

Wartburg College Student Senate

WARTBURG
STUDENT
SENATE

February 9th, 2017
11:30 am
WBC 214 Buckmaster



Future of Wartburg Panel with President Colson, Dean Kittle, and VP of Finance and Administration Rich Seggerman Panel

President Colson: I am going to do an abbreviated version of the talk I did for the faculty and staff I did a couple of weeks ago. We are here to provide information and answer questions. I love Wartburg College and I feel blessed to be here and to work for you all. We list our values in our strategic plan. In this plan, we say that Wartburg will be bold in fulfilling our plan. Dean Kittle has been saying that we should not confuse our model with our mission. It is easy to settle into the way things are. Colleges are easily very conservative environments. We conserve what has been learned then we pass those things on to the next generations. For the college to thrive in our mission we must be bold and innovative. Sometimes we forget that this is in our DNA. We are engaged in two important phases, stabilizing our budget and engaging our future. About three years ago, according to some difficult research conducted by Seggerman, we decided to temper the increases in tuition. We set a goal to raise tuition much more modestly, under 4%. We knew at the time that would need budgetary discipline and cutting expenses. For the past couple of years, we have discussed ways to do this and have implemented "improvements". For the past few years we have reduced our expenses and increased our revenues up to nearly \$5,000,000. We have reduced and eliminated some operational budgets. One of those was Artist Series. We realized this was a much smaller priority. Other budgets have been reduced on the same principle. I have eliminated the budget for off-site Board meetings where we would usually go to warm places like Florida. When the Board is on Campus they are able to be here on a normal day and spend time with students, faculty, and staff. We have reduced benefits to employees and not offered raises. The most painful for me has been to eliminate occupied positions. They are meaningful members of this society for students. It is not to say these people are not important, we must think of our priorities. We prioritize by considering the interests and change of those interests of students. If we are doing things right, we will continuously be responding to students' interests. Even when eliminating a position that effects few students, it still pains those students. I am extremely sensitive and empathize with this as my major is very unpopular. We are investing the whole time we are saving. The list of new ventures is long, we have invested in opportunities like Wartburg West, Clinton Hall, Urban Studies, and getting new professors in different majors. We have reimagined the ideal students body at least three times. From German immigrants, to Lutheran synods, then young people and included catholic. Not every change will last but it becomes who we are. We must be unsentimental to sustain the mission of the college no

matter what, that is paramount. One unsentimental decision I have made is to close Hebron hall for next year. Hebron needs a vital amount of cash at least \$80,000 to make improvements. Would it be better to be office space in instead of a residence space? At the same time, the Manors have a lot improvements that we have not been able to address. We have a normal schedule of maintenance that we could go about or we could pool and reallocate those resources. What might we do in the future? In May, we will conclude the Transforming Tomorrow Campaign that has done well over our goal. Focus on the Future is our new campaign, made of 7 task forces co-chaired by a faculty and staff. They would like to know how to engage student input. Two will focus on what we can better do to develop living learning environments and how can we better attract students. Experiential learning and entrepreneurial endeavors are the next two, increasing awareness of the college, and building a foundation for future philanthropist. Focusing on our 7 areas will lead us to the future. We are going to reimagine, innovate, and adapt? It'll be hard work but worth it.

Dean Kittle: Think of what has brought you to this room today. Students have such an opportunity to leave a footprint here. It is a special place and I know you all feel that way.

Seggerman: We are here to answer any questions you may have.

Q: Which two manors are the ones that you will aim to renovate?

Seggerman: Don't remember off the top of my head but would like some additional feedback from those that live there. We will have \$80,000 to put towards there so will hopefully get to most all of them. Especially hope to tackle moisture issues.

Q: Wartburg's Fitch rating came out in the fall and it was negative, we are in debt, how does Wartburg plan to pay that back?

President Colson: We make payments of \$5,000,000 each year on that bond debt. (Bonds are forms of debt that are bought by investors. Each year those that issued the bonds must pay interest on the money but nothing on the principle amount until the bonds mature.) We did this so we could invest in the college. The primary reason for this was so that we could make investments. The bonds don't mature until 2028. We borrowed the money to ensure the longevity of the college. The Fitch Rating agency is not likely to give us a good rating because they got their hands slapped for giving good ratings to institutions that then went bankrupt. Rich believes we should have a better rating than what we have.

