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Alumni Association Executive Board, Illinois Wesleyan University

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Illinois Wesleyan Alumni Association
Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting
May 5, 2001

Board members present: Jean Baird '80, Margaret Chorazy '02, Carl Dixon '70, Todd French '93, Jim Graehling '72, Sherry Graehling '72, Deon Hornsby '97, John Horton '82, Scott Huch '86, Marilyn Neis '71, Tom Neis '70, Barbara Nielsen '85, Larry Rollings '67, Mark Sheldon '70, Amy Tenhouse '97, Steve Wannemacher '73

Board members unable to attend: Patricia Bass '66, Ray Berger '70, Debra Burt-Frazier '75, Marsha Guenzler-Stevens '78, Ansel Johnson '81, and Britt Travis '81.

IWU Administration/Staff present: Minor Myers, jr., President; Steve Seibring '81, Director of Alumni Relations; Ben Rhodes '69, Director of Development; Marty Keller, Director of Annual Fund Programs; Sara Powell '72, Associate Director of Development-Chicago Region; Travis Pearson '94, Associate Director of Development-Chicago Region; Lora Wey '88, Assistant Director of the Annual Fund/Class Agent Program; and Emmalynd Dickinson, Alumni Relations Office Coordinator.

Welcome and Introductions:

The meeting was called to order by Mark Sheldon, Alumni Association Executive Board President. He welcomed the group to the Alumni Association Executive Board's initial meeting and thanked them for agreeing to the University's request to serve. He acknowledged and thanked the members for their ongoing service and support to the University. He noted that the purpose of this meeting was to explore ways to move and to enhance the alumni association, to extend it, to put new excitement into it and to take stock of what we have done and to look to what we can do in the future. The Board will look for ways to reenergize the alumni activities and find ways to work more effectively. Mark indicated that this meeting is just the beginning of what will be a long process of developing and enhancing further the alumni activities of the University.

As a way of getting acquainted, he asked each member to introduce him/herself and share some information about his/her personal history with IWU.

Historical Review:

Jean Baird presented an historical review of Illinois Wesleyan University's Alumni Association. In addition to the events outlined in *Section 2* of the *Executive Board* notebook, Jean reported that the success of the fundraising initiative begun in 1990 has resulted in the development of a \$110 million infrastructure for IWU, and national recognition for the University as one of the top liberal arts colleges. Construction projects over the past 10 years have included the following:

- Shirk Center
- Horenberger Field
- Beadles-Morse Tennis Complex
- Neis Soccer Field
- Football, Softball, Track facilities renovated

- Center for Natural Science
- Attained “Top 10 Most Wired Colleges in the Nation” ranking
- The Ames Library
- Hansen Student Center
- Memorial Center renovation
- Harriett Fuller Rust House
- All housing units renovated
- Troyer Hall
- North and South Entranceways

Academic programming enhancements have included the following:

- May term
- Increased internships via alumni networking
- Installation of Phi Beta Kappa chapter
- Oxford (Pembroke College) study opportunity
- Student-managed investment portfolio
- Redesign of General Education Program
- Co-curricular programming (especially guest speakers)
- Enhanced library collections
- New interdisciplinary programs; e.g., International Studies, Environmental Studies
- Increased study abroad
- Mellon Center faculty and curriculum development workshops on pedagogy, curricular issues, etc.
- Research Conference

Recent national recognition has included:

- *Kiplinger* ranked IWU #12 (tied with Princeton and Dartmouth) in its list of top 100 values in private colleges
- *US News & World Report* ranked IWU #1 among Midwest regional colleges and universities for five consecutive years
- *US News & World Report* ranked IWU #48 out of 582 liberal arts colleges
- *Yahoo* ranked IWU the #8 most-wired college in the nation
- NCAA Basketball Division III successes: IWU has finished 3rd, 1st, and 3rd in 1996, 1997, and 2001 respectively
- Discovery of a new species by Karen Lindahl working with Professor Elizabeth Balsler; featured in a national science magazine.

