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Students weigh in on Presbyterian affiliation, bylaws

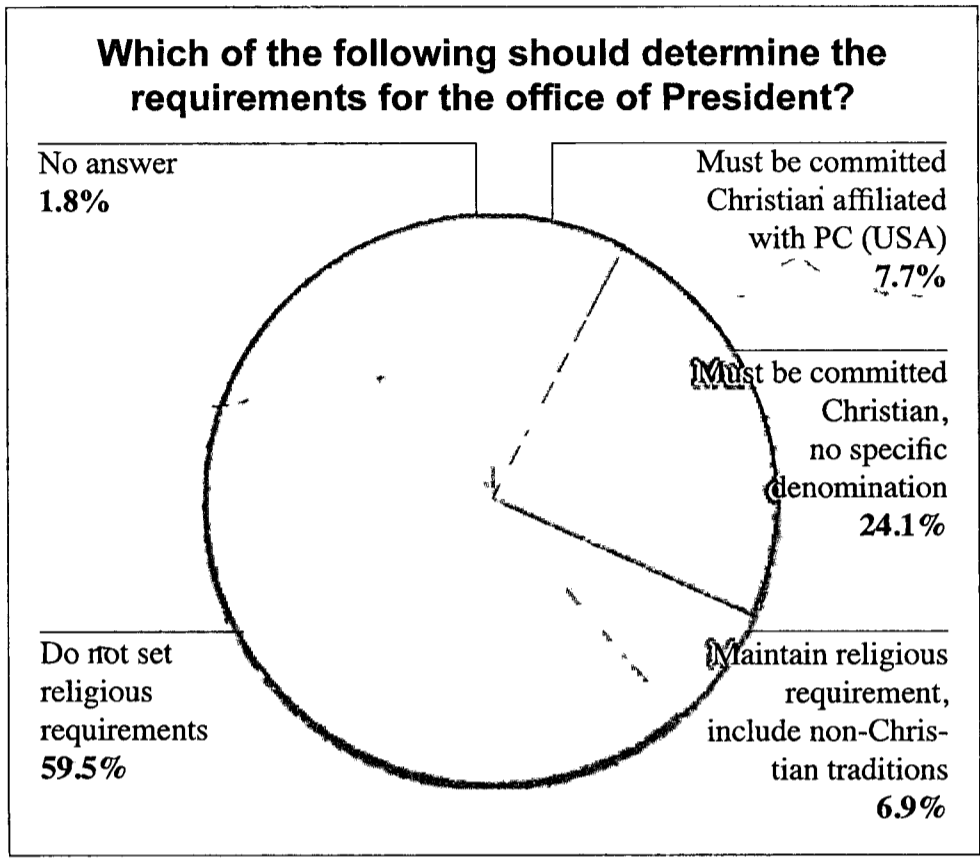
Survey results reflect students' opinions on Presidential bylaws, campus religious life

By **Chris Sawyer**
 Staff Writer

During the 2010-2011 presidential search process that ultimately brought President Carol Quillen to Davidson College, questions were raised about how the Presidential Requirements Bylaw would be applied to the search. The bylaw requires that the President of Davidson College be an active Christian. The Trustees of Davidson College decided that, rather than examining the bylaw during an ongoing search process, they would form a committee to meet within a year of the selection of the new President.

The Committee on Church Relatedness, chaired by William Rikard '67, was tasked with examining the bylaw and the role of religion in the general Davidson community. The *Davidsonian* surveyed the student body about their views on religious bylaws and Davidson's church affiliation. A total of 253 responses were submitted, which represents 25.3% of the student body. The results show little student support for the existing Presidential bylaw, as well as the related Trustee Bylaw, but majority support for affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

The presidential bylaw states that the Trustees "shall elect only a person who is a legal and active church member, whose membership provides evidence of strong Christian



faith and commitment. Such faith and commitment will be appropriately expressed by affiliation with the Presbyterian Church (USA) and active participation in the life of Davidson College Presbyterian Church."

This bylaw is the only matter of governance under consideration by the Trustees. The Trustees do not interpret this bylaw as requiring that the President be a Presbyterian. Rather, they must work within the af-

filiation and be active in Davidson College Presbyterian Church upon accepting the job. Though not under consideration, the Trustee Bylaw further requires that "at least 80% of all elected Trustees are active members of a Christian church."

Students who took the survey were asked to self-evaluate their knowledge of Davidson's affiliation with the PC(USA) and the Reformed Tradition, the theology

cited by the College. A majority (53.6%) of respondents said they knew "a moderate amount" about the affiliation, and 34.0% said they knew "very little." Few responded that they knew "a great deal" (6.7%) or "nothing" (5.7%).

When asked about their knowledge of the Reformed Tradition, the most common response was "very little" (37.2%), followed by "a moderate amount" (35.2%), "nothing" (15.6%) and "a great deal" (11.7%).

Further, about a quarter of students surveyed, most of which were freshmen, were unaware of the Presidential or Trustee bylaws prior to taking the survey.

One student, who supports the affiliation but not the bylaws, commented, "Continuing to remain affiliated with the PC(USA) might deter some future students from attending, but that is who we are and we should not be ashamed of it. Our affiliation has no impact on [the] better known Davidson tradition of academic excellence."

Another student who favors both the affiliation and the bylaws said, "...I see a direct connection between the values Davidson gives to students and to the values of PC(USA)," and "I hope that if my children decide to attend Davidson, that the college will still profess these same values which are so fleeting in our society."

Davidson's religious demographics have changed dramatically as its formerly all-Presbyterian student body has gradually incorporated other religious groups. The largest religious group among the stu-

See POLL, page 3

Roundtable diversity discussion revisits last semester's unrest

Diversity advocates discuss progress, change in light of last semester's conflicts

By **Sarah Welty**
 Editor-in-Chief

Upperclassmen may well remember last spring as a time of conflict. Tense discussions concerning diversity and representation among faculty and students broke out across campus, spreading like wildfire from the common room to the classroom.

Student reaction to the apparent lack of faculty members of color resulted in a spring Convocation-day protest, a number of strongly worded *Davidsonian* Perspectives pieces, and, ultimately, a widely-attended forum on the subject of diversity at

Davidson hosted by President Quillen.

For those same upperclassmen who weathered the metaphorical storms of last spring, there may be lingering questions from those discussions, chief among them:

Why have the conversations that so electrified the faculty and students last semester been happening less frequently—or at least less publically—this year?

The *Davidsonian* sat down with some of the students whose voices rang the loudest in last spring's protests to get to the bottom of this and other questions of campus diversity.

First: why, exactly, were the protestations of last semester seemingly silenced this year?

"The group from last year was very active

See DIVERSITY, page 4



Last spring, students held a protest calling for greater faculty diversity. After a heated spring semester, the issue seems to have cooled down this fall. Photo by Mark Sehnert



Dr. Josh Putnam, Visiting Assistant Professor of Political Science, accurately predicted the red and blue breakdown of all electoral votes, one of the few pundits to accomplish this feat.

See NEWS, page 2



The *Davidsonian* sat down for a private interview with David Brooks this past Monday during his time on campus. Part of a two-issue series, the first segment features advice to college students.

See LIVING DAVIDSON, page 5



The men's basketball team was featured in ESPN's College Hoops Marathon against the University of New Mexico. The game was televised at 2 am E.T., though the Lobos came out on top with a final score of 86-81.

See SPORTS, page 10