Seggerman: The Fitch Rating in regards to the institution has no bearing in regards to our debt service. That information is for the bondholders themselves.

Q: There is a message about being unsentimental, do you think this can apply to the General Education Committee?

Colson: Intuitions are supposed to rethink Gen Ed every 10 years and we haven't done it in about 20.

Eric Revis: Thank you for being here. As a senator, I take an oath to represent my constituency. For my four years as a senator I have been assigned floors of women. For some of these women they fear for their immediate future here at Wartburg. They fear for their safety as women in cases of sexual misconduct. I have heard so many stories over the years of girls who are scared for their safety. The sexual assault training was intended to be given each year and now it is only issued freshman year. There is no legal representation for girls that become victims of these situations. These cases are decided on he said/she said. Multiply studies show that a men who have raped once, have done it more than once. As a white man, I don't have to worry about that. We don't have to worry about being blamed for it. If you adjust the percentages of rape and assault cases, Wartburg should experience 200. Security has reported 6. The process is long and humiliating. Let's give these women a voice so they may feel as safe as we do as white men.

Dean Kittle: I am happy to hear you raise the issue. Some of the most significant issues students face here is mental health, sexual assault, and alcohol which leads to the prior. I want to point to some resources. When we have reports of sexual assault, the report is more private but the result is more public. How we have informed our staff to handle these situations, we trained and gave tools to them to help students through the process. Other campuses in the past, have said that legal representation was a bad idea. Now both parties may have legal advocate. This is not a topic of conversation that is constructive. We are conducting a campus climate survey. Working with the title IX committee to be able to see what the problem looks like at Wartburg. When I was at a conference at a campus that did this, they found that students felt vulnerable. The school was unaware. We want the absolute truth so that we may address it and take specific action. We need to keep the conversation going and if there any measures we can take to make this a safer campus, we want to know.

President Colson: I have asked Karen Thalaker to be our title IX advocate. She has examined and helped us modify our procedures in this instance. I would encourage you to invite Karen to tell you about her work. The real power of ensuring safety is a culture. That is ideal to create that environment, it is up to us to call each other out.

Q: A few years ago, there was case brought to that board in which a student asked for their assailant to be removed from campus and the Sexual Assault Board threatened to sue the victim if the information were to go public. Now that you said that students are allowed legal counsel, are those lawyers provided to them if they cannot afford one? And are they aware going in that they can have an attorney?

Dean Kittle: I do not have the information about that case, I can't go back. I was not in that conversation. We sit down with them walk them through that process. We need to know what would be the most applicable as a resource. Because it is not a legal proceeding, lawyers are not the first to go to. Those proceedings often don't bring justice to those cases. There is a legal process and the place for that is for them. Our place as the college is not to be a legal place.

President Colson: The college would never threaten to sue a student. It is possible that a student could threaten to sue a student.

Haley Cannon: That is not the case. I have contact with a professor of mine that used to serve on the Sexual Assault Board and he has discussed with me the details of this case, omitting names of course. Many cases are kept quiet from the campus.

President Colson: The reason for the quiet is to minimize the trauma for those involved. That is the reason that it is quiet. But again, the college would never threaten to sue a student for saying something. That would have come from another student if anyone at all. We don't even have standing to do that I don't think.

Haley Cannon: This was just told to me from a tendered professor who served on that board for quite some time. The assailant is still on campus as far as I know and the victim has left the next semester.

Dean Kittle: I can only speak on what would happen now and that is not part of the process is now.

President Vogel: Can we have a good consensus on what senators and students can do in these cases?

Dean Kittle: The first person would be to contact Karen Thalaker, then me hopefully, security, and pathways. There are only two institutions that are not able to share that information and those are Campus Ministries, and Counseling Services. All other groups are mandatory reporters.

Q: Going forward in the future, will those initiatives be vocalized and made known to students?

President Colson: We will talk openly about the task forces that are produced. Along the students we would like to engage with students for feedback and as a reaction. The campus co-chairs are

people you have access to talk to any time. We feel that we have reached the point we want to reach and are looking to cultivate these ideas. The future of the college is going to be exciting. Please share with you constituents that we are available when students would like to talk to us. We are available.

2. New Business

- a. Resolution #24 - Wartburg College Republicans
- b. Resolution #25 - Wings of the Knight
- c. Resolution #26 -Change in Diversity Committee

These will sit in committee for two weeks.

Adjournment

12:35 pm