

Alfred University Parents Association
Advisory Board Meeting

April 21, 2012

Minutes

Call to Order

Association President Katie Rommel-Esham called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m. She welcomed everyone and asked all to introduce themselves. Other members present were Allison Bishop-White, Melissa and Steve Delmonte, Tom Downie and Kate Parr, Steve Lassman, Steve and Gillian Raye. University administrators present were: Giovina Lloyd, Vice President for Business and Finance; Kathy Woughter, Vice President for Student Affairs; and Melody McLay, Director of Summer School, Summer Programs and Parents Programs.

Katie thanked Giovina Lloyd and Kathy Woughter for taking time out of this busy weekend to come and meet with us and asked Giovina to begin the meeting with her report.

Update from Vice President for Business and Finance

Giovina explained that she was invited to meet with us today to respond to questions and concerns raised at our fall meeting regarding the condition of the campus residence halls. She said that the maintenance of our campus residences involves an on-going effort to balance the funding available with the list of projects/repairs needed. Recent renovations/upgrades to campus housing include the addition of Joel's House and Ann's House, renovated bathrooms in Kruson, Bartlett, Brick and Tefft, replacement of boilers in Tefft, and upgraded sprinkler systems.

Two summers ago the program houses were worked on, including fire suppression systems, boiler upgrades, bathrooms, kitchens, more energy efficient lighting, etc. Last year we renovated one of the lower suite buildings (floors, bathrooms, kitchens, etc.) and will try to take on one suite building a year for the next several years until all have been done. We were hoping to receive a grant to be used for renovations in Cannon and Barresi this summer, but haven't heard anything yet. If we do get the grant, it is probably too late now to get everything in place for the work to begin this summer but we would hope to do renovations in those halls next summer.

Q: Is it true that suite living among college students is becoming passé?

A: Maybe in terms of the programming that can be done in those buildings, but the suites are still a popular housing option here. The suite configuration is ideal for students who like having more privacy, but doesn't work as well for students who want more opportunities to congregate and just hang out with each other. Kathy Woughter explained that there is a lot of programming in the first-year halls and the configuration of those halls makes it easier to build community. It is more difficult to do this in the suites because of the physical set up. Students are separated more from each other and there isn't as much interaction between them. Going from first-year halls to suites is a big change. It is a challenge that the Residence Life staff are working on.

Q: Isn't it the case that the suites were originally built as a temporary solution when additional housing of that kind was needed?

A: The facilities group has looked into this. They didn't find anything to support the idea that the suites were designed as a temporary arrangement. Those structures were built for permanence with solid construction. Rumors started a very long time ago that the suites were considered by the University administration as temporary housing, but the construction is sound. They were built to last.

Q: How many students are living in the suites and how many in first-year halls?

A: There are about 400 in the suites. Almost all are sophomores. Approximately 300 students occupy the first-year halls.

Q: Does the University have a depreciation schedule?

A: Most schools are addressing the same issues, concerns and challenges regarding deferred maintenance. Budgeting for deferred maintenance is typically not a strong point. Here at AU we don't have a depreciation schedule, but we are now looking at the need to do this. We do keep track of the halls, the age of the windows, for example, but we focus on the infrastructure and safety issues first. We try to renovate one or two buildings each year, but it isn't always possible.

Q: How often are bathrooms renovated?

A: We tend to address the bathrooms and kitchens when major building renovations are being done.

Q: It is also important to consider day-to-day functionality (i.e. toilets should flush; cooking facilities should work, etc.). Is there a budget dedicated to making regular changes/repairs for functionality?

A: We do address those needs as they come up but there isn't a separate budget for this.

Q: In Barresi, there is a problem with toilets not working. It seems like whenever we come to visit at least one is out of order. How can students report this kind of thing so it can be fixed?

A: *Melody checked into this after our meeting and found out that any student can send a work order to AU Physical Plant. Once the work order is completed, the student will receive an email message telling them it is done. (Students are asked to please copy either their RD, or the Residence Life email account - residencelife@alfred.edu - so their staff can see when the work order has been completed.)*

Comment: Better communication is needed to explain why things aren't fixed. If a work order is submitted and, for some reason, they can't fix something in a timely fashion, they need to let the students know why.

Q: If a building needs work done in the bathrooms now, but you are looking at renovating the bathrooms as part a major overall building renovation, does that mean those repairs have to wait until you get the funding for the major renovation?

