

Members of the Class of 1968:

Late last month I attended the 214th session of the Dartmouth Alumni Council. It happened to be Green Key weekend, and the campus was beautiful. Below is a summary of the session, followed by a few thoughts:

Learning by Doing

Councilors participated in discussions with students and faculty engaged in three projects that demonstrate Dartmouth's intimate intellectual community and experiential learning opportunities at home and abroad.

- Terren Klein '17 and a team of students developed the [College Pulse app](#), an incentive-based opinion polling tool that provides real-time data to students about their College and community.
- A team of students traveled to Washington, DC, in November 2016 to deliberate the pros and cons of interest-rate hikes with Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen through the [College Fed Challenge](#).
- And in January, undergrads in Anthropology 70 made a [major fossil discovery](#) while excavating at a UNESCO World Heritage site at Malapa, South Africa.

We also heard several other presentations that were academic in nature:

- Director of the **Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning** [Lisa Baldez](#) spoke of the evolution of teaching and learning, reaffirming Dartmouth's commitment to the [teacher-scholar](#) model. Equipping faculty members to be excellent teachers is a longstanding tradition at Dartmouth and remains at the core of the academic vision for the College. Baldez talked about how the Center for the Advancement of Learning serves as a resource to make professors better classroom teachers – especially in an era in which technology has upended the traditional format of lecture and Q&A.
- Professors Edward Miller and Jennifer Miller shared the **Dartmouth Vietnam Project**, a collaborative effort between students and faculty to collect oral histories from members of the Dartmouth community who served in Vietnam.
- Dean Joseph Helble moderated a panel of faculty on how the combination of engineering and the liberal arts has resulted in national leadership for the **Thayer School of Engineering**, which [turns 150](#) this year. Thayer is the only engineering school to require an AB before a BE and has been recognized for its focus on entrepreneurship. In 2016, Thayer made history by being the first engineering class from a national research university to achieve [gender parity](#).
- The academic affairs committee of the Council presented the inaugural [Professor John Rassias Faculty Award](#) for exceptional educational outreach to alumni to Steve Swayne, the Jacob H. Strauss 1922 Professor of Music; and Don Pease, the Ted and Helen Geisel Third Century Professor in the Humanities, who is also Chair of the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program and professor of English and comparative literature. Professor Rassias's daughter, Helene Rassias-Miles A&S '08, was there to congratulate the winners.

Strategy and Vision

President Philip J. Hanlon '77 shared his vision for Dartmouth as a distinctive experience defined by world-class faculty and students, intellectual rigor and interdisciplinary curricula, unique spirit, and magnificent setting. Among the highlights of his presentation to us were these:

- President Hanlon made it clear that Dartmouth is “hot”: The **Class of 2021** will be among the most selective and accomplished class in Dartmouth’s history, faculty are being recognized for their scholarship, and rankings are on the rise.
- President Hanlon took questions from Councilors pertaining to tolerance of divergent opinions and freedom of expression, House Communities, fundraising plans, and recruitment and retention of faculty of color.
- He also referenced the appointment of N. Bruce Duthu '80 as [dean of the faculty](#) – an appointment that drew strong support from some (including those who noted that Professor Duthu would have been the first Native American to serve as dean of the faculty) and criticism from others (while serving on the council of Native American academic association, Professor Duthu had signed a statement in 2013 in support of a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.) During the Council meeting, President Hanlon expressed his support for Professor Duthu, while reaffirming that Dartmouth will not support academic boycotts of any kind and remains committed to freedom of expression as a fundamental value of our community. Since the closing of the Council meeting, Professor Duthu announced he had decided to decline the appointment. In an email to colleagues, he explained that controversy had become a distraction with the potential to damage Dartmouth and undermine his ability to serve effectively as dean. The president and provost will consult with faculty members to determine next steps.

These were among the discussions we had with other members of the Dartmouth leadership team:

- Chair-elect of the Board of Trustees Laurel Richie '81 spoke with Councilors about her pride in Dartmouth and excitement to lead the **Board of Trustees**. As Board chair, Richie hopes to increase visibility and differentiation for Dartmouth by highlighting its special character.
- Vice-President of **Communications** Justin Anderson walked the Council through a new branding strategy that builds on Dartmouth’s unique location, academic focus, experiential learning opportunities, and spirit that makes the College “Distinctly Dartmouth.”
- Lee Coffin, vice provost for enrollment and dean of **admissions and financial aid**, spoke about the [Class of 2021](#) -- which had the highest yield in Dartmouth’s history at 61 percent – and his strategy for increasing applications to Dartmouth from the very best students. Alumni interviewers participating in the [Admissions Ambassador Program](#) were a key component of this success.
- Vice President for Development Andrew Davidson P'12 and Advancement COO Ann Root Keith gave Councilors a look into the planning phases of the upcoming **Dartmouth capital campaign**. There will be on priorities and goals when they become public.

Recognizing Leadership

The Honorable [Eric Fanning '90](#), 22nd United States Secretary of the Army spoke over dinner at the Hanover Inn. As the “CEO” of the U.S. Army, he was responsible for its \$147 billion budget and its 1.4 million people. He is the first person to have held senior presidential appointments in the Army, Navy

and Air Force. It was inspiring to hear his devotion to the men and women who defend our country and eye-opening to understand what a difficult job managing such huge organizations can be. His remarks focused on leadership and the role his liberal arts education at Dartmouth played in his career trajectory.

And a few observations:

--For me, by far the most memorable—and moving—event of the session was the presentation on the Dartmouth Vietnam project, an oral history project conducted by Dartmouth faculty and students. To most in attendance this presentation was no doubt (as categorized above) simply a report on another Dartmouth academic effort, but to me and other attendees of our vintage, it was much more. If you don't do anything else in response to this email, make sure you go to Dartmouth.edu, search for the Dartmouth Vietnam project, and explore a bit. Make sure you watch the video.

--The discussions regarding Professor Duthu are described above. This was a very emotional issue for a number of the attendees. I was extremely impressed by their forceful comments, as well as the responses from President Hanlon and incoming Board Chair Laurel Richie. This was a tough subject, and I appreciated the fact that it was faced respectfully, squarely and openly.

--The council continues to try and facilitate communication between alumni and the administration. I received a few emails from you prior to the last few sessions, and have summarized and passed along concerns you have raised. Going forward, I think it will be most efficient if I forward to the College your actual emails, which hopefully will lead to more effective and efficient feedback to you. I'll plan on doing so UNLESS you request that I not do so.

Enjoy a wonderful Summer.

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