Summary of St. Olaf Alumni Board Meetings
October 23 & 24, 2008
(held in David E. Johnson Board Room)

Board members present: Katherine Hoyland Barnett, Nathan Soland, Kathy Schuurman, Brenda Berkman, Randy Betcher, Linda Aasen, Bjerke, Sean Burress, Larry C. Christensen, Paul Christenson, Carol Schierenbeck Eisinger, Kristin Fossum Fletcher, Ted Hillestad, Katie Larson, Mildred Matzke Monsen, Brent Mueller, Kate Bollman Pearce, Dan Rustad, Greg Steeber, Bruce Wahl, Anne Steeves, Joy Quaidoo

Katherine began the meeting welcoming new staff to their positions: Nathan Soland as the Director of Alumni and Parent Relations, Eileen Shimota as a Special Assistant, and Tracy Fossum as Director of Partners in Annual Giving. Janet Kringen Thompson continued with leading the group in devotion and prayer as we began our work together.

Report from Consultant Mark Kromholm
Assessment: the Offices of Annual Giving and Alumni and Parent Relations
Mark summarized his report by stating that St. Olaf has really strong people in their new roles, a strong finish to the fiscal year, great enthusiasm with the new science building, a successful “Summit on the Hill,” made it to the front page of the US News and World Report, and is hearing phrases of alumni loyalty of “Give Back to the Hill.”

Carleton, Macalester, Grinnell, and St. Olaf are four colleges that are in a friendly competition. The points of consideration include: academic reputation, national/international reach, available resources, and the endowment.

There are indicators that certain classes are under performing as a group. It doesn’t seem as though we need one specific thing that defines people back to St. Olaf but rather a variety for different alumni. It’s important that we dismiss “us versus them” rather incorporate a “we’re all in this together” philosophy.

What it means to be a good Ole citizen
Highlights of group comments: has a positive outlook about St. Olaf and its future, alum are encouraged to express appreciation of the college long after they leave and serve St. Olaf. This goes beyond monetary giving but also recognize that there may be other ways to achieve it – career counseling, offering internships, providing housing for students in the area, giving them a summer job, getting together with alum in the area, etc. If you are a good citizen of the community/world, people will associate that with St. Olaf. Connecting to the college and alumni community will encourage a sense of stewardship.

How do you achieve good citizenship?
Help students understand their role as an alum. It is important that the Alumni Office has continued involvement and presence on and off campus. There needs to be more communication on how to give back and give the message, “this is what alumni do.”

Alumni and Parent Relations Discussion
The overall impression is that numbers are up; the Alumni Office can only take partial credit because reunion volunteers are doing a great job. There is also a clear consensus is that the APR Office is doing too much and offering too many events. As a reaction, programming in the Twin Cities was assessed and new programming/publication was created as a pilot program for the Twin Cities entitled, “A Year in Advance.”
Different club ideas and events
The alumni Board representatives from the various geographical areas shared events and activities that take place in their location including the annual day of service. Events can be found on the APR website.

Partners in Annual Giving
Director Tracy Fossum highlighted the activities of the office. The overall message was last year’s results were excellent and was an increase from the year before. Despite the nation’s uncertain financial crisis, PAG must move forward in their quest. Recruiting volunteers and creating a consistent message is of high priority.

New alumni awards process
APR Assistant Director Kathy Schuurman conveyed the message that staff is feeling like the Alumni Awards are getting lost in celebration weekend. After much conversation, it’s been decided to move it to Founders Day hoping to bring more attention to Founders Day and the Alumni Award, allowing faculty, staff, students, alumni to attend.

There are three awards that are distributed: Distinguished – excel in career, and have given back to the college and community; Alumni Achievement – excelling in career but not so tied back to St. Olaf College; Distinguished Service Award – changing their communities but not necessarily a career; Graduate of the Last Decade Award – a young alumni in a leadership role.

Black & Gold Gala Report
Alumni Board representatives from the Twin Cities area are leading the efforts for this event on Saturday, February 28, 6:00 p.m. - midnight at the Hilton Hotel, Minneapolis. Details are online.

MCAN report
The goal of the Multicultural Alumni Network is to get alumni of color connected. A three year strategic plan has been created: 1-Reconnect; 2-Re-engage; 3-Re-unite; 4-Recommit

Student Alumni Association Report – Student Representative Anne Steeves
Anne started the conversation with a list of where students are and what they are doing. This includes: extracurricular activities, volunteer work, service projects, study abroad, fundraising, etc. Anne distributed a postcard with activities SAA is doing right now. These events include: Homecoming (Golden Medallion Contest, Hospitality Tent, Buckthorn Project); Founder’s Day – November 6; Ole Night Out – November 16 (alumni offer dinner in their home to current students); Etiquette Dinner – Mid February; Philanthropy Week – March 2-6; National Day of Service – April 18; Alumni Board Connection – April 23-24

Discussion: What does the Alumni Board expect of the college?
Expectations of the Board, the Office, and personal expectations were noted. Generalizations include: the necessity and commitment of the APR staff, alumni sharing more of the responsibility, communication is essential to success, and technology needs. Board members are committed to being active participants in various ways in the alumni community.

What came to you from these two days of meetings?
Board members shared individually their insight, perspective, and interest.

Action Steps:
Three areas in particular that need attention are: PAG, the Black and Gold Gala, and Club events

The Spring Alumni Board Meeting is April 23, 24