

Jordan Clark '04 Statement of Purpose

I would like to be on the Board of Directors for a number of reasons – chief among them how valuable I have found the New College community to be. I love that New College has provided me with not only the foundation of my professional success, so far, the experience and the challenges of completing a degree at New College, and the community that supported me and my classmates through that experience and those challenges; it has also provided me with the community I have since established in my new city, in my life since graduation, as well as constant inspiration to keep pushing and learning and doing good.

I received a call a few months ago from a current student – it was a fundraising call, and I'll admit that it's not always my favorite thing to take phone calls that I know are about asking for money. But I answered, of course, and I'm so glad I did.

I had the most delightful conversation with the student on the other end. I talked to her about her thesis prospectus, and who is sponsoring her project, what she's hoping to accomplish with it, and where she wants to go with it afterwards. She asked me what I'm doing now, how I like DC, what I studied at New College, whether I liked New College, whether I would recommend DC.

I loved this call so much. I'm still very much invested in what the student experience is like at New College because it meant so much to me when I was there, and it is one of the things that I think distinguishes it most from other schools. My conversation with this current student reassured me that New College is what I believe it to be. It reassured me that current students are just as weird, just as eager to have an impact, just as delighted in choosing something that they know is uniquely challenging and uniquely fulfilling.

This phone call also reminded me what my own goals were as I completed my thesis prospectus, as I wrote my thesis, and as I graduated and thought about my place in the wide world. This phone call has become a touchstone that will continue to motivate me in my job and in my life – and remind me that I'm still a student and that New College is still a part of who I am.

When I say that New College has provided me with the community that I've established in my new city, I mean that fellow alumni have formed the backbone of my social support system for the years that I have been here. My classmates are all over this city doing fascinating things – running NPR, aiding asylum seekers, working on the Hill, funding microfinance projects in developing countries, teaching in public charter schools, working in public and private sector positions, or pursuing further education. Washington, DC is a transient place, so they come and go, but they also inspire me and motivate me and remind me where we all came from.

So when I think about why I want to be on this Board of Directors, it's because I want to make a difference at this school, and I want to stay involved and help in the ways that I am able.

I have always been an advocate for New College:

I was part of student government while I was there, serving on the Council of Academic Affairs (CAA) and the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) during the development of the 2007-2008 Academic Master Plan.

In the time since graduating, I have met with prospective students in my area (both at the request of the admissions office and unofficially) to help answer their questions and address any concerns they might have about making an unconventional choice.

As a student at New College, I served as the first student on the Board of Directors of WSLR, an LPFM radio station which continues to be the product of a successful alliance between New College and the Sarasota community. I was the only student among the founders of the station, and as such, I worked hard to ensure the college's interests were adequately represented in the drafting of the station's bylaws and founding documents. This included a requirement that reserved a minimum ratio of members on the Board representing New College, at least one of whom must be a current student. Serving on this Board gave me experience working collaboratively to direct a 501(c)3, organize fundraising efforts, plan events, and work in subcommittees. As an example, I sat on the Programming Committee of the station, which set requirements and developed the proposal process for new shows, reviewed applications for new shows, and set the station's programming schedule. In the second year of my term, I was elected to the office of Secretary, which elevated my responsibilities to include keeping minutes at all board meetings, among other things.

I attend NCAA functions in the DC area. Most recently, I attended an NCAA event that served as an introduction for the alumni of the DC area to the college's new president, Dr. Donal O'Shea.

Soon after that event, I read an editorial that Dr. O'Shea had published in the Tampa Bay Times. In the midst of a national controversy over the value of a college education, he wrote that the skills students develop in liberal arts programs are the same skills that are the most valuable in real world jobs. I, of course, agree whole-heartedly with this position, but I think that, based on my experience and my observations of classmates and their varied experiences, it can take a while to demonstrate that, or to find the right connection and get the opportunity to prove it. When I think about my classmates, recent alumni, and the current students with whom I've become acquainted, and when I think about the economy and about friends and colleagues and how they came to be where they are (or aren't), I know that New College needs to find new ways to tap into the tremendous resource that is the NCAA. We are so eager to find ways to contribute. We can't all develop and teach ISPs, or offer internships or jobs in our places of work, although so many of us have such interesting things to share! And we can't all make huge donations, although fundraising is so important. We are such a small club, but we are so far-reaching! We have such a broad range of accomplishments and experiences! Our successes are unique and bright! We are an inspiring group, and with the job market such as it is, with the world such as it is, we need to reinforce opportunities to connect with each other, and with new graduates. New College's alumni are one of its greatest resources. It is more important than ever to develop new and innovative ways for alumni to connect with graduating students, and integrate alumni into the career center resources already available on campus. Certainly there is value in forming more interconnections, narrowing the distance between alumni and the current student body. Opportunities for mentorship or just a conversation every now and then should be another resource available through the career center.

I think these are already among the goals of the NCAA, and I think that they are as important other primary functions like fundraising and reunion/event planning. I am an avid supporter of this school and everything that it stands for; I look forward to every opportunity to show that support. I hope very sincerely to become a member of this Board of Directors, and I thank you for considering my application.