

HALT Lunch & Learn  
September 30, 2014

Lisa Magnarelli and Nancy Thompson

Lisa Magnarelli '96

- graduate of Hamilton, started working here in 2000
- wanted to get involved in college administration because she had gotten to see a lot of the inner workings of the college as a student
- Q&A
  - How much can you divulge about Great Names? What is your biggest challenge in terms of trying to find someone leading up to the day of?
    - Challenge differs every year, sometimes in selection; finding someone to appeal to 5,000 people is extremely difficult
      - look at price, availability, are they a “great name”
      - budget hasn’t been an obstacle due to generous donors, funded by the Sacerdote family
      - advice: recognise that you’re not going to make everyone happy
  - How has your perspective on the 1995 change affected Hamilton now?
    - very good decision
    - fraternity houses in 95 were horrifying, unsafe, in disrepair, caused those students to be very isolating
    - no sorority houses, so there was inequity
    - system now is much better, Lisa is an advocate for Greek life, although it is not always the choice for everyone
  - How do you re-engage the greeks of the 90s?
    - Laurie’s job is working with alumni for fraternity re-engagement,
      - creating an alumni inter-society council
    - opportunity to engage with undergraduates is very appealing to alumni, through volunteer roles with career center, admissions, etc.

Nancy Thompson, Dean of Students

- came to Hamilton in 1986 as assistant dean of students
  - responsible for orientation, AA, RAs, and international students
- college had become coed in 1978, there was still clear fallout from the merger in 1986; struggled to make Hamilton a truly co-educational college
- questioned whether or not there should be fraternities and sororities
- debate over whether Hamilton should divest for the apartheid in South Africa at the time
  - students moved into Buttrick Hall and staged a sit-in; those students were suspended from the college
- despite all of these issues, coming to Hamilton was the best decision she ever made
- Hamilton today is in a much better state than it was then
  - much of this is due to very intentional work, i.e. with Kirkland alumni, physical plant

- KJ used to look like other dark-side buildings, Beinecke went up in 1993 to create a centralized campus between the north and south sides
- campus has always been beautiful, but now is “stunning”
- Greek life is great as long as it is creating a positive contribution
- Hamilton has also become much better at diversity, although we still have a long ways to go
- basically Yik Yak is terrible... we can't literally shut it down, but need to figure out a way to get people off of it; same with Hamilton Secrets
- Q&A
  - Have there been any improvements due to campus drinking policies?
    - things have gotten better since drinking age increased and frat houses removed
    - this year, transports to hospital are at about the same level as last year, but things do feel better
    - Lisa: students drink differently now than how they did 20 years ago.... today more hard alcohol, drink more in shorter periods of time
    - “black-out should never be an acceptable adjective”
    - 2004/2005 EMT became a verb
  - Hamilton is in a competitive market... how do you navigate competitors but differentiate our product?
    - we do things that make us a better place, not because of a competitor issue
    - in a competitive market, you succeed by being the best you can be
  - first year housing concerns
    - many first years overwhelmed by alcohol culture, first year housing gives these students more opportunities to find their way
    - kids who are determined to drink will drink, we just hope they do it in a safe way
    - “are there any concerns that have risen from the beginning of first year housing? how to measure that things are working?”
    - her sense so far is that it is doing well
    - national survey that measures first year student engagement will be used again to see if there are any changes
  - decision to eliminate downtown housing... is the goal to combat drinking culture?
    - same rationale goes back to 1995 decision
    - there have over time been lots of issues in the village related to student behavior, believes that houses have somewhat turned into the fraternity houses that had been gotten rid of
    - effort to become a 100% residential campus