

## **ALUMNI COUNCILOR'S REPORT**

### **Hugh O'Reilly '86, DCGB representative to the Alumni Council**

The Dartmouth Club of Greater Boston's Fall Newsletter should be reaching your mailbox any day now. I hope you will take the opportunity to read the Newsletter when it arrives and, more importantly, to join the Club at one (or several!) of our upcoming events.

As your Club's representative to the Alumni Council, I had the privilege of participating in the Alumni Council's semi-annual meeting a few months ago. The agenda for the meeting included a mix of briefings by various College administrators and Trustees, each followed by a Q&A session; informal opportunities to meet with both students and administrators; meetings of each of the Council's standing committees (the Academic Affairs committee, in my case); and an open-forum meeting of the Council itself to discuss new business. An unexpected highlight of the session was a brief address to the Council and a Q&A interchange with then-incoming President Jim Kim. Ironically, by timing this report to coincide with the Club's newsletter, it also coincides with Kim's inauguration as the College's new President.

The session occupied two very full days and I will not take your time with a litany of all that was discussed. The following, however, are in my view the most substantive topics we covered and the key "take-aways":

#### Address by / Q&A with Jim Kim

At the time of the Alumni Council meeting then-incoming President Jim Yong Kim was still a largely 'unknown quantity' to most Councilors. It is fair to say that the selection of a president without previous ties to the College raised an eyebrow in some quarters. Kim's address to the Council and the subsequent dialogue was the first direct exposure many of us had to him. While alumni at large have had opportunities to hear or read any number of Kim's speeches or presentations over recent months, a few of the themes he emphasized to the Council stood out and merit reporting here.

He took efforts to emphasize his recognition that Dartmouth is unique in many ways vis a vis other institutions, both in its academic emphasis and in the relationship that students and alumni/ae alike have with the College. (In this context, he specifically referred to alumni/ae as "stakeholders" in the College, a term that this listener found noteworthy.) His quip, replete with hand gestures, about "this is a brain; this is a brain on Dartmouth" was exceptionally well received by the audience. At the same time, he acknowledged that he is only just beginning to understand these unique qualities of the College. As an anthropologist by training, he expects to be in 'listening mode' for much of the next year, studying the culture in order to more fully understand it before delving into policy matters that may affect it.

A second large theme was his view of the systemic challenges within higher education and the non-profit and NGO sector in general. All too often, in his view, institutions that pursue widely-accepted worthy causes get credit merely for having their proverbial hearts in the right place, regardless of their effectiveness. As a rough paraphrase, he asked "How do we improve execution around our most cherished social goals, as opposed to embracing the goal and then letting things happen on their own." His recent work in the healthcare arena has focused on how to improve execution and outcomes, and he anticipates bringing the same focus to his role as president of the College.

#### Briefing and Q&A with Trustees Ed Haldeman and Jose Fernandez

We were briefed by Trustees Ed Haldeman (Board Chair) and Jose Fernandez (Facilities Committee Chair) on several topics, most importantly the financial condition of the College and the effects of finances on short- and long-term planning, and governance matters.

Regarding the financially-driven issues, Fernandez summarized the status of various projects that had been approved for completion or that had been deferred pending improved financial conditions. In the latter category was the visual arts center, planned for the area southeast of the Hood Museum and Hopkins Center. Since the time of the meeting, an anonymous major gift has enabled this project to move forward once again.

On the topic of governance, each Trustee is elected initially for one term (whether nominated by alumni or by the Board) and then, in most cases, the Board elects that Trustee again for a second term. As most alumni know, Trustee Todd Zywicki was not reelected by the Board for a second term this year. Haldeman summarized the process that is applied to Trustees who are being considered for reelection to a second term (both in general and this year in particular), which includes the completion of feedback forms regarding the candidates for reelection from all other Trustees, telephone conferences between each of those other Trustees and Christine Bucklin (Governance Committee Chair) and Ed Haldeman called each trustee. Each Trustee standing for reelection was then permitted to make a statement at the Board meeting, after which a vote of the full board was made. The other three trustees up for reelection (Peter Robinson) were in fact reelected. Both Haldeman and Fernandez recounted that the decision not to reelect Todd Zywicki was difficult. Haldeman expressed the view of the majority of the Board that, upon election, Trustees take on a special responsibility to the College and while they are free to express any opinion among themselves, they are obliged to speak well of the College in public.