Jean noted that, in 1999, an IWU marketing class surveyed alumni to determine, among other things, their overall satisfaction with their IWU experience. The average satisfaction ratio for groups surveyed ranged from 5.83 – 5.86 out of a possible 7.0, verifying alum satisfaction with their IWU experience.

Jean reported that IWU currently has 32 active alumni regions with hundreds of volunteers ready to continue their connection with their alma mater. Alumni have indicated they want to be even more involved, to build on the successes already achieved. In closing, Jean noted that tomorrow the first class of the 21st Century will graduate and join the ranks of alumni. They have set a new standard of class giving participation with 55%. In their first year as alumni, they have already won the Silver

Bowl for greatest number of donors and greatest percentage of participation. Their success should serve as a challenge to the rest of the alumni.

President's Message:

President Myers opened with a quiz. He asked Board members to name the four states where IWU has an alum in every county. No one was able to identify all four. (Connecticut, Hawaii, Delaware, and Rhode Island)

He thanked everyone for attending the meeting and, particularly, for their continued loyal support of IWU. He went on to address some of the important issues facing IWU right now. These issues are:

- Meeting challenge of financial aid budget
- Achieving a 90% graduation rate
- Increasing national recruitment, particularly minority recruitment
- Increasing international recruitment (Minor noted that this year we are up 100 applications in the international area, and we have admitted 10 students from Bulgaria—which may be a record.)

Minor referred to the alumni annual fund as the great engine that drives the University and will allow for the University to continue advancing. Several months ago, he asked Carl Dixon to explore how other schools handle their alumni annual fund in order to analyze ways IWU can improve its annual fund efforts. He noted that an additional \$2 million in the annual fund is the equivalent of \$40 million in endowment.

Minor reported on the Board of Trustees' retreat that was held this past February. At that meeting, the Board of Trustees concluded that "we want to be ourselves" (not mold ourselves exactly like any other university).

With regard to the graduation rate, Minor indicated that although the Executive Board notebook reports IWU's rate as 76%, IWU is over 80% now. He expressed confidence that given the facilities, kids we are recruiting, and the faculty we have, IWU can definitely attain a 90% graduation rate. (Minor noted that the University might do well to look to Dennie Bridges for tips on how to improve the school's graduation rate. During Bridges 32-year career, 91 of 95 freshman who completed their varsity eligibility graduated—a 95.8% graduation rate. If the rest of the University can do what the basketball team has done, IWU will be a national phenomenon.)

Minor asked the group to conjure up the image of how it expects people to respond to the statement "I went to Illinois Wesleyan University." He asked them if this is a phrase that tells someone else something about you immediately, or is it a phrase that evokes the question, "Gee, where's that?"

Minor emphasized, we don't want to think of IWU as poised for takeoff. We're flying!

He quoted from the most recent description of IWU in the *Princeton Review* (a national college guide) which states, "Through aggressive expansion of its facilities, the 'constantly building and improving' Illinois Wesleyan has transformed itself in the last decade from a well-respected regional school to a nationally renowned university."

Minor concluded his comments by stating that IWU alumni have the choice--to be a Cessna or a Lear jet!

Bylaws and Governance:

Mark Sheldon asked Board members to review the draft of the bylaws in order to identify substantive changes that may be needed. He asked the Board to refer to the Alumni Association model in *Section 3* of their notebook. He stated that the Executive Board is structured to reflect representation from each group (circle) in the model. He also expressed his feeling that that Board should have the freedom to recruit additional, at-large members, as needed, for their expertise, to represent new constituencies, and for energizing areas where we need additional help. At this time, the Board is scheduled to meet twice a year (at Graduation in May and at the Leadership Workshop in September).

The following questions/concerns were raised by the Board with regard to the bylaws:

- Where does the real, final power lie?
- How are the at-large members selected?
- Should the Vice President also be the President-elect?
- What are the minimum qualifications required for an office holder?
- Should there be term limits?
- A provision for amending the bylaws is needed.
- Parliamentary authority should be defined.
- Further clarification of the role and membership of the Nominating Committee needed.
- Should there be an attendance policy?
- Bylaws need to be very flexible initially.
- Can a person be an Executive Board officer and the head of a constituent group at the same time?
- May need additional clarification on some operational/procedural issues.

