

Office of Alumni Relations

2017-18 Annual Report

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# I. Executive Summary

The Office of Alumni Relations experienced a year of foundational stability coupled with growth in programming in 2017-18. Stability grew from the recruitment and retention of talented staff and students as well as the continuation of a new departmental strategic plan established in 2016. The experience and skill of department personnel pushed Alumni Relations programming in new directions throughout the year. Highlights included:

- Built on the success of the 2017 men's hockey watch party model with new nationwide alumni social event, Bulldogs on the Block.
- Supported and celebrated the success of the 2018 men's hockey team with watch parties around the nation during the team's NCAA championship run.
- Introduced Coffee & Connections, a new lecture series in downtown Duluth designed to foster lifelong learning, professional development, and networking for alumni.
- Collaborated with Recreational Sports Outdoor Program to design Alumni Adventure Series.
- Partnered with Student Life to host the first-ever Student Association Reunion during Homecoming Weekend.
- Launched a new 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion program.
- Laid the groundwork for the first-ever UMD Mentor Program.

Each of these initiatives required resources in an environment where more staff and financial support are difficult to come by. In order to overcome the challenge of limited resources, the department adhered to two core principles of UMD Alumni Relations work: 1) tap into the power of volunteers, and 2) seek collaborators on campus and partners in the community. By relying on input from other stakeholders (both volunteers and collaborators) the department was able to more effectively align Alumni Relations work with the interests and needs of alumni while sharing the burden of staff time and financial resources.

## II. Mission and Vision

**Mission:** The Office of Alumni Relations creates opportunities for alumni to learn, reconnect, influence the student experience, and contribute to the direction of UMD.

**Vision:** The Office of Alumni Relations will identify where the needs and priorities of alumni overlap with those of students and the university. We will work with alumni to create programs that address these interests. These efforts will give alumni a greater voice in the present and future of UMD.

## III. Goals

### Goal Areas:

1. Engagement
2. Branding
3. Connect Alumni to Students
4. Outreach
5. Collaboration

#### Goal Area 1: Engagement

Identify alumni who want a strong connection to UMD. Define what a meaningful experience could be for those engaged alumni (e.g. affinity group reunion; volunteer role; relationship with another department on campus) and create programs that meet those definitions. Appropriately acknowledge and thank UMD's most engaged alumni.

#### Goal Area 2: Branding

Communicate the purpose of Alumni Relations in clear, concise, and consistent terms. Audience for the messaging includes alumni, students, and the university community.

#### Goal Area 3: Connect Alumni to Students

Connect alumni to students so that alumni experience the value of giving back to UMD, and students benefit from the skills and knowledge of alumni.

#### Goal Area 4: Outreach

Create methods of outreach that bring UMD resources and institutional pride to alumni in places where they live and work.

#### Goal Area 5: Collaboration

Focus on partnerships with units and departments at UMD and elsewhere to help further the mission of Alumni Relations.

## IV. Objectives and Assessment

### Objectives:

1. Expand Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD) to provide more opportunities for new volunteers.
2. Collaborate with Development Office to establish annual 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion program with leadership provided by a committee of class volunteers.
3. Create career resource network of alumni.
4. Launch nationwide alumni event (“Bulldogs on the Block”).
5. Implement new motto to communicate the purpose of Alumni Relations: *Connect, Create, Provide*.
6. Partner with Academic Affairs to develop a plan for more effectively communicating opportunities for collaboration to faculty. Implement the system.

**Objective 1:** Expand Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD) to provide more opportunities for new volunteers.

*Assessment Strategy:* Implement onboarding system; new volunteers placed in committees.

*Action Steps:* Under the guidance of Assistant Director Mollie Nelson the BOLD Executive Committee hosted two events, created a BOLD leadership model (see Addendum A), developed an onboarding process, and added new members to the committee.

*Outcome:* The events hosted by BOLD (Bulldog Day of Service and Homecoming Happy Hour) were cost-effective and well-attended. Most importantly, the events galvanized additional support for BOLD through recruitment of new members, and provided Executive Committee volunteers an opportunity to put their ideas into action. The new leadership model was developed based on prior experience with the UMD Alumni Board of Directors, review of industry best practices, and feedback from BOLD members. The model was adopted by the Executive Committee at the annual meeting in February. Onboarding responsibility is presently shared by staff and the BOLD Chair, Kimberly Newton. Potential new members are contacted, the leadership model is shared, and an informal discussion is scheduled to learn more about the interest of the prospective member. Finally, the Executive Committee lost and gained members over the year (roster as of June 30, 2018 listed below):

Kimberly Newton '14, Chair  
Jill Custer '11  
Charlie Gordon '16  
Jireh Mabamba '17

Steven Rockwood '14  
Alyssa Schwanke '13

*What We Learned:* BOLD volunteers were most engaged when planning and executing events as part of the Events subcommittee. Other BOLD subcommittees were less active. This is in part due to turnover – when one volunteer left in fall 2017, the committee he led (Development) was largely abandoned – but also reflects the interests and priorities of existing members. Moving into 2018-19, staff will work with the Executive Committee to consider simplifying the leadership model to reduce the emphasis on unnecessary or undesirable committees. A simplified leadership model would also be easier for newcomers to understand in the onboarding process. Adding new members will continue to be a focus of the group in 2018-19. To do so, staff will work with the Executive Committee to strengthen messaging and goals so that prospective volunteers and alumni looking to learn more about BOLD have an easier time understanding why BOLD exists and what the group aims to achieve.