A: It depends upon what needs to be done. Sometimes we wait if we are expecting funding. But we do make changes/repairs as needed, especially if it impacts the health and safety of our students.

Q: There was a question at our last meeting about the condition of rooms on move-in days. Can that issue be addressed?

A: We have a new Director of the Physical Plant. One of the things he is working on is incorporating more structure, established routine, and accountability into what is done in the residence halls over the summer to prepare for the fall. There will be a punch list for all the trades to show what needs to be done in terms of cleaning, checking to make sure things work properly, repairing things that don't work, etc. When they go through each unit they will do what is needed, check off that everything has been done in that unit, and initial it. We will keep those punch lists so we will know who is responsible if something isn't done, or done right. We are also addressing the issue of student worker supervision and how we can get the student crews to work more effectively and efficiently. Their supervisors must provide adequate oversight and check their work. As you know, many of our residence halls are used during the summer for summer programs. Another change is that, this year, during the crunch time after summer programs, the Director of the Physical Plant has been authorized to bring in extra staff if needed to make sure everything gets done. If the cost is manageable and the impact is positive, we may do this every summer. These are just some of the procedural changes we are implementing this year.

Q: What is the standard procedure for cleaning each residence hall in the summer?

A: We go in and clean out the rooms, removing anything left by previous occupants. The bathrooms and kitchens are scrubbed down top to bottom, furniture and dresser drawers are wiped down, windows are opened up to air out the rooms, common spaces are cleaned and, if needed, carpets are steam cleaned. Floors are cleaned and buffed, and some halls are painted.

Q: What about the kitchens and refrigerators? They should be cleaned and the appliances should work. In one suite the stovetop/hot plate did not work for months. Do they look at those things when they go through the rooms during the summer?

A: Yes, the new punch list for all trades will include checking the refrigerators and cooking facilities to make sure everything works.

Q: The furniture in some of the suites is quite worn and some pieces are even broken. What is the procedure/timeline for replacing furniture?

A: Suite renovations include replacing furniture in the common areas. We also have a regular schedule for replacing mattresses.

Comment: Other colleges we visited have residence halls in better condition than here, even older schools. Students need to have comfortable spaces in which to live and sleep.

Giovina responded that she takes these comments very seriously and knows that this is something we need to work on. In the case of the suites, the buildings were built in 1971 and there wasn't much major work done on them for many years. Now the University is trying to renovate one suite building a year.

Comment: When first visiting AU, we were shown a residence hall room that was rather small, but our student is living in Barresi and we were pleasantly surprised by how well-laid out the building is – large rooms, nice flooring, etc.

Comment: The University could save a lot of money if they turned down the heat in some of the buildings. Reimer Hall is much too hot. Students have to keep their windows open all winter because they can't stand the heat.

Response: Unfortunately, in some cases the thermostat that controls a whole building or one entire floor of a building, is located in just one room. The students in that room might be chilly so they find a way to affect the thermostat so the heat is turned up. They might then be comfortable in their room, but the rest of the building could be way too hot. That is one of the things we are changing as part of the renovations.

Q: Is it true that Kruson won't be available next year?

A: Kathy Woughter explained that Kruson is being held for first-year students in preparation for another large incoming class. We don't triple here, but that means we have to do other things to make sure we have enough space. We may not need to reserve the entire building. After the deposit deadline we'll look at the numbers and make a final decision about this.

Q: Is it true that upper classmen who want to get into a suite next year have to get 6 people together to sign up for it? What about students who really want a suite but can only get four or five people together to sign up for one? They try, they do their best to get six, but they can't get quite enough people together. Shouldn't they have a better chance?

A: Yes, in the first round of sign ups that's true. Groups of 6 students signing up together for a suite get first priority. But after that, other students who want a suite can be assigned to the spaces that are left.

Q: Why do students have to wait so long to get confirmation about housing?

A: Juniors who apply to live off campus may not get approval until June 1st, so they sign up for other housing first, just to make sure they have a place to live. Then, after they get approval, the housing they originally signed up for can be released for use by others. Until we know which spaces will be available, we can't finalize the housing assignments.

Comment: Signing up for rooms seems like a very complicated process. Anything you can do to make it easier would be most appreciated. The sign up policies should be made clear to the students and not changed at the last minute.

Response: The Resident Directors have meetings in each hall to explain this to the students.

Q: Are we expanding as an institution? It sounds like the incoming classes are getting bigger every year.

