



Class Agents Letter

Class of 1972

Class Agents

Rick Fobes

Tom Ristine

John Bridge

Alumni and Parent Relations Office

301 W. Wabash Ave.

Crawfordsville, IN 47933

765-361-6360

alumni@wabash.edu

wabash.edu

October 12, 2022

Gentlemen:

As Rick told you in his August letter, Tom Ristine and I have joined him as Class Agents for our illustrious Class of 1972. Although you all heard from me in the leadup to our 50th Reunion, this is my first letter to you as a Class Agent. I feel honored to be working alongside Rick and Tom, and I look forward to communicating with all of you!

Last month, Tom and I attended the annual Class Agents Forum in Crawfordsville. Wabash President Scott Fuller gave his usual lucid presentation on how things are at the College. The following is a summary of things we learned.

Student Body

This August, Wabash matriculated 265 freshmen, the second largest class in a decade. Given the difficulties in attracting young men to college (more on that later), this is a great achievement. Our success comes from recruiting outside Indiana and offering strong scholarship incentives. Two-thirds of this year's freshman class is from Indiana compared to three-quarters in the past. The total student body today stands at 835.

Graduation and Retention Rates

Twenty-six members of the entering class took part in the Wabash Liberal Arts Immersion Program ("WLAIP") funded by the Lilly Endowment. WLAIP helps those freshmen with certain challenges (English a second language, first-generation



college, etc.) learn how to cope with Wabash's rigorous academic demands. The program has greatly benefitted Wabash's retention and graduation rates.

Wabash's four-year graduation rate is 83%. U.S. News and World Report predicted Wabash would have a 78% graduation rate, which means we way outperformed on this metric. Several peer institutions, such as Oberlin and Denison, significantly underperformed their predicted graduation rates. In short, Wabash students are doing a great job hanging in there and getting their degrees!

Return on Investment

The pool of college-age students is contracting, and the value of a college degree is questioned by many. Today's parents and students ask about the return on their tuition dollars. Wabash is doing exceptionally well here, too. Forbes magazine ranked Wabash ninth among national liberal arts colleges based on the economic benefits our students receive. Wabash was the only school in the top ten located in the heartland away from the east and west coasts. Wabash also was one of five schools singled out for over-performing its economic-based ranking compared to other reputational- or resource-based criteria.

U.S. News National Ranking

This year's U.S. News and World Report rankings have placed Wabash at 55th among national liberal arts colleges and the 25th Best Value School. An important factor in the national ranking is alumni giving (something you will be hearing from Tom about). This past fiscal year, alumni giving at Wabash once again hit 40%, a percentage achieved for nine straight years. This percentage puts us in the top 10 national liberal arts colleges, which is a truly remarkable achievement.

Capital Improvements

Those of us who attended our 50th reunion got a chance to enjoy the new Little Giant Stadium and the W Club at the top of the home stands. The stadium is an amazing place, to be sure. In addition, work has been done or is continuing to be done on the Lambda Chi, Theta Chi, and Fiji fraternity houses. Work will be performed on all the other fraternity houses on campus eventually.

The biggest news, however, is that the often-derided Sparks Center soon will be demolished and replaced by a new campus center. The project has moved from the discussion stage to the design stage. Plans include providing a campus gathering place, an event space, and a far better place to eat.

Financial Matters

Wabash launched its Giant Steps fund-raising campaign in 2018 with the goal of raising \$225,000,000 in five years. Donors surpassed that goal in March and have given over \$233,000,000 to date. The campaign will close in June 2023, several months from now. Obviously, Giant Steps has been a major success. Many of us have helped make this possible!

I mentioned above that alumni giving hit 40% this past fiscal year. In addition, Wabash hit a record amount in its Annual Fund drive, raising \$3,900,000, which was \$300,000 over the goal.

All this is important because, as we all know, all investment portfolios are way down, including Wabash's. The endowment, which was at \$400,000,000, is now at \$363,000,000, down 10%. While we all hope the markets go back up, unfortunately there is no certainty when this will happen.

Football Season

But enough about the Class Agents Forum. Fall at Wabash, of course, means football season. As of this weekend, the Little Giants football team's overall record stands at 3-2, and its conference record is 2-1. The team's two losses were to North Central, currently ranked #1 in Division III, and a last-second loss to NCAC rival Denison (4-2, 2-2 conf.) The second half of Wabash's schedule is considerably weaker than the first half, so I anticipate more wins than losses in the next few weeks.

Five members of my family and I attended Wabash's homecoming game against Denison and had a great time, tempered only by the loss. Highlights of the day were the recognition at halftime of the 2021-2022 Wabash basketball and wrestling teams. As you probably know, the basketball team made it to the final four of the Division III basketball tournament, and the wrestling team finished second by one point (!) in the Division III wrestling national finals. Some Little Giants!

Getting back to DePauw, however, the football Dannies currently are 5-1 and have been ranked in the top 25 teams of Division III. This past weekend, however, the Dannies lost to NCAC rival Wittenberg at home, and the Little Giants previously beat Wittenberg on the road. The conference seems to be well balanced this year.

The Monon Bell game is in Greencastle this year. Last year, the Dannies were heavily favored, but Wabash pulled off one of the greatest come-from-behind upsets in Monon Bell history in front of the home crowd. Defending the Bell in November in hostile Greendingle will not be easy for our Little Giants. But, as we all know, **WABASH ALWAYS FIGHTS!**

Monon Bell game, ticket, and tailgate information:

<https://sports.wabash.edu/news/2022/10/3/football-128th-monon-bell-classic-tickets-on-sale-now.aspx>

If you cannot get to any games this year, you can stream them at:

<https://sports.wabash.edu/sports/2021/10/28/wabash-college-video-network.aspx>

Our 50th Reunion and Big Bash

I know that Rick, Tom, Hugh McClelland, and I all have expressed our gratitude to those of you who attended our 50th Reunion at Big Bash in June, but I would be remiss if I did not mention the Reunion again.

Wabash credits our Class of 1972 with 160 alumni. Forty of our classmates have passed away, leaving us with only 120 living alumni. We had 56 classmates register for our reunion, or nearly half of our living alumni. That is a phenomenal accomplishment. Those of you who were not there were missed.

We also swept the awards. We were recognized for: best in the Alumni Chapel Sing; most Big Bash attendees; highest percentage of a class to attend Big Bash; highest percentage of a class to make a gift during the giving year; and the Dorman Hughes '43 Award for best effort in organizing our reunion! A picture of us at Chapel Sing also made it into the 2023 Wabash calendar, with Tom's and my pledge brother Don Russell's smiling face prominently featured!



Steve Hoffman '85, Director of Alumni and Parent Relations and the person in charge of Big Bash, told me privately how much he liked our class and what a great job we all did during Big Bash. Steve does not hand out compliments freely, so that was very nice to hear!

Final Thoughts

I hope you are all well. Please keep in touch with Rick (rwfobes@gmail.com), Tom (thomashristine@gmail.com), or me (jbridge@psrb.com). As Rick told you, you will be hearing from him with news of our class, and you will be hearing from Tom about gift-giving opportunities. In the meantime, I wish you all the best!

Yours in Wabash,

John

John Bridge