#### Address by Dean Carol Folt

Dean of the Faculty Carol Folt addressed the Council regarding curriculum and faculty initiatives in general, and regarding educational priorities in particular. On the former, more nuts-and-bolts topics, she noted that this year's financial pressures have resulted in budget cuts and staff reductions generally, the number of tenure-track faculty has not been cut although faculty have been subject to a salary freeze. She also provided data showing that over the past ten years (1998 to 2008) tenure-track faculty have increased from 352 positions to 411 positions, reducing the student-faculty ratio from 10:1 to 8:1. Classes of fewer than 20 students constituted 57% of the total in 1998-99; they now comprise 64%. Classes of more than 50 students constituted 11% of the total in '98-99 - they are now down to 9%. Annual research grants have also more than doubled over the same period, from \$79 million to \$163 million.

On the broader topic of educational priorities, she addressed the effort to "Ignite the Creative Learner in Every Student." This effort leads to a "5 I's" rubric of priorities within Dartmouth's undergraduate programs:

- Individualized attention to students
- Interdisciplinary learning and thinking
- International study
- Innovation and modernization in curriculum
- Inclusive learning environments

These five 'formal' priorities also lead to a sixth, more general priority: Integration of the student experience into a cohesive whole. These five (or six priorities) inform decision-making as the College considers new programs or changes within existing programs.

#### Veteran Students Roundtable

We attended a panel discussion of three current students who are military veterans. These students recounted both the paths that brought them to Dartmouth (all of which were unconventional, and some of which were directly influenced by President Jim Wright) as well as their current experiences as students. The vantage point of these students, who are both older and whose life experiences are quite different from the typical college student, was fascinating. The students on the panel were drawn from 17 veterans currently in the student body. While we heard only from the vets themselves and not from their non-veteran classmates, it also seemed clear that their different vantage point brought something quite different to the classroom and to their classmates, both in and out of the classroom. The anecdotes they recounted were a testament to the value of bringing diverse life experiences together as part of the educational experience.

### Student Roundtable – DOC

Each Councilor had an opportunity to participate in any of several roundtable discussions with students. Your Councilor attended the session with the leadership and various other members of the Dartmouth Outing Club. We had a session that – if I may be so bold – was informative in both directions. The students brought us up to date on some of their current programs and initiatives, and we alumni identified for the students some resources (mostly among alumni) that could be brought to bear for the benefit of the DOC, and potential improvements in the DOC's approach to reaching alumni.

To put in a modest 'plug' for the DOC for anyone who may not know, this year is the DOC's 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. They have a variety of special events planned to commemorate the event, which can be accessed here: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~doc/centennial>. Perhaps most important among these is the DOC's "AT in a Day" hike, scheduled for October 10, just two weeks from now. The DOC plans to have every inch of the Appalachian Trail hiked by someone 'flying the DOC banner' on this single day, a first for any club. If you want to participate, you can 'claim' a segment of trail at this link: <http://doc.dartmouth.edu/atinaday>.

### Briefing Professional Schools and the Graduate Studies Deans; Academic Affairs Committee

We had a briefing and Q&A session with the deans of the three professional schools and the graduate studies program regarding their respective programs, and more particularly the inter-relationship of those programs with undergraduate education at the College. A significant portion of the briefing was devoted to bringing Councilors up to date on these programs (few of us having attended the College's professional schools). Additionally, however, the briefing reinforced the understanding that many of the Councilors previously had regarding the close integration that has long existed between the Thayer program and undergraduate engineering studies, and the less comprehensive but nonetheless important integration that has long existed between the Medical School program and some aspects of undergraduate biology, chemistry and other disciplines.