A: We are traditionally a 2000 underclass university. The current total is 1,896 undergrads. We had small classes for a few years but are now getting back to the numbers we should have. We are very glad our numbers are up, especially at this time when the pool of graduating high school seniors in New York State is shrinking.

Q: Why is it that so many people in our home areas have never heard of Alfred University? Perhaps the University doesn't do enough recruiting?

A: We can invite our Admissions Director, Corey Unis, to come to a future meeting and present information on the University's recruitment efforts.

Q: Evidently there is going to be a new College of Professional Studies and they are moving Education majors into that college. How are students informed of this? What is the communication process?

Katie responded that she spoke with Dr. Nancy Evangelista (Dean of the College of Business and soon-to-be Dean of the College of Professional Studies) and Nancy indicated it is more of an administrative change, and should be transparent for the students (Education and Athletic Training majors).

Comment: Education majors affected by this are hearing lots of rumors that some faculty are leaving, things are changing, some courses are no longer going to count toward their majors, etc. When students are freshman they need to be told what the requirements are and what courses they have to take, so they have a plan to follow. It can be very confusing. There should be more focus on this, more communication with the students.

Response: Melody will check with the Chair of the Division of Education, Dr. Ann Monroe-Baillargeon, and Dr. Nancy Evangelista, to get clarification on how the change to the College of Professional Studies will impact students and how information about this has been/will be communicated.

*Update: Melody contacted **Ann Monroe-Baillargeon** after our meeting. Ann thanked us for the opportunity to provide a response, indicating that they have and will continue to take steps to address these issues, including the following:*

- 1. She created an Education Newsletter which was distributed to all education majors and minors during advising week providing information about the move to the College of Professional Studies. The purpose of this was to cut down on rumors that might be circulating.*
- 2. As chair, she scheduled two open information sessions for students to attend, to answer questions and discuss concerns. All the students were notified about these sessions.*
- 3. One faculty member, Connie Synakowski, is retiring after 5 great years here at AU. Ann said they will miss her dearly. A new faculty member will be joining the team, and they are looking forward to welcoming him to campus. In this transition, they are doing some reassigning of advisors, which was explained in the newsletter. If, however, students have concerns about this, they can choose whomever they want as an advisor (this is University policy).*
- 4. On Wednesday afternoon, April 25th, Ann, along with Deans Mary McGee and Nancy Evangelista, are holding an open information session to address concerns and provide a period for questions and answers. Another, similar, information session is being held for Athletic Training majors. Dean McGee personally sent out an e-mail inviting all Education and Athletic Training majors to attend these sessions.*
- 5. The end-of-the-semester Education Division picnic is scheduled for Tuesday May 1, 3-5 pm at the bandstand, and all Education students have been invited. That will be another opportunity for students to talk with faculty and ask any questions they might have.*
- 6. With regard to requirements, students currently in the Education program will be held to the same learning contract/program which they came in under, no changes. Those **INCOMING** freshman, fall 2012 will have the pleasure of taking a new one credit course - EDUC 105 Perspectives in Education, so faculty can address program requirements with them early on, in their very first semester!*

*In addition to this, **Dr. Nancy Evangelista** told Melody that she will be sending a letter in May to all of the students and their parents in the new College of Professional Studies to explain the transition and address these types of concerns.*

Report from the Vice President for Student Affairs

Dining Services: Kathy Woughter reported that Ade Hall will be renovated this summer. Currently the ground floor is dark and not a very inviting, welcoming space. After the renovation, that space will be really beautiful. It will be a brighter, more comfortable space for students to hang out in, with a TV, new seating, lighting, ceiling, etc. It will still be one big room, but through furniture placement and creative use of space, it will have separate areas. It won't be a game room, but a place to relax and congregate. The upstairs was renovated several years ago, so that won't be changed too much, but there will be some new concepts added, including a gelato machine, a make your own pasta station, better dessert selection/serving methods, and more.

We are planning to renovate Powell Dining Hall in the summer of 2013. We can no longer sustain having two full board halls open every day. We're just not a big enough school to do that. So, we are moving

toward making Powell Dining Hall more of a retail facility. We'll have four or five different food concepts up there; there will be some coffee house style drinks; and it will be open later at night so students can sit up there and relax. There will be corresponding changes to the meal plan options.

Members of Kathy's student advisory board have been very helpful in making suggestions for changes in Ade and Powell. We are looking at the new trends in student dining services, but also focusing on what seems to work best on our campus. New trends include more raw and vegetarian options and more personalization. We've also found that our students are the top consumers of chicken of any AVI account. So, one of the food concepts in Powell will focus on chicken.

