

ITT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MINUTES OF MEETING: NOVEMBER 12, 2009

ATTENDEES:

Lenny Furlough, Chair  
Gilbert O'Neal, Treasurer  
Bob Barnhardt  
Neil Cahill  
Patrice Hill

Robert Hines (via phone)  
John Wirth (via phone)  
Jim Beaty, Secretary (via phone)  
  
Barry Leonard was absent

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the August 18, 2009 meeting were approved.

Points of Discussion

**Input from ITT Board of Trustees**

Gilbert O'Neal presented a summary of recent discussions with the Institute Board of Trustees. The Trustees reported that they no longer have the time or resources to support the ITT Fellows Program funding to the same extent as they have in the past. In particular, they report that ITT research no longer provides the short term direct value to justify its cost.

The Board challenged Gilbert to propose a new direction for ITT.

**Changes to the ITT Format**

Gilbert advised that the format of applied research will require change. TAC will be terminated. In the past the TAC had selected, ranked, and commissioned the research that the Board of Trustees now no longer feel provides the short term value to justify funding. Gilbert pointed out that "research" and "short term benefit" are not necessarily synonymous.

The Fellowship Fund will continue. Existing students will be fully supported. There was much discussion about the future of the ITT fellowship, particularly if there are alternatives to the thesis work that would be more cost effective. It was estimated that the cost to support an ITT Fellow for 2 years is about \$40,000, not including support of

the thesis. Thesis support adds another \$40-50,000 per student. Better utilization of available funding may require changes to, or elimination of, programs such as thesis work which have historically been bedrocks of the Institute.

Funding for research should be separated from that of the Fellowship Fund, which would concentrate on education. A new direction for ITT's overall focus will be required, and would drive new research funding from a broader membership base.

## **Sustainability**

Gilbert plans to propose a focus on **textile sustainability** to the Institute Board of Trustees as ITT's new direction. It is clear that the topic is of strategic importance to retailers, and ITT could play an important role in defining, measuring, and improving sustainability for textiles. A key goal would be to remove the economic disadvantages to going green.

Manufacturing members would gain a competitive advantage by offering cost effective, sustainable products demanded by their retail customers. Retailers would have a benchmark by which to leverage their supply base. ITT may ultimately even act as a certification body for the achievement of various levels of textile sustainability.

An important part of this effort would be to gain the support of retailers which are driving sustainability programs such as Wal-Mart, Target, and others. It opens the door for their potential ITT membership.

The new direction also presents an opportunity for international membership. Some ITT members may take issue with this, but it may also help level the playing field for them.

Overall, sustainability is of increasing importance in the marketplace. Different retailers have gravitated toward different definitions and standards. Who better than ITT to take the leadership on what that means to textiles? It will likely require embracing and coordinating with other parties. John With mentioned the Sustainability Consortium which involves a coalition from the University of Arkansas along with companies such as P&G, Colgate, General Mills, SC Johnson, and Clorox. John suggested that ITT may wish to align with the consortium.

Neil Cahill raised some questions worth pondering. Will sustainability be a long term market need? What is really driving the consumer demand for sustainable products that retailers are responding to?

Gilbert will move forward with proposing this new direction to the ITT Board of Trustees

## Alumni, Fund Raising, & the ITT Brand

The Board briefly reviewed the results of the alumni survey which was conducted since the last meeting. Some alumni refused to participate, possibly indicating their negative perception of ITT's evolution. Those who did respond were overwhelmingly positive, citing what the ITT experience meant to them and how it helped their career.

Bob Barnhardt challenged that the positive responses might simply be categorized as "fond memories", and pointed out that few alumni have ever financially contributed to the Institute they recall so dearly. He also questioned if these experiences can be reproduced today, especially in light of potential changes to the format of the student's fellowship and the certain shift in direction of ITT's research mission.

The survey had been intended as a first step to preparing for an alumni fundraising effort. The Alumni Board decided not to proceed with fundraising until ITT's new direction is understood and approved. This may take about 2 months, during which time the Board could "prepare" for a future fundraising effort by updating alumni contact information.

Neil proposed formation of a "critical mass" of alumni, perhaps about 20 people including the current Board members. Each Board member would contact 2 to 4 alumni to see if they would be interested in working on a short term effort to:

1. Focus on ITT as a brand
2. Define how the ITT brand is valued by alumni and industry
3. Create a "brand statement" that could be used to stimulate alumni financial contributions

Several of the group could then be recruited to help redefine/reinvent ITT. Neil's proposal remains open for further discussion.

### Action Steps:

- All Alumni BOD members: Contact ITT alumni and confirm their current email addresses and telephone numbers. This information will be used to update the alumni database.