Alumni Board Meeting Minutes – April 2013

Thursday, April 11, 2013

Present: Ben Baker, Sam Dotzler, Paul Finley, Amy Gillespie, Sandy Skustad Jerstad, Katherine Kroeger, Mitch Lehn, Vijay Mehrotra, Kate Bollmann Pearce, Ron Pechauer, Gary Perkins, Jennifer Rajala Sawyer, Rebecca Schmidt Taibl, Magdalena Wells

Absent: Nikki Brock-Maruska, Kate Sands Johnson, Brock Metzger

Visitors present for at least a portion of the day: Heidi Quiram, Jen Winterfeldt, Karl Turnlund, Martha Kunau

The meeting opened with devotions led by Ron Pechauer.

Board of Regents Report
Kate Pearce, Alumni Board President and liaison to the Board of Regents, shared an update:

- A retreat-style meeting was held earlier this year, which includes a social aspect with spouses and an opportunity for board members to get to know one another on a more personal level.
- The board recently approved a new comprehensive fee of $49,960, which reflects the lowest increase in several years. The board remains committed to raising the comprehensive fee no more than 1% over CPI each year.
- Kate sits on the Advancement sub-committee. Discussion centered around the upcoming campaign, which has no official start date. (That kick-off date will probably be decided on during the next meeting in May.) President Anderson has been doing strategic consultations around the country, many of which are hosted by a regent in that area, to discuss the strategic plan and gather feedback.
- Alan Norton also gave a detailed presentation on the College’s current financial status.
- Kate feels one of the charges of the alumni board is to be able to speak knowledgably about the status of the college, the challenges it faces, and what we’re doing well.

Show and Tell
Board members shared anecdotes and reflections on their involvement with St. Olaf and other Oles. Examples of information shared include: events in conjunction with St. Olaf Choir concerts, ski event in Sun Valley (already approved by the president for 2015), networking gatherings, St. Olaf on the Road, Strategic Consultations, lefse-making events, cookie packaging to send to current students, Black & Gold Gala, Young Alumni Holiday Party, new student send-off events, hosting students and receptions in conjunction with the Connections program sponsored by the Piper Center, theater events, ice skating in Central Park, St. Olaf Trivia Night, Syttende Mai parade, partnerships and initiatives with Northfield and Carleton, wine tasting, planning volunteer-driven and volunteer-supported Day of Service, broomball versus Carls, book clubs, Happy Hours, Facebook groups, class fundraising, reunion volunteering, student mentoring, Career Network for Oles, and barely resisting the urge to follow random cars home that sport St. Olaf stickers.

Working Groups
The board broke into two working groups to address club events and meaningful alumni and parent engagement. One group addressed the Twin Cities area and one addressed regional clubs.

Report from the non-Minnesota working group: first question we asked was, what is our role? What is our goal in holding events? Then, as we hold events, we can keep some metrics to discern whether the event was successful. We can only measure success if we know our mission, our goals and objectives. Lastly, how do we collaborate as a board to help each other be successful?
Each region will identify at least one successful event and then write up a procedures manual, share with the alumni board, in case anyone else wants to replicate the event (due by next board meeting). Vijay is creating a Google docs directory with this information that everyone can access. A tertiary benefit is that putting together the procedures manual will help us think about why the event is successful.

Report from the Twin Cities working group: first, in looking at our events, we realized we are envious of what everyone else is doing in regional areas and we want to do more of that in the Twin Cities. Key questions we asked are how much time does it take Alumni Office staff, what is the cost to put it on, and what audience does it benefit. Then we scored each event based on level of engagement, how many donor dollars it brings in, and whether the event is reflective of the St. Olaf brand. We need yet to go to the next step and make decisions on what events we would recommend discontinuing, or what events should follow a different model (e.g., more volunteer driven).

Suggestion was made to create a sub-committee to concentrate on this issue. Sam, Jennifer, Ron, and Gary volunteered and will have this discussion during the working group session tomorrow.

