

Alumni Board Meeting

Erskine College, Founders Room

July 27, 2024

Call to Order + Opening Devotional/Prayer

The meeting was called to order by President Sanita Cousar at 10:15am. Ralph Bowling gave the devotional and prayer for the meeting. Mark 6:30-34 was used for a message about the accessibility and availability of God and how we should also be accessible and available to others as His hands and feet.

Roll Call, Declaration of Quorum, Approval of Meeting Agenda, Approval of Minutes from February 3, 2024

A quorum was established with 15 members present. Mary Elizabeth Land made the motion for this meeting's minutes to be approved and Jack Williams seconded for the motion to pass unanimously. Mary Elizabeth Land made the motion to approve the last meeting's minutes, Trey Watts and Ralph Bowling seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Old Business - Deferral of Bylaws

At the last Board meeting, Paul Bell raised the question as to whether or not the Constitution specifies if one must be a board member in order to be an officer. It was voted on to ratify the Constitution and make a clarification about officers in a later addition to the bylaws at a future meeting. Sanita Cousar at this current meeting declared that the Board would not vote today on that issue but would defer this to a later meeting due to time constraints and more pertinent new business. However, she advised that all Board Members read the by-laws along with the options suggested under Old Business at the February 3, 2024, meeting.

Advancement Update

Paul Bell gave an update on the Annual Fund. He noted that the giving goal for the 2023-2024 fiscal year was \$1.8 million and that after a slow start (USPO failed to deliver most of the fall solicitation letters.) the total received was \$2.8 million, one of the best Annual Fund years Erskine has experienced. Beginning this year, Jeanne Bell and Andy Anderson will be spearheading Annual Fund efforts.

Jeanne Bell gave an update on Upcoming Events and Promotions which will include a mailer sent out to alumni, *Inside Erskine*, and communications to alumni targeting specific age groups.

The Erskine Open Golf Tournament will be on September 27 coinciding with Homecoming and Family Day the next day, September 28. On October 25, Erskine will host the Garnet and Gold Forum with speaker Greg Koukl. The Choraleers will have a concert on November 23. On December 3, there will be a Community Lesson and Carols event on campus to kick-off the Christmas season. April 12 will be Alumni Day and Garnet, Gold and Boom. Commencement will be on May 10, and the 3rd Annual Flower and Garden Show will take place on May 17. Sanita added that it is important for Board Members to commit to attending at least three of these events that Jeanne listed.

Sanita directed the meeting to Andy Anderson to give an update on alumni engagement and events. Andy echoed the devotion by saying how important it is for the Board to be available and accessible for hosting events. There was a Columbia event at Congaree National Park on April 27 that was very successful. One alumna mentioned that she was planning a visit back to Erskine with her family after attending that event. There was another event in Greenville on July 13 at a Greenville Drive game that was very successful as well. At this event, alumni were able to update their information so that they are in regular communication with Erskine.

Ralph Bowling mentioned how it is good to focus on Greenville, Columbia, and Charlotte as well since many people graduate and move to these areas. Paul emphasized this and added that it is important for the Board to get involved to make these events happen.

Presidential Update

Sanita introduced Dr. Adamson to begin the “President’s Update.” Dr. Adamson began by informing the Board that Erskine’s fiscal year ended on June 30, 2024, and the operational surplus for the year was \$735,000. According to records, that is the first time Erskine finished with an operational surplus in more than 21 years. Additionally, the endowment grew in value for the first time in 6 years. Erskine ended the year with \$24.6 million in revenue and that was without a tuition raise. The debt has gone down, and Dr. Adamson credited the alumni and Alumni Board for their participation in pushing the Annual Fund. Dr. Adamson also shared that 65% of the money used for operations came from student-based funds, an improvement from 75% in the past. He shared that he would like for it to be 50%.

Dr. Adamson then addressed the current situation with the Charter Institute at Erskine. There is only one reason that Erskine got involved with the charter school bill that was passed in South Carolina in 2017: mission. Rural areas need schools of excellence, and the charter school bill provided an opportunity for these rural areas to receive that. He emphasized that charter schools are public schools open to any student. Erskine College does not make any money from the Charter Institute at Erskine. Statements to the contrary made in the press (i.e. *Post & Courier*, *The State*) are false; no one from the press has contacted the college for a statement on the matter. Dr. Adamson encouraged the Board to visit a Charter Institute school to become familiar with the work they do.

Clarifying the relationship between the Charter Institute and Erskine College, Dr. Adamson explained that charter schools cannot exist without a higher education institute sponsor. The only connection between Erskine College and the Charter Institute is that the president of Erskine is the chairman of the board for the Charter Institute.

There are currently 28 charter schools in the Institute and more of the graduates continue to choose Erskine College as their next step in education. Dr. Adamson expressed that they have a goal to have at least 50 charter schools in the next 5 years. This could potentially educate 100,000 students by 2030 and impact 1 million South Carolina voters.

Regarding SACS accreditation status, Dr. Adamson shared that everything looks great on the audit and that SACS will render a decision in December.

Committee Meetings + New Business

At 12:31 pm, the Board split into Committee Meetings. Around 1:30pm, the Board came back together, and the Committee Chairs gave their reports.

Michael Noble reported that the Student Engagement Committee discussed four major things: First, they want to encourage local alumni and the Board to show up to Move-In Day on August 17th to help the new freshmen class move in. Second, they want to be involved during the Grad Fair in February of this year by having some alumni show up for different career clusters to begin making connections with graduating seniors that may be wondering about careers or looking for jobs. Third, they want to host another career panel around Alumni Day in April to push students to think about careers and make beneficial connections with alumni. Fourth, Michael stated that he and some of the basketball alumni will be beginning a mentorship program with some of the current Erskine basketball players.

Jack reported that the Alumni Engagement Committee discussed three major things: First, they want to create events for all ages and also more events that are age-related. Second, they want to communicate with other alumni about Erskine more. Third, they want to focus on repairing signs and buildings on campus.

Sanita then gave one final overarching action point for the board. This action point was to be ready to help!

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

Sanita announced that the next meeting will be right before Homecoming on September 27th in the afternoon. Lloyd Kelso offered the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 1:47pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary P. Horne