

Alumnae Association of Mills College  
Board of Governors Meeting  
July 21, 2021  
5:00 – 7:30 pm  
Teleconference

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND WELCOME**

President Viji Nakka – Cammauf called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm. There were 17 members in attendance via Zoom, with 4 absent.

Those in attendance and constituting a quorum were:

President: Viji Nakka – Cammauf

Vice Presidents: Alexa Pagonas

Interim Treasurer: Annick Ma

Board Members: Debra Connick, Gwen Foster, Linda Goodrich, Myila Granberry, Christina Hannan, Alice Hewitt, Ellen Hines, Catherine Ladnier, Courtney Long, Pam Roper, Ari Wolf, Cherlene Wright

Alumna Trustees: Adrienne Foster, Jacki Brown

Absent: Dawn Cunningham, Ferhiz Dinshaw, Debby Campbell Dittman, and Deborah M. Wood (alumna trustee)

Guests: Erica MacKinnon (Mills student), Roger Sparks (Mills professor), Susan Ardisson (alumna), Rachael Meny (alumna), Lisa McCurdy (attorney for Greenberg Traurig).

- II. PRESIDENT'S REPORT** President Nakka-Cammauf reports on 4 items: (1) that Treasurer Lucy Seereiter has requested a sabbatical, (2) that President Nakka-Cammauf has met with the new AAMC business coordinator, (3) that Taco Tuesday is scheduled, (4) she hopes to have a facilitator to discuss board communications and processes in an in-person meeting in August or September, and (5) that former President Jan Holmgren has called her to offer support to AAMC over the dismantling of the College.

- III. PERSPECTIVES ON NORTHEASTERN PROPOSAL** with reports from (1) Erica MacKinnon (current student) and (2) Dr. Roger Sparks (faculty).

- A.** Ms. MacKinnon reports on conversations with her academic advisor indicating that a liberal arts education would not be valued going forward under Northeastern University. She reports that the advisor told her that the timeline has accelerated due to the 200-300 students and *"we must embrace the new model"* which would be a *"co-op model of education."* Ms. MacKinnon reports that she continued to ask questions about what a *"co-op model"* meant and learned that first-year students would go to classes the same way the first year, but afterwards they would transition to *"work-study tracks"* with internships at corporations, write *"some"* papers and attend *"a few classes here and there"* but that their education would be primarily on

the job training. Further, there will be no upper division classes outside certain fields of study such as business and science, but that classes in the humanities “*would be very unlikely.*” She explained that Mills’ liberal arts education model is in danger with Northeastern.

- B. Dr Roger Sparks notes that one way to get corroborate Ms. MacKinnon’s report is by researching what happened to the New College of Humanities in London after acquisition by Northeastern. He has a very good friend who taught there after retiring from teaching at Cambridge. His friend reported that Northeastern initially “*sweet talked them*” and later bullied them. Northeastern increased the workload of faculty and did away with the liberal arts. Dr. Sparks states that the College’s March 17<sup>th</sup> announcement has hurt enrollment and hurt chances for the College to survive. When asked about faculty fear, he notes that for the last several years the faculty had been very compliant with the Administration, coming up with ideas to help the college by sitting on committees and developing graduate programs. He explained that when he was chair of Faculty Executive Committee, President Hillman told him, “*Roger, you’re liked by the faculty and the students but not by the Board of Trustees.*” He took that partly as a warning and partly as a threat. Sparks is a finance professor and sees Mills as having a cash flow problem. He has researched how the Board of Trustees has managed the endowment. On average annually the Board of Trustees’ way of managing the endowment gives a Rate of return of 4.5 percentage points lower than similar investments in index funds that replicated the same risk/volatility as the Mills endowment, such as S&P 500 and Barclays Aggregate Bond Index. Cumulatively, over 12 years the Mills endowment would be worth \$150 million more had the Board of Trustees invested in index funds. Additionally, if you take a 5% payout rate it is 7.5 million / year, which takes care of the deficit. He presented to the Board of Trustees but was ignored.
- A. Overview of communications – Debra Connick. Discussed how OIA handled communications for us and had a website that was a subsection of OIA’s community site. Under the MOC we are given 3 pages in the Quarterly. However, in reaction to the lawsuit the Hillman Administration has restricted access. Under order of President Hillman we were blocked from sending out communications in early July. Nikole Adams has said she will need to review any emails we send out going forward. OIA also took down our whole page because we had initially posted the legal complaint. We offered to remove the complaint but the whole page was still taken down. The Quarterly has cut our story from 3 pages to 1. Thus, a new website was launched with the helps of alums Stacy Varner and Karilee Wirthlin. We used our single page in the Quarterly to announce our new website and campaign and are sending out emails and surveys. AAMC has received \$56,000 since the March 17<sup>th</sup> announcement and does not include pledges (such as a \$100k pledge from an alumna in Southern California. The pledge total is close to \$920k). 755 alums responded to the survey. This may be due to survey fatigue and

likely also because we do not have access to email so fewer are receiving it than had the College sent it. However, there was a strong indication from survey results that the lawsuit should continue.

B. Financial report by Annick Ma. We have available funds of over a million dollars. Legal fees thru 6/30 are \$250,000.

C. **KEY MOTIONS AND VOTES**

A motion to approve the agenda is made, seconded, and carries.

A motion to approve the minutes is made, seconded, and carries with amendments.

A motion by Nominating Committee for Annick Ma to temporarily fulfill the Treasurer role due to the sabbatical of Lucy Seereiter through December 31, 2021 is made, seconded, and carries.

A motion to extend the meeting by 15 minutes is made, seconded, and carries.

A motion to extend the meeting to 7:30 is made, seconded, and carries

A motion that the AAMC will be added to the legal complaint as a plaintiff in a roll call vote is made, seconded, and passes with 9 yes votes (Viji Nakka – Cammauf, Courtney Long, Cherlene Wright, Pamela Groves, Annick Ma, Alexa Pagonas, Alice Hewitt, Debra Connick, and Ari Wolf), 4 no votes (Christina Hannan, Gwen Foster, Myla Granberry, and Linda Goodrich), and 1 abstention (Catherine Ladnier)

A motion to end the meeting is made, seconded, and carries.

Adjourns at 7:40pm

Submitted by Courtney Long  
July 21, 2021