

BRYN MAWR & HAVERFORD COLLEGES

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First Two Dean Candidates Visit Haverford

By Andrew Thompson

After an extensive search and several intensive, confidential interviews, the Dean Search Committee has finally developed a list of four finalists for the position of Haverford's next Dean of the College.

According to biology Professor Judy Owen, Chair of the Dean Search Committee, the Committee interviewed 12 semi-finalists on February 17, 20, and 21, each for about two hours. After the confidential interviews, the four finalists who would actually visit campus and meet with administration, faculty, and students were chosen.

Two of these finalists, Candidate A and Candidate B, visited Haverford on Tuesday, February 24 and Wednesday, February 25. Two others, Candidate C and Candidate D, visit the college on Monday, March 2 and Wednesday, March 4.

Candidates A and B had dinner meetings with student leaders. After-dinner meetings were held in Ryan Student Center, and were open to all students to meet the candidates and ask questions.

Candidate A described herself as "definitely a fan of small liberal arts colleges. I like knowing students and I like students knowing me."

Candidate B said that his vision for being dean was how they "can come in and help contribute to helping provide students with the most efficient and effective way to get resources." Candidate B also said that in their short time on campus, they had picked up on an "allusion to the Dean's office operating more in silos than need be."

At both Candidates' meetings in Ryan Student Center, Daniel Kent '11, Students' Council of 12's representative to JSAAPP, asked about each candidate's position on alcohol issues.

"At [Candidate A's current institution], alcohol has been an issue for a long time and still is an issue," Candidate A said. "Maybe Haverford's the first, but I haven't been to a school where anybody feels they've solved that problem."

"In learning a little bit about [Haverford's alcohol policy], I have to say that I really like the fact that students have a lot of input into [it], that they vote on it every year," Candidate A continued. "I think that both helps to educate people, and also helps people own more of the policy."

The next day, Candidate B agreed that alcohol was a pressing issue. "Students drink it, sometimes they drink too much of it. I would love to have a year without any alcohol problems, because that would show me that students are being responsible, respectful, and doing it in a way that doesn't draw attention to themselves," Candidate B said.

Candidate B brought up alcohol issues in the context of the Honor Code. "[It] begs the question about community standards, and how you mitigate someone who doesn't want to tolerate it," they said.

Students' Council Co-President Will Harrison '10 said at the meeting that under the social Honor Code, a student could confront another about alcohol use they were uncomfortable with. Candidate B questioned the feasibility of such

confrontations, because “At [College B], students would not want to risk that confrontation. It’s admirable that people [at Haverford] feel the agency to be able to confront these things. Talking to students here, [I think] people sometimes feel that confrontation doesn’t happen because people are being too polite.”

On Haverford’s relationship with Bryn Mawr, Candidate A said, “I was very impressed with the number of students that cross over, and the fact that as a Bryn Mawr student you can major over at Haverford and vice versa. ... It also seems like a terrific thing to have a bi-college career center.”

Honor Council Co-Chair Sarina Schwartz ’10 asked what Candidate A thought about the idea of a student-run Honor Council. Said Candidate A, “I think the more opportunities there are for students to have a voice, the more ownership there is in the whole process. ... I’m very excited that you ratify [the Honor Code] every year.”

Robin Riskin ’12 asked what made Candidate A stand out. Candidate A replied, “I have a lot of experience. I really enjoy working with students, I think I’m a good listener, I’m also really committed to doing a good job, so I work long hours to try to be accessible.”

On cultural diversity on campus, Candidate A said, “Working with students to try to make them feel part of the culture and not outsiders has been a very important goal to me. ... Every four years we have a totally new student population, so it’s one of those things if you’re not working on it continuously you’re going to slip.”

Candidate B said, “Diversity and multiculturalism and inclusion can mean different things to different students. We want to be an all inclusive community.”

Both candidates said that they wanted to work at Haverford, but had different reasons.

Candidate A said, “I like strong senses of community. Hearing about the community here and the way students treat each other with respect, and the Quaker traditions all are very appealing to me. All my professional life I’ve worked at schools that have honor codes, and that sense of student responsibility and student ownership is very important to me.”

“Over my career I’ve developed a list of ‘dream schools’ that I’d really like to work at and Haverford was always on the list,” added Candidate A.

Candidate B said, “I wanted to work here 10 years ago and they wouldn’t hire me.” Candidate B stressed that he liked the position he were in now, but “I want to have a go somewhere that could be transformative for students...I can make a contribution, for me there’s a sense that I can bring something here.”

Of the two candidates, Vice President for Finance and Administration Dick Wynn said, “I liked one better than the other,” but declined to say which candidate that was.

Will Harrison said, “They had different strengths and weaknesses. They would do well in different areas of the school.”

Harrison Haas added, “You can’t really get to know someone in 2 hours.” However, he praised the way the process was going.

“We think the search is being done excellently, the student representatives [Adam Lewis ’10, Ammanuel Zegeye ’09, and Marla Yee ’09] have been doing a great job,” he said.

Both Students’ Council Co-Presidents had a few qualities in mind that they would like to see in a new Dean. Harrison Haas said he wanted someone with “respect for the institutions that make Haverford great: student self-government, the Honor Code, and recognition that those are in effect what make Haverford, Haverford. Without those you have a very different school.”

Will Harrison said he wanted a Dean with “more than a token willingness to work with students and addressing concerns. Someone who’s willing to speak their mind, whether it’s to the students or the administration.”

Both candidates had a sense of humor through the meetings. When asked what the other schools on their ‘dream list’ were, Candidate A mentioned Davidson College in North Carolina.

Said Leo Sussan '12, "I was afraid you were going to say Swarthmore or something."

"That would have been a faux pas, right?" responded Candidate A.

When Candidate B was asked what "food embellishment" he would be, he said "Crushed Red Pepper, it's hot and racy!"

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