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Collection at Haverford Family Weekend

By Andrew Thompson

Collection at Family Weekend was held Saturday morning at 10 in Stokes Auditorium. The purpose of the event was to inform parents of what academic programs and initiatives were planned for the year, as well as to give parents an update on student life at Haverford.

“In the tradition of the college...a gathering of everyone is called Collection...we’ve been doing C ollections on Family Weekend for about 20 years,” said Senior Executive Administrator Violet Brown.

Speakers included President Stephen G. Emerson ‘74, Provost Linda Bell, Chair of the Educational Policy Committee Roberto Castillo-Sandoval, and Dean of the College Greg Kannerstein ‘63. A question and answer session was held afterwards.

“The Provost can be thought of as the Chief Academic Officer of the College,” said Bell, who was first to speak.

Bell discussed the Middle States re-accreditation process Haverford is currently undergoing, as well as the Faculty Committee on Academic Enrichment and the Academic Blueprint for the Future that the Committee recently created. The Blueprint outlines an increase in the size of the faculty without increasing the size of the student body.

“[This increase in faculty] will free up time, energy, and resources to engage students...beyond the classroom,” said Bell.

The plan involves creating 27 new faculty positions in fields including Visual Culture, Area Studies, and Computational Methods and Statistical Social Sciences. Bell went on to say that seven new faculty members had been hired in the last year.

Roberto Castillo-Sandoval, Chair of Educational Policy Committee, spoke next. He began by explaining that Haverford’s EPC was different than policy committees at other institutions, which tend to be geared towards rules and enforcement.

“At Haverford...we are a conduit, a place for discussion [and] exchange.” While EPC may seem to be in charge of academics at Haverford, he explained, in reality that lies with the faculty as a whole. Having students on the committee, with equal standing as the faculty, also changes the dynamic for the better.

Castillo-Sandoval said EPC reviews ideas that faculty have for new courses, as well as broader matters, such as the recent elimination of the Social Justice course requirement.

“EPC last year...decided to do away with [the requirement]. This does not mean that Haverford is actually giving up on the concept of Social Justice. On the contrary, I think the elimination of it is more like a lapsing, it’s a result of our own success,” Castillo-Sandoval said.

The requirement was cutting edge 20 years ago, but many courses at Haverford now include issues of social justice anyways. Faculty also had concerns about the way the requirement had been implemented, he said.

“When you have people in the class who are really interested...and those there just to fulfill the requirement, it changes [the dynamics of the classroom].”

“[There is still] a very strong sense...that Social Justice is what we’re about,” he said. “There are ideas in the works on how to incorporate social justice in other ways.”

Castillo-Sandoval also touched on plans to rethink the freshman writing seminar requirement, and to better tie it in with the senior thesis experience.

Emerson introduced Dean of the College Greg Kannerstein ‘63 by stating this would be his final year as Dean of the College, and next summer he would be moving to the Institutional Advancement Office.

Kannerstein began his talk about student life by joking, albeit seriously, that the one issue he had dealt with the most this fall was “finding rooms for a capella groups!”

“This is symbolic of the energy and enthusiasm our students have for what they do...I think we’re up to 12, which is per capita the largest in the country,” Kannerstein said. “...we have 60 hours a week for rehearsals [where we have to] have a room of some sort...that’s one of the things [we’ll look at] in the Master Plan. Right now, though, we’re kinda stuck.”

Kannerstein also talked about the increase in the number students who study abroad, resources students have access to through Haverford’s alumni network, and the importance of student self-government and the Honor Code at Haverford.

Collection ended with a question and answer session for parents, during which Linda Bell clarified that the faculty expansion would be coordinated with Bryn Mawr’s departments and their offerings. President Emerson also explained that the time frame for the expansion could range from a minimum of three years to a realistic maximum of seven.

The question of how the economic crisis would effect Haverford in the near future was raised. Emerson again stated that even though revenues from tuition, gifts, and endowment were at risk, due to the college’s conservative budgeting practices in the past, he hoped that in the near-term the economic restraints would be inapparent to students.

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