

DEERFIELD

MAGAZINE

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DEERFIELD MAGAZINE REPRINT
"The Bottom Line"

THE BOTTOM LINE

BY JULIA ELLIOTT

This spring, **David Pond** retires as Associate Head of School for Alumni Affairs and Development. **His is a story of record-breaking fundraising and extraordinary service to Deerfield.** “Numbers do speak loudly,” says Dr. Curtis, but “to really understand the scope of David’s impact, I would never want to let numbers obscure his tremendous human qualities.”

In many ways, the story of David Pond’s thirty-four year tenure at Deerfield is a numbers story. First, there is Deerfield’s endowment, which has grown from \$20 million when he arrived in 1981 to a staggering \$500 million—twenty-five times as big. Then there is the Annual Fund, which increased from \$1 million in 1981 to nearly \$7 million in 2014. Over the same period, yearly gift income climbed from \$2 million to \$30 million.

Impressive numbers like these have had a transformative effect on the Academy.

“Everywhere!” exclaims Head of School Margarita Curtis. “I see his hand everywhere.” President of the Board of Trustees Rodgin Cohen ’61 agrees: “You can’t really take a step on campus without seeing David’s impact.”

Seven dorms, the David H. Koch Center for Science, Mathematics and Technology, the Hess Center for the Arts, the Robert M. Dewey Squash Center, the Koch Pool, two turf fields—all were built during Mr. Pond’s tenure. Then there are the significant renovations made to the Dining Hall, the Greer Store, the Fitness Center, the Main School Building, and Ephraim Williams; work on the Frank L. and Helen Childs Boyden Library is in progress.

“All of that is really, really impressive,” says Mr. Cohen. “But where I think you see his impact the most is in the excellence of the faculty, and in a more diverse student body.” Here, too, numbers tell a story: a financial aid budget of \$7 million; faculty and staff compensation and benefits at \$25 million, a program budget of \$15.3 million.



7

DORMS

2

TURF
FIELDS

4

NEW ACADEMIC^{*}
BUILDINGS

BUILT
DURING

34

YEAR TENURE

**The David H. Koch Center for Science, Mathematics and Technology, the Hess Center for the Arts, the Robert M. Dewey Squash Center, the Koch Pool.*

\$ GROWTH 1981 *THROUGH* 2014

20 MILLION
ENDOWMENT

500 MILLION
ENDOWMENT

1, ANNUAL
FUND

000,

000

7, ANNUAL
FUND

000,

000

2 MILLION
YEARLY GIFT INCOME

30 MILLION
YEARLY GIFT INCOME

In each of those cases, the budget has increased sevenfold. Under Mr. Pond's watch, the school has created over 400 new endowment funds for teachers, students, and programs. He has overseen three hugely successful capital campaigns. "David is a silent hero," says Trustee Stanford Kuo '78. "We have great faculty, we can offer an attractive salary, we can fill in the gap in tuition so we can attract the best students, and all because of David's efforts. Basically, David is legend."

Such tremendous success has earned Mr. Pond the respect of his peers throughout the advancement world. He spoke often at events for the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)

and the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and in 1995 was awarded by CASE the Robert Bell Crow Award, which recognizes service to independent school alumni and development work.

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IMPRESSIONABLE BOYDEN MOMENT:

As a young teacher during the 1969-70 school year, Mr. Pond coached a Kimball Union Academy JV basketball game at Deerfield. After the game, former Headmaster Frank Boyden, around ninety at the time, stopped by the locker room to thank the KUA players for coming to Deerfield. “That made such a lasting impression on me,” Mr. Pond says, “and must have had some influence on my being here and on how I approach my work—to see this person who didn’t need to make that nice gesture but took the time to do it.”

