

Alumni Board Meeting

February 3, 2024

Call to Order + Opening Devotional/Prayer

The meeting was called to order by President Sanita Cousar at 9:35am. Wendy Childress gave the devotional and prayer for the meeting via TEAMS. Psalm 62:5 and Matthew 11:28 were used for a message about relying on the Lord for our help and strength in all times but especially in times of grief, sorrow, and suffering.

Roll Call, Declaration of Quorum, Approval of Meeting Agenda, Approval of Minutes from October 13, 2023

President Cousar appointed Mary Horne as secretary to fill in for Peggy Harrill who was ill and unable to attend. A quorum was established with 14 members present. David Danehower made the motion for the meeting's agenda to be approved and Walker Riley seconded for the motion to pass unanimously. Ralph Bowling made the motion to approve the last meeting's minutes, John Wingate seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Advancement Update

Paul Bell gave the "Advancement Updates" beginning with an update on the Annual Fund. Last year at this time the Annual Fund was at \$826,000 and this year it is at \$1.6 million. The concern is that the Annual Fund is 100 givers behind last year at this time. This needs to be bumped up. There is still time. Board members were encouraged to make calls to fellow alumni about giving.

A list of upcoming events was given. The President's Gala will be hosted on February 23 with a concert by Edwin McCain being held in Memorial Hall. This concert can only be promoted by word of mouth due to advertising restrictions, so Board Members were encouraged to assist in that. March 19 is the Day of Giving and in light of the Annual Fund update, Board Members were encouraged to consider being an ambassador for that. May 18 is the second annual Flower and Garden Show. Martin Hamilton, the director of the South Carolina Botanical Garden, will be there this year.

The topic was directed back to the Annual Fund and giving after questions were taken. Paul Bell explained that the original goal for the Annual Fund was \$2.5 million and that the Day of Giving focus is set on reaching a donor goal rather than a dollar goal. President Cousar explained that making phone calls to fellow alumni helps with reconnecting with old friends as well as encouraging donation. Walker Riley suggested that for giving phone calls, members should be given a set of 25 people rather than selecting who they want to call. Andy Anderson reminded Board Members to encourage fellow alumni to update their contact information.

Back to the topic of upcoming events, the Grad Fair for Erskine seniors will be hosted Thursday (February 8). This is a great opportunity to get information from "soon-to-be" graduates about their plans and to connect them to the Alumni Office. Alumni Day is April 13, and Board Members need to ask where they can serve after

reviewing the schedule. The Association meeting will be that morning. Homecoming will be early this year on September 28. Stani Day (Class of 20210) and Mary Bailey (wife of Alumni Board member Lloyd Kelso), will be convocation speakers this semester. On Alumni Day, there will be a “Teachers Talk” under the Towers hosted by Sarah Little, education professor, and the education department.

Andy Anderson gave an update on Alumni Chapters and events. There was a drop-in for donuts at Bonclarken on January 26. A chocolate tasting in Anderson, SC is scheduled for March 2. The Choraleers will be in Columbia at First Presbyterian Church and Centennial ARP on February 25. On March 8, there will be a board game night at Firefly Toys and Games in Columbia. On April 27, there will be a nature walk at Congaree National Park in Columbia. There is an event at Town Theatre on May 20 through May 24. In June, there might be a studio art night creating pottery. On August 10, there will be an Erskine Alumni Night at the Fireflies game in Columbia. A dinner cruise is being planned on Lake Murray. On October 19, there will be an Alumni Tailgate at North Greenville University and another Alumni Tailgate at Chowan University on November 9. These events have been added to the Erskine Alumni website for registration. Andy requested that those outside of the Columbia area begin to host events in their own area. Andy also said that events in homes go well. Erskine “swag” is given away at these events and that “swag” provides great conversation starters.

Alumni Board Updates

President Cousar gave an Alumni Board update. She encouraged the Board Members to memorize the four pillars of the strategic plan for sharing with other alumni about how Erskine is doing. Board Members should be in contact with Erskine regularly to gain good news to spread to other alumni. The Campus Tour that Board Members go on during this meeting will help visiting alumni “buy in” to Erskine again or still. This will be discussed in committee meetings. Board Members should suggest to “on-the-fence about giving” alumni to come back to campus for a visit. The conversation ended with recognizing that someone needs to lead the Student Engagement committee meeting because of the absence of Chair and Vice Chair.

Presidential Update

A break was held between 10:14am and 10:22am. When the meeting resumed, Walker Riley explained the new “We are Erskine” brochure. Dr. Adamson was introduced to begin the “President’s Update.”

In the “President’s Update,” Dr. Adamson framed his update around the four pillars of the strategic plan. In “Missional Fidelity,” Dr. Adamson shared that all by-laws and handbooks have been updated to have internal consistency. Additionally, the institution is moving to have consistency in training new employees. In recruitment, Erskine is moving to be more missional as well. The point is to not hide Erskine’s identity and to encourage civil conversations with people with different worldviews about Erskine.

