

# IYSSE member Mitch Abrams wins student senate seat at Eastern Michigan University

A WSWWS reporting team  
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On Thursday Mitch Abrams, candidate of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at Eastern Michigan University, won a seat on the EMU student senate. Vote totals have yet to be released, but the results are in as far as the impact the IYSSE is having on the political life of the campus.

IYSSE members campaigned before and after the election in opposition to war, the attack on immigrants, social inequality and skyrocketing student debt. They received a strong response from students.

In his statement on the election, Abrams wrote, “The IYSSE is fighting to develop at EMU a new political culture, connecting the problems of students with the broader conditions of the entire working class—in Ypsilanti, the Detroit region, throughout the country and internationally.”

Michael, a sophomore in accounting, explained why he joined the IYSSE and campaigned for Abrams. “I supported this campaign because it’s the only one that had any political substance to it. I didn’t see any other documents from other senate candidates. And the presidential candidates had nothing to say about broader political issues. One candidate discussed parking and dining, and I didn’t see how that had anything to do with the real issues students are facing: the racist attacks on immigrants, rising tuition and the threat of nuclear war.

“I worked on this campaign because of Trump’s attacks on immigrants and the response of the university, that they won’t turn over your information unless the government asks for it. And to me that was absolutely disgusting. These are people who came here because they want to learn. They wanted to escape the crippling poverty and famine that exists in their own country, and the university agreed to be complicit in sending them back.”

While campaigning, IYSSE members came across one of the two faculty advisors of student government, essentially the referees overseeing the student-run election. After reading the IYSSE campaign statement, the advisor said, “These issues have no place in student government. Student government is only for students to voice their opinions about what courses should be offered.”

Campaigners replied that they were getting a very positive response from students on the issues of war, defending immigrants, student debt and inequality. Campaigners put the question back to him, that if the student government is supposed to be the democratic expression of students’ concerns, who is he to say what issues students should or shouldn’t bring into student government?

Many students responded with great interest to the IYSSE campaign.

Patti, an EMU student, said, “The rich have all the power and they blame the poor for being poor. A lot of people are living under the poverty line. I have co-workers who are students or recent graduates that are paying off their student loans.

“Tuition is extremely high. Many poor people cannot afford to get an education. I agree with the IYSSE that education is a social right. I am going to join.

“It just seems like history is repeating itself and we are not learning anything from it. I see that a lot in the rise of dictatorship and oligarchy. The rule of the few over the many leads to chaos, poverty and war. We definitely need a revolution here.”

Alex, a senior in film studies, said, “I am on my way to impoverishment under the weight of student loans. I have \$40,000 now and will need another ten or fifteen thousand before graduating. Fifty-five thousand dollars is a lot of money. I have not made that much in my

whole working career at just over minimum wage. I agree with the IYSSE. Education should be free, or at least, affordable.

“A friend of mine is Iranian and the ban prevented his father’s bank from sending money to him. He had to sell his computer. I studied World War I, and there are a lot of parallels with the current political situation especially in the attacks on the working class.”

Barret said, “I am a film major so my whole course of study is in the arts. We see nothing but cuts—no new equipment, program cuts, faculty cuts. We have only five or six professors for the entire program. The niche classes that are least enrolled get cut. Lighting, for example, is offered only once every two years. The cameras are 10 to 15 years old so we have to run old computer operating systems for them.

“They teach history in a way that is suitable for children, so they don’t talk about genocide. You have to educate people about history, so you have to tell the truth. Otherwise, we are doomed to repeat it.”

Alex replied, “They are quick to point out what they want you to know about World War II. They never tell you how bad the nuclear bombs were in Japan. They did it to send a message.”

“Education is as capitalist as any other industry and is controlled by the oligarchs as another industry. I don’t think a war has ever been started by poor people.”

Aaron, a student, said, “I have been studying socialism. The frame up of the Maruti Suzuki workers is not surprising. They want to create those conditions in this country.

“The corporations don’t believe in morality. They believe only in making a profit. There needs to be social responsibility and social equality. No human life is worth more than any other. I am opposed to war. It is an attempt to seize resources by force.

“We live in a global society, and yet they are using nationalism to keep people from looking at people from other countries as human. I remember the report of a train derailment in Spain quite vividly. The news reported the Americans who died but did not mention the Spanish people who died.

“Currently, social anger is foggy and not pointed at what causes the anger, which is the corporations, capitalism and the government that allows them to evade responsibility. Why can’t they be charged with murder? Social anger gets displaced by the system with

the idea that someone is trying to steal their job or their way of life.

“The corporations need international markets, but they use nationalism to create conflicts between workers of different countries. It is hard to sympathize with the government on the whole Russian thing. They are angry at Russia for doing the same things that they do every day.

“Obama claimed he was anti-war, but he expanded the wars. He went from bombing two countries to bombing seven. But it was okay because he pushed the button with a smile.”



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