

Alumnae of Color Committee (AOCC) General Meeting

Minutes

Saturday, April 10, 2021

AOCC Mission Statement: *To foster retention and recruitment of alumnae, students, faculty, and administrators of color; to serve as a force for change, confronting racism, prejudice, and discrimination; to support a thriving multicultural Mills community where people of color are valued and empowered as full participants.*

Attendance: Myla Granberry, Co-Chair; Gwen Foster, Co-Chair; Micheline Beam, Treasurer; Anita Kreplin; Arabella Grayson; Benita Harris; Camellia Hudson Franklin; Cassandra Curry; Clarice Flippin; Debi Wood; Estrellita Hudson Redus; Glodean Champion; Judith James; Kristyne Lange; Linda Goodrich; Marisa Anderson; Marlene Hurd; Nzinga Woods; Patricia Duncan-Hall; Sabrina Kwist; Sharon Jackson; Sharon L; Sheryl Wooldridge; Viji Nakka-Cammouf; Yvonne Daniel.

1. Welcome & Introductions

Myla welcomed all and each person introduced herself.

2. Approval of minutes from March 6, 2021

The minutes were reviewed by all. One correction: On page 1 of minutes, under AAMC Board of Governors Update: the report regarding the President's extended term of office should be "in the interim," not "in Year 5."

The minutes were approved with the correction.

3. Summary Updates

AAMC Board of Governors (Myla and Gwen): Following the announcement that no new students would be accepted for the Fall semester, in preparation for the school's closure in its current form, there have been strong reactions from all stakeholders, including alums. At least two alum groups, Save Mills and UC Mills have formed, in addition to AAMC to oppose the school's closure as a degree-granting college. AAMC and Save Mills have retained attorneys.

AAMC's position statement was emailed to the membership following a survey to which nearly 1200 alums responded. The AAMC Town Hall on March 24 was well-attended on Zoom (over 600 people), chaotic and the information provided by President Hillman and the BOT often was not what people wanted to hear. A meeting was scheduled on April 11 for AAMC, Save Mills, and UCMills leadership to see where there are points of agreement among the groups and to develop a statement (posted on the [AAMC website](#)) for a Board of Trustees Listening Session on April 22.

Board of Trustees Report (Debi): There has been a strong reaction to the announcement about the development of an "Institute" as Mills' possible next organization, in part because there is little information about it available. Marilyn Schuster, a Trustee and an alum, and Ajuan Mance, Mills Professor of Ethnic Studies and English, have been charged by the BOT with developing a plan for the Institute, and are holding small focus groups to gain input and ideas from Mills stakeholders. AOCC has been invited to submit names to participate in a focus group. Sheryl, Debi, and Gwen volunteered.

Sheila Lloyd, Assoc. Provost for Teaching, Learning & Faculty Affairs is joining Chinyere Oparah

and Maggie Hunter in leaving the college. These are all high-level college administrators and women of color who have been supportive of AOCC.

Intersectional Antiracism Team Update (Kristyne): The IAT subcommittees are being encouraged to continue to coordinate with and work with other subcommittees, but don't have data needed to work effectively. Science students are doing a survey about Mills' racial environment due to a number of incidents. All subcommittees have been moving forward, but need information from other subcommittees, which they don't have.

4. Additional Items

Meeting with Financial Aid (Myila)

Myila, Gwen, and Lynette met with Financial Aid (FA) Director Cora Manuel, and Associate Director Darryl Williams on March 19 about the Endowed Scholarship.

FA expects to continue to distribute financial aid funds despite the uncertainty of the college's future. This year, because the BOT approved an increase from 5% to 7% in the percentage of endowments that can be used, they were able to distribute 7% of the endowment to award scholarships to three students (approximately \$2500 each).

Our funds are a one-time enhancement to each student's financial aid package, not a scholarship that is part of the package every year.

Because our endowment is similar to a donor-advised fund, we will have influence over what happens to the funds if financial aid packages are no longer given.

