

Dartmouth Alumni Council Meeting Report

Don O'Neill June 10, 2022

Overview and summary

The first in person Alumni Council meeting in 3 years was held in Hanover May 19-21. The AC serves as the eyes and ears of the Alumni. Ostensibly to provide opportunity for 2-way communication, I know I learned a lot from the presentations from staff, faculty and school leadership, and from informal discussions with fellow alumni. I'm not so sure how much is heard, valued, new and different going in the other direction. These are not stupid people. They take their jobs seriously and I doubt what they hear from us is much different from what they've already heard or know.

I've organized this report in such a way as to present the facts as reported by others combined with my own experiences, hunches and observations, as a Dartmouth alum and as a businessman leader.

In this report you'll note 4 things: one, a lot of the details can be found in the Thursday and Friday sections; two, I did not spend much time on the criteria for the 19th President in the Wheelock succession. Our class, the Board, other alums, even students seem pretty well aligned on the issue. 8 Trustee alums are on the search committee of 18 members. Three, the main themes are stated many times throughout the report, so no dumbed down summary of them; Four, I've tried to see the challenges and choices of the last 9 years as Phil saw them and dealt with them. Looking at the world through the eyes of the Leader.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent our great class on the Council. I learned a lot which I've tried to pass on to all of you.

Phil "pays your money, takes your choice." (Aldous Huxley)

Phil is an academic, a PHD from Cal Tech. I assume that's what our trustees wanted and that's what we got. He's an introvert, not an easy conversationalist, nor a dynamic public speaker. But he impresses me as a man possessing a backbone of steel and when convinced of something being the right cause or direction, he's going to stay on it until it's done. I also believe that he is a good man, who loves his Alma Mater, and would do anything to support and improve it.

That being said, how has he done over his 9-year term? How do you grade him? A, B, C, D? 10 on a scale of 10, a 5 or less? 10 years is a pretty good period of time to assess someone. Like 2 business cycles.

Only my view, but I think he's a lot closer to an A than he is to a D. I suggest one's performance is driven by the challenges one faces, the choices one makes, one's vision of the present and future, and the leadership one provides to create and execute on that

vision. Phil was and is an academic. He feels that his charge was to dramatically raise the bar on academic excellence. I think he would say that he did very well in this regard

Phil's Challenge and if he expected business as usual, he got a rude awakening. Financial problems dogged him right at the start requiring layoffs and budget cuts.

1. The perception that Dartmouth had lagged academically and that it needed to resolve the incongruities between being a world class undergraduate teaching institution and a pre- eminent R1 rated research university (which it had lost).
2. A perceived (and probably real) lack of diversity, equity and inclusion on campus (leadership, staff, Board, students)
3. The riots and turmoil caused by reaction to George Floyd's murder. BLM, White Supremacy etc. etc.
4. Covid and online / virtual learning - a subject all its own. The impact was devastating.
5. Alumni dissatisfaction - reaction to "Wokenism ", perceived lack of freedom of expression, fairness to all political viewpoints, decline of Dartmouth Athletics and so on.
6. Insufficient funds to finance the growing disparity between an ever increasing list price (\$70 k) of a Dartmouth education, the ACTUAL cost of that education (2x that amount - \$140k) and what families could realistically afford and what Dartmouth needed to do physically and programmatically to remain on the cutting edge of world class US and Global institutions. Dartmouth does not have name recognition globally as HYP do. We're an afterthought or no thought at all.
7. Behavioral issues concerning alcohol abuse and sexual harassment on campus. Even among the faculty.
8. The lack of adequate residential housing for students. Many of older dorms were unlivable
9. Debate without resolution of a 10–15-year Dartmouth Master Plan. Realize that the Dartmouth campus consists of 237 acres. We have this rep of being this in the wild rural place, but 237 acres is not a lot of space without a ton of reimagining. Along with that issue is that there are many restraints put on growth by interest groups such as the class of '61. "Don't mess with Frost", the Hanover community, the faculty. Quite a planning and leadership challenge not the least of which is can Dartmouth be all that it wants to be at the existing Covid stretched size of 4600 undergraduates or the budgeted size of 4200 undergrads. Note graduate students add another 2000 to the equation. Phil believes that we have to grow our size and he stated so to us.
10. Apps and enrollment had stayed constant for many years. Selectivity, test scores were barely holding their own. We were sliding in the rankings from US News, Forbes, Niche. Schools such as Brown, Northwestern, John's Hopkins, Duke were often ranked higher.

