

Letter to the editor, *Wall Street Journal*

Your Sept. 1 editorial about Dartmouth's proposed alumni constitution was the equivalent of a middle-schooler's blog entry. You got the number of alumni right, but that's about it (I counted 25 inaccuracies, *footnoted below in the editorial itself*).

Beyond the factual errors, the editors displayed a complete lack of understanding of the benefit of having one-on-one contests for Dartmouth trusteeship in which a clear, majority-favored, winner emerges. In 2005, four Alumni Council nominees together received 47% more alumni votes than the two dissident petitioners combined. But under the current system, Dartmouth ended up with two petition trustees not as interested in Dartmouth's brilliant future as they are in making a political test case for all of higher education (as the editorial notes).

The proposed constitution, which promotes one-on-one trustee contests, was created out of accord between collegial dissidents willing to negotiate and the long-time volunteers they regarded as insiders. It took five long years to produce (and, yes, it was in the works long before the recent petitioners had set their sights on "reforming" Dartmouth). It is as much a treaty as it is a constitution. Dartmouth alumni weary of the nation's culture wars being fought on their beloved Green will vote yes to approve it.

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Kelley Fead, Dartmouth '78, served on the committee that drafted the proposed constitution.

CATALOGUE OF ERRORS OF WALL STREET JOURNAL EDITORIAL

1. Alumni do not elect trustees; they nominate them for seating by the Board itself.
2. Eight are not chosen by popular vote (see above).
3. Remaining seats are not reserved for major donors. Two are for the president of the College and the governor of New Hampshire; the rest are filled by people with needed skills and talents (which can include fund-raising).
4. It's amazing that anyone could imagine the trustees as rubber stamps. These are people who are tops in their fields—chosen by alumni and the Board specifically because of the expertise, talents and skills they bring to the table. No shrinking violets there.
5. Slates have offered choices of backgrounds, skills and political views. Even in the past balloting, Ric Lewis offered views probably more in line with petitioners and was nominated by the Nominating Committee.

6. There were two, not three, trustee contests in which the three petitioners won pluralities and eventually were seated on the Board.
7. The petitioners together had many fewer votes than the nominated candidates together. In 2005, four Alumni Council nominees together received 47% more alumni votes than the two dissident petitioners combined.
8. The “intense opposition” was independent alumni battling the petitioners with agendas.
9. How can anyone read dissatisfaction with Dartmouth into a vote taken when alumni giving is at a healthy 51%, student satisfaction is at an all-time high, and applications and enrollment are at their highest ever?
10. Lobbying efforts are mounted by a paid political organization (the Hanover Institute), the deep-pocketed *Dartmouth Review* and an outside conservative-funded shell group (American Council of Trustees and Administrators).
11. Constitutional scrutiny started in earnest in summer 2001 with a joint committee of alumni formed by the Council and the Association.
12. The first proposed alumni constitution, defeated in an Association vote, was proposed in 2003. The one from the Alumni Governance Task Force was proposed in April 2005. Alumni (not the administration, by the way) first proposed establishing a committee to rewrite the constitution in a meeting in May 2001.
13. Any alterations to the task force’s drafts were based on comments sought from the community. Dissidents loudly protested instant runoff voting, another way to make a system that results in a clear majority winner in trustee balloting, so the task force designed the one-to-one contests system proposed in the constitution.
14. Nothing is said about the “incorporation of trustees” in the constitution.
15. The new document is designed to put people of all views together and let the chips fall where they may. It is designed to make sure no one—not insiders, not outsiders—with solid funding and an agenda can take over either the Association or the Board of Trustees.
16. Having petitions due before the slate is announced, as Yale does now, allows petitioners to make any case they like. Those rights are preserved. Petitioners run against the establishment rather than against individuals, so timing is immaterial about the announcement of names.

17. The rules would create a more level playing field, although it still favors petitioners who have several months more time in which to campaign. The constitution would make balloting more fair by promoting head-to-head contests.
18. The constitution does increase fairness and transparency because anyone can run for anything and vote on everything. For the first time, all alumni would be able to elect by mail the president of the Association of Alumni, the president of the Alumni Assembly, the vice president of the Alumni Assembly, the chair of the Alumni Liaison Board, 21 at-large members of the Association of Alumni, half of the nominating and balloting committees. Moreover, class representation would be doubled, with class and alumni club reps elected.
19. The Alumni Council today has 96 members who serve on committees and communicate with their constituents. Where's the bureaucracy?
20. The Assembly would be more representative, with all classes represented up to the 50th reunion and elections urged for class and club elections. Twenty-one at-large seats are directly elected by alumni.
21. The Assembly has less to say about nominating trustees than the current Council does. The new Association nominating committee would have half of its members elected at large and half of its members elected by the Assembly. Right now the current Council nominating committee membership is elected entirely by the Council.
22. In accordance with the bylaws, the election date can be set by the Association executive committee at any time.
23. Transition provisions provide for an orderly transition with elections occurring as soon as possible after passage.
24. Alumni continue to have a say in trustee elections as the transition occurs.
25. Dartmouth faculty have had no involvement in alumni constitutional debates or in balloting for trustees.