A GOOD SCHOOL MAN—THE EARLY YEARS

“Have you ever heard of an addressograph machine?” asks Mr. Pond. He is thinking back to his first days as Deerfield’s Director of Development. Mr. Pond moved to Deerfield with his wife, Nancy, and two daughters, Amy ’92 and Rebecca ’98, after twelve years working at Kimball Union Academy in New Hampshire. At the time, Alumni and Development was a quiet office of seven or eight people in the basement of the Main School Building. “There were no computers, there were no electric typewriters. There were rolodexes, 3x5 cards, addressograph machines, and that’s what we did.”

Mr. Pond was the first hire of former Headmaster Robert Kaufmann, who was looking to replace Bob Crowe, himself a legend. In those days, fundraising at Deerfield was largely based on loyalty—to the school, to the Boydens, and to “Crowe.” As a direct connection to the Boydens faded with each graduating class, Mr. Kaufmann wanted his new development director to represent a fresh start. He also wanted someone who understood secondary schools.

“I stumbled on David,” describes Mr. Kaufmann. “He had some fundraising experience, but not a whole lot.” What Mr. Pond did have was experience teaching, coaching, and operating a well-run admissions office. “I determined that being organized and being school-focused would stand Deerfield in good stead over the longer term,” says Mr. Kaufmann. “It was a risk. I passed over a couple of seasoned development veterans. But my bones told me that David was the right guy and that Nancy was a complement to that.”

Mr. Pond was drawn to Deerfield because of its reputation for good academics and strong traditions. One small but significant event also may have played a part: As a young teacher during the 1969-70 school year, Mr. Pond coached a Kimball Union Academy JV basketball game at Deerfield. After the game, former Headmaster Frank Boyden, around ninety at the time, stopped by the locker room to thank the KUA players for coming to Deerfield. “That made such a lasting impression on me,” Mr. Pond says, “and must have had some influence on my being here and on how I approach my work—to see this person who didn’t need to make that nice gesture but took the time to do it.”

Mr. Kaufmann’s strongest memory of Pond is his willingness to roll up his sleeves and jump into school life at a time when not all the faculty members on campus were pitching in on non-academic responsibilities. Table duty at sit-down meals, School Officer in Charge on weekends, Associate Master on a corridor—Mr. Pond did it all, and inspired other faculty to follow his lead. “That was where the judgment that he was a good school man proved prescient,” says Mr. Kaufmann, “because he was more than willing to settle in and do his share.”





Nearly everyone agrees that Pond's greatest strength as a fundraiser—and as a boss and a friend—is that he is a terrific listener. “When he calls and talks to you, he knows everything about you, your family,” says Rodgin Cohen. “He is genuinely interested in you. It’s a conversation—it’s not just about raising money.”

Mr. Pond and Mr. Kaufmann worked together for thirteen years, focusing on putting Deerfield on solid financial footing and taking the school through the transition to coeducation in 1989—one of the greatest challenges, Mr. Pond notes, of his role as Director of Development because of the need to get older alumni “to think beyond their years at Deerfield to how the school had to evolve and change and be better.”

“Any new headmaster should be so lucky as to have someone like David Pond waiting to welcome him,” says former Headmaster Eric Widmer ’57, who began his tenure in 1994. Right away, he and Pond began planning for Deerfield’s impending 200th anniversary. The campaign they launched in 1997, Days of Glory, “was an enduring collaboration from beginning to end,” describes Mr. Widmer. “The amount of money we raised eclipsed any record up to that point of a school the size of Deerfield. David and his staff did a terrific job. Good fundraising doesn’t happen just because the school is doing well or someone is asking for money; it happens because there is a good strong plan and strong cultivation.”

Mr. Widmer is particularly proud of everything David did to endow a financial aid budget, getting it to a place where Deerfield was competitive with Exeter, Andover, and St. Paul’s. “For me, and I know it’s true of David, too,” says Mr. Widmer, “it would be very hard for us to spend our lives in an institution where only the people who could pay the cost of tuition were there—where there was virtually no diversity. It’s not just about wanting to be fair or democratic; it’s the spirit of the school and the strength of the student body. And David really understood that.”

