A New Chapter for Fairfield-Sonn

Dean James Fairfield-Sonn will step down this summer after nine years at the helm of the Barney School of Business and more than 30 years at the University. Following a leave in the fall of 2013, Fairfield-Sonn, a noted scholar of management, will return as a member of the Barney faculty.

During Fairfield-Sonn’s tenure as dean, the Barney School’s academic environment was enriched by the addition of an actuarial science minor, the implementation of a choice between online or in-classroom MBA classes, increased numbers of students enrolled in honors courses, and recognition of the work of top students through the Beta Gamma Sigma and Beta Alpha Psi honor societies.

The Barney Alumni Hall of Fame was established in 2008 to recognize Barney graduates for their outstanding achievements. The Mali Global Center, a state-of-the-art videoconferencing facility that enables students to interact with other students around the world through live broadcasts, opened in 2009.

In 2011, Fairfield-Sonn was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Scholar grant to participate in a two-week cultural exchange in Germany.

Board of Regents Election Makes History

Lucille M. Nickerson was elected chair of the University of Hartford Board of Regents in May, becoming the first woman chair in the University’s history. Nickerson succeeds Thomas J. Groark Jr., who has headed the board of regents for the past five years.

Nickerson has been a member of the board since 2006, serving as vice chair for the past three years. She served on the board of trustees of Hartford College for Women (HCW) and currently chairs the board of the HCW Legacy, the Women’s Education and Leadership Fund, at the University.

A former vice president and corporate secretary of Aetna, Inc., Nickerson is the cofounder and president of Nickerson-Zegarelli Consultants. She is also executive director of the Children’s Educational Opportunity Foundation of Connecticut.

In vice-chair positions, Roger Klene M’90 was reelected and Dominic Fulco III ’81 was newly elected. It is believed to be the first time that both vice chairs of the board are alumni of the University.

Sports Shorts

Giuliani and Alves Named Top Hawks

Caitlin Alves (women’s soccer) and Bobby Giuliani (men’s track and field) have been awarded the Coaches’ Top Hawk Award for the 2012–13 year. The award honors a well-rounded male and female student-athlete in his/her final year of eligibility who works hard in each respective sport, excels in the classroom, and is a quality leader.

Alves helped lead the women’s soccer team to a 37-26-11 overall record in her four years at Hartford, including a 13-2-3 mark in 2011, the Hawks’ best single-season winning percentage since 1997. She earned National Soccer Coaches Association All-America distinction in 2011 and was named to All-Northeast and All–New England Teams.

As a four-year member of the cross-country and track-and-field teams, Giuliani set school records in the medley relay and 4x800-meter relay teams. He was named to the America East Commissioner’s honor roll five times and was a two-time All-Academic Team honoree.

Alves and Giuliani graduated in May with health sciences degrees.

A New Hawk Flies into America East

UMass Lowell’s athletic teams, nicknamed the River Hawks, will join the America East Conference on July 1. This will keep the conference membership at nine schools, following Boston University’s departure at the end of the spring season.

You Can Play at Hartford

University of Hartford student-athletes are working in conjunction with the America East Conference and the You Can Play project to change the culture of athletics to one that is accepting and welcoming of all people, and to put a stop to the use of homophobic language in sports.

In April members of various Hawks athletics teams released a video illustrating that student-athletes should be judged on talent, heart, and work ethic, not sexual orientation.

To see the video, “If You Can Play, You Can Play at Hartford,” go to hartford.edu/observer.

Sunrise Special

The University of Hartford men’s basketball team has been selected to participate in ESPN’s 24-hour Tip-Off Marathon on Tuesday, Nov. 12. The Hawks are scheduled to play a 7 a.m. road game against a team that advanced to the Sweet 16 of the NCAA Tournament this past March.

This is the sixth year for ESPN’s Tip-Off Marathon, which features games from midnight to midnight on its multiple networks during the first week of the regular season in November.
Pioneering Businesswoman Endows New Scholarships

The generosity of a pioneering Hartford businesswoman will help deserving students earn a University of Hartford education. Marion Bills (1890–1970), a longtime Aetna employee who became the first woman officer of a Hartford insurance company, recently gave the University of Hartford approximately $2.3 million to form an endowment to fund need-based scholarships. The gift will also help support the existing John G. Martin Scholarship, which sends one University graduate to Hertford College of Oxford University each year.

"Marion Bills left a legacy that reflects her distinguished career as one of the earliest women leaders of the insurance industry in Hartford," said University President Walter Harrison when announcing the gift. "The Marion Bills scholarships that her gift has created will help provide a University of Hartford education to deserving students for years and years to come."

This gift is just the latest contribution Bills made to life at the University. From 1937 to 1954 she was a trustee of Hillyer College, one of the three founding institutions that became the University of Hartford; she received an honorary Doctor of Laws from Hillyer in 1954. Scholarships bearing her name were given to University students in the 1960s.

Bills began working at Aetna in Hartford as a consultant in 1925. Until she arrived, women employees were not allowed to walk through the front doors at Aetna, a practice common among companies during that era. She became an officer in 1926, the first woman to do so at any Hartford insurance company. She retired as Aetna assistant secretary in 1955 after a distinguished career in personnel research and administration.

IN MEMORIAM

David Komisar, Provost Emeritus

Provost Emeritus David Komisar, the University of Hartford’s longest-serving chief academic officer and an integral figure in its history, died on March 19. He was 95.

A psychologist by training, Komisar became the first chairman of Hillyer College’s Department of Psychology in the early 1950s. In 1957, when Hillyer joined with the Hartt School of Music and the Hartford Art School to form the University of Hartford, Komisar began his long affiliation with the University, where he worked until his retirement in 1984.

Rising through the administrative ranks, Komisar served as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (1966–67), dean of faculties (1967–70), vice president for academic affairs (1970–71), and provost (1972–80).

Among his many accomplishments, Komisar played a key role in the creation of Mortensen Library, which opened in 1971. After his retirement, he became one of the founders of the University of Hartford Emeriti Association. In 1990 he was awarded the University Medal for Distinguished Service.

"David Komisar played a leading role in making the University of Hartford what it is today," said University President Walter Harrison. "He cast a long shadow as an academic leader and helped shape our profile as an institution devoted to teaching and research."