

VISIAN '19-'20

Vishwaa Sofat and Julian Giordano for Student Union

WITH YOUR **VOTE** AND OUR **visian**, WE CAN CREATE **CHANGE**.

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Our Philosophy

We believe in a Student Union that never ceases to push for reform that benefits students and their experiences at Stuyvesant High School. We understand that constructing a truly representative and effective Student Union thus requires extending preconceived definitions of leadership. To us, leadership is about inclusivity, transparency, and accessibility. Above all, it prioritizes listening attentively to student voice and amplifying it to the administration, the DOE, and other stakeholders within the community. We seek to create reform with a Student Union that places student input and feedback at the top of its priorities, with transparency and communication as a means to this end. In decomplexifying the Student Union and increasing its receptiveness, we hope to form a lasting bond between Student Union members, the administration, community groups, and, of course, the student body.

Yours truly,

Vishwaa Sofat & Julian Giordano

Our Plan

We, Vishwaa and Julian, believe that our goals are in the best interests of the student body. Some of our goals might seem to be far-fetched, and it is fair to say we are trying to accomplish a lot within one year. While we acknowledge this, we think it is of greater value to recognize a variety of issues that we can potentially address. This provides options and flexibility to best serve the needs of the student body. We guarantee that we will be unwavering in our advocacy for these policies and that we will always prioritize student voice and opinion. We hope to reach new heights and set the standards for future Student Union administrations.

Internal Restructuring of the SU and of its Relationship with Caucus

The current Student Union structure consists of positions that have not been used effectively to reflect and achieve the desires of the student body. We would like to adopt a new structure that is both efficient *and* effective. In addition, we aim to improve the cooperation between the Caucuses and the SU by increasing dialogue and creating a more balanced representation between the two.

Advancement of SU Collaboration with Community

The Student Union has pre-established relationships with the Parents' Association, Alumni Association, and the Administration amongst others. We would like to not only extend our partnership with these bodies but also work on new, varied projects with them. This allows for the Stuyvesant community to move together as one unified force, which enables us to accomplish a lot more.

Student Life Improvements

The main priority of the Student Union is to improve the experiences of Stuyvesant students in their time here. This involves balancing both short-term projects that can be quickly implemented as well as more ambitious long-term policy reforms.

Continued SU Communication and Transparency

We want to create more mediums of communication between the Student Union and the student body to encourage student involvement, maintain regular updates, and increase transparency.

Internal Restructuring of the SU and of its Relationship with Caucus

Description

Currently, the internal organization of the Student Union is unsuited to carry out the changes that we know the student body desires: there are extra positions in departments that do not need them, yet a lack of positions in other areas that *are* necessary for reflecting the needs of students. We aim to remedy this and restructure the Student Union. To complement this, we believe it is also important to give Caucuses a larger say in student government affairs. The current relationship between the Student Union and the four Caucuses is not optimal and can be improved.

Our Plan

Restructuring the Student Union

We plan to get rid of Student Union positions that aren't necessarily needed and instead replace some of them with positions that could be put to better use. Specifically, we would like to remove the five Executive Delegate positions, and transfer their work to the Chief Auditing Officer. We would also be interested in establishing a Wellness Department, which would collaborate with and hopefully incorporate the Stuyvesant Wellness Council. Overall, however, we would cut down the total number of SU members, because the current large number leads to confusion all around.

Giving Caucuses a Bigger Say

Because of the Student Union, Caucuses have previously been restricted to the path of pursuing policy change. We believe that such a relationship between the SU and Caucuses creates bipartisan complications. To amend this issue, we plan to maintain a balance of votes in the Cabinet between the SU and Caucus. This allows for a lower attendance requirement for quorum, and make constitutional reforms for the benefit of students much easier and fairer.

Advancement of SU Collaboration with Community

Description

It is important for us to acknowledge that the issues we face as students must be addressed by us as a *community* for true change. While we take pride in our current relationships with organizations such as the Alumni Association, Parents' Association, and student-run organizations, we believe there is room for improvement. Furthermore, we find it crucial that we collaborate on projects with other groups within the Stuyvesant community. These collaborations would result in a diverse set of resources and opportunities that the Student Union could utilize to further benefit the student body.