**Working Dinner**

Dinner was shared with Enoch Blazis, Vice President for Advancement, who shared an update on the division.

**Friday, April 12, 2013**

Present: Ben Baker, Sam Dotzler, Paul Finley, Amy Gillespie, Sandy Skustad Jerstad, Kate Sands Johnson, Katherine Kroeger, Mitch Lehn, Vijay Mehrotra, Kate Bollmann Pearce, Ron Pechauer, Gary Perkins, Jennifer Rajala Sawyer, Rebecca Schmidt Taibl, Magdalena Wells

Absent: Nikki Brock-Maruska, Brock Metzger

Guests in attendance for at least a portion of the day: Jen Winterfeldt, Heidi Quiram, Karl Turnlund, Martha Kunau, Kari Swanson, and Bailey Williams

The meeting was called to order by Kate Pearce.

**Student Alumni Association Report**

Kari Swason shared updates from the Student Alumni Association and campus life in general. There are new class offerings such as Arabic, Korean, and Italian, and new Interim study abroad opportunities. St. Olaf athletics are doing well, particularly the Nordic ski teams and women’s golf. Other student life updates included information about STOTalks (TED-style talks), St. Olaf student Facebook activity, Lutefest being cancelled (music festival on the green), and recent leadership awards. Student Alumni Association updates included the success of Give to the Max Day and a new event this Spring in which the SAA hosted Mary Carlsen in an informal setting about her time at St. Olaf and its influence on her life. Another new event includes a young alumni event where a panel will provide advice on transitioning away from St. Olaf and seek to further connect recent alumni with the college.

**Reflections on Alumni Board Connections Breakfast**

The Board reflected on their experiences connecting with current students at the Alumni Board Connections breakfast that happened this morning at 7:15 a.m. in Stav Hall. Students discussed what surprised them about St. Olaf, experiences abroad, challenges, and career interests. Other discussion topics included student engagement, student stress level, socio-emotional and psychological needs and challenges, and networking opportunities.
Nomination Report, Discussion, and Selection
Kate Pearce presented the nominations for new Alumni Board members. Mitch Lehn, Magdalena Wells, Gary Perkins, and Katherine Kroeger are ending their tenure on the board. Board nominees were introduced and discussed, with one nomination yet to be announced via e-mail. A discussion followed the nominations about ensuring that the alumni base is well represented by a variety of class years, gender, and ethnicity. There is no limit to the number of members that can sit on the board; consequently, additional members may be brought in to balance the board representation. Orientation practices were discussed to potentially include “three hats.” Board members are expected to be thoughtful in board work on a broad level, align that work with committee work and representation in geographic areas, and have personal influence and lead by example through regular gifts to the College. Communication strategy between board members was discussed, as well as possible means of implementing those potential strategies, including Google Docs, e-newsletters and e-mail reminders.

The nominees were unanimously approved by the present board members.

Black and Gold Gala Report
Jennifer Sawyer provided a report and an accompanying discussion about the Black and Gold Gala. Vijay did an interpretive dance based on the commentary from Jennifer. This year the Gala brought in 509 guests and $211,000 — both new records! The event has become a signature event for St. Olaf, but the ROI of the event came under scrutiny. A recommendation was made this year by the Alumni and Parent Relations Office to reassess the division of labor to execute the event in two facets: Engagement and Fundraising.

Raiser’s Edge Conversion Update
Matt Fedde from the St. Olaf Fund office provided a report on the new website and database that the college is transitioning into. All the advancement webpages will be hosted on a new website that will offer new features because of the integration of the webpages and the alumni database. The alumni directory will get an update, giving history will be displayed, making gifts will be streamlined, and e-receipts will be available. Event registration forms will be auto-filled, and specific class pages will no longer be static, offering a new level of engagement among classmates. The new portal to these pages and the alumni directory can be found at my.stolaf.edu.

