

What Now?

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Many alumni and other supporters of the Parity Slate of candidates in the completed Association of Alumni elections must ask themselves what to do now. I find myself asking the same question. The opposing slate of candidates won the election to the executive committee and has already separated itself from the firm that was representing the association in its suit against the College. It would have been better had the Trustees settled the matter of the lawsuit by preserving parity, but for now, it is over.

What can supporters of meaningful alumni representation on the Board of Trustees do now? Our cause seems to be lost for the moment, as the lawsuit itself was a last-ditch effort to stop the Board-packing scheme that it seems will now proceed unimpeded.

Of course, the slate that won the election has consistently claimed that the lawsuit was in fact not a last resort, but a rash, misguided action that has divided the College. Well, now is the time to demand performance from the so-called "Unity" slate of candidates. The power is theirs; they had better uphold their promises to the alumni of this fine institution. Now that we can no longer fight against their election, the supporters of parity on the Board of Trustees must ensure that this new committee does what it has said it will. Most importantly, we must make sure that they engage the trustees about the issue of parity as they have said they will.

The following is taken directly from their slate statement on the Dartmouth Undying web site. "Our slate is fully committed to working constructively with the Trustees to address the issue of alumni governance and 'parity' in true dialogue, and not in the New Hampshire state courts or legislature. The Trustees, all of whom are fellow Dartmouth alumni except the President and the Governor of New Hampshire, welcome such dialogue. Dartmouth needs it, now more than ever."

Those who voted for the lawsuit said they were unable to engage in "true dialogue" with the trustees, but perhaps this new committee can. It is imperative that they try. Failure to do so will be the ultimate breach of trust and will effectively kill any possibility of parity without major damage to the school. There were many complaints about the cost of the lawsuit to the College and how Dartmouth could have better spent the projected \$2 million in costs, but if you anger enough multi-million dollar donors such as the Byrnes, the total cost to the College will be far greater than the lawsuit. This said, I implore all of the major donors to give the new committee

time to work on this issue of parity with the trustees before you cut off your funds. If dialogue suddenly works and the trustees stop their Board-packing plan, it will have been worth the uncertainty of the discussion period.

The supporters of Alumni Parity on the Board of Trustees need to make sure that this new Association of Alumni committee does not ignore what is still the issue that may most affect the College. This is especially important in light of the fact that while the “unity” slate won the election, 40 percent of alumni still voted against them. To truly be the unifying force they claim to be, they must address the concerns of that 40 percent.

The first thing the new Executive Committee should do is to send a survey to all alumni and determine whether alumni want Parity. This should be easy to do, as it seems that Dartmouth Undying certainly had access to the College mailing lists. Once it has officially been determined that Dartmouth alumni fully support parity, the “unity” slate must be fully prepared to engage in hardball discussions with the trustees. If these talks again prove fruitless, the new committee — yes, the same one that withdrew this lawsuit — must be prepared to file a new one to get what the alumni want. They are, after all, the elected representatives of the alumni.

Personally, I seriously doubt the new Committee’s ability to deliver in terms of parity. Therefore, I certainly hope that various supporters of Parity will find a way to continue the lawsuit on the behalf of those who do believe that it was filed as a necessary last resort. But, I implore the donors who were disappointed with the elections to continue to donate until there is no other option.