5. Upcoming Events

- The Phenomenal Women of Color Celebration will be held on April 14, 2021, 6:00 – 8:00 PM.
- The Board of Trustees will hold a listening session on April 22, 2021, 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM about Mills status and planned transitions, open to many stakeholder groups, including alumnae.
- Black Graduation will be on May 12, 2021.

6. Open Forum

At the AAMC town hall meeting on 3/24 and since, alums have expressed many opinions and emotions and are moving in many directions. This AOCC meeting included time for us to process everything, share factual information, and consider actions to take.

Yvonne Daniel, former BOG member and former Alumna Trustee, provided a valuable history of Mills' financial problems and attempted solutions:

- There have been ongoing discussions at BOT for many years about Mills' financial crisis
- The deficit has increased from \$9 million – up since 2016, when President Hillman came on board. At that time, the main problem seemed to be enrollment (lack of hitting the numbers needed). Mills restructured recruitment, including a new website, planned restarting of the Alumnae Admissions Recruitment program (which never happened),

and new messaging about Mills.

- The curriculum was restructured
- The cost of tuition was lowered with the expectation that more students would enroll
- Faculty, including tenured faculty, were laid off
- More adjunct faculty were hired.
- The deficit is now about \$20 million, accelerated by the pandemic.
- Mills has looked at different assets as revenue sources, e.g. land and art possessions
- About half of the BOT members are alums and have been giving steadily to Mills for many years.
- Mills is now losing faculty and high-level administrative staff
- Mills and UCB have been in discussions and exploring partnerships for several years.
- There has been lot of searching for financially viable models; the Hastings model was considered, now the idea of an Institute.
- To really address the deficit, Mills need \$500 million+.
- Mills needs a new model, not maintaining the Mills that exists today.
- The central issue is declining enrollment; our level of diversity is unusual in small colleges, but Spelman College had 11,000 apps this year.
- Women of color should be at the forefront of developing and leading the model that emerges.
- Trust Beth; her actions and communications have not been perfect, but she is trying to solve the deficit and move Mills forward.

(Arabella) When was the last time Mills had a capital campaign? (2017 for Lisser Hall). Mills may have been overspending the endowment since the strike of 1991.

An alumna recounted visiting the campus to get information about graduate programs. She was sent away from the Admissions office by a student worker, despite having worked there years before, and was told to enroll elsewhere for book arts grad programs.

(Linda G) Described a love-hate relationship with Mills as an African American woman of color who was a graduate student, faculty, and chair of Ethnic Studies. What are we raising money for? Rather than keeping the “good old” Mills, alums should re-imagine what Mills can be in the 21st century. She does not support the Institute.

(Kirstyne) has been meeting with and hearing from classmates, and is in contact with current students. People are sad, shocked by the news, and many are uninformed.

(Debi) In addition to structural financial deficits, there are problems in operations (admissions: outreach and recruitment, marketing, etc.), and academics as well. Mills needs a 21st century model.

(Marrisa) While we consider the future of Mills, she has been told there are no robes available for graduating students this year.

(Gwen) If Melinda Gates and Mackenzie Scott agree to support Mills, that would be a believable sign that Mills can continue as is. Otherwise, fundraising efforts by alum groups now will probably not bring a permanent solution to the problems Mills is facing. The racism that Mills students of color and alums have been dealing with for years needs to be viewed as an operational deficit to be addressed in any new model. People seem to remember the strike with fondness as a victory that stopped the BOT and kept the college from going co-ed, but those strategies may no longer fit with

current realities.

The discussion turned to actions to take. The majority of members wanted AOCC to be represented at the Mills listening session on April 22. Yvonne, Linda G, and Gwen volunteered to form an ad-hoc subcommittee to invite members to share their preferences about Mills going forward, synthesize the responses and prepare a statement for the BOT listening session on April 22. A copy of the statement and an informational position comparison chart are attached.

Meeting Adjourned 12:33 PM.