Mark summarized the Board's sentiments with regard to certain items in the bylaws as follows:

- Expand the number of vice presidents
- Keep three-year terms for officers, but include some kind of language that limits the officers' terms.
- Ask the constituency groups to rotate their members through the process in order to expand the number of eligible Board members.

The Board determined that a committee should be formed to rewrite the bylaws based on the comments received today and circulate the revised draft to the Board for its approval. The committee selected to redraft the bylaws is as follows:

Mark Sheldon
Scott Huch
Steve Seibring

Luncheon Speakers:

Janet McNew, Provost: McNew updated the Board on the following academic enhancements:

- Increased full-time, tenure-line faculty at a time when most schools are moving to the use of more part-time and adjunct faculty.
- Recruitment of new, young energetic faculty.
- Use of tenured faculty in teaching Gateway Colloquium.
- Introduction of optional May Term to replace required January short term.
- Implemented Interdisciplinary program of study.

Jim Ruoti, Director of Admissions: Ruoti updated the Board on the Admission Department's latest marketing efforts:

- Sending new brochure, "Illinois Who?" to students in targeted markets.
- Added high school sophomores to the admissions' mailing list and reduced the number of high school juniors on the list.
- Contracted with EMBARK, a national database for international admissions (result: international applications have increased this year).
- In process of producing special international brochure.
- Currently attending 25 national college fairs and 21 fine arts college fairs.
- Worked out an arrangement with Bradley and the University of Illinois to bring high school counselors on campus.
- Currently targeting the following markets outside Illinois: Denver, Cincinnati, Louisville, St. Louis and Milwaukee.

Alumni Annual Fund Plan

Mark Sheldon introduced the discussion of the alumni annual fund by emphasizing it as one of the core issues of today's discussion. He asked the Board to spend some time focusing on this particular effort, recognizing that the percentage participation for alumni needs to be increased.

Mark reminded the Board that the benefit IWU has derived from the Ames Challenge ends this year. For the coming year, the University faces the daunting task of raising funds through the annual fund process without the Ames Challenge. The Board needs to determine how to respond to this challenge and how to generate new ways to approach the system of fundraising for the annual fund (class agents and leadership gifts process; alumni activities, particularly the reunion process; etc.).

Mark asked John Horton, the Executive Board Alumni Fund Chair, to lead the annual fund discussion.

John opened the discussion by sharing with Board members how impressed he is with the changes at IWU. When he attended, IWU was considered a very good regional liberal arts university; now, it has become a world-class university. He emphasized the important role the annual fund plays in the overall funding of the University.

For the past three years, IWU has been getting a little over \$1 million per year from the annual fund (\$2 million with the Ames match). The Board needs to focus on how IWU

can compensate for the loss of the Ames Challenge. He noted that IWU's alumni participation rate is 34%, compared to our peer group, which is in the 40% range. The participation rate for a world-class university is about 50%.

John asked Carl Dixon to present his findings from a survey he did for President Myers on how world-class universities handle their annual fund campaigns.

Carl Dixon reported that he surveyed Williams, Amherst and Harvard. To the extent possible, he got information directly from the institutions (primarily from their web sites). He also spoke with people who he knew were graduates of the institutions and had been actively involved in fundraising campaigns for their alma mater.

Carl reported the following:

- Alumni have a strong loyalty to their alma mater--they feel that their university is a "defining" part of their life.
- The three schools use a very similar approach; i.e., classmates solicit classmates.
- Generally each class sets its own goal annually--the overall Alumni Fund is a compilation of the individual class goals. The alumni perception is that the classes drive the university goal, not vice versa.
- In all cases, the classes have a great deal of control over the fund raising mechanics. In other words, what works well with one class or at one school may be somewhat different for another class or school. Each institution really allows the individual classes to determine what really works--as long as it works.
- All three institutions rely on the college to provide staff and administrative support. In all cases the perception (and therefore, the reality) is that the staff reports in some measure to the class leadership.
- Classmates solicit classmates, but not on a random basis. There is a definite effort to have peers solicit peers. If a classmate is doing business with another, it is likely the he/she will also solicit the classmate.

