

Washington DC 10-11-06 Town meeting Summary by Melissa Rainer '92

Thank you to the folks who already posted excellent summaries of last week's meeting in DC. I was able to attend and just wanted to add a few thoughts. The remarks portion of the meeting began with Ginger saying that she hoped that the meeting would be about healing, coming together, and only looking forward now that the strategic plan had been decided upon. And that's pretty much where my frustration began.

Throughout the meeting, things were said such as (and I paraphrase):

--We do not need to attract very many men -- just some -- and THEN lots of women will come (and we will therefore still be focusing on educating women). [isn't the BOT clever?!]

--That the coed plan had to be sorted out and approved by the trustees BEFORE it was sent to the faculty (so yes, the vote took place long before September).

--That the BOT waited to announce its decision until the students got back to campus because that's what the students wanted and the board was being ever so accommodating.

--That the PEC is doing things "just to make the admissions process difficult" and, later, that it's fine that some people don't agree with the "vote," but it sure would be nice if they wouldn't get in the way. Actually, Ginger and the board seemed very annoyed and I think surprised that the PEC was attempting to thwart their wonderful plan. Ginger held up the bag of carrots (that someone had left at the podium? -- yeah!) and said that the PEC sure wasn't offering these anymore. Perhaps she thought that the 'carrot' phase would continue indefinitely no matter what?!

It must be noted that Ginger said aloud by the end of the meeting that, as much as she wanted to start looking forward, she realized that she would still need to spend some more time looking back? I actually think that they thought that the alumnae who showed up at the meeting would just nod and smile and spread lots of warm fuzzies through the room. I was very pleased that there were a lot of hard questions, but I think there could have been more. People thinking about attending future meetings, PLEASE DO ATTEND and PLEASE GO WITH QUESTIONS! I hope that someone may want to ask a question that I wanted addressed but never got to ask: "So far you have talked about the formation of committees to improve the curriculum, the marketing, and the social life of the college. You've discussed the addition of new programs. You've discussed building a new sports facility and lacrosse field and hiring great new coaches. You've mentioned how excited you were that RMWC had just hired a hot new marketing firm. Yet all of this is being done solely to attract new men students (and the women that attend because of them). But please tell me WHY couldn't all of this been tried FIRST to attract and retain new women students?"

By the end of the meeting, my husband and I were very angry, frustrated, and upset. We both said that the meeting had only made us want to give MORE support and money to the PEC. Oh, and I did have an idea for the meetings? Is it possible to have someone hand out a PEC flier at the meetings by to provide to alums who do not yet know about it?

Sorry for the long posting! Thanks for hanging in till the end!