So, given the condition of the school, our many strengths and a few weaknesses, what choices did he make? Where did he focus? What did he do and what did he not do?

1. Successfully turned around the fiscal operating performance of the school.
2. Settled the debate as to whether we're an undergraduate focused institution or a research university. We're both and in his view, they go hand in hand. Best faculty attract the best students and vice versa. He reaccredited us as an R1 research university and rejoined the Association of American Universities.

3. Hired Bob Lasher as VP. Advancement to build and execute the next major capital campaign The Call to Lead which raised over \$ 3 bil to fund need blind financial aid domestically and most recently to be one of only 6 institutions to offer need blind admissions to international students. Additionally, funded the development of the West End of campus project with the new class of 1982 Center for Engineering and Computer Science, The Irving Institute for Energy in Society. Integrated with Tuck and Thayer we have a world class physical and programmatic center on the West End area of campus for research, project based and experiential learning, and entrepreneurship
4. Hired Lee Coffin as VP admissions and financial aid. Applications have been built to over 28,000 the last 2 years yielding 70 % on an admit rate of 6.2 %. Records. Need blind international admissions should increase awareness internationally. 15% of students live outside the US. (# 1 &2 are UK and India).
5. Built Diversity, Inclusion and equity. The extent of diversity that I saw was transforming
6. Built out the faculty in key departmental areas.
7. Amidst the turmoil kept the campus relatively safe and peaceful.
8. Arrested the spread of sexual harassment and alcohol abuse
9. Validated graduate studies at Dartmouth by building the Guarini School of Graduate and Advanced Studies. I believe the new building is actually named Anonymous Hall. Not sure I understand that choice. The College is also about to open a new grad student residential Hall out near the hospital.

What choices did he make, intentional or otherwise, about issues which are current needs but which he chose not to tackle or which he couldn't get done.

1. Residential housing
2. Athletics
3. School size
4. Creating a compelling story communicating his plan.
5. Maintaining freedom of expression as a key tenant of a liberal arts education while at the same time leading the College and society to become more diverse

Thursday PM session of Alumni Council (AC)

OPENING SESSION

There were presentations by Laurie Shapiro '95 AC President; Rachel Drew '98, Alumni Liaison Committee (ALC) Chair ;Cheryl Bascomb '82, VP of Alumni Relations ;Scott Brown '84a, Interim Dean of the College (big focus on Mental Health) I'm not going to detail these presentations except to capture a few key findings

The ALC surveyed all 80,000 alumni. Only 154 we're returned which is pretty weak to say the least. Interestingly, however, the top 5 issues mentioned in the responses have been important themes in our own EC discussions as they were throughout the 3-day meeting

1. Strategic Direction

2. Infrastructure / Housing / Size

3. Athletics

4. Freedom of expression

5. Admissions

There was an attitude survey in March with only 200 responses: more negative view 32%, more positive 25%, same 43%. I'm not sure what conclusions can be drawn. We

The presentation by Scott Brown was very interesting. It dealt with the growing importance of mental health issues on campus and in the community. Such that over 33% of students are accessing counseling and other mental help assistance. More would use it if access were more readily available.

Dartmouth is developing a Mental Health strategic plan that will provide Life Skills training, Social Connectedness, identification of Students at Risk, and enable quick access to counseling services when most needed. We have recently hired 16 new counselors. Counseling is available in 6 different languages. There is a Suicide Prevention program. After the meeting I asked Scott if we had a suicide problem and he said we did not. I also asked about addiction, such as hard drugs (heroin, fentanyl) and he gave me the same reply. Biggest concern seems to be binge drinking (hard alcohol ban?)

