

Thanks to Ms. Riemer-Peltz for your heartfelt letter of [November 13](#) regarding the Kirkland Endowment, and its implications for the needs of women at Hamilton. Please know that we hope to engage in dialog with you to find solutions that work for women at Hamilton now and in years to come. We agree entirely that increased numbers alone do not address the problems of women on campus.

To understand why Kirkland alumnae proposed changes to the Endowment, and why you've never heard from us before, please allow us a moment of history. The 1977 announcement of Kirkland's demise was shocking and sudden. 950 graduates got a letter in the mail (no email). The 600 women on campus learned that K '78 graduates would be the last. There was no chance to fight – it was over. Given the kinds of students Kirkland attracted (more on this later), we pretty much scattered to the wind. Most of us went on with our lives with little or no connection to Hamilton. There was no Kirkland to connect to.

In 2007, 120 women gathered for an all-Kirkland reunion. Fifty chose to remain involved to create the Committee for Kirkland College (CKC), the first alumnae group in three decades to engage with Hamilton on a consistent basis! Our purpose:

- Contribute to an enduring Kirkland spirit at Hamilton – one that reflects the innovative, creative, passionate, and quirky Kirkland we knew.
- Use our life experiences to mentor Hamilton women. We are teachers, poets, biologists, bankers, mothers, CEOs, painters, entrepreneurs, politicians, wives, community activists, lawyers, life partners, architects, professional athletes, and farmers. We hope we have much to offer.
- Document our history.
- Ensure that the Kirkland Endowment (KE) will endure.

The Endowment. The Kirkland Endowment Advisory Committee (KEAC), comprised of faculty, students, and Kirkland and Hamilton alumnae, operates the KE. For over thirty years, they nurtured, protected, and sustained the KE while we were out in the world doing what Kirkland prepared us to do. We are deeply grateful for their tireless work and fierce dedication.

In 2007, as the CKC began to rally newly engaged alumnae to give, questions arose about the Endowment's operation; its informal and opaque processes were discouraging. The KE supported a narrow range of interests; KEAC did not meet on a regular basis or include all members in all decisions, did not follow clear criteria for awards, and did not always distribute accrued funds. The CKC recognized that, to be sustainable and vibrant in perpetuity, operations must improve. We encouraged KEAC to improve processes, communication, and transparency.

Sustainability also requires that the KE become bolder, more impactful, and better reflective of the diversity of Hamilton women. To foster inclusivity, we propose that

KEAC broaden student membership – Kirkland was about participatory democracy in its purest sense. We also propose using 50% of the unrestricted funds for Hamilton scholarships – ***exclusively for women***. KEAC would work with Admissions to set the criteria, and then select Kirkland Scholar recipients. We believe that offering a Hamilton education to inquisitive, out-of-the-box, Kirkland-like women is the boldest, most impactful legacy we can create.

Kirkland alumnae, faculty members consulted by the Dean, the Administration, and the Board all like the idea of Kirkland Scholars. In particular, Kirkland alumnae are energized about contributing to an endowment that will support the needs and interests of future generations of women at Hamilton, while honoring the full diversity of Kirkland College.

We understand that – beyond tales of the dark side – you don't know much about Kirkland College or its alumnae. Most of us came to Kirkland to pursue studies of passionate, personal interest. That Kirkland was a women's college was a given, the air we breathed. Here is how we describe Kirkland in the CKC Charter:

“Kirkland College offered young women a unique education in an environment of possibilities...to achieve their academic potential, pursue their individuality and develop political and social consciousness. Amidst an often-turbulent national landscape, Kirkland provided a vibrant space for creativity, academic challenge and vigorous mental stimulation. For one decade, graduates left the college armed with the ability to apply theoretical and abstract lessons to the process of living with purpose and impact.”

The KE changes we propose reflect this purpose and impact. Read them at www.hamilton.edu/alumni/kirklandcollege/ and feel free to contact any of us directly. Kirkland alumnae very much want to get to know you; we hope that the women of Hamilton want to get to know us.

Kirkland Endowment Subcommittee, Committee for Kirkland College

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