



Last Friday May 15th, the Dartmouth Alumni Council held its first [virtual meeting](#) in its 107-year history. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, we gathered via Zoom with campus leaders and shared questions and feedback we've heard from alumni over the past few months. It was one of our best attended meetings ever with over 200 current and former councilors calling in. Although we missed being together, it was a surprisingly effective opportunity to "see" each other and celebrate our connections. If there is a silver lining to this global crisis, it has been the opportunity to find ways to pause and reconnect with Dartmouth classmates, colleagues, and friends. The Dartmouth community is more important now than ever.

There were several outcomes of the meeting I'd like to share with you:

Responding to Extraordinary Circumstances

In conversations with campus leaders and members of the Board of Trustees, the Council heard examples of how Dartmouth has responded swiftly to the pandemic while staying true to its mission. Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences Elizabeth Smith described the extraordinary commitment of the faculty in converting 93% of the courses (674 offerings in total) that would have been held on campus to virtual. That work is complemented by a rapid pivot in student affairs to move all support services online. Dean of the College Kathryn Lively shared that student governance is alive and well, as is sense of community as Undergraduate Advisors are holding virtual floor meetings and house communities have organized virtual gatherings, from faculty speakers to cooking classes. Vice Provost for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid Lee Coffin offered good news that the class of 2024 is strong and yield rates excellent, but also painted a picture of the steep increase in need for financial support that students are experiencing due to the pandemic. Dartmouth continues to look ahead and plan proactively for the 2020–2021 academic year, and Board Chair Laurel Richie '81

commented that the Board is keeping a keen eye on what can be done to consistently improve and enhance the experience that makes Dartmouth so distinctive.

A Presidential Call to Action of Historic Proportions

In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, President Hanlon shared with the Council his belief that this is Dartmouth's leadership moment. The Alumni Council has supported Dartmouth at its most challenging times: the Dartmouth Hall fire, two world wars, the Great Depression, to name a few. Now is the time for the Council to step forward again and lead. Our mission is to ensure that our next generation of young people are ready to tackle the next great challenges.

President Hanlon pledged to strengthen efforts to make a Dartmouth education accessible and prepare the next generation of leaders. He outlined for the Council the economic toll of recent months and the dramatic increased need for student support as our Dartmouth families are impacted by changing circumstances. Citing the College's unwavering commitment to both need blind admissions and our desire to meet the full demonstrated need of each student, he urged the Council to assist our students by mobilizing the global alumni community on two urgent fronts: employment and internship opportunities for current students and, for those who are able, to provide financial support to student scholarship and financial aid. He announced the creation of a Presidential Commission for Financial Aid as well as a bold plan to respond to the surge in need with a plan for undergraduate [financial aid](#). And he challenged alumni to help in any way they can.

Embracing the Class of 2020

President Hanlon also issued another challenge to alumni: we must find ways to lift up the Class of '20. They will finish their Dartmouth journey missing their senior spring and Commencement, and they are entering a world where the health of our communities is in danger and the economy is reeling. This cause was also supported by members of the Board of Trustees who joined our meeting. The Council expressed enthusiasm and support for the '20s, and I hope you will consider joining us. An immediate way you can do so is by joining the [Dartmouth Career Support Network 2020](#). Through this effort,

we hope to source 50 (or more) job opportunities for the '20s by June 12 and to connect them with alumni expertise via a new [LinkedIn group](#).

Evolving the Alumni Council

During the Alumni Council meeting, we voted to approve several changes to the composition and committee structure of the Council to ensure that we maximize our mission, function effectively, and have access to alumni sentiment from all corners of the alumni body. Founded in 1913, the Council's shape and size have evolved over the years and were last changed in 2007–2008. The newest changes are designed to create a more representative structure that will allow us to sustain an engaged exchange between alumni and Dartmouth and to inspire alumni engagement. The recommendations were developed over the past year by two task forces. I encourage you to read their report [here](#).

If you'd like more information about the Alumni Council meeting, please read the [meeting minutes](#) and share comments and questions with your Council rep or the Council's [Alumni Liaison Committee](#).

This will be my last communication as Alumni Council president. I'm honored to pass the gavel to Rachel Bogardus Drew '98 who will serve in this role in 2020–2021. During last week's meeting, the Council elected Laurie Lewis Shapiro '95 to the role of president-elect. It's been my pleasure to serve Dartmouth and its alumni in this role.

I hope you and your loved ones are healthy and well.

For Dartmouth,

C. Alec Casey '88

Alumni Council President