

Class Secretaries Association Meeting Saturday, September 16, 2017

The meeting of the Class Secretaries Association opened at 10 a.m. with an introduction of officers: outgoing President Victor Rich '61, outgoing Vice President Stan Weil '79 and secretary/*DAM* associate editor Theresa D'Orsi. In attendance were secretaries Mark Smoller '53, John Dinan '55, Al Rollins '57, Richard Hoehn '59, Larry Langford '67, Gary Miller '70, Dave Hetzel '72, Bob Conway '73, Rick Sample '74, Veronica Wessels '81, Robin Shaffert '82, Jere Mancini '88, Ned Ward '89, Rob Crawford '90 and Walter Palmer '90, Deb Owens '91, Jason Casell '97, Liz Sullivan '12, Samantha Webster '15 and Dorian Allen '17; plus Sarah Woodberry '87, class vice president filling in for class secretary Laura Gasser '87.

The group then moved on to elections of officers. Stan began by thanking Victor for his leadership during the past four years and acknowledging the work of his predecessor, Kaja Fickes '95. Theresa then highlighted Stan's contributions to the group and nominated him for the position of president; the group unanimously approved. Stan then discussed the evolution of the role of class officers and said that the Nominating Committee had received an exceptional response to the recent call for names for vice president, with several talented and experienced secretaries willing to serve. He introduced Jason Casell as the Nominating Committee's choice for vice president (Jason's bio is attached); the group unanimously approved.

Report on the Alumni Council: Vic, as the Class Secretaries Association's rep on the council, reported that the discussion at the last (May) meeting of the Alumni Council revolved around the theme of how learning and teaching are changing at Dartmouth, with various reports on STEM studies, recruitment of students and faculty and the house communities. A highlight was the new communications strategy focused on the College's unique location and spirit. He said the council is currently focused on two issues: should Dartmouth grow the student body and the future of the liberal arts education.

Report on *DAM*: Editor Sean Plottner opened by saying the secretaries are essential to the magazine's ongoing reputation as having the best Class Notes in the country. He said that the editor of Penn's alumni magazine recently called to ask for advice on building a communications network modeled on the Class Secretaries Association. Sean said the magazine has a new editorial board chair, Jaime Trowbridge '82, the president of Yankee Publishing, who is a strong supporter of the magazine's independence and able to explain to supervisors what the magazine is doing. Sean also shared some story ideas the staff is working on:

- a package on the new Moosilauke Lodge by Jim Collins '84 that offers a behind-the-scenes look at architectural decisions and how the plans came together;
- a discussion with admissions chief Lee Coffin on how the College builds a class;
- a roundup of Winter Olympians; and
- a blow-out issue on the College's 250th anniversary.

Secretary of the Year Awards: Stan said that the leadership team had expanded and formalized the Secretary of the Year selection criteria (the document is attached), and that, as in recent years, it was very difficult to select just two nominees. Vic read aloud the award to Laura Hardegree Davis '94 (out 25 years or less) and Stan read aloud the award to Victor Rich '61 (out more than 25 years). Their commendations are attached.

Panel Discussions: Stan then began a discussion on "Gathering the News," saying that class secretaries consistently ask for guidance on how best to gather news and develop interesting and engaging columns. He introduced Rob Crawford '90, the 2014 Secretary of the Year honoree along with his cousin, Walter Palmer '90. Rob explained that he and Walter came up with a Q&A solution that has proved highly effective with respect to these questions. First they set up a dedicated Gmail account from which all Class Notes-related emails would be sent; then (ideally two or three weeks before each bimonthly

column submission deadline for optimal results, according to Rob) a class-wide email would go out asking classmates to respond to a question typically focusing on some aspect of their time at Dartmouth or their current stage of life (see attached list of sample questions they have used). Because the questions were intriguing and conducive to spontaneous short-form answers, responses to Rob and Walter's outreaches rose immediately and have continued to grow over time, with classmates now eagerly anticipating each bimonthly question. In cases where a question doesn't prompt a dozen or so responses within the first 24 hours, Rob will email a different question.

The discussion then segued into tips on "Putting the Column Together." Stan introduced Mark Smoller '53, who is entering his 20th year of carefully crafting and fact-checking his columns well in advance of their deadlines. Mark said that he considers what's going on around him nationally (a recent column reflected on the spirit of sportsmanship of Olympic athlete Abbey D'Agostino '14, for example) and at Dartmouth (another recent column reflected on Commencement). He might pick a season—either when he is writing or when classmates will be reading the column—and recall highlights of the class as students. Mark also speaks every month with his class head agents, as "they're talking to everyone," he says, and will ask fellow class officers if there is anything they would like to see in the column. His writing process begins by considering the structure and theme of the column, fitting the pieces together and then letting it sit for a couple of days before going back for a fresh read and final tweaks.

Other best practices discussed:

- read Class Notes columns before and after your year for ideas;
- keep track of which names appear in the column and seek out others;
- consider bringing in a guest columnist occasionally;
- use themes/questions/shared interests/seasons to tie a column together (SOY Laura Davis '94 recently opened a summer column sharing thoughts on high school students "about to embark on the mind-opening experience of college.")
- bring pen and paper to any Dartmouth-related event so you can grab names and news

Stan closed the meeting with two reminders for secretaries:

- on the importance of submitting a Class Notes column for every issue of *DAM*, both for your class CAR assessment scores and for enhancing *DAM*'s chances of being recognized for general excellence by the judges of the CASE alumni magazine awards each year.
- that many resource document for class secretaries—such as the association manual, Class Notes best practices and obituary guidelines—can be found on the alumni website:
<http://alumni.dartmouth.edu/resources-class-volunteers>.

The group adjourned at noon.

Addendums:

- Commendation: 1961 Class Secretary of the Year, out more than 25 years
- Commendation: 1994 Class Secretary of the Year, out 25 years or less
- Memo: Jason Casell '97 bio
- Memo: 1990 Questions for Classmates
- Memo: Guidelines for Selecting Class Secretaries Association Officers
- Memo: Selecting Class Secretary of the Year