

**Class of 1972**

**Class Agents**

**Rick Fobes**

**Tom Ristine**

**John Bridge**

Alumni & Affinity Group Engagement Office

301 W. Wabash Ave.

Crawfordsville, IN 47933

765-361-6360

[alumni@wabash.edu](mailto:alumni@wabash.edu)

[wabash.edu](http://wabash.edu)

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Gentlemen:

This past weekend, I attended the Class Agents Forum at Wabash, a yearly program where the College briefs class agents on important matters. President Scott Feller once again was the highlight of the program, as he always gives a pull-no-punches evaluation of the College's status that is both sobering and inspiring. Here is a summary of what I learned.

### **New Community Center**

How do you feel about the Sparks Center? My memories of it consist of the *Bachelor* offices, the Scarlet Inn, and the bookstore. Well, whatever your memories of it, it is a goner. Thanks in part to a \$25 million grant from the Lilly Endowment, immediately after Big Bash in June, the Sparks Center will be demolished, and construction will begin on the new "Community Center" (so far, that's what it's called) that will take its place. The work will last two years. The benefits to Wabash and Crawfordsville will be enormous. There will be a new kitchen, dining room, event center, Wally's Pub, and many other amenities. Here is an artist's rendering of what it will look like.



## **New Latino Center**

The grant from the Lilly Endowment also will be used in part to build a new Latino Center to serve the growing number of Latino students on campus. According to President Feller, Wabash's share of Latino students is the highest in Indiana, and Latinos are the only growing college demographic in the country. As such, it is an important demographic for the College. President Feller said the new center will provide many of the same purposes for Latino students that the Malcom X Institute provides for Black students.

## **Enrollment**

As reported by Trustee Chair Jay Allen in his recent newsletter, enrollment for the Class of 2028 seems to be going well. Applications are up 12% over last year, admissions are up 11%, and deposits are up to 103 compared to 81 at this time last year. Even so, President Feller stressed that Wabash faces a tough environment in recruiting. There has been a 26% drop in the percentage of men attending college in the last decade. The pool of available students for Wabash is shrinking.

## **Colleges Under Pressure**

Here is a big reason for this drop in male college attendance. Undoubtedly, you've read about the challenges facing colleges. Many say they are too expensive and just not worth it. Others say they are indoctrinating our youth into ways of thinking they don't agree with. President Feller stressed that most of the challenges are created by 1% of America's colleges. While Wabash is not causing any of the problems you've read about, it must deal with the impressions created by those challenges.

## **What Can be Done?**

President Feller said to continue to attract outstanding students, Wabash will lean on its distinctiveness. Being all male is an obvious distinction, but the Gentlemen's Rule, written and oral comps, and active, involved alumni are others. The last thing is one of Wabash's core strengths, and it is where we come in. Active alumni make a college attractive to others. As you probably know, *The Princeton Review* annually ranks Wabash's alumni network #1 or #2 in the country – and when they rank us #2, that's a mistake.

## **Alumni Engagement**

Something I learned prior to our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion is that Wabash tracks “alumni engagement.” Only about 10% of our alumni are “completely disconnected,” meaning the College has lost track of them or they have informed the College they don’t want to be contacted. A little less than 47% are “somewhat connected,” meaning the College is sending them communications. The rest, a little less than 48%, are “actively engaged.” An “actively engaged” alum is one who has sent a financial gift, has attended at least one Wabash event on or off campus, and/or has volunteered for service benefitting Wabash.

## **Where We Stand**

You will be pleased to know that our Class of 1972 is one of the most engaged of all classes at Wabash. The College considers us to be 48.1% engaged, which is the highest of any class from the 1970s. In fact, among all classes from 1959 through 2013, a total of 54 classes, the only classes with higher engagement are the Classes of 1967, 1969, and 1983. Not surprisingly, from 2014 on, class engagement is exceptionally high, but that’s because those are young guys who are still close to their time at Wabash.

## **We Can Do Better**

Wabash has a goal of improving alumni engagement. Your Class Agents – Rick Fobes, Tom Ristine, and me – will be working together to produce a strategy for continuing to connect with our classmates in the coming months. You can expect to hear more about this. In the meantime, here are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, our 55<sup>th</sup> reunion will be in just three years in 2027. It would be great to have a large group of us there then. Maybe even more importantly, our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion will coincide with the College’s 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2032. You can imagine that will be quite the Big Bash Weekend!

## **Sports Roundup**

Here is some info about Wabash’s sports fortunes so far this school year. The showcase fall team, as usual, was football. It was a bittersweet season for the Little Giants, however. At season’s end, the team’s record was 7-3, which put it in a three-way tie for second in the North Coast Athletic Conference. Seeking to avenge last year’s defeat in the Monon Bell game, Wabash took on undefeated DePauw at home. I was there, and everyone there agreed it was one of the best football games anyone

had ever seen. Unfortunately, the Little Giants lost a heartbreaker to the Dannies 33-30 in double overtime. But Wabash could hold its head high. It was an outstanding game and a shame someone had to lose.

Cross Country is another traditionally standout sport for Wabash, and this year the Red Pack won the North Coast Athletic Conference championship. Another outstanding meet was the Greater Louisville Classic where the team placed second out of 48 teams. At the NCAA Regional, Wabash placed 10<sup>th</sup> out of 30 teams.

Unfortunately, the remaining fall sports teams all finished near the bottom in the conference. However, the winter sports teams are doing very well.

The same day as the Class Agents Forum, the Wabash basketball team defeated the College of Wooster by 10 points to win the regular season conference championship and gain home court advantage for the conference tournament. The same weekend, the swimming and diving team took third in the conference meet. The track and field team also is having a good indoor season and will defend its conference championship on February 23 and 24. Volleyball, a new varsity sport, stands at 9-3 so far this season!

**WABASH ALWAYS FIGHTS!**

### **A Date to Keep in Mind**

This year, Wabash's Annual Day of Giving will be on Wednesday, April 24. You will hear more about this as we get closer. As a reminder, last year Wabash raised \$1,679,438 in support of Wabash and our students, which was a new record and the sixth consecutive year in which more than \$1 million was raised in a single day.

### **Final Thoughts**

I hope you are all well. Please send news about yourself to Rick (rwfobes@gmail.com) or any communication you want to send to Tom (thomashristine@gmail.com) or me (jbridge@psrb.com). Please stay in touch! In the meantime, I wish you all the best!

Yours in Wabash,



John Bridge