

**Alfred University Parents Association  
Annual Meeting  
September 20, 2008**

**Minutes**

**Call to Order**

Parents Association President Katie Rommel-Esham called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. There were approximately 30 people in attendance. Members of the AU administration included Kathy Woughter, Vice President for Student Affairs; Patricia Debertolis, Assistant Dean for New Student Programs; and Melody McLay, Director of Summer School, Summer Programs and Parents Programs.

Katie welcomed everyone and then introduced Vice President Kathy Woughter.

**Student Affairs Update**

Kathy expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak to the group. She thanked the parents for bringing their sons and daughters to Alfred University. She then explained that the areas she supervises are those outside of the classroom. They include: Athletics, Health Center, Dining Services, Career Development Center, Women's Leadership Center, Equestrian Center, Student Activities & Powell Campus Center, Counseling & Wellness Center, Judicial Affairs, Safety, Interfaith Opportunities and Residence Life.

Kathy reported that the **opening of the new school year** went very well and the weather has been unusually good. The campus has been lively with lots of activity and the sports teams are doing well. So far, there have been some judicial incidents, but nothing major. In the case of some violations, letters were sent home to the parents, so some of those in the audience may have received them. But, overall, it has been a nice start to the year.

One new development this year is that we've started using the **NY Alert System** for emergency notification. Using this system, we can enter the emergency message into a website and it is automatically sent to voicemail, text messages, email, etc. We've made it mandatory for all students to sign up for this. AU was the first school to mandate this. Most schools make it optional. Hopefully we won't have to use it, but it is in place in case we need it. Later today there will be a Parents Information Session on Campus Safety. Kathy encouraged everyone to attend.

There are several exciting **construction projects** going on around campus, or in the planning stages. A brand new residence hall – Ann's House – is currently under construction. This 48-bed facility is being built up behind Openhym and the Ford Street Apartments. The rooms will all be singles and there will be a shared bathroom for every two bedrooms. The building will be certified by the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. Another feature of the building that will be very attractive to students is that there will be a parking lot with a parking spot for each bed. No decision has been made yet concerning how to fill the building. Students are being asked how they think it should be filled, i.e. with upper class students only, a special group, etc.

We are in phase two of the **Miller Performing Arts Center**. This project, scheduled to be completed in 2010, involves linking a 500-seat traditional proscenium theater to the existing structure, via a walkway. More information about this project is available in the current issue of the *Fiat Lux*.

Last year we ran a pilot **recycling program** in Reimer (with students in Tefft also participating). It worked out well and will now be expanded to all residence halls on campus. There is currently one central recycling bin area in each building, but we hope to broaden this as time goes by.

We recently inaugurated the **Gary Horowitz Center for Service Learning** which is currently housed in Joel's House. Students in this program get academic credit for their service project. They are in the process of determining exactly what their project will be, but they will be working with local organizations on services that impact the lives of children. Next year the Center should have a home of its own.

The **Career Development Center** is off and running with three big events scheduled for the fall. We encourage all students to go to them, even first-year students. Law School Night will take place at the end of September, in Rochester. We'll transport students up there for that event. Then, in mid-October, the Engineering Career Fair will be held here on campus, with approximately 50-60 recruiters. At the end of October there will be a Graduate and Professional School Fair with about 70 representatives coming to campus. All of this information is accessible on the CDC website.

Kathy then introduced Patricia Debertolis, **Assistant Dean for New Student programs**. Tricia explained that she is in charge of Orientation, but also works with faculty and others throughout the year to assist new students adjust to campus both in and out of the classroom. She announced that a new program has just been launched – the Leadership Certificate Program. All students are welcome to sign up for this program. Students in the program are required to attend a series of 5 different topic workshops. They will have four years to complete this. After each session the student must write a reaction paper on what he/she learned. They also have to get involved in something on campus, an organization, event, conference, etc. and write about their experience, telling what they've learned about their leadership style. The capstone is a 20-hour service project on campus. For example, one student is serving as Chair of the Committee on Breast Cancer Awareness for her capstone project. After the students complete their capstone projects they will each meet with a Career Development specialist to learn how to articulate the experience in an interview and how to incorporate it into their resume. They will also get a distinct pin to wear on their robe at graduation. Parents are asked to please encourage their sons and daughters to get involved in this program.