Our Plan

Parents' Association (PA)

❖ Combined Efforts to Fund Activities

The Student Union is only able to allocate around \$30,000 of its budget for activities. While this is a large sum of money, it is not enough to fund over 200 clubs serving a student body of over 3,300. In the past, lack of communication between the SU and the PA has resulted in some clubs receiving funding from both, and others receiving money from neither. We would like to streamline the club-funding process by bringing it under the StuyActivities website. Both organizations would be able to determine funding together and help provide for more extracurricular opportunities.

❖ Career Fair

In the past, the PA has not been involved with the Career Fair, but we would like to continue the efforts of the Wang-Sofat administration by collaborating with the PA to host the annual Career Fair. Ideally, this would allow us to expand the number of professions we cover and increase parent involvement in the event.

❖ Policy Reforms

While pursuing policy changes, it is important that we work alongside the PA. Their support is crucial for issues and proposals we bring up at the Student Leadership Team (SLT). We plan to seek feedback from them, which we will then incorporate into our proposals. We believe that this spirit of collaboration and compromise will make our efforts more effective.

Guidance Department

❖ **Online Meeting Portal**

Students often complain that they have never been able to meet with their guidance counselor when they visit their office. Our counselors are involved with so many aspects of student life that they aren't always in their offices. However, counselors are typically aware of their schedules in advance. We suggest implementing an online calendar system where students can book appointments with their counselors. It would improve relationships on both ends and especially make students feel comfortable approaching their counselors. This system would be based off the currently existing portal used by college counselors and, as a result, shouldn't be hard to reproduce.

❖ **Electronic Student Log**

We suggest the implementation of an electronic student log linked to Talos. This log would allow counselors to keep track of which students they have and haven't seen and then send automatic emails to students that they wish to see, especially those that have not visited them in a while. Our goal is to allow for every student to visit their counselor at least twice a year, even if it's just for a small check-in. We think this will remove any stigma currently associated with the guidance department. Moreover, it would allow for better student-counselor relationships, which would make guidance recommendations more personal. The end goal is to make the guidance department a more open place where students are comfortable to go and get the assistance they need.

❖ **Freshman Workshops**

During the Wang-Sofat administration, under the leadership of Julian Giordano, the External Affairs Department successfully created a Sexual Misconduct workshop that was implemented in the classes of all freshman students. Based on the success of that workshop, we would like to create new workshops alongside guidance counselors. These workshops would tackle real-world issues both inside and outside of school, which would result in a more informed student body.

ARISTA

❖ **Parent Teacher Conferences**

In the 2017-18 school year, ARISTA did a beta testing on a website that allowed parents to electronically sign up for spots to meet teachers and kept a track of how long it would be until their turn. Though the website had some issues, the ideas creates a lot of convenience for parents, teachers, students and

volunteers. We would like to work with ARISTA and the administration to implement this interface — potentially as a subset of Talos.

Alumni Association

❖ Career Fair

We would like to continue working alongside the Alumni Association to plan the Annual Career Fair. The career fair serves as an excellent opportunity for students to explore a vast spectrum of professional interests.

❖ Targeted Skills Workshops

We would like to start a series of one-day workshops alongside the Alumni Association. These workshops would teach students skills such as resume writing and networking. We would also be able to do more targeted workshops related to the college application process and college in general for upperclassmen. These workshops would be an expansion of the current offerings of the Alumni Mentoring Program but also a lot more specific to fit the needs and interests of each grade.

❖ Stuyvesant High School Alumni-Student Networking Site

We would like to build upon the foundational work done by the Wang-Sofat Administration. The networking site would serve as Stuyvesant's very own LinkedIn, where students could benefit from the strong Alumni database. Students would be able to access information such as an alum's alma mater, major, and career and then reach out to them. This would allow students to learn about the majors and fields they are interested in but also seek internships through social networking.