The most interesting aspect of this discussion (to your Councilor, at least) was a plan to introduce a new series of management courses taught to Dartmouth undergraduates by Tuck School faculty. The first of these courses was offered last semester. Following the group session, Tuck School Prof. Robert Resutek addressed this topic in detail when he spoke to the Academic Affairs Committee (of which your Councilor is a member). His course is one on financial accounting, with a focus on analyzing and understanding financial statements and the information that can be gleaned from them (rather than on the technical rules of accounting). Prof. Resutek indicated that the feedback from students so far has been that the demands of the class, which is largely the same as a graduate school class, are exceptionally high but also that they find the class stimulating and highly worthwhile.

In addition to the discussion with Prof. Rusetek, the Academic Affairs Committee heard from Prof. Lindsey Whaley, Chair of the Linguistics and Cognitive Science program and Associate Dean for Interdisciplinary Studies. Prof. Whaley spoke in general of the increasing focus on interdisciplinary teaching at the College (picking up on themes introduced by Dean Folt as discussed above), and specifically on the new International Studies Minor. This program is being introduced as a Minor (rather than as a Major in a stand-alone Department) because it incorporates classes from several existing disciplines, with the specific mix depending on the focus chosen by the individual student, and to evaluate the program through a trial period before considering it for status as a full Major.

### Committee Reports

At any time the Council has a number of standing or working committees. We were presented with reports from two such committees, the Committee to Support Greek Life and the Alumni Liaison Committee.

In part, the report of the Committee to Support Greek Life provided a variety of factual information on the state of the Greek system (65% of the student body are members of 29 such organizations; of these, 22 have physical houses; of these houses, 15 are privately owned and 7 are College-owned; 2 additional buildings are in the process of being acquired and converted into sorority houses). Perhaps more important was a discussion of situations in which alumni have supported these organizations as “elders” (or whatever term may be used in a given organization), providing examples for additional such support by others in the future. Beyond the obvious role of financial support, examples were presented in which alumni provided invaluable advice and other non-financial assistance, ‘saving the day’ in some cases but in the process also serving as mentors for these students. It should be noted that the term ‘knuckleheads’ was used more than once in that discussion.

The Alumni Liaison Committee’s (ALC’s) role is to serve as an interface between the alumni organizations and the Board of Trustees, synthesizing feedback received from alumni/ae at large into reports to the Trustees. Among other inputs, all comments that Councilors such as myself receive from each of you are compiled and categorized, and included in a report to provide the Trustees with views of the sentiment that is being expressed to the Council. The ALC’s report provided us with a summary of the topics addressed in those comments that we all received from our respective constituents, and to the extent those comments were ‘directional’, the direction of the sentiment expressed (e.g., pro or con on various issues). The ALC’s report also included a useful flow chart depicting the relationship of the Council, the Association of Alumni and its Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees, and alumni/ae at large. That flowchart can be viewed at [http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/media/Alumni\\_Council/alcflow\\_members6.pdf](http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/media/Alumni_Council/alcflow_members6.pdf)

### Plenary Session

As it always does, the Council meeting ended with a Plenary Session at which any Councilor may present new business or raise any topic for discussion, and in which any alumnus/a (including non-Councilors) may participate.

In this session, the Council considered and adopted a resolution commending President Wright for his efforts on behalf of veterans of the U.S. armed services, and encouraging the College to continue to build on his legacy. On the same theme, the Council engaged in a discussion of the current status of the ROTC program at the College, and whether it was desirable or even possible to expand that program. At the request of the Council, Vice President for Alumni Relations David Spalding ’76 provided a summary of the current status of the program, which consists of an Army ROTC program conducted on the College campus. A proposal was offered that would have encouraged the College to explore expanding the

ROTC to include other branches of the military, but the Council determined that it had insufficient information to make any such recommendation and that the Council's Executive Committee would gather additional information for consideration at a future session.

### Conclusion

As lengthy as it is, the foregoing Report is only a summary of the wealth of information that was provided and issues discussed at the last meeting of the Alumni Council. If you would like to discuss any of these topics with me in further detail, or if you have other issues you would like discuss with me before the next Council meeting in December, please email me at [hugh.oreilly@dartmouth.org](mailto:hugh.oreilly@dartmouth.org) or, if you do not have email access, telephone me at (617) 354-5400. I look forward to hearing from you.

\* \* \*