Kathy went on to say that parents may notice their students have concerns now that we are a few weeks into the semester. There might be roommate issues, concerns about classes and homework, concerns with faculty. They are adjusting to their new schedule. We're hearing from faculty about some students not going to classes, sleeping in class, etc. Parents should be aware that Student Affairs staff members are available to help and they should feel free to contact them. She also encouraged parents with concerns to attend the Long Distance Parenting Information Session later in the day.

### **Parents Advisory Board Update**

Katie reported that the Parents Advisory Board had a successful meeting earlier in the day. In addition to reports from Kathy Woughter and Tricia Debertolis, Director of Retention Jennifer Posener met with us and talked about new and ongoing strategies and programming to assist students who may be thinking of leaving the University. She explained that some students leave because it just isn't a good fit, others leave because they don't want to be so far from home. Jennifer will be joining us again at our Spring meeting to give us an update.

In the past the Parents Advisory Board has addressed the issue of student advisement and it looks like the University is moving toward a much more proactive process than we had in the past. The Board has also discussed dining plans, residence life issues, campus safety and many other topics. The Parents Advisory Board is an active group, in a "passive" way. It's great to have the opportunity to meet, discuss issues and exchange information.

The University is very receptive to hearing from parents, and very responsive. Parents send Katie email messages about issues or problems and we do what we can to assist.

There is a weekly AU electronic newsletter – the Alfred E-News. It provides lots of campus information and parents can subscribe to it simply by sending an email message to [enews@alfred.edu](mailto:enews@alfred.edu).

Katie went on to say that her son has had two great years so far. He is now a junior and is thinking about graduate school.

*Q: How much influence does the Parents Association have?*

A: Kathy Woughter encouraged parents to contact the Dean of Students if they have suggestions. There are some things that we are required to do by law, but if it isn't something that is mandated, we welcome suggestions. The Dean of Students recently published a webpage with frequently asked questions about the judicial process. He would be happy to receive your feedback on it. The page can be accessed from the Parents News Page, <http://www.alfred.edu/parents/news.html> under the heading "Tips and Suggestions from Current and Past AU Parent." (Please refer to the sixth bullet point.)

Katie mentioned that she has found people at the University to be very receptive during the past two years.

*Q: How can parents express their views?*

A: We encourage parents to contact or join the Parents Advisory Board to express their views or concerns. The Board meets just twice a year, during Fall and Spring Family Weekends. We discuss issues and concerns and invite members of the AU administration to meet with us to provide answers to our questions.

*Q: Who can attend the Parents Advisory Board meetings?*

A: The meetings are for members of the Parents Advisory Board, but parents who think they may want to join the Board are also welcome to attend.

*Q: How does AU handle letters of violation if children are age 18 or older?*

A: We are required to comply with FERPA with regard to student privacy. There are some exceptions, however, such as if the student gives us written permission to tell the parents, if it is a health/safety emergency or if it is regarding an alcohol/drug violation (if the student is under 21). FERPA says we have the right to send those letters out and we have chosen to do so. But the letters only go out if the student has been deemed in violation by the Judicial Board. Parents need to understand that they won't get a letter just because a student is "written up." A letter wouldn't be sent until the judicial board has judged that the student was, indeed, in violation.

*Q: How long does the process take from the time the student is written up for a violation to the point when a letter would be sent home?*

A: It depends upon the seriousness of the violation. There are three levels of review. One is an administrative conversation, one is the Peer Review Board, and the most serious violations come before the University Judicial Board. There is also an appeal process students can go through, so that takes more time.

*Q: Who makes up the Appeal Board?*

A: It isn't actually a Board. It is usually the Vice President for Student Affairs or the University President.

There is also an academic grievance policy. For example, if a student is cited for cheating he/she would be brought before a review board made up of faculty.

FERPA also dictates how much we can say to parents about their student's academic situation. For example, a parent recently called saying she believed her son wasn't going to class. The student hadn't signed a waiver, so the dean said as much as he could to the mother, as per FERPA rules. The dean then asked the student for his permission to talk with his parents, got his consent, and was then able to speak more freely to the mother.

