through their ramblings. If the content is worthy, then any venue should be acceptable, rather than one that extends the graduation ceremony.

Certainly, there are certain circumstances that merit a captive audience. But what grand insight does a student speaker provide that isn't already heard in the hallways of 55 5th Ave? What massive revelation is so unique that it hasn't been said before? What cliché is so important that we have to sit there and listen? There is nothing new under the sun, and there will be nothing new in a student speech, so let's simply eliminate it from graduation. The entire ceremony is long enough as is and the last thing it needs is a glorified soapbox for someone who loves the sound of his or her own voice.

At least the actual graduation speaker has some sort of insight, but even that position is increasingly questionable. It seems the only merit to a graduation speaker these days is the prestige and attention of getting a celebrity, who of course will be rewarded with cash gifts or meaningless honorary degrees.

Now, this isn't cynicism. This is idealism.

This is the ideal that students can vote to overturn an unnecessary and wasteful relic dating to a time when the opportunity to address large groups of people were few and far between. That time is gone.

In the end, I may not be the best law student at Cardozo. Heck, I'm probably not even fifth best. But I have a dream: A dream of a quick graduation so we can all go about our lives. So come to the Student Speak-Off on April 13 and help make that dream a reality.

Vote for me, Evan.