St. Olaf Alumni Board Meeting Notes, November 4-5, 2010

Present: Katherine Barnett, Kate Pearce, Mickey Monsen, Sean Burress, Gary Perkins, Brenda Berkman, Rebecca Taibl, Magdalena Wells, Bruce Wahl, Linda Bjerke, Jennifer Sawyer, Katherine Kroeger, Mitch Lehn, Sam Dotzler, Brock Metzger, Ted Hillestad, Jill Klanderman, Alice Ellis, Siri Thompson, Nathan Soland, Kathy Schuurman, Meredith Utt Olson, Sheri Eichhorn

Thursday, November 4:

President’s Report – Katherine Barnett

- Board of Regents meets February, May, and October
- Pleased Black and Gold Gala changed to fit into Regent schedule in February
- A lot of time focused on strategic planning
  - Small working groups focused on fiscal sustainability, academic excellence, campus culture
  - Katherine is in the campus culture group
    - Overriding discussion is about the STO experience (residence life, alcohol policy, living, learning tolerance, campus dining services, building needs, opportunities for global travel and experiences)
    - Cost of college is big discussion in the fiscal sustainability group
      - Any tuition increases will be decided in February
      - Last 2 years have been the lowest increase since 1970s
      - College is not need blind
    - Board has also spent a lot of time talking about Tomson Hall
    - College is still in good financial shape
    - Pete Sandberg doing an incredible job with campus facilities
    - Workforce planning is also being discussed due to the aging of faculty
      - College able to hired 10 new faculty members last year
        - More diverse
        - Good for both students and other faculty
  - Approximately $300 million currently in endowment
  - Was approximately $335 million in 2007
  - College locked in interest rates (currently low rates)
    - Surplus when budgeted for a higher amount originally
    - This surplus has allowed college to make upgrades

Introduction of Alumni Board Members

Broke into small groups for discussion on Alumni and Parent Engagement

Meeting adjourned at 5 p.m.
Friday, November 5:

8:30 a.m.  Strategic Plan Report – Paula Carlson ’76

• Planning began about a year ago
• First activity was to launch a web survey
  o Asked about strengths, places for improvement, priorities to consider
  o Approximately 850 responses
• Board of Regents then decided to do an environmental scan
  ▪ Leaders in finance, government, politics were selected for interviews conducted by David Anderson
  ▪ Asked “what are the big things that might threaten the ‘main things?’”
  ▪ Interview transcripts given to the Board
  ▪ 3 working groups created-made up of Board members and faculty/staff members
    • Academic excellence, STO Experience, Value Proposition
    • Value proposition focus is on college cost
      o How can increasing costs continue?
      o Economic realities of families
      o How sustainable is it?
      o At some point, college costs will be insurmountable for families
      o How can academic excellence and STO experience be delivered at an affordable cost to all types of students—big focus of their discussions
• Challenges of having 845 first year students in the class of 2014.
• Issues to confront included curriculum and housing for all students.
  o All rooms in Kitt are triples
• What is the end timeline for this planning to be finished?
  o Preliminary report to David Anderson by end of December
  o Cabinet formulate plan during January
  o Board will look at plan/report in February
  o Incorporation of Board ideas/wisdom
  o Final piece considered by Board in May
  o Goal is for the plan to be sleek-easy to communicate briefly to others, clear and succinct
  o Often like a wish list

Questions:

What is the main reason for the increasing costs of a college education?
  A: Hard to pinpoint, but some issues are:
    o Health benefit costs for college employees
    o Technology—opens up opportunities, but comes with a cost
    o Costs of general living things—energy costs, food prices, etc
Increasing staff due to larger number of students, health concerns of students (nurses, counseling staff, etc), staff needed to address “new” needs of students

Financial Aid costs—colleges with a larger endowment can fund this better than St. Olaf can with current endowment.

Is there student representation on the working groups?

- Students will be working on the STO Experience team
- Sean suggested that there should be representation of all types of students that we want to have here, (cultural, geographic and economic diversity)

What does the Board do to make sure all activities that are going on are all effective?

- Cabinet prepares a report before each Regent meeting.
- Cabinet then reviews, questions, comments on what is happening

9:15 a.m. Mainstreet Project – Steve McKelvey

- Historical overview of how the project came to be:
  - President Anderson’s idea/initiative
  - Pilot program to maintain new accreditation through the HLC (Higher Learning Commission)
  - Trying to turn accreditation process into something that has real results for students and campus
  - Strategic response to rising college costs
    - Parents continue to ask why is a liberal arts college worth this much money?
    - Mainstreet Project is one attempt to answer that question
    - Students will leave with a strong suite of skills to contribute directly to jobs and world
    - Vocational piece is also important—want students to have had the opportunity to know themselves well enough, to understand what it is that gives them meaning in their soul, life
    - Want students to know about themselves as well as being able to get a good paying job.

