

Report on the 189th Semi-Annual Alumni Council Meeting – 12/2-4/04

We may come to know 2004 as The Year of the Alum. Another valuable Council meeting, marked by good information flow and candid discussion with top people in the Administration and five, count 'em five, Trustees in attendance. Skeptics may say that the strong effort we're seeing to improve the dialogue between the College and its alumni traces directly to the Capital Campaign, but I believe the desire to fix the communication breakdown, both perceived and real, is sincere. Here are some highlights from the meeting:

Nominating Committee Report – Alums will be asked to elect two new Alumni Trustees this spring, choosing from a slate of four candidates:

- Sheila C. Cheston '80 – Sr. VP and General Counsel, BAE Systems, a \$6 billion defense and aerospace company.
- Gregg L. Engles '79 – Chair and CEO of Dean Foods, largest dairy products company in the U.S.
- Richard W. Lewis '84 – CEO of Curzon Global Partners, a leading real estate advisory company.
- Curtis R. Welling '71, Tuck '77 – CEO of AmeriCares, the disaster relief and humanitarian aid organization.

For bio details go to <http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/index.shtml> and click on Alumni Council Announces Slate of Candidates for Alumni Trustee.

Admissions Report – Dean Karl Furstenberg – Dartmouth makes 11,000 to 12,000 admissions decisions a year, admitting about 18% to end up with a class of 1,075 or so. Diversity is important, including socio-economic diversity – 45% of the student body receives some degree of need-blind financial assistance, and 14% are the first persons in their families to attend college. Dartmouth plans to stick with its early admissions plan requiring a firm commitment by both parties, even though some peers are moving to a looser “early action” system. Dartmouth offered 390 students early admission (35% of the class), drawing from an exceptionally strong applicant pool. The College has improved its electronic admissions tools, as applicants rely more and more on website information and electronic communication. Alumni interviews are more important than ever, since the growing applicant pool means Admissions are seeing a smaller percentage of total applicants. Alums willing to volunteer should contact their local District Enrollment Director or the College.

Trustee Working Group on Alumni Relations – Five Trustees from the working group were present seeking input from the Council: Karen Francis '84 (chair), Brad Evans '64, Ed Haldeman '70, Nancy Kepes Jeton '76 and Al Mulley '70. They are focusing on three areas: alumni governance, alumni communication and “individual sentiment”. The Trustees have always listened more to alums than most alums think, but the Board realizes they need to establish a stronger, more visible dialogue. Comments and suggestions were elicited – e.g., there's a strong need to acknowledge and report on alumni minority views and to treat those well-intentioned views with greater respect. The working group will continue to seek input and explore ways to improve alumni relations, aiming at having a report out in September '05.

Student Life – Dean James Larimore – The College believes it has achieved a balanced level of diversity. The '08 class includes 31.1% students of color (13.9% Asian, 7.6% Black, 6.2%

Hispanic and 3.8% Native American) versus 19.9 % in the class of '98. The minority acceptance climate on campus has improved in recent years – a '04 student survey showed only 3% think there's a problem with racial harassment, 6% sexual harassment and 3% harassment regarding sexual orientation (the figures in a '99 study were two to four times higher). Dartmouth works hard to encourage close relations between students and their teachers - 84% of seniors say they've gotten to know faculty members personally and 76% say they turn to the faculty for advice. Studies show Dartmouth students have closer relationships with the faculty than is the case at peer schools. Efforts are being made to further strengthen these ties through several College sponsored programs: "Take a Prof to Lunch" (30 one-on-one sessions/week), FAST (Faculty and Students Together)-Talk Buffets (300 students/term), faculty book and author luncheons at the Dartmouth Bookstore (120 -180 students/term) and stepped-up residence based student-faculty programs (85 in '03 -'04 versus 12 in '99 -'00). (The writer encouraged Dean Larimore to foster such programs with Greek houses as well.) Periodic surveys show student satisfaction with their Dartmouth experience is on the rise.

Dartmouth Writing Program – Tom Cormen, Director – The new head of the Dartmouth Writing Program is a MIT PhD and professor of Computer Science, not someone in the English department. That's partly because he's the best-selling co-author of "Introduction to Algorithms", the bible on that subject, and partly because the program's focus is on improving expository writing (versus creating the great American novel) and research/organizational skills. Dartmouth's first-year writing courses prepare students to engage fully with their intellectual work in every discipline. In order to provide a solid foundation for that work, Dartmouth requires students to take two writing courses in their first year: English 2-3 or English 5, and the English Seminar. Although some students are exempted from the English requirement, all students are required to take the First-Year Seminar offered in the Humanities, Social Science and Sciences. Nearly 2000 students in total will participate in the program in '04 -'05.

Alumni Governance Task Force Report – Joe Stevenson '57, Chair – The Task Force is making good progress in its work to create a new constitution for alumni governance. Major objectives include: reunification of the Association of Alumni (all alums) and the representative alumni body (the Alumni Council), greater democratization in alumni governance, simplification of the Alumni trustee election process, better representation for classes and affiliate groups and an improved process for future constitutional change. The Task Force is working closely with Association and Alumni Council officers as well as the Dartmouth Association for Open Governance (DAOG) that opposed the previous draft of a new constitution. In fact, two members of DAOG (John Daukas '84 and Bill Hutchinson '76) are important contributing members of the Task Force. While nothing is carved in stone, it seems likely the Task Force will recommend making the Association of Alumni the overarching alumni governance body, with a closely linked representative Assembly and an Alumni Liaison Board (ALB) charged with fostering direct and open communication between alumni and the Trustees/Administration. As soon as a couple of pending discussion points are resolved, the Task Force will create for broad circulation a white paper describing its basic proposals, while working on the preliminary drafting of a new constitution. Input will be sought from all alums prior to coming up with a final document to be voted on, first by the Alumni Council (possibly in May '05) and then by the Association of Alumni (possibly in late '05). The Task Force will move ahead as quickly as possible, consistent with seeking input from all interested alumni and making sure we end up with an alumni governance system the vast majority of alums can embrace with enthusiasm.

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(Comments? Questions? Reach me at Jim.Adler@Valley.net)