*Q: Do local restaurants accept AU meal plan dollars?*

A: At this point, no. Alfred State meal plan dollars are accepted downtown, but not Alfred University's. We're still trying to work out all the logistics involved. It is complicated. We are exploring it.

*Q: Where can we pick up a HAT bus schedule?*

A: Schedules are available right at the Campus Center Information Desk.

*Q: Sending tuition bills electronically just to the students seems problematic. What if the student doesn't check email regularly or doesn't share the bill with his/her parents? Is there any way the bill could be sent to the parents as well?*

A: Melody said she would contact the Student Accounts Office and ask these questions. She will also provide any additional information with the minutes and will add it to the Parents News page.

*Comment: Other schools do on-line billing, but also send 1 paper bill to the parents each semester.*

*Comment: It might be a good idea to do one last paper bill with a warning that this will be the last paper bill you get.*

*Q: Will there be a convenience fee charged for paying electronically? How will parents be made aware of financial aid changes? How will they coordinate third party payments? Will the University still accept checks?*

*Comment: At another school everything is on-line. You can access your account and check it's status at any time.*

*Comment: A parent recently tried to check his son's account to see if his NYS TAP had been credited. His son didn't know how to get into his account.*

*Q: Can there be an alternate person authorized to access the student's account? If so, the parents could then check the account independently of the student.*

*Suggestion: At another school the students can authorize a separate parent account so the parents can access the account. The student can determine how much the parent can access/see.*

Melody said she would refer these questions and suggestions to the Office of Student Accounts and would provide further information with the meeting minutes.

*Q: How can faculty communicate concerns about their students so the students can be helped?*

A: Faculty can use the Student Alert System to make the appropriate people on campus aware of students who are struggling or if there are behavior issues in class. Faculty can also refer students to the Counseling Center. If the situation is serious, and action is needed right away, the faculty member would call the Counseling Center or the Dean of Students.

Thanks to everyone for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

**Addendum:**  
**Electronic Billing FAQs**

*Q: Will the bill be sent to the student's email, only, or could it also be sent, or at least copied to, the parents email?*

A: The notice about the bill will be sent to all students affected, and any other email accounts that they have given permission to. The bill itself is on a secure site within the Cashnet system.

*Q: What if the student doesn't check email regularly and misses the bill?*

A: Once the student has set up authorization for the parents to have access to their bill/payment information, it will go to the parent even if the student doesn't check his/her own account.

*Q: Can the student give the parent authorization to access his/her account? A: Yes. If so, would the parent be able to access it at any time?*

A: Yes - see earlier answer. Once a bill is published on Cashnet, it will always be out there for historical purposes.

*Q: How would financial aid changes be communicated to the parents?*

A: This will all work the same way it does now. Any changes they normally see via the bill will still be seen on the e-bill. In addition, we expect to publish bills more frequently now (since we don't have to be concerned about mailing costs), so they may be able to see information more quickly than previously.

*Q: How would third party payments be handled?*

A: The same way they are now. In addition, we are planning to bring in a new payment plan option (which is currently TMS, through afford.com) in-house, through Cashnet for next academic year.

*Q: Is there a fee for paying electronically through Cashnet?*

A: The ACH option (through checking or savings accounts) will be available for no charge (versus the current \$5 fee through our current option with TMS,) the credit card option will have a flat 2.75% charge, which is similar to the current option through TMS.

*Q: Will AU still accept checks?*

A: Yes! Payment can be sent directly to the Student Service Center on the Alfred University campus.

*Q: Would the University consider doing one last mailing to parents with the bill for the spring semester, including a notice that this will be the last paper bill they receive and giving them information about the new process?*

A: This notice was sent in the bills that were mailed on 9/25/08 to all students at their permanent address.

*Q: It is difficult to find the AU webpage with information regarding when tuition is due. Could that page be made more accessible?*

A: We are working on a new webpage for important information related to Student Account activity. It will include a link to the billing and payment website, and it will be much more visible, and easily accessible, from the parent page and other related sites on the AU webpages.