

Alfred University Parents Association  
Advisory Board Meeting  
April 16, 2011

**Minutes**

**Call To Order**

In the absence of Association President Katie Rommel-Esham, Melody McLay, AU Director of Summer and Parent Programs, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Members present were: Allison Bishop-White, Ken and Betsy Dahlgren, Melissa & Steve Delmonte, Jennifer & Paul Lange, Vicki McDonough, Gillian & Steven Raye, and Melissa Rinn. Other University administrators present were: Kathy Woughter, Vice President for Student Affairs and Deb Votava, Assistant Controller and Bursar.

**Message from Parents Association President**

Melody welcomed everyone and asked all to introduce themselves. She then read a message from Katie Rommel-Esham. In her message, Katie thanked everyone for attending the meeting on what she hoped was a sunny, warm and wonderful Hot Dog Day in Alfred. She apologized for being unable to meet with the board today and explained that she was on her way back to New York from a professional meeting in Indianapolis. She went on to say that we've been in the midst of a quiet stretch since our September meeting. With the discontinuance of Google's "groups" feature, the auparent2parent and auparent2parent2011 groups have been switched to Yahoo. Parents of prospective students have begun discussions regarding their children's decision-making processes with the onset of AU's spring Purple and Gold Days. Jodi Bailey (AU's Director of Marketing), who administers the groups, has recently uploaded a variety of documents, including things like the academic calendar for next year, student health forms and the shuttle bus schedule. These should prove very helpful to parents who are assisting their children in making the transition from high school to college.

Katie also expressed her thanks to Melody McLay, Kathy Woughter and Deb Votava for being at our meeting to provide information and support. The University is very generous in supporting this forum for parents.

She then expressed gratitude for the long-term contributions of Ken and Betsy Dahlgren to the Parents Advisory Board. While we are excited for them as they watch their son, Andrew, graduate and move out into the world, we will miss having them with us and wish them and Andrew well.

Katie thanked everyone on the Board for their help in bringing parents' concerns to the University and said she looks forward to seeing us all in the fall.

**Update on Student Billing and Financial Communications from the University**

Melody reminded the group about the questions and concerns raised at our fall meetings about student billing and financial communications from the University to new students prior to their arrival on campus. Deb Votava was kind enough to provide us with helpful information in response to those questions and concerns, which was included in the fall meeting minutes, and has generously agreed to be at our meeting today to give us an update.

Deb explained that the University used to send paper bills to parents, but in keeping with FERPA regulations, began sending bills to the students at their home addresses. However, since the University switched to using CashNet, billing notices have been sent to the students' AU email accounts.

CashNet is a good system. There have been a few glitches along the way, but they are the same problems that you would encounter with any on-line billing system. If students give their parents their PIN, the parents can get on-line and see everything that is there. Or, if the student inputs the parent's email information and makes them an authorized user, the parent can have total access to CashNet.

The University doesn't produce bills daily, but at the beginning of each term and 3-4 weeks into the term a bill will be produced in CashNet. Then, if there is still a balance, bills are produced once a month.

Holds are still a concern. If a student's bill is not paid, that student can't register for classes nor can they have access to their transcript.

The student is in control. Most students let their parents have access to CashNet, since the parents pay the bills. Deb has total faith that the system is secure. You don't have to save your payment information in CashNet; you can key it in every time you wish to make a payment. Most parents are okay with this system. There are some people, however, who don't wish to make any payments on-line. She noted that parents can always mail in a payment to the address listed on the bill. Students and their parents can also come in to pay in person if that is easier for them.

She also said that they are working toward getting additional student charges billed through Student Accounts, such as athletic charges, etc. This way everything is in one place. It is more efficient and makes things easier for everyone. If students should pay for the miscellaneous charges on their student account, that should be determined between the parent and the student.

Given the concerns parents of new students expressed at our fall meetings, however, Deb indicated that there will be a change in how the first student billing is handled. New, incoming first-year students will get a paper bill mailed to their home address, with an information sheet explaining how CashNet works and indicating that future bills will be sent electronically. This should help eliminate some of the confusion that occurred last year.

