

Alumni Council Minutes
Monday, April 26, 2021
Webex, 1-3 p.m. Central Time

Present: Lester Alemán '07, Ed Atkins '66, Claudia Beckwith '77, Ann Poor Cary '81, Ryann Haines Cheung '93, Jeetander Dulani '98 Deborah Feir '68, Robert Gehorsam '76, Graciela Guzmán '11, Phillip Hales '02 Kelly Clements Hopfer '96, Andrea Jackson '95, Bernard Jackson '86, David Jarvis '04, Chris Meyer '70, Eric Mistry '14, Becky Reetz Neal '65, Robert Ruhl '76, Scott Shepherd '82, Rick Stuck '82, Tom Triplett '69, Ben Vaughn Jr. '15, Jocelyn Wyatt '99.

Absent: Debbie Gottschalk '90, Brigham Hoegh '08.

Excused:

Staff: Jayn Chaney '05; Jennie Jackson, recording secretary; Jaci Thiede, Mae Parker.

Guests: President Anne Harris, Georgeanna Robinson.

- I. Welcome and Housekeeping
 - a. Chris Meyer reported that our final meeting of the school year will be a social gathering in May, more information to come.
 - b. Jayn Chaney reported that Phillip Hales will be helping to host a Student/Alumni Connections panel in the upcoming weeks where volunteers will hear directly from current students about their Grinnell experience. Council members are encouraged to attend.
 - c. Lester Alemán notified Council that each member will be asked to fill out a survey indicating their committee preferences for next year. Those who are currently serving as vice chairs will be asked to chair that committee next year.
 - d. In-person meetings are scheduled to resume on campus this fall. Next year's meetings will be held on November 4-6, 2021, and March 3-5, 2022. At each meeting, there will be a Thursday evening welcome event, business meetings throughout the day on Friday and Saturday, and no programming on Sunday.
 - e. Virtual reunion is being planned for June 3-10. Council members were encouraged to attend the virtual Alumni Assembly.

- II. Membership Committee Presentation
 - a. Lester thanked the membership committee for their work. He shared the PowerPoint Presentation, *Membership Committee Presentation April 2021*.
 - b. Lester moved that Robert Gehorsam '76, Bernard Jackson '86, and Eric Mistry '14 be appointed to second term and that Graciela Guzmán '11, Phillip Hales '02, Brigham Hoegh '08, and Robert Ruhl '76 be appointed to third term.

- i. Second: Chris Meyer
 - ii. Vote: Unanimously approved
- c. The Committee had a total of four slots to fill this year. We will say goodbye to Rick Stuck '82, Ryann Cheung '93, and Jeetander Dulani '98 this spring. Howie Schein '66 retired earlier this year.
- d. This year the committee overlooked geographic regions, and instead focused on the recruitment of women and diverse candidates.
- e. It was a positive experience to view the potential Council members in a group interview environment because it gave the committee the opportunity to see them function in a group setting. A small group advanced to individual interviews, which were all extremely positive. It was difficult to choose just four finalists.
- f. Lester shared slides showing the current demographics of Council, including geographic region, class year, gender, and race/ethnicity.
- g. The Council presented on the four finalists.
 - i. Dawn Helsing Wolters '87
 - ii. Kate Goddard '91
 - iii. Anton Jones '02
 - iv. Jake Joseph '11
 - 1. Motion: Lester
 - 2. Second: Kelly Clements Hopfer
 - 3. Vote: Unanimously approved
- h. Lester encouraged the future president elect to continue the work of diversifying the Council.
- i. There is one candidate for President-Elect: Robert Gehorsam '76.
 - i. Vote: Unanimously approved

III. Young Alumni Listening Session Discussion with President Harris

- a. Mae Parker provided donor and engagement participation data. It is statistically unlikely that an alum will begin giving down the road if they do not give as a young alum.
- b. Andrea Jackson asked if the debt load at graduation impacts giving. Mae did not know but noted that it will be interesting to see how the College's new no loan initiative impacts future giving.
- c. Tom Triplett asked how important it is to have targeted fundraising. Mae responded that all of the different funds and strategies are important.
- d. President Harris expressed how important the young alumni listening sessions are to the future of the College. The listening sessions provided clear data and indications of where alumni healing can start to happen. President Harris expressed that a lot of young alumni felt hurt while at Grinnell, especially alumni of color, from various things such as decisions made by administration (including the union and Posse), not seeing themselves in the curriculum, and lack of clear communication. She asked the Council for their feedback on the report.
- e. Jeetander Dulani discussed multicultural reunion, which involved alumni who were alienated as students returning to campus in order to make

Grinnell better for current students. Jeetander also noted that there is a huge communication problem, including alumni receiving information too late, and lack of an understanding of what “self gov” actually means.

Jeetander also noted that there is a presumption of distrust, and wants to encourage alumni to assume good intent from Grinnell.

- f. President Harris has spent time this year creating a structure directly for diversity, equity, and inclusion work, and has looked at policies, spaces, behavior, and belonging. Anne plans to continue to work with Council and DAR to shape what conversations need to be had with alumni.
- g. Eric Mistry commended the process, as a young alumni who attended the listening sessions, and noted that it was the most heard that young alumni have felt. Eric expressed that he has often been notified what has happened, but no thought process has really been laid out. A look behind the curtain would really help to build trust. Ann Cary affirmed this opinion.
- h. Debby Feir expressed the disappointment she had heard from students who felt like the administration was not explaining the decisions that they were making. The students felt betrayed, without being given an explanation of why.
- i. Ben Vaughn talked about his experience as a Posse member. As students, he and fellow Posse members felt a pressure to perform, hold leadership positions, get good grades, and be involved in the Grinnell community in order to prove that they belonged on campus. Ben continues to engage with the college now because he was involved in multiple communities. He first returned to campus for a swim team gathering, and then became involved with other alumni communities.
- j. Graciela Guzmán acknowledged Lester’s point in the chat that it is okay to be an institution that admits when it makes mistakes. There are systemic issues that different alumni from different generations have all experienced at Grinnell. Grinnell should come back and express the ways that they are going to show up for me, and people like me, in the future. Will Grinnell be worthy of my goddaughter attending in the future?
- k. President Harris thanked the Council for their thoughts, and has saved the chat. The Council then broke into small groups for discussion.
- l. When the Council returned from small group discussion, Tom Triplett asked Council to acknowledge the wonderful work that Chris has done, especially with creating the racial justice internship. Jayn added that the selection process is happening this week. Chris congratulated the group for their unanimous support of this initiative. Ryann Cheung added that the Council should release future statements about accomplishments like this.
- m. The meeting was then adjourned.