❖ Alumni Access Program (AAP)

The AAP is an initiative started under the Jun-Narang administration to help seniors find answers and advice from Alumni. We would like to make the AAP a subset of the aforementioned Stuyvesant High School Alumni-Student Networking Site. However, while the Networking Site is being created, we would like to make the currently existing AAP site more user-friendly. We would recreate the data structure to support functioning alumni accounts and sends unanswered student questions directly to them.

Administration

❖ Announcements & Communication

The Wang-Sofat administration was successful in creating strong relationships with the administration. This allowed them to receive key updates and clarifications that they would then report back to the student body. We plan to continue this work. We find it essential to work more closely with Ms. Ingram,

as she has done an amazing job to bridge the gap between stakeholders and the administration.

❖ **Policy Reforms**

While pursuing policy changes, it is important that we work alongside the administration and seek feedback from them, which can then be incorporated into our proposals. These changes often have legal concerns, which the administration is most familiar with addressing.

United Federation of Teachers (UFT)

- ❖ While pursuing policy changes, it is also important that we work alongside the UFT. Their support is crucial for issues and proposals we bring up to the Student Leadership Team (SLT). We believe that collaboration and compromise with them will make our efforts more effective.

The Spectator

❖ **Transparency**

We want to be held accountable for our mistakes but also want students to be aware of our efforts and accomplishments. We plan to work with the Spectator to publish progress reports for the Student Union and Caucuses. We hope to maintain transparency and keep students well-informed of not only our goals, but also our progress, detailing what we have accomplished thus far, projects we are currently working on, and what we strive to finish by certain dates. More details are outlined in our [Communication and Transparency](#) section.

Student Life Improvements

Description

Despite the fact that the main goal of the Student Union is to make the lives of Stuyvesant students easier and happier, in recent years, improvements in student life have been limited. We will pursue both small and large-scale policies but also create new programs and infrastructures that we hope will make students' overall high school experience better.

Our Plan

Phone-Charging Stations

In the new and improved [cell phone policy](#), Clause Nine states, "Students may not use school electrical outlets to recharge cell phones." However, we believe that it is imperative for students to be able to charge their phones, as phones are often their sole medium of communication with their parent or guardian. Thus, we would like to explore the idea of having designated charging stations in the school — or build off the work done by the Sophomore Caucus Sofat-Wening administration and utilize the sponsorship offer they had obtained from LocknCharge, a company that specializes in phone-charging stations and charging carts.

PSAL Frees

Gym free periods for students in PSAL sports were first brought back into the discussion by the Freshman Caucus Sofat-Wening administration. Since then, there has been great progress made with the proposal. Under the Wang-Sofat administration, the proposal was brought to the SLT and was shut down due to legal constraints. Principal Contreras has agreed to create a sub-committee to deal with the various intricacies. If the sub-committee does not meet during this school year, we will see to its creation next year. If this does not succeed, we will work alongside other SLT members to address the issues and find a compromise to get the policy instituted by the end of our presidency.

Reforming Financial Allocations

❖ Club-Pub Allocations

Though the Wang-Sofat administration did a good job in allocating more funds than the previous Chowdhury-Valentino administration, both failed to do so in a streamlined fashion. We plan to make sure that all activities know about this opportunity and to help all activities receive any necessary funding. This is also

where our aforementioned plan with the Parents' Association would be highly valuable.

❖ **Caucus Budgeting**

We will continue to use the Cost Revenue Analysis model to approve Caucus expenditures for events. However, we plan to be more supportive of Caucuses investing in appliances and materials that might be expensive — as long as they are also sustainable. We will ensure that our Budget Department is always there to assist Caucuses with budgeting.

Finishing the Fifth-Floor Balcony Project

Working under the leadership of Julian Giordano, the External Affairs department has fought since 2017 to make the fifth-floor balcony accessible to students (with student seating and a greenhouse). Since External Affairs has already partnered with an architecture firm and applied for numerous grants to fund the project, its completion should run smoothly, and we plan to execute it fully.