- President convened the Mainstreet Project
- Final results of work probably won’t be called “Mainstreet”
- Committee made up of faculty members, staff, students
- Wabash Study
  - Have access to expertise from Wabash College that does college evaluate and data mining
- Nathan working on a survey of current young alumni to find out how well they felt college prepared them for life after graduation
- Sociology courses are also working on student surveys of attitudes and perceptions of what is available on campus as well as what they would like to be available
• Last summer a draft of Mainstreet objects was created
• Public meetings held related to Mainstreet Objectives.
• Moved into “Construction Phase”
  o Identifying potential initiatives to take
  o Subcommittees:
    ▪ Reflection Committee
    ▪ Mentorship Committee
    ▪ Exploration Committee
    ▪ Connections Committee- Continue to build networks with large and small corporations, fundraising
    ▪ Each committee charged with producing a long list of possible ideas, keep creating potential initiatives consistent with Mainstreet Initiative—realistic, reasonable
• Parent Alumni Advisory Board will support all subcommittees. Responding to ideas, coming up with their own ideas to pitch to the subcommittees.
• Subcommittees will respond back by December.
• List presented to entire STO community (off and on) in January.
• March or April—start actively soliciting feedback on ideas
• May – Mainstreet will produce a final report for the President
• Implementation phase may begin over the summer
• Results could be seen as early as next fall
• Appears to be a lot of support for this idea from students, faculty, alumni

• Other colleges with good models for this type of program?
  o Carleton – Externships (more involved job shadowing with alumni during school breaks)
  o Wake Forest – has a lot of similar ideas/projects to Mainstreet
  o Some colleges have “guaranteed jobs” for students after graduation (sometimes this is another semester of free classes after graduation)

• How will this program work to help alumni after graduation?
  o Alumni resources will be part of this—not sure yet how that will look, but will likely change the culture of opportunities after graduation

10:40

Alumni Board Term Limits Discussion – Nathan Soland

• What is an appropriate time for a board member to serve? (Opened for discussion):
  o 4 years seems a good amount, possibly too short
  o Could be a good idea to stay on longer, if interest in the Board remains. Otherwise, one could leave after their initial term.
  o How do other boards manage this?
  o Devil’s Advocate—effectiveness could wane after 4 years. Perhaps keep former members involved in a different way and then bring on new people to the Board
  o Could split term starts and stops to prevent many people going off at the same time.
- Important to have new members to keep energy and keep it fresh.
- Self-evaluations could be helpful for members to fill out after each year.
- Once members know what their role/passion is, they can continue that work even off the board.
- 3 year term a possible idea, then with the option for review and stay on for another X number of years.

- How do we create continuity on the board and also allow room for transition and growth?
- If I had the choice, how many years would I like to serve on the Board?

11:00 a.m. Student Alumni Association Report – Siri Thompson

- Homecoming Week themed the celebration “OLE!”
  - “tomato” fight and “running of the bulls”
  - Alumni mug tent was very popular
  - Homecoming dance in the Pause was packed
- OK GO for fall concert sold out for the time ever
- Northfield Flood this fall
  - Students helped out with sandbagging downtown and with flood clean up.
- Musical tours, vocal guests on A Prairie Home Companion
- Volleyball team is still in the playoffs, round two on Saturday
- Women placed 1st in the MIAC Cross County competition, Men placed 2nd
- Football plays St. John’s tomorrow
- Winter sports starting, hockey already in season
- Tomson Hall is the big buzz on campus, students are incredibly excited for a new building, new study, classroom, and office spaces
- SAA has Ole Night Out and Give to the Max Day in November.
  - Carnival in the Pause for Give to the Max Day
  - Give MN is offering 2 prizes for the non-profits with the most donors (20K or 10K extra for top 2 orgs)
  - Golden tickets will be give out each hour to a random donor (adds $1,000 to donor’s gift)
- How can alumni outside of the area assist with current students – overnight stays/dinners, etc?
  - Perhaps a database could be set up
- Committee Make-up:
  - Open invitation to join
  - 12-15 consistent members
  - PR director, Executive Assistant, Subcommittee Director
  - All class years represented
  - Actively involved with educating students about philanthropy.

11:15 a.m. Black and Gold Gala Update – Brock Metzger and Kate Pearce
500 people, $150,000 goals
February 19, 2011
want to raise $35,000 for sponsorships to help off set cost of holding event
Online auction items this year so the Gala can be “attended” by those outside of the Twin Cities
VIP level added to the event:
  - Extra charge
  - Begins an hour earlier, champagne reception, open bar, early admittance to silent auction
How can Alumni Board Members help?
  - Can donate items or experiences
  - Do you have any connections to an item, experience, possible attendees, sponsors?
If you purchase a table early you can save $100 (10 seats for $900 before Jan. 31, $1000 after)
Register online now!
Can we stream event online for those outside of the area unable to attend?
Generate excitement for future attendance
Galerization options are available if those are interested in donating to event but can’t attend on their own.

