November 21, 2011

Dear members of the Dartmouth community,

Greetings. There has been a lot going on in Hanover recently, and the first thing I would like to highlight is the ongoing success of the Dartmouth Aires a cappella group on NBC's show The Sing-Off (http://bit.ly/uguUos). The Aires are now among the four groups remaining in the competition, which next airs tonight, Monday, November 21 at 8 p.m. ET. In front of millions of viewers, the Aires are representing the talent, commitment, diversity, and enthusiasm that characterize our entire student body. This is a great moment of pride for Dartmouth. I hope you will join me in watching the show, sharing the message with friends and family, and--should the Aires advance to the final three groups after tonight's show--voting for them as the #1 group!

The Aires are just the latest exposure our College has been receiving in the national media this fall. Last month, we were on the world stage hosting the October 11 Republican Presidential Debate (http://bit.ly/qvQ787). President Jim Yong Kim has also appeared on the Charlie Rose show (http://bit.ly/sVpeU) and in Forbes magazine (http://bit.ly/sqCpQL). While many of us in the Dartmouth family are fixated on happenings at the College, many people in the world don't know Dartmouth exists. This kind of media exposure is not only good to see as an alumnus, but more importantly, it increases the College's visibility and reputation.

Let me offer some thoughts about the state of the College, our future direction, and the work of the trustees. Looking at the big picture, I am very happy about: 1) The leadership team we have at Dartmouth; 2) The financial condition of the College, accomplished through lots of thoughtful work following the 2008-09 financial crisis; 3) The quality of the discussion in the boardroom and level of commitment from, and collegiality within, the Board; 4) The joint development of innovative and impactful programs between the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Dartmouth Medical School, Thayer, and Tuck; 5) The high quality of our academic, athletic, and residential facilities—which is a tribute to the extensive work done under President Emeritus James Wright’s leadership. The openings of the Class of 1953 Commons (formerly Thayer Dining Hall) and the Class of 1978 Life Sciences Center are the most recent examples.

Thus, we are in a good position to "play offense" and take Dartmouth to the next level. President Kim frequently cites the words of President John Sloan Dickey when describing his mission at Dartmouth: "The world's troubles are your troubles ... and there is nothing wrong with the world that better human beings cannot fix." Dartmouth can make the world a better place both by producing those "better human beings" and by developing and sharing knowledge and insights about societal problems. Outstanding faculty and outstanding students who become future leaders are the ingredients to make this happen. This is the symbiotic magic of a great school: students who want to learn from active teacher/scholars and teacher/scholars who want to teach and work with talented students.

Our reputation, and thus our ability to attract these terrific faculty and students, rests largely on the strength of our faculty, on their skills as teachers, and, on their work as groundbreaking scholars, measured primarily by their research and productivity. The "next level" for Dartmouth
means supporting and celebrating faculty who are the true thought-leaders in their fields, as well as attracting and retaining new professors who are at the top of their respective fields. These scholars are the magnets that attract other great faculty and the students who want to work with them.

The faculty and administration are in the midst of a strategic planning process. We trustees have been working closely with them. While the process has another year to run, it is clear that one of the key aspects of the plan will be to invest in our stellar faculty and add to their ranks, with the objective of increasing their capacity to lead in their chosen fields.

Beyond the strategic plan, we are focused on several things, and I would highlight the timely completion of two critical facilities projects: the Visual Arts Center and the renovation of the Hanover Inn. The Visual Arts Center will form the third piece of an "arts block" along with the Hopkins Center for the Arts and the Hood Museum of Art, enhancing what is already a vibrant arts community at the College. The Inn is the "front door" to Dartmouth. Having first-rate guest rooms and conference, meeting, and dining facilities will enable us to host academic conferences and other events that previously were not possible. The Hanover Inn will then not just be a hotel, but will be central to the intellectual life of Dartmouth. Renovations are slated to be completed by Commencement 2012.

As trustees, we strive to be accessible and visible to the Dartmouth community. I hope we are meeting your expectations. Best wishes for a healthy, happy holiday season.

Best regards,

Steve Mandel '78
Chair, Dartmouth College Board of Trustees