

Young Graduate Alumni Trustees

Proposal to Strengthen the Board of Trustees of Princeton University

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Graduate U-Council*
The Graduate Student Government

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Executive Summary

The Graduate School is an essential component of Princeton University's mission "to be both one of the leading research universities and the most outstanding undergraduate college in the world." (Wythes Report) It provides a first-rate graduate education, producing prominent and distinguished alumni in academia, public service, business, and the arts. The involvement of graduate students directly benefits both faculty research and undergraduate education. Graduate students are involved as well in the social and administrative life of the University and have a unique perspective on the complex and changing nature of higher education. Including recent graduate alumni on the Board of Trustees can help the University harness their talent, energy, and perspectives in a more effective way to serve the entire University community.

Background

The Board of Trustees of Princeton University is a body empowered to make decisions regarding the finances, administration and long-term goals of Princeton University. In recent years, the Board has made several important decisions regarding the present governance and future development of Princeton University, including a significant increase in the size of the undergraduate student body, the development and adoption of the comprehensive Wythes committee report on Princeton's programs and resources, and an initiative to reduce the underage consumption of alcohol among University students.

At present, the Board of Trustees consists of 40 members, of whom two are ex officio (the President of the University and the Governor of New Jersey). Thirteen members of the Board are Alumni Trustees who are elected by the alumni members of the University and serve four-year terms. Of these Alumni Trustees, four are recent graduates with baccalaureate degrees. The junior and senior classes, along with the two most recently graduated classes, annually elect a member of the graduating class to serve a four-year term on the Board of Trustees. The remaining trustees are elected by the members of the Board. Charter Trustees serve ten-year terms, while Term Trustees serve four-year

terms. In addition to the 13 Alumni Trustees, no more than eight serve as Term Trustees; the rest serve as Charter Trustees. There is always at least one alumnus/a of the Graduate School on the Board. Currently, there are two - Harold T. Shapiro *64, President of the University and ex officio member of the Board of Trustees, and Barry Munitz *68 *65.

The Graduate School

The Centennial of the Graduate School at Princeton University is a particularly opportune and appropriate time to consider increasing the involvement of graduate alumni in the governance of the University. During its hundred years of producing first-rate scholars and professionals, the Graduate School has made a significant contribution to the intellectual and cultural life of the world as well as the University. Graduate alumni include such notables as President James Madison (the University's first graduate alumnus), Cornel West *80, George Will *66 *68, and Syngman Rhee *10. The last three presidents of Princeton have been graduate alumni (Harold T. Shapiro *64, William G. Bowen *58, and Robert F. Goheen '40 *48), and Richard Spies *72 is currently the Vice President for Finance and Administration.

In addition, the Graduate School is essential in maintaining the quality of the faculty and the undergraduate body. Professors are drawn to Princeton by the opportunity to work with and train young scholars who share their enthusiasm for research and learning. Professors also recognize that high-quality graduate research assistants make their own scholarship more productive.

Graduate students make a significant direct contribution to undergraduate education at Princeton, as a great deal of teaching and learning takes place in precepts and other graduate student-led seminars. The recent development of the McGraw Center for Teaching and Learning in offering additional training to assistant instructors attests to the importance of graduate student instruction.

As Woodrow Wilson explained during his presidency of the University, "It is our confident hope that [the introduction of precepts] will bring about very gratifying results: that the undergraduate will take more pleasure in his studies, derive more profit and stimulation from them, and that the instructor will find vital intercourse with his pupils...." We believe the graduate instructor-undergraduate student relationship has fulfilled this early promise. Instruction by young scholars close to the undergraduate student's experience and perspective is an excellent complement to instruction by distinguished professors. Of course, it is also essential experience for the next generation of distinguished professors.

In addition to being involved in their own teaching and research, graduate students are increasingly involved, informed, and committed to the health and advancement of the University. In the last year, the Graduate Student Union reinvented itself as the Graduate Student Government, expanding from an advocacy group for graduate students into a more active partner with the CPUC and the USG in the governance of the University community. Graduate students have created new activities, such as a cappella ensemble and a South Asian theater festival. The Graduate College has become an active hub of graduate student life, as reflected in increasing demand for rooms in recent years, well beyond capacity. Graduate students, like undergraduates, develop sentimental ties to the University and are true Princetonians.