EVENING SESSION

Each of the AC committees then met after dinner, usually with a staff or faculty resource present. As I was assigned to the Admissions / Enrollment committee, our resource was **Lee Coffin, Vice Provost for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid**. He was present virtually. Some stats he presented for the class of '26/which I think the entire community can be proud of are:

- 28,336 applications, almost the same as for class of '25.
- 6.2% admit rate; all top rated have experienced similar results. Princeton is in the 4 % range, Harvard 4.6%
- 70% yield (up from 49% a few years ago)
- 16% low income ;15% non US; major feeder countries are UK and India
- need blind for international. Only 6 other institutions are need blind
- no loans required for families below \$125 k, no parental contribution for incomes below \$ 65 k, 49% qualified for some type of financial aid.

In addition, the committee met with 3 students - 2 males from N Cal, 1 female from Wales. The female was a member of the National Championship Women's Rugby team. They were really great, and we warmed up to each other as the meeting went on. Here's a summary of their insights

1. They applied to D for a number of reasons but in general it was because it was:
 - small
 - possessed the Dartmouth spirit, a sense of Community
 - offered lots of opportunities to do research with great teachers

2. Two of them are campus tour guides. The most asked question from prospective applicants pertains to the availability of mental health support at D. They confided that it is there, but very hard to access. "Covid was brutal for many students".

3. Something is missing from online / virtual learning. Not going to replace the demand and need for in person, high touch, residential college experiences.

4. We discussed some of their criteria for selection of our next President. Their feedback was

- personally exemplify diversity, inclusion and equity
- an alumnus
- a diverse person him/ herself
- next CEO should be able to relate, more of an extrovert and a generalist instead of an academician. A get "out and about" type. We used to call it MBWA (Management by walking around).

Friday am session of Alumni Council (AC)

Campaign for Dartmouth update (Bob Lasher '88 - Sr VP Advancement)

- reports to Phil
- The Alumni council started the DCF in 1914
- Call To Lead started in 2013. Has raised over \$3 bil.
- Key goals: advance D's educational model; make discoveries that improve human condition; prepare students for lives of wise leadership
- 7 new state of the art facilities inc Dartmouth Hall and The Hop
- Development of the West End and the Arts District
- Need blind international students / one of 6 in the US)
- BOD challenged to double annual income to \$328 mil from \$154 mil from previous campaign
- There are 17 institutions having \$3B + campaigns: D tied with Cal tech only 2 w less than 100k alumni. D got 60% participation others less than 40%
- Collective Acts - classes coming together like '82 Engineering and computer science center
- Only 1250 donors needed to reach 60% participation
- Gratitude Tour - Boston, NY, Chicago, SF etc. before Phil leaves
- About 14 months left in campaign
- Residential housing big topic today but was not 7 - 8 years ago. Long campaign things change during it
- Mental health rising priority as well
- Dartmouth's endowment is now over \$ 8 bil (before the recent market meltdown)

Peter Roby Athletics at Dartmouth

- interim role 15 months in role
- Wanted to make decisions not caretaker
- Covid put students through difficult times (not play in 1-2 years)
- Got kids back playing. Big achievement. Keep them safe

