

A Trustee Is...



Trustees prepare to discuss important matters of Louisburg College.

Columns: What is a trustee?

Dean Eller: A trustee is a person who is entrusted with the business of the college. That is to say, a trustee is a person who makes up the full board of trustees. Those trustees prescribe broad, general policies for Louisburg College. They are the only individuals who would have the authority to do certain things at the college; like, they are the individuals who establish the budget on a year-to-year basis. They are the individuals who determine what buildings are going to be built. They are the individuals who, essentially, prescribe what our rules and regulations are in broad terms. Of course, the Methodist Conference owns Louisburg College, but the Methodist Conference has established that there will be a Board of Trustees in whom the power resides. Of course, the trustees then are businessmen and professional people who have their own concerns. They hire individuals such as the President and myself to attend to the day-to-day activities.

Columns: So the Board of Trustees actually answer to the Methodist Conference?

Dean Eller: If they answer to anybody, they answer to the Methodist Conference. Their position is such that they are the ultimate party here at the college.

Columns: How is a trustee's position filled?

Dean Eller: There is a nominating committee on the Board of Trustees which seeks out, finds individuals who share a strong abiding interest in higher education, specifically a strong interest in higher education as it pertains to Methodism and want to do something to help assure that young people as they come along, every generation of young people, still have a Louisburg College to attend if they want.

Columns: So these are the qualifications?

Dean Eller: That's how they are selected. Now, once they are nominated on that basis, then the Board of Trustees themselves actually vote on new members. What prescribes the characteristics of a trustee? I suppose you can say they are broadly varying. But those characteristics I mentioned: ones with a very strong interest in education, particularly Methodist-related education, and a strong

desire to help young people get that education, I suppose they are the two main qualifications. Now other things we are looking for in a trustee are a good sense of fiscal responsibility; we want to diversify thinking on the Board. We want businessmen. We want political leaders. We want church leaders. We want educators. We want administrators. We want a broad spectrum of people across the board because that way we can keep Louisburg College viable.

Columns: How do Trustees work with the faculty and with the students?

Dean Eller: You mean the actual mechanics of how they work with them? The trustees have their own committees. For instance, there is a Student Affairs Committee. Mr. Paul Barringer, who is the president of Coastal Lumber Company, is the chairman of it. Let's assume, for instance, that there was something going on in student activities that required trustee input or approval. Let's assume that the students and the S.G.A. wanted to extend visitation hours. What they would do is submit this proposal to me. I would approve, disapprove, or maybe send it back requesting changes. Once it reaches me in the state that I can approve, I will then take it to the President. The two of us would approach Mr. Barringer saying that we have something here that we want the Student Affairs Committee and the Board of Trustees to look at, consider, and hopefully accept our recommendation. Then he will get the committee together to discuss this. I will be a part of that committee. Probably we will invite in the president of the S.G.A. to discuss the matter. If the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees approves it, then they will take it as a recommendation to the full Board, which only meets twice a year. The proposal will be approved, disapproved, or sent back to the committee for further work.

Those are the channels. The same channels will work in any area, whether they are academic affairs, finance, or whatever. There is a committee on the Board of Trustees to work through the individual problems of Louisburg College. When the full Board meets their job is to approve or disapprove the committee's recommendations.

Columns: How long is a trustee's term?

Dean Eller: Four years.

Columns: Since the Trustees set forth the policies concerning the college and its students, how much weight does the S.G.A. carry if they would like to challenge a policy?

Dean Eller: Well, I think the weight of any organization, particularly the S.G.A., is directly relative to the amount of logic and reason that is behind the proposal, and whether or not that proposal fits in with the broad, general policies of Louisburg College. So it is very difficult to say what any particular proposal would do with the Board of Trustees and how much weight it would carry with them.

Columns: Would you care to comment on the Board of Trustees' outlook? Is it liberal, conservative, or in between?

Dean Eller: Louisburg is certainly not an ultraconservative college even among the Methodists. As a matter of fact, we are more liberal than either of our two sister institutions which are both four-year colleges, Wesleyan or Methodist College. On the other hand, we are not as liberal as say our big sister, Duke University, which is also a Methodist College. We are somewhere in the middle.

Columns: Would you care to elaborate a little bit on the Board of Trustees' involvement in the Third Century Campaign?

Dean Eller: Sure, I'd be glad to. The Board of Trustees is basically responsible for the success of the Third Century Campaign. It's gratifying to attend a Board meeting and realize that these men and women, sitting around you, are so concerned with the well being of Louisburg College that they themselves have contributed well over a million dollars to this campaign.

Columns: That's a lot of money.

Dean Eller: When you think of this coming out of a small group of people, it gives you some idea of just what their concern is. These people aren't paid a dime for the giving of their time and energy to sit on the Trustees' Board at Louisburg College. They, in fact, are givers, not takers. They give to Louisburg College, and it's been a real, almost an inspirational kind of experience for me to see the kind of effort these Trustees have made to insure the success of this campaign. Not only do they give personally, but they contact people that they know. You see, these are businessmen and leaders of their communities and they come from all over the South. They are not just local people at all. We do have some very fine local Trustees who give their time, money, energy, and ideals. We've got other people who are from Raleigh, Eastern North Carolina, and all over the place who drive to Louisburg, who get involved and go back home to their own towns and cities and talk with their friends and other business leaders in their communities to get them excited about Louisburg College. They do it because they are interested in young people, people just like yourself.

Columns: In a summary, you can almost say that a trustee is an invisible friend to the student?

Dean Eller: Unfortunately they are invisible to most students, or if students think of them at all, it's the way I use to think when I was a student: that these people really had no direct relation to the college. Yes, they are an invisible friend with the accent on friend. They are very much a friend to Louisburg College and to the students at Louisburg College.

Chuck Satterwhite

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