An Upgraded Printing Station

The current printing station is very useful to many students, but we have plans to improve upon it. These include possibly securing grants from Staples (or another paper provider) and adding another Google Cloud printer on a different floor to create better accessibility. We would use sponsorships to fund and ground these ideas.

Better Vending Machine Choices

Over the past year, the Coordinator of Student Activities (COSA), Mr. Polazzo, partnered with Ito En to implement a Tea's Tea vending machine on the second floor. Although the machine has proved to be massively popular with students and faculty alike, it is facing issues with compliance to the Chancellor's Regulations. We will work to create a compromise that will allow the Tea's Tea to remain at Stuyvesant, as well as to allow for similar machines with beverages and food that students enjoy to be created. In the meanwhile, we will collaborate with the administration to improve current vending machine food and beverage choices based on student interest.

StuyVantage Expansion

We want to create cost-effective options for the student body in all aspects of their student and extracurricular lives. During the Wang-Sofat Administration, the SU secured discounts at various stores, including Shake Shack, Terry's, and Poke Green. We aim to expand the range of stores at which these discounts are available, as well as bring StuyVantage to art and study material suppliers (such as Staples). Most

importantly, we want to step up the advertisement of StuyVantage to students so that everyone is aware of the discounts they can receive with their Stuyvesant IDs.

Upgrading StuyActivities and Improving Student-Run Extracurriculars

Under the Wang-Sofat administration, the Student Union launched StuyActivities, a new initiative to help student organizations, clubs, and publications run more effectively. We would like to expand upon these efforts in various ways: we plan to update the StuyActivities website to make it easier to navigate (by fixing the issue that some people have encountered with correctly filtering the numerous activities listed in the catalog, for example) and we also want to assist club leaders in keeping track of member attendance for major events. A possible way to do that would be by setting up scanning or swiping-in stations where members would be able to sign in to events with their ID cards. We would also like this more parent friendly and work with Ms. Ingram to create more tutorials amongst other changes.

School Spirit

❖ Live Streaming Sports Games

Stuyvesant has dozens of PSAL teams that compete in games and meets across the city. In order to make it easier for students to watch their peers compete in sports, we would like to set up a platform for live-streaming games. We would first implement this with playoff and home games as a trial, and depending on the results perhaps work to slowly expand it. This project would also be ripe for collaboration and partnership with the Spectator, which could assist and/or manage the live streaming as part of their sports coverage.

❖ Pep Rally

The annual Pep Rally was started under the Junior Caucus Saha-Rohrig and has been continued by the Student Union since then. We plan to continue this but would ideally like to grow the event.

❖ School-Wide Spirit Week

Many students have expressed discontent regarding Spirit Days being a senior-only tradition. While we value this tradition, we would like to have a school-wide spirit week alongside the Senior Spirit Days planned by Indicator, the school yearbook.

❖ Stuyloween & Boograms

Started under the Sofat-Wening Sophomore Caucus, Stuyvesant holds an annual Stuyloween tradition where students can write Boograms with attached candy to be sent to their friends during homeroom. We seek to continue this great tradition, but to improve upon its organization. In the past, some students have had their Boograms have been lost in delivery (the code names for the candy/chocolate to be attached were mistaken for the

homeroom numbers, one example being 1C referring to both a bag of chocolates as well as a homeroom), and the general sales process has been chaotic. We would ensure this Stuyloween tradition is properly executed and that all Boograms are delivered to their intended recipients by changing the code names used and by better organizing and publicizing sales.

❖ **One Unified Mascot**

The Wang-Sofat administration conducted a poll amongst team captains to gauge interest in this subject. Over 70% of the captains voted for the change. We would like to pick up this project wherever it is left off and bring together our athletics under one banner. This is largely depend on student interest and will be determined by a school-wide vote.

College Trips

Before 2016, Stuyvesant students were able to go on overnight college trips. Since then, the faults of one grade have cost the future grades the consequence of not being able to go on similar trips. We aim to bring back overnight college trips so that future upperclassmen have the chance to learn and explore different colleges.

Communication Improvement and Transparency

We want to make sure that all students are given the resources they need to see and understand what projects the Student Union is working on. This will also help in making sure the student body is updated on all of the advancements in the SU so that they can begin to use these benefits.

