



# CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

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*President*

March 2, 2016

Dear Members of the Connecticut College Community,

I am writing to let you know about the recent meeting of the Board of Trustees, which took place last weekend. The agenda included discussions of the new strategic plan; the ongoing work on the Connections curriculum; strategies for strengthening enrollment, the residential experience, and student safety; the fiscal year 2017 budget, year-to-date fundraising, and other topics. Details of the meeting are summarized below.

### ***Strategic planning***

Representatives from Keeling & Associates were present on Friday to lead a conversation about the College's new strategic plan. We are currently in the second phase of the planning process. Board members considered the themes that have emerged from the feedback collected thus far and discussed possible directions that could enhance the future distinction and sustainability of the College. The strategic planning committee will be taking responses from recent campus meetings into a retreat during the spring break, in order to arrive at a concrete set of goals for the next five to 10 years. The third and final phase of the planning process, starting in April, will analyze the resources needed to realize these goals.

### ***Connections, Admission, and Retention***

The success of the Connections curriculum was the subject of several dialogues among members of the Board, the faculty, and the administration. Dean of the College Jefferson Singer talked about the faculty's commitment to the first-year seminar and team advising programs and offered summaries of the ConnCourses, pathways, language requirement, and commitment to full participation, all of which will go into effect next year. The discussions among trustees emphasized the importance of integrating career development into the four-year program.

The purpose of Connections is to provide a superior education that will enliven the student experience and improve the College's overall competitive position. To that end, the Board heard about progress in the area of student enrollment. The current admission cycle has seen the highest number of applications in the College's history — with a total of 5,876 applications, a 14-percent increase over last year. Andy Strickler, dean of admission and financial aid, described some new strategies for building the first-year class and for expanding the College's reach into new geographic markets. Dean Singer outlined the further goal of bringing first- to second-year retention to 95 percent, and presented an analysis of factors that, over time, should help the College reach that **goal**.

### ***Residential experience and student safety***

The quality of the residential experience is one such factor. The trustees heard a comprehensive report on the College's residence halls, including renovations completed over the past 20 years, ongoing plans to create stronger first-year communities, and ideas about future living options. They also received an update on the recently formed working group on pedestrian safety. Progress made since January includes: working with the state Department of Transportation on speed limits, signage, traffic lights, crosswalks, and another potential pedestrian bridge. The College has also installed speed trailers to help calm traffic; hired a pedestrian safety consultant; and arranged for a comprehensive safety audit of Route 32, surrounding roads, and campus thoroughfares.

### ***Finance and capital projects***

In the area of finance, the Board evaluated the target parameters for the fiscal year 2017 budget, including potential fee increases, faculty and staff salary pools, and financial aid. These and other aspects of the budget will be finalized later in the spring and approved by the Board in May. Cambridge Associates, the College's investment advisers, reported on the annual performance of the endowment, which exceeded policy benchmarks with strong long-term performance.

A long list of campus improvements was approved for summer 2016, including the refurbishment of academic spaces, residence halls, Cummings Art Center, and Unity House. Trustees also approved plans to modernize the College's IT infrastructure and bandwidth.

### ***Fundraising and new gifts***

A discussion of the Connecticut College Fund showed solid growth, owing to several \$100,000 gifts from current and former trustees, and a successful leadership challenge at the end of the tax year. With \$4.4 million raised to date, the fund is on pace to reach its \$5.7 million goal. Other gifts and grants received since the October Board meeting include: \$1.8 million from Linda Lear '62 to support a new Special Collections Librarian; a leadership gift from the estate of Nancy Camp '53 to create the Nancy H. Camp '53 Unrestricted Endowed Fund; \$1.025 million from the Conservation and Research Foundation, Inc., to establish the Richard H. Goodwin Environmental Fund; and \$100,000 from the SJS Charitable Trust, to support two Posse Scholars.

### ***Honorary degrees and invited guests***

The Board approved two honorary degrees: one for this year's Commencement speaker, award-winning investigative journalist Rukmini Maria Callimachi; and another for Bryan Stevenson, author of "Just Mercy." Stevenson, who is founder and executive director of the Equal Justice Initiative and a professor of clinical law at New York University, will be the inaugural speaker in the President's Distinguished Lecture Series on April 4, when he will receive his degree.

Finally, the trustees welcomed a number of guests to lunch and dinner on the weekend. On Friday, student representatives from Unity House, the LGBTQ Center, the Women's Center, and the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life enjoyed lunch with the trustees. Members of the Strategic Planning Committee and the Alumni Association Board were present for Friday's dinner. On Saturday, the trustees of color, with the help of Unity House staff, hosted students of color at another luncheon.

Overall, the weekend's conversations were open, constructive, and filled with sense of optimism about the future.

Yours,



Katherine Bergeron