September 26, 2012

Dear Friends of Dartmouth,

The year ahead is an important one for Dartmouth, and I want to update you on the activities and priorities of the Board of Trustees following our recent annual fall meeting in Hanover.

The Trustees have four major areas of focus for the year: finding an inspiring 18th President, who can lead Dartmouth well into the future; working with senior leadership to conclude the important strategic planning work of the past 18 months; overseeing master planning for the campus; and enhancing education, procedures, and sanctions to ensure the safety and success of our students.

Bill Helman, Diana Taylor and their fellow members of the Presidential Search Committee have been hard at work over the past several months to identify an excellent candidate to continue the Wheelock Succession. A number of strong candidates have emerged and the committee is getting to know these individuals better. We hope to be able to name Dartmouth’s next President by early in the New Year.

At the Board’s fall meeting, we reviewed the current phase of Dartmouth’s strategic planning process. Strategic planning in an academic institution needs to be a bottom-up, very inclusive process in order to be successful, and Dartmouth certainly has followed that model. Under the committed leadership of Provost, and now President, Carol Folt, the faculty and administration have developed a set of aspirational directions for Dartmouth’s future. The central themes of the plan will be outlined later in this academic year, but they build upon Dartmouth’s scholar/teacher model and on areas of distinctive competence where Dartmouth can make a difference in addressing major global and national issues.

The beauty of Dartmouth’s campus is a function of our location and of careful planning over many years for open space and architecture that fit Dartmouth’s environment. It will be critical to the master planning that is under way to preserve those characteristics as well as to maintain a walking campus, while at the same time providing opportunity for growth. We are also engaged in a process of energy planning to ensure that Dartmouth is both a good environmental steward and economically efficient in its energy consumption.

My fellow Trustees and I believe that nothing is more important to Dartmouth than the health and safety of our students. We want to foster a thriving and fully engaged
community founded on accountability, concern for others and personal well-being. While initiatives to combat binge drinking, hazing, and sexual assault were launched under President Jim Yong Kim’s leadership, we need to do more. We are pleased that last week Dean of the College Charlotte Johnson, with the close involvement of Director of Athletics Harry Sheehy, put in place enhanced harm reduction measures that focus on increased education, policies, and sanctions for hazing. Such behavior is antithetical to Dartmouth’s values and it is our responsibility to take actions to eliminate it.

While we have a great deal of work ahead of us, this is also a time for celebration. Two weekends ago, we celebrated the opening of the Black Family Visual Arts Center (BVAC). Not only is it a spectacular building, but its presence has also transformed the plaza between the BVAC and the Hop into one of the most beautiful and inviting spots on campus, enhanced by Ellsworth Kelly’s “Dartmouth Panels” on the brick façade of the Hop. The arts district formed by the Hop, the Hood and the BVAC creates a distinctive magnet for our campus and provides a splendid backdrop for the Year of the Arts at Dartmouth. The Year of the Arts and the 50th anniversary of the Hop were kicked off by renowned cellist Yo-Yo Ma’s solo concert. (Here is a photograph of Yo-Yo Ma and Ellsworth Kelly with Leon Black ’73, and another of Yo-Yo Ma visiting with Kappa Kappa Gamma after the concert.)

The renovated Hanover Inn opened in June and its full conference facilities will be operational by November. For the first time, Dartmouth will be able to host large-scale conferences in Hanover, a significant feature for faculty across the institution. If you have not been inside the new Inn, I encourage you to stop by. I think you will like what you find.

The beginning of the academic year is always filled with many interesting events and talks. Here are links to several of them: videos of Convocation speeches by Carol Folt and Ricki Stern ’87, a film about the Black Family Visual Arts Center, Arts at Dartmouth events and information, and upcoming speakers in the Leading Voices in Higher Education series.

In the spirit of maintaining an open dialogue with the greater Dartmouth community, please feel free to contact me with any ideas or thoughts you may have.

Best wishes for a productive, enjoyable balance of 2012.

Best regards,

Steve Mandel ’78 Chair, Dartmouth College Board of Trustees