

THE COLLEGE OF ST. SCHOLASTICA  
Parents Advisory Council

Winter Meeting  
Saturday, January 17, 2009; 9:00 a.m.

Minutes

PRESENT: Laura Clements, Darrell Gorham, Jennifer Gorham, Becky Johnson and Jeanne Thompson.

ABSENT: Kay Dahlka, Kathy Kostohryz, Rick Kostohryz, and Chet Taylor.

**College Update**

Jeanne presented a brief College update:

- Traditional undergraduate retention looks good for spring semester. Our 10-day count is not final – but it appears to have only dropped by a percent or two. This is good news considering the difficult economic environment. Graduate and extended studies enrollment is holding strong for the year.
- The financial state of the College is strong. Since the year started out so strong and over our anticipated enrollment budget, the College is in good shape. Jeanne asked the group whether or not they felt Dr. Goodwin should send another “financial overview” to parents this semester and everyone felt this would be a good idea.
- Applications for next year are up right now compared to this time last year, and our deposits are about even. Given the state of the economy and national trends, it is believed that traditional enrollment will decline over the next several years, so the College is budgeting very conservatively. However, in bad economic times people have a tendency to return to school to upgrade their credentials; therefore the College will be emphasizing extended studies, graduate studies and online programs. The College is currently in the process of reorganizing our extended studies with an emphasis of “one college” and “teamwork.”
- The College’s endowment has taken an \$8M hit over the past 12 months; it reached \$29M and now stands at \$20.9M.
- Our Science Initiative – a 4-year \$15M fundraising endeavor which will add a 25,000-square-foot addition to our current Science Center is currently at \$2.5M with another \$650K in verbal commitments. The Initiative is in its first year.
- CSS athletic teams continue to bring glory to the school. Men’s and Women’s Soccer and Women’s Cross Country were conference champions this fall, with Women’s Soccer ranking 12<sup>th</sup> in the NCAA Region Poll. Our Hockey team is ranked 6<sup>th</sup> – our highest NCAA ranking ever, and Cross Country Coach Steve Pfungsten was elected UMAC Coach of the Year.

**Committee Name**

Discussion continued from our fall meeting regarding our committee name – and it was unanimously agreed that moving forward we will be called the Parents Advisory Council. Jeanne will change the Web site and any Orientation materials to reflect this change.

## **Enhancing Parent Communications**

Discussion continued from fall regarding parent communications. We are committed to implementing a parent FAQ to be located on the College Web site. Jeanne will be requesting input from everyone on what questions to include. It was also discussed to provide links to further explain questions.

The College's "new and improved" Web site is scheduled to go live March 1. Jeanne will work with the IT staff to begin the process of developing an interactive parent forum, discussion board, message board – whatever will work best to accomplish the goal of allowing parents to communicate with other parents. Laura Clement suggested having this broken down by subject type as well – to make it more user-friendly.

Developing a monthly e-news from the Parents Advisory Council was also discussed. However, the Institutional Advancement office currently has only 250 parent e-mail addresses. See discussion on collecting parent email addresses below. Input from all Council members will be needed in order to make a monthly e-news worthwhile. Becky Johnson agreed to work with Jeanne on the first newsletter.

Discussion was also held on the "ask Lena" idea (from St. Olaf's Web site) that Jennifer Gorham brought to our fall meeting. We discussed who parents "should ask." Laura looked for Patron Saints on the internet from her phone; "ask St. Rita" was suggested as St. Rita is the Patron Saint of parents. Jeanne will run this past her staff for additional ideas/suggestions. Sister Tim in Alumni Relations Office (part of Institutional Advancement) is an expert on Patron Saints.

## **Brainstorm on Ways to Collect Parent Email Addresses**

- Orientation and Move-In Weekend are great ways to ask parents for e-mail addresses.
- Promotions in the College's *Times* Magazine with a tear off or return card.
- Parent and Family Newsletter (bi-annual) sponsored by the Student Affairs Office.
- Web site promotions.
- E-mail students asking them to forward the e-mail to their parents requesting their e-mail addresses. *I'm sorry I don't remember who at our meeting brought up this idea - but it's a great one!*
- Parent solicitation packets can include requests/response cards.

Jeanne is also going to check with other departments to see if we have more e-mail databases on campus that are not being shared with the Institutional Advancement office.

## **Parents Fund Update**

Laura Clements worked with Jeanne on a parent appeal letter that was mailed last fall to all current parents (with the exception of freshman parents) and parents of alumni. Freshman parent appeal letters are scheduled to be mailed the end of January.

Our December 31 reports show parent giving is up from this time last year – including our number of donors. We are up 30 donors (521 vs. 491) and our total raised in cash and pledges is up 33 percent over this time last year (\$56,125 vs. \$42,345). This is great news since the national trend is fundraising is down in both dollars raised and number of donors.

The spring appeal letters to parents is scheduled to be mailed in March/April. Jennifer and Darrel have offered to help with this letter, which is mailed to all parents who did not respond to the fall appeal,

excluding freshman parents. Freshman parents who do not respond to the January appeal will be mailed again in May – one month before the College’s fiscal year ends.

### **Meeting Schedule**

We discussed our meeting schedule because Jeanne originally thought two meetings per year and one longer meeting in the summer would be sufficient to accomplish goals set for our Council. After some discussion it was enthusiastically decided to add a third meeting this year in March since this is our inaugural year and we have lots to do.

Our March meeting will be held Saturday, March 14, from 9:00 a.m. -12:00 noon, with lunch and open discussion until 1:00 p.m. at Tobies in Hinckley. The meeting room was very private, food was great, and the location was very convenient for all members – even with the little bit of snow we had falling that morning. **Please mark your calendars.**

### **Open Discussion**

Our open discussion session brings an opportunity for members to ask questions they may have about a specific department, procedure, what other students are doing about a certain thing, etc. Several questions that came up were:

- Why does the College open registration for a new semester at midnight?
- Why do passwords need to change multiple times during the year?
- Several students experienced problems with their PIN numbers during registration.
- There were some questions about whether or not Residential Life staff communicated to students that electric items would be unplugged over winter break – including refrigerators.

Jeanne will investigate and get back to everyone.

Overall it was a great meeting with everyone fully engaged. It was enjoyable to hear everyone’s “winter break” stories.

The meeting/lunch was adjourned at 1:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jeanne Thompson