We also found that we need to do better with signage, because, for example, students tell us they want organic eggs. We are already serving organic eggs, but they just don't realize it. So, we need to do a better job of getting that information out.

Q: When do the dining halls close? Are they open at all over the summer?

A: They close on May 6, but open again on June 24 for summer programs. They are not able to remain open during the weeks from May 6 through June 23, because there aren't enough students staying on campus to sustain the dining services operation. Because of this, Summer Session I students are assigned to campus housing with kitchen facilities.

Q: What is the University doing to accommodate students with food allergies? Can there be more vegan choices.

A: Yes, there will be more vegan choices and a pasta bar available starting in the fall.

Another change in Ade Hall is that more of the food preparation will be visible to the students so they can see that the food is fresh and observe how it is prepared.

Athletics Update: Our Equestrian Team is going to the nationals. We got second in our zone nationally. This is really great, especially considering we are competing against huge schools. In softball, we are ranked second in the nation in individual hitting.

Our Athletics Director, Jim Moretti, is retiring this summer. Paul Vecchio will be the new A.D. He and his wife are from this area and are glad to be coming back. Vecchio, who has been Senior Associate Athletic Director for Communication and Sports Administration at the University at Buffalo, a Division I program, since 2006, previously spent three years, from 1992-95, as Sports Information Director here at AU.

This summer we will be starting work in the new Athletic Center, which is scheduled to be open in 2013. This will be a wonderful addition to the campus, and especially appreciated in the wintertime.

We are currently in the middle of an athletics fundraising campaign. The money raised will be used toward the Athletic Center, a new softball facility, bleachers, etc. It will help meet many needs.

Residence Life is expanding living-learning activities. Alfred Al Fresco is a program for students interested in outdoor activities. We are still doing the Drawn to Diversity program in Openhym. Kathy encouraged parents to go to the Student Affairs Face Book page to learn more about what is going on and to see a photo of a project on Main Street recently completed by the Drawn to Diversity students.

The Women's Leadership Academy has inducted new members and capstone projects have been completed. One project was a mini-conference for women of the world. Another capstone project was a magazine on student leaders. It is a beautiful publication.

Q: Is there an indoor track where students can walk during the wintertime?

A: Students sometimes walk in McLane Center. Davis Gym has an indoor track, but it is not generally open to the public. We also have treadmills in the Fitness Center.

Q: The Health Center switched management last year. How is that working out?

A: Yes, last year we decided to run the Health Center in house, rather than through Saint James. We also consolidated the Health and Counseling Centers into the Wellness Center. This has been working very well. Kathy has not heard a single complaint this year. If there are any problems, please let Kathy know.

Parents Association President's Report

It has been a quiet year. Katie hasn't gotten any communications from parents since the fall. Even the Yahoo group is quieter. No major problems or issues at this point.

Director of Parents Programs Report

Parent Handbook Update – We will be updating the *Parent Handbook* in May. If anyone has suggestions for the updated handbook, please let Melody know by the end of April.

New Student Check-In, Parents Welcome Table and Parents Orientations – We will once again have the Parents Association Welcome table at New Student Check-in – Thursday, August 23. This is always a great experience and a lot of fun. At least 2 volunteers are needed at the table to help greet parents and give out the *Parent Handbooks*. We will also need their assistance with the Parents Association table in the lobby of Harder Hall, outside Holmes Auditorium prior to, and during Parents Orientation. So, if you can come in the morning and stay until the afternoon, lunch will be provided! If you think you can make it, please let Melody know. The time frame is 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Fall Family Weekend Dates – Fall Family Weekend is scheduled to take place Sept 21-23. Our Parents Advisory Board Meeting will be held that Saturday, from 8:30-9:30, followed by the Annual Parents Association Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Topics/Issues for Future Meetings

It was requested that the fall meeting include an update on how things go over the summer with the new residence hall prep check list and other procedures in place.

It was also suggested that Admissions Director, Corry Unis, be invited to share information on AU's recruiting efforts.

Adjournment

Katie thanked Gillian and Steve Raye for their faithful attendance, insightful comments and suggestions, their enthusiasm, and their sincere concern and interest in helping other parents and making the University a better place for our students. She expressed thanks on behalf of the Board for all they have done and told them they will be greatly missed. She also thanked all the other parents for participating in this meeting. The meeting adjourned at 12:00 p.m.