The Cowboy Parents Council held its summer meeting on Friday, June 15, 2012, at 2:30 p.m. at the Alumni House on the University of Wyoming campus. Present: Members – Julie Balzan, Robert Balzan, Lida Citroen, Kimberly Conci, Joe Gulino, Kurt Kinderwater, John Rundel, and Mark Vaporis; ex officio – Sara Axelson; Staff – Kim Shannon and John Nutter; Guests – Mary Aguayo, Patrick Call, Joanna Carter, Keith Evashevski, and Becky Vinzant.

Prior to the meeting, the Council members and their guests enjoyed a luncheon at the Alumni House. At 1:30, the group traveled by carpool to the new Visual Arts Facility for a tour led by faculty member Mark Ritchie.

Robert and Julie Balzan presided at the meeting. Robert remarked that the Visual Arts tour was sincerely appreciated and very helpful in knowing about new opportunities for students. He also noted that New Student Orientation appeared to be going well and that several out-of-state students were attending.

Vice President’s Update: Sara introduced the new directors of departments in the Division of Student Affairs. Council members met Joanna Carter, new director of Student Financial Aid during lunch. Patrick “PC” Call, new executive director of Residence Life, Dining Services and the Wyoming Union, and Keith Evashevski, new director of the University Counseling Center, each spoke briefly about their work.

PC Call talked about the new Bison Run Apartments which will be completed in time for occupancy in August. Leases have been signed for 99% of the bedrooms. Residence hall occupancy numbers are up by 75 over last year. White Hall renovations are underway for $10 million in electrical, fire safety, paint, bathroom and furniture upgrades. New equipment is replacing worn out equipment in Washakie Dining Hall. At the Wyoming Union, the SLCE and Alternative Spring Break programs are expanding.

Keith Evashevski said the Counseling Center provides clinical services, outreach programming, and health and safety programs and information. His staff is also willing to consult with parents in general terms about student needs.

Sara thanked the Council for their support and assistance with the activities of New Student Orientation. Parents talking with parents is very helpful in making new students and their families feel welcome.

She observed that UW has experienced a 16% increase in enrollment confirmations for the coming academic year for non-resident new freshmen. This comes after the largest spring enrollment ever of 13,922 students. Budget challenges are on the horizon as UW prepares for
cutting up to eight percent of its state-funded budget in response to the Governor’s request. At this time, the university does not know if the cuts will be needed. An 8% reduction will be substantial, but UW will remain solvent. Faculty and staff reductions will be handled as much as possible through attrition as individuals leave or retire. A central staff position management process will be designed and implemented to assure UW-wide staffing priorities are addressed. UW is a strong enterprise with many varied sources of revenue. Only the block grant from the State of Wyoming and related accounts are affected. It has been said that it costs about $2 million per day to run the university.

As UW plans for these decreases, we will also be preparing the University Plan (UP4) for the next six years – 2014 to 2020. The current plan – UP3 – is now 90% completed with two years remaining.

Sara also mentioned that the NCAR supercomputer is being delivered and should be operational soon. UW’s Registrar, Tammy Aagard, is leaving to take a position at the University of Florida as Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management. Jo Chytka, Director of the Center for Advising and Career Services, will serve as the Interim Registrar while retaining her current duties.

**New Student Orientation:** Mary Aguayo, Assistant Director of Admissions for Orientation and Campus Visits, thanked the Council members for their help this summer with the parent receptions and resource fairs. She noted that this year, the orientation sessions are just 24 hours long, and the schedule is posted on line. Kurt reported that orientation is running smoothly, is comprehensive, and is generating positive feedback.

Becky Vinzant and Mary demonstrated the Virtual Orientation program they have developed. It is designed to enhance the student’s experience, not to replace the in-person experience. A total of 124 items have been included. The program explains what the student can do prior to attending a summer orientation session. It is called “Destination You-W.” Designing the program has involved 24 people working over two years. By addressing many administrative issues, the student can spend the on-campus experience building relationships.