A WAY OF LIFE

“Where am I next week? Well, let’s see.” Mr. Pond looks at his schedule. It is January of 2014, and he has just returned from a three-day trip to Texas. “Next week I’m in Connecticut for one day. Then I’m in New York for three days. The following week I’m in Florida for three days.”

Mr. Pond has maintained a similarly grueling schedule of travel for years. He now oversees a staff of 28 people concentrated in Ephraim Williams House. The alumni relations program reaches out to many more people than it did 34 years ago, the involvement of parents is greater, and for the past three years, he has overseen the *Imagine Deerfield* capital campaign. “It’s a much more complicated job than when I first came,” he acknowledges.

During moments of downtime, Mr. Pond closes his door and thinks. “In the course of raising 200 million dollars,” he explains, “we’ll have about 280 gifts or so of \$100,000 or more. Maybe a third to a half of those will be gifts of a million dollars or more. I will really be focused on those individual approaches almost on a daily basis. You might have an hour to state your case and get a donor’s reactions,” he explains, “so it has to be well thought-out and well-considered.”

Such thoughtfulness and consideration has served Mr. Pond well. “David is diligent,” says Mr. Kaufmann. “He does his homework and he’s patient.” Dr. Curtis agrees that Mr. Pond’s patient approach is one of his strengths. “He takes his time to get to know a donor,” she says, “and to really, really understand what is going to appeal to them, and then he matches those interests and passions with what the school needs.”

Former Board President Jeff Louis ’81, who along with his family has been a longtime supporter of the school, says that, in many cases, Deerfield’s chief fundraiser doesn’t actually ask for money. “What I remember about David,” says Mr. Louis, “is he would come and he would say, ‘I wanted to let you know what we’re up to and why we’re doing what we’re doing.’ But he never said, ‘Will you give x amount?’ David gets without asking because he just has a gentle way. You never felt that he was going to go away unhappy if you didn’t give, which always made giving very easy.”

400+

ENDOWMENT FUNDS

for teachers, students, and programs

25

MILLION

FACULTY & STAFF COMPENSATION + BENEFITS

7

MILLION

FINANCIAL AID BUDGET

15.3

MILLION

PROGRAM BUDGET

Mr. Pond is often referred to as a “gentleman.” He is humble, discreet, and always calm. Former Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving John Knight '83, who reported to Mr. Pond for a decade, admits “I sometimes panicked and ran to him and said, ‘I need help with this or that,’ and there is just no panic in him. He reminds you of the strengths of the school, reminds you of the strength of the alumni, parents, and friends, and then encourages you to work your way through the decisions you need to make. That strength of purpose sets a good tone for everybody.”

“I think that many of us will remember David as a guy who always replied, ‘Sounds good,’” says Kathy Coughlin, Mr. Pond’s Senior Administrative Assistant of twelve years. “He was absolutely upbeat. In all the years I worked for him, I’ve never seen him lose his cool or say something disparaging. He put a lot of trust into his staff. In that way he was a good boss and a kind person.”

Mr. Pond’s equanimity certainly aided Jeff Louis when, as head of the Building and Grounds Committee, he led the effort to build the Koch Center. “I remember the day I did the final presentation to the board of directors,” says Mr. Louis. “I remember being quite nervous because we didn’t yet have the money, and David being, as always, incredibly calm about it. So I made the presentation and we didn’t really know what was going to happen. But by dinner that night David said, ‘I’ve got the money. You can build it.’” Mr. Louis laughs at the memory. “It was just David’s way. He takes the pressure off everyone, because you just have great confidence that he has the facts at hand, that he is going to be there if you’re running into a problem. He took the burden of raising the money certainly off of me, and let us go about building a great building.”

Nearly everyone agrees that Pond’s greatest strength as a fundraiser—and as a boss and a friend—is that he is a terrific listener. “When he calls and talks to you, he knows everything about you, your family,” says Rodgin Cohen. “He is genuinely interested in you. It’s a conversation—it’s not just about raising money.”