Student Opportunity Bulletin

The Wang-Sofat Administration began initial discussion with Mr. Blumm about moving all his opportunity bulletins on to a website, which would make archives easy for students to search and filter through. We want to build upon this discussion and make this website into a reality. We see its interactive nature as a potential for numerous features (such as deadline alerts, “favoriting” abilities, etc...) that make it easier for Stuyvesant students to succeed outside of the classroom.

Continued SU Communication and Transparency

Description

The first priority of any government should be to maintain a strong connection and transparency with its constituents. While in the past the SU has struggled to provide regular newsletters, reports, and progress updates, we strive to have full transparency with the student body and to use communication to not only keep everyone in the know, but to hold ourselves accountable to our goals.

Our Plan

Reforming SU Communication

❖ **Flyers and In-School Communication**

The SU already releases flyers with information on events hosted by the SU and the Caucuses. However, we aim to release these flyers more frequently and in more locations around the school so that the student body can more clearly be made aware of events. In addition, we plan to use flyers to share periodic updates on progress the SU and Caucuses have made on their projects.

❖ **Newsletters and Online Communication**

Although the SU has traditionally sent out newsletters with updates to students' emails, these newsletters often lack frequency and consistency. We aim to send out monthly newsletters that are clear, simple, and interesting for students to read. We also plan to centralize information on the numerous newsletters run by SU Departments and Caucus, such as the External Affairs Department's Civic Engagement Course or Sophomore Caucus' "So You Want to Be A..."

❖ **Q&A Forum**

In order to improve the accessibility and responsiveness of the Student Union to students, we plan to implement an online Q&A Forum through which students can ask questions to the SU and receive quick responses. This would allow students to not only communicate easily with the SU, but also allow students to use the forum to see the answers to questions their peers have already asked.

Redefining SU Transparency

❖ **Budget Reports**

Continuing with the work of the Wang-Sofat administration, we plan to produce periodic budget reports that make clear the finances of the SU, and explain the processes of its Budget Committee in approving expenditures and generating revenue. Apart from being featured in the Spectator, we would share these budget reports through our website for them to be accessible to as many students as possible.

❖ **Spectator Updates**

In order to ensure the utmost transparency on all operations conducted by the Student Union, we will work closely with the Spectator to provide students with regular progress updates. These will allow students to fully hold the SU accountable to its goals and projects.

Our Experience

With a combined half a decade of experience in the SU, we have spent our Stuyvesant careers working to create meaningful change for the student body. Outside of the SU (and even outside of Stuyvesant) we have been involved in our communities and in local organizations that have given us the skills necessary to excel in leading the SU. Here is a list of some of some of the work we've done and our accomplishments:

- Vishwaa and Julian have worked on the Manhattan Borough Student Advisory Council for a combined three years, collaborating with other students from high schools around the borough to draft school and city-level policy initiatives.
- Vishwaa and Julian have collaborated with the DOE Department of Community Affairs to improve the transitions of students in the Discovery Program into Stuyvesant.
- Vishwaa and Julian have worked with COSA Mr. Polazzo to bring a Tea's Tea beverage machine to Stuyvesant.
- Vishwaa has served as the Freshman Caucus President, Sophomore Caucus President, Student Union Vice President and the Student Representative on the School Leadership Team (SLT).
- Vishwaa has planned multiple profitable dances. Under his administration, the Freshman/Sophomore Caucuses were able to host the most successful Freshman Snow Ball and SophFrosh SemiFormal in terms of both attendance and overall profit.
- Vishwaa fought to ensure that all students could wear sweatpants for physical education if they didn't feel comfortable wearing shorts for religious/cultural reasons.
- Vishwaa has been highly successful in obtaining sponsorships since freshman year. These include deals with Dos Toros and the Brookfield Place Ice Skating Rink.
- Vishwaa has worked to institute Sexual Misconduct workshops for freshman in conjunction with the External Affairs department and guidance counselors.
- Vishwaa has reformed the club pub chartering process by implementing [StuyActivities](#). This website not only allows students to charter their activities but also provides them with resources to manage their activities.
- Vishwaa has increased transparency at all levels within the Student Union. Under his administration, the SU has instituted monthly newsletters with department and Caucus updates. He has also collaborated with the Spectator to release a complete SU Budget Report and a mid-year SU Check In.