11:30 a.m.       Partner’s in Annual Giving Report – Randy Betcher ’79

Peer to peer focus on Annual Fund
  - Removes face of college in the ask and puts the fund on the shoulders of alumni and parents
Schools we compete against today all have larger endowments and larger annual funds
How effective Partner’s Board is will be shown through number of donors and increased donations
Participation rates of donors is 30%
Why so low if alums have had such a great experience at STO?
  - Focus groups will be held on Nov. 6 at General Mills with a random sampling of alumni from all generations, givers and non givers, 80 participants total
  - Sean Burress has been key leader in organizing these focus groups
“Impact drives income”
Partner’s Board meeting in August
Goals set: $4 million dollars, 1.5 million from reunion years, increase leadership gifts ($1,000 or more) by 15%
31% participation
Need sponsorships for Gala to come through, Carlson and Neuger are possible sponsors
Letters out to Alumni now have specific ask amounts in them
  - Are you capable of giving more?
  - Some argue this is intrusive
However, this does prove to increase revenue to the college
Some give more, some give less, some give the same as previous years
Some people like to know what is expected or acceptable
- Need to bring more people on board especially to represent classes that currently have no leaders
- Imbed habit of philanthropy to STO in students are parents
- Needs most critical to the college come out of the Annual Fund (i.e. flood damage in Mellby was paid for by Annual Fund resources)
- Need at least 1 CFA in each class, increased leadership gifts, awareness of the importance of the Annual Fund
- Especially need more CFAs as we approach another major campaign.
- Can’t remain “community chest” for the College but needs to bridge gap between needs of college and the revenue brings in.

Questions:
- How did Jill and class of 1974 increase participation so much for their class?
  - Worked with Larry Christensen ’61 on how their model works and is so successful
  - Enlisted freshman corridor to do phone calling. Team of 18 people trying to contact 500+ classmates
  - By the time they hit their 35th class reunion they had 36 people making phone calls
  - How many Oles have never given?
    - Approximately 2/3 of alumni have given at some point
    - Problem is with consistency
  - First phase of focus groups is to find out what questions should be asked, and to which groups, etc.

- How will economic malaise continue to shape giving in the future?
  - St. Olaf is not immune to decline, but there is a strong affinity of donors
  - This year will hurt – end of Thrivent match reduces about $65,000, $40,000 reduced by charging Christmas Fest

- What can Alumni Board do to help?
  - Possibly recruit CFAs for classes
  - Be advocates in support of Annual Fund

2 p.m.  Alumni and Parent Engagement Discussion

- Small group gatherings rather than large group events could be more beneficial
- Micro-marketing of events
- Day of Service is the type of event that draws people
Create a structure of “go-to’s” for the events around the country so no one person has to do everything. Also creates a broader community of engagement
- Online vehicles for discussion
- Harvard Alumni website is a good model of functionality
- Thinking of STO as a resource.
  o Means something different for all alumni
  o Can we create our own alumni “network”
  o “Amway” philosophy of pyramid programming to build community
  o Facebook type functionality of Online Alumni Directory
  o An “Ole Network.com” type site separate from main website
  o Limitations of current online directory
    ▪ Can’t look at past history of jobs
    ▪ Specific job field
    ▪ Not linked to other online resources
    ▪ Williams Alumni Website as a resource
  o Challenge of how to make such a web network “cool”
- Focus groups focused on questions that the college wants discussed may be a good way to connect smaller groups of alumni to do something purposeful
- List of people to engage rather than events to plan could be new route for planning meetings in clubs, classes, areas, etc
  o Would this be feasible for volunteers to do? What tools and background info would be needed ahead of time?

Concrete Take-Away Ideas for the Alumni Office/Process of Engaging Alumni:

- Online faculty lectures/discussions or faculty podcasts
- Update class newsletters
- Local alumni speakers for STO on the Road or other type of event
  o Alum speaker could carry more weight and be more of a priority for area Oles
- Identify charitable project for retirees or smaller projects where they can all gather as Oles.
- Hard to get people to commit time
- Need to find more volunteers to represent different segments of clubs/areas, take on leadership
- Targeted person to person events supplemented with online activities to keep people involved
- Target, General Mills, etc specific gatherings
- Presidential Series of speeches, create gathering of people interested in each topic to discuss further. Hosted by a particular “champion” alum.
- National Paraphernalia Day
  o Ask people to wear their “colors” on one day all over the country/world
- Comprehensive exit plan with students: what did you like here? What do you want from us?
- Alumni opportunities for classes
- Alumni Board Members can email Ole friends after Board meetings with a couple of updates about campus and then ask them to send it out to their Ole networks, etc.

3 p.m. Meeting adjourned to take advantage of Founder’s Day speakers and events.