

Dartmouth Alumni COUNCIL

Gentlemen of the Class of 1968:

In late October, I attended my first session of the Dartmouth Alumni Council (my first, the Council's 213th!). Below is a summary of what I saw as the major elements of the session, as well as a few personal observations:

The session focused on the theme of **Dartmouth for All: Fostering an Inclusive Community**, which drove many of the panels and discussions. For more information, you'll find links throughout the text and can view the full meeting minutes [here](#).

Diversity and Inclusion

The meeting featured panels and discussions on various dimensions of diversity and inclusivity at Dartmouth, as well as the challenges the College feels it faces in this area and the efforts it is making to improve. Alumni Council President Russell Wolff '89, Tu'94 gave his perspective to the topic with his opening statement: "Diversity is who is on the team, inclusion is who gets to play and how the team makes them feel."

Specific topics included:

- **House Communities Discussion and Tour:** Effective this fall, Dartmouth has reorganized its dormitories into [House Communities](#), with which students will be affiliated not only during their four years at Dartmouth but for life. We heard from two of the house professors and participated in a tour of the two house community social spaces which have been specifically constructed for those Communities which did not have such spaces in their existing configurations. Inge-Lise Ameer, vice provost for student affairs, summarized the College's intent for the House Communities: "More than a random place to sleep and do laundry, Dartmouth's new housing communities provide students a home base, sense of place, and a feeling of continuity." The houses, while they differ in set-up, each provide a central location for study and socializing). The new residential life model is a key component of the [Moving Dartmouth Forward Initiative](#) and is designed to transform the undergraduate living experience, bringing continuity to the on-campus living experience and creating deliberate opportunities for faculty-student interaction beyond the classroom. Students are assigned to one of six faculty-led houses. Read about the [opening celebrations](#) and see a [welcome message](#) from house professors.
- **First Generation Programs at Dartmouth,:** After an introduction by Jay Davis '90, director of the First Year Student Enrichment Program, we listened to and asked questions of a student who is the first in her family to attend college, and learned what Dartmouth's [support and mentoring programs](#) have meant to her. She shared that for her, "meeting my first year mentor was like looking in a mirror at my future self." The emphasis of this pre-orientation program is on building community and embracing belonging for those who are first in their family to go to college. Inge-Lise Ameer, vice

provost of student affairs, also provided an update on the many ways Dartmouth is committed to supporting students from all backgrounds.

- **Communities for All: Conversation with Alumni Leaders:** Alumni Councilors representing Dartmouth's [alumni communities](#) participated in a panel discussion about how and why they provide a supportive smaller community to their members within the context of the larger Dartmouth family. Panelists included representatives of the Black Alumni of Dartmouth Association (BADA), the Dartmouth Asian Pacific American Alumni Association (DAPAAA), the Dartmouth Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Alumni/ae Association (DGALA), and Women of Dartmouth. Discussion centered around the communities' efforts to build inclusion and collaboration across classes, clubs, and the alumni community through events and mentoring.
- **Competing Beyond Our Differences: A Conversation with Student Athletes:** Four student athletes participated in this panel discussion, which focused on competing beyond differences and how diversity is an asset on teams. The students described the powerful bonds built through teams, while providing a view into the schedules and unique challenges faced by student athletes competing for a strong academic institution at the NCAA Division 1 level.

College Updates

President Philip J. Hanlon '77 and Michael Mastanduno, dean of the faculty of arts and sciences and Nelson A. Rockefeller Professor of Government spoke about the competitive academic environment, the niche Dartmouth occupies with a research faculty also dedicated to teaching, and the increasing value of a strong liberal arts education. President Hanlon also discussed the new house communities and their role in strengthening the student academic and social experience, experiential learning initiatives, the [Inclusive Excellence](#) initiative, and the creation of the [Arthur L. Irving Institute for Energy and Society](#).

We met new **Vice Provost for Enrollment and Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid** [Lee Coffin](#), who joined the Dartmouth team this summer after a 13-year career at Tufts. Coffin commented that he has dedicated his career to shaping a multifaceted undergraduate community from a wide array of backgrounds and perspectives and is thrilled to continue to do so at Dartmouth.

Chair of the Board of Trustees Bill Helman '80 and Trustee S. Caroline Kerr '05 addressed the Council on Saturday morning. Discussion topics included discussion of the Board's view of divestment from fossil fuels, how the College is addressing diversity in the tenure process, and the [Inclusive Excellence Initiative](#) among other College updates.

A few observations:

--I was very impressed with the energy, and particularly the enthusiasm, displayed by the members of the Council. It was clear that they cared, and were not simply going through the motions. A very dedicated and committed group. There were not a large number of what I would call hard questions, but that may simply have been a function of the specific focus of the session.

--For me, the most interesting area covered during the session related to "first generation" students, defined as the first student in his or her immediate family to attend a four year college. I was struck

both by the number of such students at the College (around 500) and the number of unique issues—both large and small—that such students face. The link to “support and mentoring programs” referenced above is worth exploring, but it doesn’t come close to expressing the challenges many of these kids face.

--I was initially concerned that, given its theme, the session did not touch on one aspect of “inclusivity”—i.e., the College’s view and approach to diversity of political and social thought, and what it saw as its role in that arena. Many other institutions, such as the University of Chicago and other Ivy League schools, have approached that topic quite differently, and I was hoping to hear Dartmouth’s institutional perspective. I have heard from a few of you asking the same question. In thinking about this matter further, however, I concluded that this topic merits a more in depth presentation and discussion. I have suggested to the Council that it in fact be made the featured subject of a future session. We’ll see what happens.

I look forward to hearing from you regarding your questions, thoughts, and concerns, which I am happy to pass along.

Best wishes for the holidays.

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