- Vishwaa has worked alongside the administration and Physical Education department to ensure plausibility when drafting the PSAL Physical Education (P.E.) Fees proposal. He has succeeded in having the proposal presented at SLT this year and is currently working towards reaching a compromise by creating a subcommittee with all stakeholders.
- Vishwaa was able to resurrect StuyVantage for the first time since 2006, providing Stuyvesant students with discounts at local eateries.
- Vishwaa has been successful in reforming the Cell Phone Policy alongside other members of the School Leadership Team to allow more areas of access for cell phones
- Vishwaa has been successful in not only starting a dialogue at the School Leadership Team for the need of a new and improved homework policy but also drafting a new homework policy that will severely impact the lives of students.
- Vishwaa has managed and grown a budget of over \$180,000. He has also been able to increase the amount of funds allocated to activities and hold club-pub allocations twice a year
- Vishwaa has promoted school spirit by organizing the Pep Rally and working to unify Stuyvesant athletics under one banner.
- Vishwaa has been able to give Caucuses more power within the Cabinet, allowing the elected officials to make their voice heard and not overshadowed by appointed members.
- Vishwaa has helped devise the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals with the Student Leadership Team by analyzing key data collected by the administration and DOE.
- Vishwaa has helped plan the logistics of SING! by managing concessions, security, apparel, ticketing, allocation and helping out with administrative duties.
- Vishwaa has served on Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney's where he advises the Congresswoman on the problems faced by the youth. He was been able to tackle various issues such as but not limited to gun reform, health care accessibility and educational reform.
- Vishwaa has served as the Deputy Chief of Staff for Tahseen Chowdhury's campaign for State Senate.
- Julian has served as the Director of External Affairs of the Student Union for the past two year, where he has worked on numerous projects with public and private organizations
- Julian has led the [Civic Engagement Course](#), a series of bi-weekly emails to enrolled Stuyvesant students explaining different aspects of local and national government and providing opportunities for students to become involved in their communities

- Julian has made progress on opening the 5th floor balcony to students with a seating area and greenhouse. As a part of this work, he has collaborated with the Manhattan's Borough President's Office in applying for grants and funding, and has worked closely with the administration to organize designs, blueprints, and cost-estimates.
- Julian managed Security for SING! 2019, overseeing check-in, concessions, merchandise, and SING! Video sales.
- Julian regularly represents Stuyvesant at Community Board 1 meetings and at Battery Park City Authority Meetings, where, amongst other topics, he has advocated for Stuyvesant's escalators to be replaced to the DOE and government officials.
- Julian serves on the Chancellor's Student Advisory Council, a group of 30 youth from around the city, where he advises the NYC DOE Chancellor on changes in school policy. He has spent the past year advocating for more equitable practice in education. These includes culturally responsive pedagogy, implicit bias trainings, PSAL for all, and restorative justice.
- Julian was a founding member of the Youth Technical Assistance Center on Addressing Disproportionality (YTAC-D) under the NYU Metro Center. Since, he has continuously advocated for elevating student voice in the effort to foster inclusive, humanizing and critical learning environments with equitable practices. Julian has presented his research and work at Columbia University and NYU.
- Julian is and has been an active member in New York City politics. He has interned for Daisy Paez (District Leader, AD 65), Alison Tan (campaign for City Council District 20), Joseph Garba (campaign for Democratic State Committee), and Yuh Line Niou (State Assemblywoman, AD 65).
- Julian helped found and is the current communications strategist for the West 65th-66th Streets Block Association, which advocates for neighborhood change and coordinates with elected officials, Community Board 7, the 20th Police Precinct to serve the local community.
- Julian has also interned with City Council Member Helen Rosenthal (District 6) in helping implement Participatory Budgeting throughout the district.