- Teams have been reinstated (for how long?)
- Gained trust?
- 3 internal reviews: Ivy, NCAA, outside firm
- Title IX issues being implemented. What issues?
- Hired 8 new coaches
- Proud of work he's done
- Toby is a firm vigorous supporter of excellence in athletics. Before he leaves he wants BOT to commit to Excellence. That word was written on his notepad
- Avg GPA at D among 1000 athletes is 3.6. The number of young athletes is 35-40 mil. The number of Div 1 athletes is about 2% of that The numbers who qualify to play at Div 1 level and be admitted and succeed at Ivy level is minuscule.
- Continuity of Coaching staff one of reasons why Buddy and football have been so successful. Many coaches and staffs have only been here for 1-2 years through Covid and are just now beginning to coach. Coaches are young, not paid competitively, and frequently move on as D was a steppingstone to something better
- Chris Jenny and a number of influential, big donor alumni have been vocal about the sad decline in varsity sport competitiveness. Currently Dartmouth is next to last in championships in the last 10 years (Phil's tenure).Except for football, we are at best a doormat. Championships: Brown - 4, Columbia - 32, Cornell - 31, Dartmouth - 14, Harvard - 71, Penn - 28, Princeton - 85, Yale - 28. Brown has begun a campaign to turn their performance around. What was Dartmouth's response to address the problem - cut 10% out of recruited athletes by shit canning 5 sports that had to be reinstated for title IX problems, losing coaches, trust, credibility in the process. How we were able to attract Mike Harrity from West Point looks miraculous. Can he be that good? What's missing? A clear STATEMENT that a Dartmouth core value is to compete effectively and successfully at the Ivy League level and that Mike will be given the support to build and execute a plan to achieve that objective. One objective should be to double or triple the number of Ivy titles over the next 5 years. I'd also keep Peter Roby around as an advisor to Mike.
- Dartmouth Friends of the various sports is a significant contributor to their success
- "How many times do we have to prove it ". Athletes are a worthy part of the student body.
- Size a problem. Everyone growing except us. AC needs to support undergraduate population.
- The 20 students we lost per class in recruited athletes have not been reinstated.
- Roby sees the situation exactly like us. Size, excellence. BOT don't have a clear sense of mission and do not (along with Phil) have a commitment to Athletic excellence at Dartmouth

Interview with Phil Hanlon

- 2 new buildings Irving and 1982 affirm D's commitment to innovation and entrepreneurship, better known as "Experiential Learning ". The
- He feels his biggest contribution has been to upgrade the school academically. Top students and top faculty go hand in hand

- Combines science and the liberal Arts
- Banner year for students and faculty - awards and honors. Never more successful. Get list.
- Biggest task is to raise the final \$500 mil for financial aid
- Other major project - Renovation and expansion of Hopkins Center
- Overcome financial challenges: stable budget, despite Covid, all projects on time on budget
- Residential, hi touch, personal but what alternatives exist to offer new products and services that are lower cost yet financially valuable. Priority of the BOD and Phil
- Gesture of returning Wheelock papers to Occum
- Very focused on Cultural development on campus - native Americans, BADA, Women
- Phil's frustrated the size issue wasn't addressed. He wants bigger

Report from Committee on Financial Aid

- want very best students at D.
- Trend to more student apps from sunshine states vs northeast. Needs higher so trend line is towards more financial aid. 45% receive financial aid
- Spend \$132 mil in aid now. Every 1 %increase in tuition There's a 1 1/2% increase in FA.
- Phil believes we need to increase our size. Subject will be revisited.
- Covid effect 4600 students on campus vs usual 4100.
- Did NOT touch on Athletics excellence

Session w BOT members: Laura and Rachel on Student experience committee and academic excellence committee

- new net revenue projects under consideration K by BOT trading on experiences from virtual learning Covid
- Presidential search - great pool of candidates - amazing search firm
- Athletics an important core value
- Seemed to agree varsity athletics competitiveness very important,
- Agreed freedom of expression a core value
- Studying size of school issues
- We need more student housing. Desired is new open spaces but uses land more intensely. More capital intensive energy sustainability. Existing housing stock a mess some horrible
- Why did new resident Hall plan get opposed 400-10 by faculty. Faculty and their families are residents of Hanover so have opinions. Doesn't look like their voices were solicited in the beginning. Flawed process looks like
- Are building new 500 bed graduate housing out by hospital. Will take pressure off the main campus
- The 2 BOT members were very impressive
- Financial condition strong can ride out the ups and downs of the martlet impact on the endowment

- Interesting that the 2 members seem very aligned with the views of the AC and most alums. That's a good thing!