Admissions and Financial Aid 2013-2017
Jeff McLaughlin ’92, the Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid, provided a report on admissions, how the department and its strategies have changed over time, and the goals their office holds moving forward. Racial and ethnic diversity has increased significantly; the gender balance is closer than the national average for liberal arts institutions, yet the Lutheran student count is down to about a third for the entering first year class. Jeff also shared some of the selection criteria for incoming students. For example, GPA is recalculated for each student to better reflect their academic capability and potential success academically here at St. Olaf. Additionally, he shared reflections on need-sensitive admissions paired with St. Olaf’s commitment to meeting 100% of demonstrated financial need. A discussion on financial aid, the endowment, and the ways in which St. Olaf has changed in the last 20 years followed.

Lunch with David Anderson ’74 and Advancement Staff
President Anderson provided a state of the college presentation that included the announcement that College Treasurer Alan Norton will be retiring this summer, the present state of the college’s endowment and the St. Olaf Fund’s fund raising efforts, as well as a few new innovations happening here on campus. These innovations include an expansion of the Conversation Programs to include two new programs — the Environmental Conversation, and Arts Conversation — a rebuilt and soon-to-be-dedicated Art Barn, an expansion of the Cage café area in the Buntrock Commons, as well as a new examination of how St. Olaf positions its brand and ways of communicating what St. Olaf’s mission is. David concluded by sharing that the ultimate focus is engendering institutional sustainability to allow St. Olaf to continue to advance and thrive into the coming years.
The St. Olaf Fund Report
Randy Betcher ’79, chair of the Annual Fund Board shared the current status of the Annual Fund. The Annual Fund goal this year is to raise $4.3 million. As of the board meeting, the Fund is ahead in dollars raised but is behind in participation in comparison to last year. Randy reminded the group that the process for raising funds for the Annual Fund is very volunteer driven and each volunteer can craft the individual way they make contacts with their peers and friends. Overall, fundraising for the Annual Fund is about making touch points with Oles and sharing the good news about St. Olaf.

Working Group Time and Report Back
Mission Group (Sam, Jennifer, Gary, Vijay, Ron):
The group spent time discussing and re-evaluating the role of Alumni Board members by looking at the mission, vision and strategy. Overall, board members want a more concrete vision for the way they should do their work and want a deeper understanding of what is expected out of each member. Building a more comprehensive strategy is desired and the group will convene over the summer to create a concrete draft as made by a subcommittee. The subcommittee to examine this will be: Kate P., Jennifer, Sam, Maggie and Rebecca. As part of the process of creating a strategy, it was suggested that each board member will create their own personal working plan.

Volunteer Group (Kate P., Kate J., Sandy, Mitch, Katherine, Rebecca, Paul and Amy):
The group discussed a desire for giving more accountability and direction to all volunteers. Overall, it was decided that more communication is necessary between the APR office, board members and other volunteers. It was discussed that creating more useable tools will help manage volunteers and guide events toward success.

Presentation from Dean of Students Roz Eaton-Neeb ’87 and VP for Student Life, Greg Kneser
Roz and Greg shared updates on student life at St. Olaf. Updates include:

- A group of Oles are working with the IT department to create new portals to make a more user friendly web presence for students and updating the way technology works for students.
- Students are working to create a new creed to replace the R.I.C.H. statement with a P.R.I.D.E. statement.
- A policy about plagiarism was created to work in conjunction with the honor code to better encompass all facets of integrity for students.
- The After Dark Committee planned to create three unique events to help create opportunities for different pockets of students: DYI light saber event, showing a movie on the ceiling of the Pause, headphone Disco
- Oles continue to be very active in volunteering efforts on campus and in the surrounding communities.
- SustainAbilities is a project that was student created and is based in the residence halls with a goal of making campus life more sustainable.
- College staff worked with SGA to make the difficult decision to cancel Lutefest.
- This year, race and hate issues are being more heavily examined and discussed and the policies related to hate crimes will be examined by faculty, staff and students going forward.

Wrap-Up
The meeting wrapped with everyone reporting what they will take on or do over the next 6 months. The next meeting dates are:

- Nov 7–8, 2013 (Founder’s Day on Friday)