Carl noted that it has not been his perception that IWU alums go out of their way to do business with one another. Alums from other schools, particularly Williams and Amherst, will seek out alums to do business with, all things being equal. This appears to be an area in which IWU is not quite up to speed as yet.

Carl found that an approach used consistently with all the campaigns was having solicitors urge their classmates to match or exceed their own gifts. He quoted one person as saying, "I never ask anyone for less than I give."

Alumni from all three of these schools possess a tremendous sense of pride in having attended the college. They are all very proud of their alma mater. Not only do they have pride in their school; these alums also have a tremendous sense of membership in their individual classes—something IWU has not traditionally pushed for.

Carl shared his preliminary conclusions on how to structure a successful class-based campaign as follows:

- Empower alumni to set the goals for their class. No one wants to fail at a project undertaken for his/her alma mater. This makes the class feel that it has the responsibility for making the goal.
- Have staff report to the class. It makes the class feel that it has authority to do what needs to be done to make the goal.

Carl also noted that in addition to the annual fund, these schools run very substantial gift campaigns. An important component of a five-year reunion is a major gift. These projects are chosen by the class (not dictated by the alma mater) usually from a list of “wants” given to them. Some classes give scholarships and, in some cases, a committee from the class determines who gets the scholarship.

Mark Sheldon noted that Yale has a very systematic way of cultivating an ethos of generosity, an ethos of service, and an expectation that students will become lifelong donors to the university. He emphasized the need to cultivate IWU’s undergraduate population. The Board needs to consider long-term cultivation as well as deal with the immediate problem of getting greater alumni participation. He also suggested that we look at some Midwest models in addition to the East Coast schools.

In response to Carl’s presentation, Scott Huch stated how important he felt it was for alums to share their personal stories of giving with other alums they are soliciting--to explain why they give, not from a sense of bragging, but from a sense of why they feel it’s important to give and convince them of the same. Scott noted that one important key to this puzzle is getting alumni together, face-to-face, more often.

Carl Dixon recommended that we should establish a meeting place (pub, diner, etc.) for alums in the regions where we have enough alumni population to support it.

Steve Seibring noted that it is important to get alums back on campus as much as possible.

Marty Keller reported that the telephone center has been targeting specific reunion years to contact, letting alumni know this is their reunion year, advising them as to who is planning to attend, referring them to the IWU web site for information on activities planned for the weekend, asking them who they would like to sit next to at dinner, and asking for a reunion gift. Marty noted that using the telephone center is just an interim step until alums are in place to handle this effort.

Scott Huch presented the idea of offering lifetime e-mail to alums. Steve Seibring responded that IWU already offers a lifetime e-mail forwarding service to alums, but it has not yet been marketed to the entire alumni population. It has been tested with the last two senior classes. The alumni office plans to create a technical brochure that will cover all the capabilities of the IWU web site. He also noted that, next year, IWU plans to give every freshman an account name (chosen by them) that can be used both at IWU and when they leave the University.

Tom Neis noted the opportunities for student/alumni cultivation made possible through college intern/mentoring programs. He referred to his positive experience with Millikin’s program.

As one approach to getting a reunion gift, Scott Huch suggested that the Board notify the alumni from this year's reunion classes that when they come back to campus for homecoming this October, they will meet to vote on a proposal for an alumni reunion gift to the University. This approach would give the Board the opportunity to test this idea and see how invested alumni are going to be with this fundraising effort.

Barb Nielsen noted that alumni would probably be more likely to give if there were a specific/targeted gift identified as opposed to a generic appeal for giving.

Mark Sheldon suggested that the Board think how it can involve alumni so the gift request is only one of many things alumni are involved with. He reported that John Horton and Marty Keller are working on a fund raising plan to address the issues discussed at this meeting.

