Next Steps – Parents Council

1. Committees will plan to convene by conference call at least once before the April meeting. Committee Chairs and liaisons will be in touch with volunteers with specific details for each committee.
2. All Parents are encouraged to join the Puget Sound Parents LinkedIn Group.
3. Council members are given the opportunity to participate in the Admission Committee ‘Ask A Parent’ program for parents of prospective students. Parents interested in participating can sign up online with their contact information and specific interests and activities their student is involved with.
4. Save the date for the Spring Parents Council Meeting, April 11, 2015. A parent-student reception with President Thomas is scheduled for the afternoon of April 10, 2015.

Executive Summary

The Fall Parents Council meeting was held on-campus as part of Homecoming and Family Weekend. Parents Council Co-Chairs, Harminder Sikand and Amit Vasavada P’16, started the meeting by sharing recent accomplishments of the five committees (Admission, Athletics, Career Development, Communications, and Parents Fund) over the past several months. The three hour meeting featured an update from President Thomas, who discussed Puget Sound’s current priorities, including an updated enrollment strategy, and experiential learning. Each committee chair provided an update on the work of their committee over the past several months, and the plans for the year ahead. Parents were then given the option to attend one of four committee meetings and begin planning their work for the coming months.

Meeting Summary

Parents Council Meeting
The meeting began with Harminder Sikand and Amit Vasavada P’16, who introduced themselves before inviting introductions from the parents and staff members present. Harminder then reviewed the Council’s objectives and outlined when the council meets on campus twice a year: Homecoming & Family Weekend (typically October), and Spring Family Weekend (typically in April).

She then shared the following recent council accomplishments with the group:
- Helped recruit and welcome the class of 2018 through admission events, including over 700 welcome phone calls and 12 summer welcome gatherings
- Created networking opportunities for students through the Puget Sound Parents LinkedIn group, and two Project: Hometown networking events
- Supported Puget Sound athletes while travelling
- Raised a record $801,000 for the Puget Sound Parents Fund
- Improved the Puget Sound Parent website based on input from this group

Conversation with President Thomas
President Thomas shared with the group and discussed in more detail the current priorities for the university, including 1. Enrollment Strategy; and 2. Experiential Learning.
Enrollment Strategy
President Thomas shared discussions he’s been having with the Trustees about remaining competitive among a changing environment in higher education. Puget Sound’s priorities continue to focus on ensuring its strong market position, student quality, diversity, and financial sustainability. Discussions will continue with a focus on these areas, ensuring Puget Sound is working to attract the best fit students.

Experiential Learning
In the new Admission materials, there is a saying: ‘A Puget Sound education is not something you get. It’s something you do.’ This concept of experiential learning is focused on ensuring students leave Puget Sound with not only an outstanding education, but experiences that prepare them for a fulfilling career after graduating. This includes internships, research or field work, employment opportunities, community learning, and international or other travel experiences. There are a variety of offices on campus who work with students to provide these co-curricular experiences; the challenge is ensuring students take advantage of these opportunities, and are reflecting about how these experiences are contributing to their overall educational experience. A group of faculty and staff members will continue to focus on the idea of experiential learning and how to build a culture of reflection among the student body.

Committee Breakout Sessions
As is customary at each Council meeting, committees met to continue their work in support of Puget Sound. At this meeting, Admissions, Career Development, Communications and Parents Fund committees met for about 60 minutes. Committees debriefed on their work over the summer and set goals for their work in the year ahead.

Committee Updates
The Admissions Committee discussed the group’s activities over the past year that welcome the Class of 2018, and agreed to continue those events to help recruit and welcome the Class of 2019. In addition, the group is hoping to expand the number of parents active on the ‘Ask A Parent’ website where potential parents can reach out with specific questions as their students apply and considers Puget Sound. Parent volunteers can sign up to participate here.

The Career Development Committee continued the discussion around experiential learning and how parents can encourage their students to take advantage of the career resources available on campus. Additionally, the group discussed locations for Project: Hometown networking events for summer 2015 in Seattle and the Bay Area.

The Communications Committee debriefed Orientation and the ways it could be improved for incoming parents, specifically areas of opportunity for more detailed communication to incoming families. The group agreed to break into sub-committees with focus on specific areas where communication can be improved: parent website, orientation, and ‘What I wish I would have known’ sharing insights, tips and other words of advice from current parents.

The Parents Fund Committee discussed how parent outreach is an important component to reaching the goal of the Parents Fund each year. The group discussed strategies for making fundraising phone calls to parents, and discussed this year’s goal of $845,000 to be accomplished through a combination of phone calls, annual giving letters and emails, and calls from the student phone-a-thon staff.

Full committee minutes are available online.