Deb encourages all parents to feel free to contact her office if they have any questions at all. She and her staff welcome questions and are happy to help.

### **Student Affairs Report**

Vice President Kathy Woughter thanked everyone for the opportunity to provide them with an update. She reported that the concert went well last night and, so far, there haven't been any emergency calls, so that's good sign. Several students have been working on a great educational program, centered on Hot Dog Day, with the theme: "Be Safe. Have fun. Give Back." Their intent is to reclaim Hot Dog Day as a community event, a family event, and a fundraising event. They've done a great job of getting the word out about this.

**Arson Update:** Kathy also gave us a brief overview of the situation involving an arsonist on campus. There were 4 fires set in trash cans in residence hall bathrooms. The first two occurred some time apart, and it wasn't clear whether they were intentional or accidental. Then the next two took place over a two-day period, at the same time of day each time, so they began viewing this as a crime. A letter was sent to all parents, to their address of record. A couple of emails also went out to the parent email list. Emails were sent to students, as well, and they were asked to forward copies to their parents.

Prevention measures have been put in place including the installation of cameras, patrols in the residence hall corridors each night, among other things. At this point in time the investigation is very active, and still very focused. We don't yet know the motivation behind these fires.

Student reactions have run the gamut from fear to not worrying too much about it. Some students have come forward with tips that have helped narrow the scope of the search, but the culprit has not yet been identified

The State Fire Inspector reported that there have been similar fires at the University of Buffalo, Buffalo State, Oswego and other colleges.

*Comment: Thank you for sending the letter to parents. It was great that the University took action to notify the parents about this situation.*

*Comment: It was also good that the University contacted the students right away to let them know what was happening.*

*Comment: Some parents didn't get the letter.*

Response: Kathy said she would look into this. If their address is correct in our records, they should have received the letter.

**Beth Judson Leadership Center:** Kathy went on to announce the creation of the Beth Robinson Judson Leadership Center, which will be in place next year. Beth Judson was a trustee and was the anonymous donor for the Women's Leadership Center. She and her husband were killed in a small plane crash in October. Shortly before her death,

Kathy had spoken with her about expanding the leadership center to include men and women. Men have always been welcome to participate, but it is important to make that clear. Beth agreed and said she was interested in working with the University to see how they could expand the Leadership Center.

Beginning in August, other leadership programs will be brought under the umbrella of the Beth Robinson Judson Leadership Center. It will include the Women's Leadership Center, the Gary Horowitz Leadership program and the Tri-mentoring Program.

**Making the Most of the University's Setting:** A group of students working with Student Affairs is focusing on how to make the most of our campus location and the surrounding environment. They are promoting ways in which students can get out into the beautiful scenery. One example is the Friday Night Hikes program, sponsored by the Outdoor Club.

**Wellness in the Wilderness:** New special interest housing for upper class students with the theme "Wellness in the Wilderness" is being made available at Joel's House. The house will be tobacco free, with a focus on healthy living and wellness principles. There will also be "extreme outdoors" programming. There will also be a "Wellness in the Wilderness" option available for first year students in one of the first year halls.

**Athletic Teams Successful:** The equestrian team is doing well, with six students going to regionals in hunt seat riding, and three riders going on to the nationals in Lexington, Kentucky. Men's lacrosse is off to a great start. The football team made it to the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of NCAA National competition.

*Q: Can students email Kathy with suggestions?*

A: Yes, student suggestions are always welcome.

*Q. Can students who have never ridden a horse take beginning lessons at the Equestrian Center?*

A: There are classes that offer this – physical education classes. There are also people who give private lessons at the Center.

*Q: What about transportation to the Equestrian Center?*

A: There is no scheduled transportation, but students get rides, car pool, etc. We looked into the possibility of sharing resources with Alfred State, because they have their own buses, but couldn't make it work, due to legal ramifications.