Proposal

Composition

We propose the creation of two new positions on the Board of Trustees for young alumni of the Graduate School (hereafter "Young Graduate Trustees"). These two Young Graduate Trustees shall serve four-year terms with staggered elections every two years. In order to accommodate these two positions, we propose a commensurate reduction in the number of Term Trustees.

Eligibility

At the time of each election, those who have graduated from Princeton University within the previous two years with a terminal graduate degree shall be eligible for candidacy as a Young Graduate Trustee. Those eligible to vote would be current graduate students, as well as graduate alumni who have graduated from Princeton University with a terminal degree in the previous 2 years. Graduate students and young graduate alumni would vote for the candidate who they believe has best served the University during his or her time as a student and who would best serve as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Rationale

This proposal parallels the Young Alumni Trustees, created in 1969 amid growing student interest in the governance of the University. Since then, the adoption of four Young Alumni Trustees has aided the administration of the University by providing important insights on student life and the needs and concerns of current undergraduates and recently graduated alumni. In recent years, graduate students have been increasingly involved in student life and in the governance of Princeton University. Adding two Young Graduate Trustee positions will enhance the ability of the University to meet its short-term and long-term goals involving student life, academic affairs and other matters pertaining to the governance of the University. As reflected in the Wythes report, the university's mission depends on both graduate and undergraduate education, and it is important that the Board of Trustees always include people intimately familiar with the current nature and needs of graduate education.

We believe that having two Young Graduate Trustee positions with staggered terms is important to ensure some substance and continuity in the contribution of graduate alumni to the governance of the University. While it would be ideal to have a similar four-person structure for graduate alumni, we recognize that there is an upper limit to expanding the Board of Trustees and that there are more undergraduate than graduate alumni. With these considerations in mind, we propose the creation of two Young

Graduate Trustee positions on the University Board of Trustees. Since the current Board is at its upper limit of 40 trustees, we propose a reduction by two in the number of Term Trustees who are not Alumni Trustees of the University.

Graduate alumni bring valuable skills and perspectives to the Board of Trustees. Rigorous academic training at Princeton gives graduate alumni strong analytical skills that would be useful in decisions involving the governance of the University. In addition, both Ph.D.s and terminal masters degrees such as those in the Woodrow Wilson School and School of Architecture often have specific expertise related to University governance, from the perspective of faculty, public administrators, or architects. As noted earlier, graduate alumni have already served capably as President, Vice President and other senior administrative posts at Princeton University.

We specifically propose creating these positions for recent graduate alumni. We believe recent graduates are likely to feel a closer connection with the University and are more likely to be familiar with the issues and processes related to its governance than those who graduated less recently. We also believe that it is important that current graduate students be able to vote on the new trustee positions. This proposed voting system enables current graduate students and recent graduate alumni to contribute to the governance of the institution. Such a system will enable the University to respond in creative and productive ways to issues affecting the Graduate School, graduate students and graduate student alumni. Just as important, it will strengthen institutional commitment and loyalty to Princeton University among current graduate students, as well as graduate alumni pursuing successful careers in academia, government and the private sector. This step will further the process already underway of making graduate student and alumni as committed to and involved in Princeton as undergraduates, a process that can only be beneficial to the University.

This proposal itself is evidence of a growing interest among graduate students in contributing to the overall success of the University. The impetus for proposing the creation of young graduate trustees comes from a genuine feeling among many graduate

students that we have essential contributions to make to the University. The value of graduate degrees depends on the continued excellence of Princeton, which further encourages graduate students to contribute to the well being of the University. As the marketplace for recent Ph.D.s increasingly includes industry and private-sector positions as well as traditional academic careers, it is important for the Graduate School to adapt. It must take advantage of the new information economy and changing career outlooks of graduate students while retaining its strong academic research focus and keeping graduate students committed to the University. The inclusion of recent graduate alumni on the Board of Trustees can help the University meet this challenge, as it has at other institutions. For example, Susan Timberlake '93 is a recent graduate alumna on the Board of Trustees of Duke University, and Vice President Janet Dickerson (formerly at Duke) reports that the other members of that Board have appreciated her contributions.

Adopting our proposal will contribute to the governance and well being of Princeton University, continuing the traditions set by current and past Presidents and acting in full spirit of the centennial celebration of the Graduate School. Giving recent graduate alumni a direct voice in the board of trustees will bring significant long-term benefits to the entire Princeton community and represents an important step towards fulfilling Princeton's mission of being both a world-class research university and an outstanding undergraduate college. We look forward to your comments and support in this matter.