

February 18, 2013

Dear Gustavus Alumni,

On February 6, the alumni of Gustavus Adolphus College received an email letter from Mark Bernhardson, '71, Chair of the Gustavus Board of Trustees, which refers to recent news regarding concerns about the College's governance and leadership. His letter's stated purpose is "to provide background and context to the concerns being expressed." However, the content of his letter completely ignores the real concerns of the Gustavus community (faculty, staff and administration) regarding the leadership of Jack Ohle.

The Board Chair's letter implies that the concerns on campus are somehow related to national trends in higher education. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our concerns are about a president who has demonstrated, over four and a half years, an inability to manage the finances of the College in a way that will support the long-term health of the academic program. Our concerns are about a president who unilaterally makes decisions that do not give priority to the academic mission of the College. Our concerns are about a president whose demonstrated behaviors put a lie to the shared values of our community. Our concerns are about the loss of key members of our community - faculty, staff, and particularly the administrators who worked most closely with this President. And, our concerns are for faculty members, whose plummeting morale may make it difficult for them to continue to put in the long hours of hard work and individual mentoring that are the hallmark of a Gustavus education.

The Board Chair's letter mentions a new governance model, developed in the past few years, which allows for greater input and dialog from campus constituencies. Under this new model, which the Faculty entirely supports, the Board received in October (at the request of its own Academic Affairs Committee) 330 pages of detailed survey narrative expressing in detail the overwhelming problems with President Ohle's leadership. In his letter to alumni, Chair Bernhardson says, "As a Board, we have listened and are hearing the concerns expressed on and off campus and will continue to do so. While we know there is work to be done, we are excited about the progress of the institution under the President's leadership." Taken together with the survey results, his words expose the problem - namely that the actions of "listening" and "hearing" are, for the Board and the President, consistent with "ignoring" the concerns that have been openly conveyed to them, through official and unofficial channels, almost continuously for four and a half years. It is difficult, after reading and understanding those 330 pages of faculty survey responses, to be "excited about the progress of the College under President Ohle's leadership."

The Board Chair's letter also speaks to successes the College has had in recent years. The first one mentioned, "an increase in student enrollment," must be contextualized. Gustavus' total full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment in Fall 2007, a year before President Ohle arrived, was 2587 students. In Fall 2012, our FTE enrollment was 2508, which, although still some 79 students behind the overall enrollment numbers that preceded President Ohle's arrival, is showing an upward trend, thanks in large part to our Vice President for Enrollment Management and his capable and dedicated team.

Chair Bernhardson's letter also mentions increased giving to the College. We are very grateful for the generous response to Campaign Gustavus 150. At the same time we are solicitous that these gifts be invested in the academic mission of the College rather than in vanity projects such as the \$500,000 in granite for the Sesquicentennial Plaza. And we are concerned by the loss of transparency in the budget process and the erratic swings in the President's fiduciary leadership. For example, in a budget report to the All-Employee meeting on March 26, 2012, President Ohle painted a rosy picture of our future that included no employee layoffs and small short-term raises followed by better ones in the long term. This was followed on July 26, 2012, by a second All-Employee meeting at which it was announced that salaries were frozen, millions of dollars had suddenly been removed from the rollover budgets of the academic departments and programs, and that \$1 million had also been cut from the current year's budget by decreasing the College's contribution to employee retirement plans.

At the end of his letter, Chair Bernhardson told you: "The one thing we know for sure is that the Gustavus family is a tight-knit group that cares deeply about the success of the institution. With your continued support and dialogue, we will stay committed and focused on Gustavus's core values and mission of educating students for lives of leadership and service." In our opinion, that dialogue can only take place if you, as individual alumni, make your voices heard. We urge you to contact us, the administration, and the members of the Board of Trustees to express your concerns.

Despite the challenges we face as a community, Gustavus Adolphus College continues to be a first-rate liberal-arts College filled with teachers and students who are passionately dedicated to academic excellence and lifelong learning. The fact that the Gustavus Faculty is speaking out, publically, during this crisis in leadership, is precisely because we try to embody, through our actions, Gustavus' core values of community, faith, justice, service and excellence. We believe that this makes us the kind of faculty, and the kind of College, to which anyone can be proud to send their children. We hope that you understand the situation in which we find ourselves, and we hope that you find us worthy of your support.

The Gustavus Faculty Senate:

Dr. John Cha, Associate Professor of Religion – Chair
Dr. Mary Solberg, Associate Professor of Religion – Vice Chair
Dr. Priscilla Briggs, Associate Professor of Art
Dr. Sean Cobb, Assistant Professor of English
Dr. Eric Dugdale, Associate Professor of Classics
Dr. Yurie Hong, Assistant Professor of Classics
Dr. Greg Kaster, Professor of History
Dr. Michelle Koomen, Associate Professor of Education
Dr. Richard Leitch, Associate Professor of Political Science
Dr. Steven Mellema '72, Professor of Physics
Dr. Stephen Miller, Assistant Professor of Chemistry
Dr. Sujay Rao, Associate Professor of History