

To: Association of Alumni Executive Committee

From: Election Reform Study Committee:

John Mathias '69
John (J.B.) Daukas '84
Veree Hawkins Brown '93
Ron Schram '64
Ron Harris '71
David Spalding '76

Re: Report on Election Finance Reform Study Project

Date: October 28, 2009

Based upon the extensive input we have received from alumni/ae in response to our inquiries about possible finance reform in Dartmouth elections, we have reached the following conclusions:

Although the clear majority of those responding recognize that the amount of money involved in alumni trustee and AoA Executive Committee campaigning in recent elections raises serious issues worthy of attention, the Dartmouth alumni community is significantly divided over whether anything can or should be done about it through the medium of changed election rules or guidelines. Many alumni favor implementing rules either forbidding campaigning entirely or capping the amount of money allowed to be spent by any candidate. Others feel that it should be entirely up to the candidates and their supporters to determine whether to spend their own money campaigning. Still others feel that, although campaign spending is a problem, there is no practical solution to it.

Although a controlling consensus among politically active alumni to create and enforce election finance reform rules and guidelines "with teeth" appears to be unachievable at this moment in time, the ERSC feels it is important to articulate the following general guiding principles concerning any reformed election process:

- (A) Alumni should be given sufficient information about each candidate and his/her positions to enable informed voting decisions.
- (B) To the fullest reasonable extent, candidates should be able to communicate their qualifications and positions freely without editorial review.
- (C) Elections should not be influenced by the amount of money spent campaigning, and no candidate should have to raise or spend any substantial amount of money campaigning to have a realistic chance of winning.
- (D) No candidate should ever be disadvantaged by any restrictive election guidelines or rules promulgated by the AoA EC.

Unless a controlling consensus among politically active alumni can be achieved in time for the upcoming election cycle, for the time being only two administrative changes to existing election procedures are recommended:

- (1) The election period should be shortened from six weeks to four weeks; and
- (2) In the initial ballot mailing to all alumni and on a College sponsored website, consideration should be given to allowing more expansive personal statements from trustee candidates within reasonable limits.

Respectfully submitted,

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