Ben Rhodes reviewed the annual fund-giving plan with the Board (*Section 6* in the Executive Board notebook). He noted that the trustees look at the budget three separate times before it is finalized. IWU has operated under a balanced budget for the past 43 years. He emphasized how important it is for alumni to be involved in determining how much they can raise. After the alumni goal is determined, the staff can go out and work to get the rest of the funds necessary to meet the budget. The goal is to have the process of alumni setting goals to be in place by September 15, 2001.

Mark Sheldon asked for a motion to approve John Horton's plan for annual giving.

Carl Dixon made the motion to accept the plan. Tom Neis seconded his motion.

The Board voted unanimously to adopt the plan.

Photos of Executive Board:

Following the alumni annual fund discussion, the Executive Board adjourned, temporarily, for formal photographs.

Tour of Ames Library and Hansen Student Center:

Following the photograph session, the Executive Board toured the Ames Library and the Hansen Student Center.

When they returned from the tour, Ben Rhodes showed sketches of what is planned for the Ames Library.

Following Ben's presentation, Marty Keller shared with the Board the bookplate that Development/Alumni Services marketed this year to families of graduating seniors as a graduation gift. Marty is now looking at how to market bookplates to the general alumni population. He is considering the IWU Magazine as one possible marketing tool.

Individual Committee Responsibilities

Mark Sheldon asked for volunteers for various committee assignments. Committee assignments were made as follows:

- Regional Clubs – Carl Dixon, chair; 28 regional club presidents
- Alumni Annual Fund – John Horton, chair; Jean Baird, Carl Dixon, Tom Neis, Steve Wannemacher
- Reunion Committees – Ray Berger, chair; 12 class reunion chairs
- Nomination and Award Committee – Larry Rollings and Amy Tenhouse, co-chairs
- Academic Advisory Committee – Larry Herbolsheimer, chair

Additional committee assignments will be made at a later date.

Mark Sheldon stated that he felt the most important time to make the linkage between the Executive Board and alumni volunteers will be at the Leadership Workshop scheduled for this coming September. Following this fall meeting, the Executive Board will be able to build contacts and determine specific ways to stay in touch with alumni.

Mark noted that the Board also needs to communicate to the general alumni group what has transpired with regard to the restructuring of the Alumni Association. The IWU Magazine was recommended as an effective way to disseminate this information. Mark emphasized that the Board needs to communicate to alumni that the Board is here to serve the general alumni and get what the alumni wants done—not just what the Executive Board wants.

Other forms of communication suggested were:

- Class newsletters.
- Homecoming – Executive Board to serve as greeters at the Alumni Luncheon.
- Opportunities for student interaction with alumni identified (Student Senate, SAC, etc.)

Steve Seibring reported to the group that one of the issues that came out of the focus group discussions held last year was the need for a physical presence on campus; i.e., the establishment of an alumni house. He noted that parking availability is very important. Currently, the University is looking at the Methodist Conference Center as a possibility for establishing an alumni center. The Executive Board responded very favorably to the concept of an alumni house.

Mark Sheldon asked each committee chair to think about their responsibilities and submit a written job description that outlines what they have been doing and what they want the job to be in the future.

Mark noted that the purpose for the development of the Alumni Association and this Executive Board is to make more explicit the alumni involvement and empowerment in the governance of the University. The Board of Trustees is revising its bylaws to include the addition of alumni-elected Trustees beginning next year.

Future Meeting Dates:

Mark Sheldon asked Board members to note the following meeting dates:

September 14 -15, 2001 – Leadership Workshop (Executive Board meeting)

October 5 – 7, 2001 -- Homecoming

May 4 –5, 2002 – Commencement (Executive Board meeting)

September 13 – 14, 2002 – Leadership Workshop (Executive Board meeting)

October 4 – 6, 20002 – Homecoming

May 3 - 4, 2003 – Commencement (Executive Board meeting)

September 12 – 13, 2003 – Leadership Workshop (Executive Board meeting)

October 10 – 12, 2003 -- Homecoming