Jack Chen '08 and his father, Dongsheng, hosted Phil Greer, Margarita Curtis, and David Pond.

21
ASIA TRIPS

35
GIFTS FROM
ASIA OVER
100K

(IMAGINE DEERFIELD
CAMPAIGN)

“I like people,” admits Mr. Pond, “I like to learn what they’re doing and what they’re interested in. You learn a lot when you listen. And when you’ve got people who really love what the conversation is focused on—Deerfield—that’s a pretty easy conversation to have.”

This has particularly paid off in Mr. Pond’s work overseas. He began traveling internationally, especially to Asia, in the 1980s. In recent years, he has traveled twice a year to Asia, and last year made his 21st trip.

“He’s the best ambassador we’ve ever had,” says Stanford Kuo. “Whenever there’s a new family, or an old family in need, he’s always there to help without a hidden agenda.” In his gentle way, Mr. Pond has cultivated donors in a part of the world where a philanthropic model previously did not exist. “I think Deerfield is one of the first prep schools to actually have a sizeable giving culture in Asia,” says Mr. Kuo. “We are ahead of the game in Asia and it’s largely due to David.” As illustration, Mr. Pond notes that during *Imagine Deerfield*, over thirty-five gifts of over \$100,000 came from Asia; in the previous campaign, that number was five.

To Jeff Louis, the loyalty and support among parents and alumni that Mr. Pond has inspired is of far greater importance than all the improvements he has brought to campus. “That sense of love of Deerfield without cynicism about the fact that Deerfield is also in the business of raising money,” says Mr. Louis. “I think David made donors of all sizes feel like they were contributing to something really important.”

Of course, when asked to reflect on his fundraising success, Mr. Pond refuses to take credit. “I would say, ‘David and his team have done that.’ Development,” he adds, “is a team sport.”

Despite all his hard work, the national and international travel, and the impressive sums raised, Mr. Pond has remained to the end “a good school man.” “He could tell you what was said at sit-down lunch yesterday, or what was scheduled for School Meeting,” says Dr. Curtis. “You always see David at games, at art and theater performances. This wasn’t a job for him. This was a way of life.”

ON FUNDRAISING SUCCESS:

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AN ICON RETIRES

In January of 2014, David Pond announced that he would be retiring. “It’s always daunting to try and find a successor for somebody who is really an iconic figure,” says Dr. Curtis. The search for Mr. Pond’s replacement proved so challenging that she asked Mr. Pond to stay on for another year. “In typical David fashion he agreed to do whatever was right for Deerfield,” says Dr. Curtis. “I was enormously appreciative of that gesture.” The expanded search yielded CJ Menard, who brings decades of fundraising experience to Deerfield, and who started working alongside Mr. Pond last summer.

The Ponds plan to stick close to Deerfield. They have moved to Greenfield, MA, but Mrs. Pond will continue to teach French at the Bement School, where she has worked for twenty-five years, and Mr. Pond will continue to serve on the board of Deerfield’s Brick Church, as well as the boards of King’s Academy in Jordan, and Kimball Union Academy. He looks forward to learning how to play the piano and being able to “just get up Saturday morning and go to the hardware store. You don’t get a lot of time for that in my line of business.”

“Deerfield has a lot to thank him for,” says longtime volunteer Zeke Knight ’54. “I don’t know of anybody else in fundraising at the independent school level who has done more than he has, quietly and effectively, and with a sense of duty and loyalty.”

In his humble manner, Mr. Pond says that he is the one who should feel grateful: “When I was in Dallas last Wednesday night, Margarita talked about what a great privilege it is to work with really bright, capable, hardworking students on a daily basis. And I’m sitting there thinking, ‘What an incredible opportunity to work with bright, motivated, and enthusiastic Deerfield alumni and parents on a daily basis. Every time I sit down with someone, they say to me, ‘Wow! What’s going on at Deerfield? Tell me all about it.’ For thirty-four years, that’s been pretty special.’”