*Q: Why isn't the Equestrian team included in the weekly newsletter in the "Sports Round Up" section?*

A: Kathy is going to look into this.

*Q: In the Tri-mentoring Program, are upper class students required to be mentors?*

A: No, it is not required. Kathy's student intern created the program for incoming students. Upper class mentors were recruited and they nominated faculty who were asked to participate, as well. They are called the *Saxon Sidekicks*. It is all voluntary, but the mentors receive special training.

### **Old Business**

**Honors Convocation Format** – At our fall meeting there was a question raised about the format of Honors Convocation. Provost Bill Hall reported that he had been having conversations with the deans and faculty about the possibility of changing this event, perhaps splitting it up into several smaller, more intimate events. Melody asked Bill for an update on this and he indicated that they are still discussing this, and the main concern is not to take away from the significance and importance of the event and the honoring of the students and faculty. If any changes are made, the resulting ceremonies must not be any less significant. So this is still in process.

### **New Business:**

**Parent-to-Parent Yahoo Groups** – The Parent-to-Parent Google Groups were recently discontinued and new Yahoo Groups were formed. One is for continuing parents and one is for parents of accepted students. The one for **parents of accepted students (auparent2parent2011)** has 31 members. There have been 70 messages since January about Purple & Gold Days (positive comments), on-line registration for new students, new parents introducing themselves and getting to know one another, questions about where to stay in the Alfred area when visiting campus,

decided/undecided students – parents telling how thrilled their children are to be coming to AU and others saying their kids are still in the decision making stage. The one for **parents of continuing students (auparent2parent)** has 64 members. There have been about 18-20 messages since January, mostly been about on-line room selection, health services, getting a ride home for spring break and Hot Dog Day. We really appreciate everyone's help in continuing to monitor the posts and responding to questions and concerns. If you are having any trouble with access, or would like to join one or both groups, please contact Jodi Bailey at [baileyj@alfred.edu](mailto:baileyj@alfred.edu).

**Parent Handbook Update** – Last year we put a lot of time and effort into completely re-vamping the *Parent Handbook*. This year we will update the information and make a few small changes, but it should be an easier process. If anyone has suggestions for the updated handbook, please let me know by the end of April.

**New Student Check-In/Parents Welcome Table/Parents Orientation Plans** – Having the Parents Association Welcome table at New Student Check in last August turned out to be a great experience for those who staffed the table, as well as (we hope) for the parents of new students. We plan to be there again this year – on August 25<sup>th</sup>. Ken and Vicki did a fantastic job of welcoming the parents and giving out the parent handbook last fall. Melody asked if anyone else is willing to volunteer to work with her this year. She will also need assistance with the Parents Association table in the lobby of Harder Hall prior to, and during, Parents Orientation. If anyone can come in the morning and stay until the afternoon (we'll provide lunch!), please let Melody know. Vicki said she might be able to help again and Ken may also be there, but others are most welcome.

**Fall Family Weekend Dates** – Fall Family Weekend is scheduled to take place Sept 16-18. 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 to Address in the Future**

*Suggestion: It would be helpful to get an overview of residence life, and information on how roommate problems are addressed.*

*Comment: It would be good if an emergency phone number could be posted in the Residence Hall laundry rooms so students (or parents helping their students) would know who to call if a machine is broken, or water and suds are pouring out on the floor. One set of parents ended up cleaning up a mess in the laundry room while trying to help their son. The only phone number posted was for the company that supplies the machines. It would have been good if the emergency number for Physical Plant was also posted, and there should be a mop and bucket available in the laundry rooms.*

*Question: What is the University's policy on cyber bullying? How is it reported? Is the policy made clear to all the students? Is it covered during New Student Orientation? It would be helpful to have someone present on this at our next meeting.*

*Comment: The professors at AU have been wonderful in helping students who need special accommodations due to health issues.*

#### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. Our next meeting will take place Saturday, September 17, at 8:30 a.m.

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