The Virtual Orientation program uses WyoWeb as a platform. If an individual is a new student, s/he will see the Virtual Orientation website. Short chunks of information lead the reader to various web links and video clips. A current student will see regular WyoWeb information. A Virtual Orientation for parents is being developed and will be available via a URL address. A PowerPoint presentation with screen captures is available for parents. This is just phase one of the program.

An information checklist, enrollment confirmation, housing contract status, MMR vaccination status, registration for New Student Orientation, and registration for the Math Placement Exam can all be handled through the Virtual Orientation portal. ID photos can also be submitted, so that ID cards can be ready for pick up on Move-In day in the halls. New students can chat with one another prior to arrival on campus. The goal of the program is to do as much on line as possible, so that staff time can be spent helping others.
Alumni Update: Keener Fry, executive director of Alumni Relations, talked about the many new ideas and changes in his department. He reports to a Board of 42 and to the Vice President for Student Affairs. All that the Alumni Association (AA) does is for the benefit of the university; therefore they are involved in many collaborative efforts which leverage everyone’s outreach efforts. AA is working with Admissions and with the Center for Advising and Career Services on joint projects. AA is also involved with the New Student Orientation resource fairs. Other successful universities’ alumni operations are working with current and prospective students, so UW is doing this, too.

One third of the Alumni Relations budget comes from membership dues. AA is committing new resources to several programming areas: leadership through WyoSAA (student alumni association); Homecoming; scholarships of more than $100,000 plus the license plate supported scholarships of $60,000; student memberships at $20/year for a t-shirt, cup, and free sodas; a program for recent graduates of membership for $25/year for the first four years following graduation (and this $100 can be applied to a Life Membership); Welcome Wednesdays on the mornings of the 2nd Wednesday of each month for pastries and juice to introduce them to the Alumni House; hosting a Family Weekend event at the Alumni House; and Freshmen sendoff picnics in Ft. Collins, Denver, and Billings, MT. About 40 new students are expected in Ft. Collins this year on August 16; Denver has 400 new students coming to UW and Billings has 50 to 100 new students. These picnics are great opportunities for collaboration between AA, Cowboy Parents, and Admissions. The AA board is very supportive of this initiative.

In response to a question, Keener said about five percent of new graduates become AA members in the first five years after graduation. Nationally, 14.5% of UW graduates are AA members; the goal is to increase this number to 17.5 – 20%. UW has 111,000 living alumni; UW has no contact information for 6,000 of them. Life memberships are available for $475 per single or $575 per couple. AA is not competing with the Cowboy Joe Club or the UW Foundation to raise money, because their missions are different. Individuals often do not recognize that each is a separate part of UW. This leads to some confusion among alumni.

Financial Reports: Kim presented the financial reports. Not much spending or fundraising has occurred since the February reports.

Membership in Cowboy Parents is currently free; should memberships have a charge to increase the perceived value? Some members like the concept “you are part of our family once your student enrolls.” Parents need to feel a part of a community. There are so many free things at the beginning of the year. What Cowboy Parents offers needs to be useful. The calendars will be free this year (available in July), however contributions will be accepted. The Council feels the calendars should be available to those who want them, and, if people want to make a contribution, they will whether they pick up a calendar or not. The organization needs to communicate better what it does. Lida suggested use of social networking more in addition to direct mail and in-person contacts. The demographics on parents’ use of technology are changing. Kim noted that UW has mobile phone applications through WyoMobile.

Kim recommended the organization find ways to get people interested in supporting students. Sometimes “volunteer” frightens people away. Helping can occur without traveling to Laramie. A freshman sendoff picnic is an example. Cowboy Parents, Admissions, and Alumni Relations can work together locally. The picnics provide a good time for talking about contributing to UW. Kurt noted people ask, “What would I do if I joined your organization?”
They want to stay connected with UW. Robert suggested hosting a family picnic during Family Weekend. It should be free, with contributions accepted. Cowboy Parent members can be local UW contacts in their own communities. Kim noted that Council members have many skills which can be used beneficially for the organization. Please send her suggestions of how you can help.