In “Financial Stewardship,” Dr. Adamson noted that Erskine is on track to finish this fiscal year in a positive position. In December 2022, SACS put Erskine on a warning due to the financial situation of the institution. SACS said that the board needed to be more involved with the finances of the college and that there needed to be a more stable source of income. At the time, the unrestricted net assets exclusive of

property (referred to going forward as UNAEP) were negative and the college was behind on audits. UNAEP is positive for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, and current projections show that by June, everything will be positive for the audit. The question now is if the SACS accreditors will determine further monitoring or probation. December 2024 will be the deciding time because SACS only allows institutions to be on “warning” status for 2 years.

There are opportunities for income from the campus of Erskine. More camps will be coming to Erskine this summer than last summer. Memorial Day to July 31 will be nonstop camps on campus.

A question was asked by Walker Riley and John Wingate about what investments the endowment is in. Dr. Adamson said that it is in UBS which is a mix of domestic, international, and others. Right now, it is in conservative mode due to the current economy. There is 5.25-5.5% annual return from it. It is reassessed every month.

Ralph Bowling suggested that the McGee Gym be turned into a dormitory to house more students. Dr. Adamson informed the Board that the current plans for McGee are to turn it back into a gym and cap the enrollment of the student body at 900. He also mentioned balancing the male to female ratio.

Regarding both “Educational Excellence” and “Expanding Reach,” Dr. Adamson updated the Board on the Charter Institute. The Charter Institute is providing opportunities to grow enrollment elsewhere. The Charter Institute is a non-standard but traditional education opportunity in Columbia and Greenville. Dr. Adamson mentioned goals of beginning a Teacher Education program in Columbia geared toward older students wanting to become teachers that are already in their careers. This would assist in the teacher shortage. The Charter Institute operates as a separate entity from Erskine College but is sponsored by Erskine. Dr. Adamson is the chairman of the board and appoints the members of the board. None of the money earned by the Charter Institute comes back to Erskine. It is considered the 4th largest school district in South Carolina and includes schools that are some of the academically highest performing schools in the state.

The Charter Institute gives an opportunity for school choice, and there is a scholarship structure to encourage graduates to come to Erskine College for their undergraduate work. President Cousar suggested coming up with a clear statement as to what the Charter Institute is when discussing it with other alumni. Dr. Adamson added that the School of Education is growing, and they hope to graduate 100 teachers from the program someday.

Committee Meetings + Reports

Dr. Adamson led the board on a “VIP” campus tour, highlighting aspirations for campus improvements. When the Board reconvened, members discussed the potential of having a VIP tour during Alumni Day.

It was decided to have joint committee meetings. The first order of business was to discuss the “vision statement” of the Alumni Board. This was led by Walker Riley. The vision statement would serve to promote the purpose of the Alumni Board. The statement was read and then opened for discussion. Many suggestions were made, but it was recommended by John Wingate that the vision statement be voted on via email where Board Members could read it and make suggestions.

President Cousar began discussion about “Annual Fund Involvement.” There was great participation from about three members of the board who contacted alumni between Thanksgiving and Christmas 2023 asking if they would donate to the Annual Fund. President Cousar encouraged Board Members that they must participate and asked for suggestions about better ways for contacting alumni. There needs to be 100% participation from the Board and the Board needs to honor their commitments as members. What matters is not how much is done, but what matters is doing it. In addition to making initial phone calls, Board Members need to follow up with the alumni they have contacted. Board Members need to inform Andy Anderson how contacting alumni works best for them. When contact is made, Board Members need to inform the Office about who was contacted and who wants to donate. Members need to encourage alumni to get back to campus and advertise the events that are happening. Board Members need to show up to events as well and help make things happen.

Old Business

On the topic of Old Business, David Danehower began discussions about the Constitution and By-Laws. He reviewed the changes and additions that were made, but reminded the Board that this is an evolving document. 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. A suggestion was made by Andy Anderson about having a rotating executive committee. There were two options to solving this: either the Constitution goes back into being edited and is not ratified yet, or the Constitution is ratified and the clarification about officers is added in the by-laws. Walker Riley motioned to ratify the Constitution as is and clarify in the by-laws about officers being elected from the Board. John Wingate seconded, and the motion passed unanimously. The Board extended thanks to President Cousar and David Danehower for their 2 long years of work cleaning up the documents.

New Business

Walker Riley began a report from the “Nominations Committee.” Five new members were selected from a list of seven. The seven nominations were Ann Marie Tribble (Class of 1984), Brooke Wilson Clinton (Class of 1998), Christen Ashley Davis (Class of 1998), Thomas Holland (Class of 2000), Brian Melancon (Class of 2008), Wyc Timmons (Class of 2020), and Donald (Trey) Watts (Class of 2020). Of these Ann Marie Tribble and Wyc Timmons were set as alternates if any of the other five did not accept. All five accepted so the two alternates have been put in rotation for nomination next term. Additionally, Alumni Awards were announced. The Honorary Alumni Award will go to Mike Whitehurst, the Distinguished Service Award will go to Jane Shelton Dale (Class of 1973), the Erskine Service Award will go to Charles “Ed” Poore (Class of 1961), and the Young Alumni Award will go to Jennifer Jennings (Class of 2016). Due to the secretary position being vacated at the end of this term, Mary Horne was nominated to serve as secretary.

Closing Prayer and Adjournment

An announcement was made by Paul Bell that there will be an Alumni Work Week to help clean up campus the week after Commencement. Ralph Bowling offered the closing prayer and the meeting adjourned at 1:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary P. Horne