New Council Members for 2012-13: Kim apologized for not having enough background information available on prospective new Council members. She provided a list of individuals who have expressed an interest in joining the Council. It was decided that each of these people should be sent an application with a deadline for submission. The communication should say what is involved and details of the commitment to serve. Once the applications are collected, they should be sent as a batch to the current Council members for review. Selections for six openings will be made at the September meeting. ASUW should be asked to appoint two students to the Council.

Calls and Letters to Parents of New Students: It was noted that calls to parents are appreciated, but it is a time-consuming effort. Please let Kim know if you would be willing to make calls in your community/area, and a list of possible parents to call will be generated. The Council endorsed sending welcome letters to parents of new students. The letters will come from Julie and Robert. Mark suggested the letter should include email addresses for parents to contact if they have questions. Welcome information on the Cowboy Parents website would also be helpful. Lida volunteered to assist Kim and UW Public Relations with Facebook postings.

Summit Parents’ Reception: Kim reminded Council members of the reception for parents of new students to be held Thursday, August 23, from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. in the lower level of the Washakie Dining Center. Please notify Kim if you are able to attend this event.

Family Weekend/Silent Auction: Family Weekend will be held September 28-30 this year. It is on a football bye-weekend, so more activities are planned to replace the game. If a family picnic is offered by Cowboy Parents, it was suggested that it be held in the grassy area west of Hoyt Hall and south of Merica Hall, where previous Elizabethan Fairs have been held.

Dan and Vickie Herlihey will coordinate the auction. Council members like having the auction in the open space outside the Union Ballroom. T-shirts can be sold and calendars distributed. It will be held in conjunction with the Saturday morning brunch with the Deans. Dan and Vickie will be soliciting donations in Laramie on Saturday, July 14, during Jubilee Days, and would welcome help. Mark volunteered to help pick up donations after the 14th. Joe volunteered Maryalice to help pick up donations, too.

Homecoming: UW’s Homecoming will occur on October 13 this year. Council members want to have a float in the parade again. Positive comments have resulted from past entries. Those present hope that Carlene Irion and Maryalice Gulino will again spearhead the effort.

Cale McCormick: Cale is a freshman student at UW from Lewellen, Nebraska, who, as a pedestrian, was severely injured by a driver under the influence at the corner of 15th St. and Grand Ave. in Laramie in early February. John reported that Cale and his family were very appreciative of the gift basket provided by Cowboy Parents. Cale has returned to campus twice this spring; the first in a wheelchair and the second on crutches. He plans another visit in July. He is registered for classes this fall in Laramie.
Each Student A Person Award: Kim distributed copies of the ad placed in the *Branding Iron* listing the names of the award nominees for 2012. Council members suggested running the same ad in the *Casper Star-Tribune* as a community service announcement and posting it to the Cowboy Parents website.

Orientation Booklet: Kim distributed copies of the 2012 UW Transitions booklet prepared by Student Media for New Student Orientation sessions. She called attention to Cowboy Parents and Family Weekend information on pages 46, 47, 53, 82, and 83. Student Media also provided lanyards, key chains, and copies of the *Owen Wister Review* for Council members.

Future Meetings and Discussions: Appropriate meeting times were discussed. It was decided to hold the September meeting from 4:00 – 7:00 p.m. on Friday, September 28 on the campus with a dinner afterwards catered by UW Catering. Council members liked having time to visit socially, to include family members in the meal, and to have it on campus. To limit individuals’ time away from work on a workday, the start time was shifted to 4:00 p.m. With a full day of activities on Saturday (including preparation for and conducting the auction), a Friday meeting was deemed preferable.

Photos needed: To keep publications current, Kim needs parents and their students to pose for photographs that can be used in Cowboy Parents and other UW publications. *Please volunteer to Kim to arrange a time* (perhaps during Move-In Day) to be photographed.

With no future business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*John Nutter*