**Objective 2:** Collaborate with Development Office to establish annual 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion program with leadership provided by a committee of class volunteers.

*Assessment Strategy:* Volunteer committee makes decisions on program and recruits classmates to attend.

*Action Steps:* Committee chairs were recruited in summer and fall 2017. Staff worked with co-chairs to recruit additional committee members in winter. Full committee meetings began in January and continued through the reunion in June.

*Outcome:* The 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion program was a success in large part due to the effectiveness of the Planning Committee:

Peg Haley Kepner '68  
Jerry Knickerbocker '68  
Mike Dean '67  
John DeSanto '68  
Peter Ramme '68  
Stephen Welsh '69

The committee was instrumental in providing guidance on programming options and recruiting classmates to attend the reunion. The Development Office partnership was limited to help with staffing some of the reunion events.

*What We Learned:* Building a large, diverse committee representing the active social groups from the era will be a critical advantage to future reunion efforts. In particular, staff and volunteers will need to identify members of the various Greek organizations, many of whom are still in contact with their cohorts. Overall, the work of this committee proved that the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion model can work at UMD, and deserves the time and resources required to make it grow. Any fundraising component of the 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion will require dedicated staffing from the Development Office, and must begin early in the reunion planning process.

**Objective 3:** Create career resource network of alumni.

*Assessment Strategy:* Define roles, build marketing plan, and identify action steps for network members.

*Action Steps:* Director Matthew Duffy and Alumni Associate Julie Visger met several times with staff from the Career and Internship Services Department to address the topic of a new career resource for alumni.

*Outcome:* Ultimately, Alumni Relations staff determined through internal discussion and work with Career and Internship Services Department staff that a career resource network is not viable at this time. A network would likely duplicate existing resources (GoldPass; LinkedIn) without adding enough additional benefit to the user, the department lacks the technical knowledge and staff resources to build a network, and a similar system available to all system alumni was in development by the University of Minnesota Alumni Association (the system, the Maroon and Gold Network, launched in January).

*What We Learned:* Alumni continue to express interest in greater career development programs; staff need to develop alternative methods beyond an online network. The department worked to address this in 2017-18 by refocusing efforts on the UMD Mentor Program (scheduled to launch in fall 2018) and developing more events that foster networking (Coffee & Connections, Bulldogs Behind the Scenes, Twin Cities Networking Night, etc.).

**Objective 4:** Launch nationwide alumni event (“Bulldogs on the Block”).

*Assessment Strategy:* Event participation and survey results indicate interest from volunteers and attendees in repeat program.

*Action Steps:* Staff reached out to past volunteers and personal contacts to establish initial roster of Bulldogs on the Block (BOTB) hosts. Staff worked with each host to identify a location, venue, and time for their event. Staff sent targeted emails to geographic areas with information on the event in their area. Email blast went to all alumni after initial cities were identified; this email approach yielded even more hosts and created inroads with new volunteers. All hosts were mailed a spirit box including small prizes and decorations for their event. Hosts were encouraged to use social media to post photos from their events.

*Outcome:* Staff worked with 28 volunteers to host BOTB events in 22 cities around the country. Event attendance exceeded 100 total guests (exact attendance numbers were immeasurable due to lack of formal event registration process). Response to the event was nearly 100% positive from hosts and attendees. Nearly all volunteers expressed interest in hosting again in the future.

*What We Learned:* Staff intentionally did not create a formal RSVP process for this event outside of confirming the attendance of volunteer hosts. Staff determined an RSVP process could create a barrier to attending for some guests, and may also give hosts an unrealistic attendance expectations (alumni may register in advance, but fail to show up for the event). This system worked well for most hosts; however, some volunteers requested help with an RSVP process. Overall, staff

determined that alumni want to meet others. Mobilizing greater numbers to attend the regional events is a key objective for future BOTB events.

**Objective 5:** Implement new motto to communicate the purpose of Alumni Relations: *Connect, Create, Provide*.

*Assessment Strategy:* Redesigned website and newsletter reflect CCP motto; events are marketed as one or more of CCP.

*Action Steps:* Motto was incorporated into website, newsletter, and some print materials.

*Outcome:* The *Connect, Create, Provide* motto was used sporadically after the initial introduction in fall 2017. The introduction went as planned, but subsequent branding with the motto was less consistent than intended.

*What We Learned:* The new motto may be helpful in communicating what the department stands for. To make it work, the department needs a clearly defined set of expectations around how and when to use the motto. This strategy should be developed by Alumni Associate Visger (Communications), and shared with the team by Director Duffy.

**Objective 6:** Partner with Academic Affairs to develop a plan for more effectively communicating opportunities for collaboration to faculty. Implement the system.

*Assessment Strategy:* Increase in collaborative events and programs.

*Action Steps:* Following guidance from Vice Chancellor for Student Life and Dean of Students Dr. Lisa Erwin, Director Duffy determined the best approach for reaching this objective in 2017-18 was focusing effort on partnership with one college. As such, Director Duffy worked with Swenson College of Science & Engineering on a plan for collaboration in FY18 and FY19.

*Outcome:* Through meetings with Interim Dean Andrea Schokker, staff initiated plans to partner on a UMD Mentor Program coupling Swenson students with alumni and a 10-year reunion for the Civil Engineering Department (scheduled for October 12-13, 2018). Additionally, Alumni Relations staff were connected with faculty in Swenson for work on a video storytelling project that was used in an alumni e-newsletter.

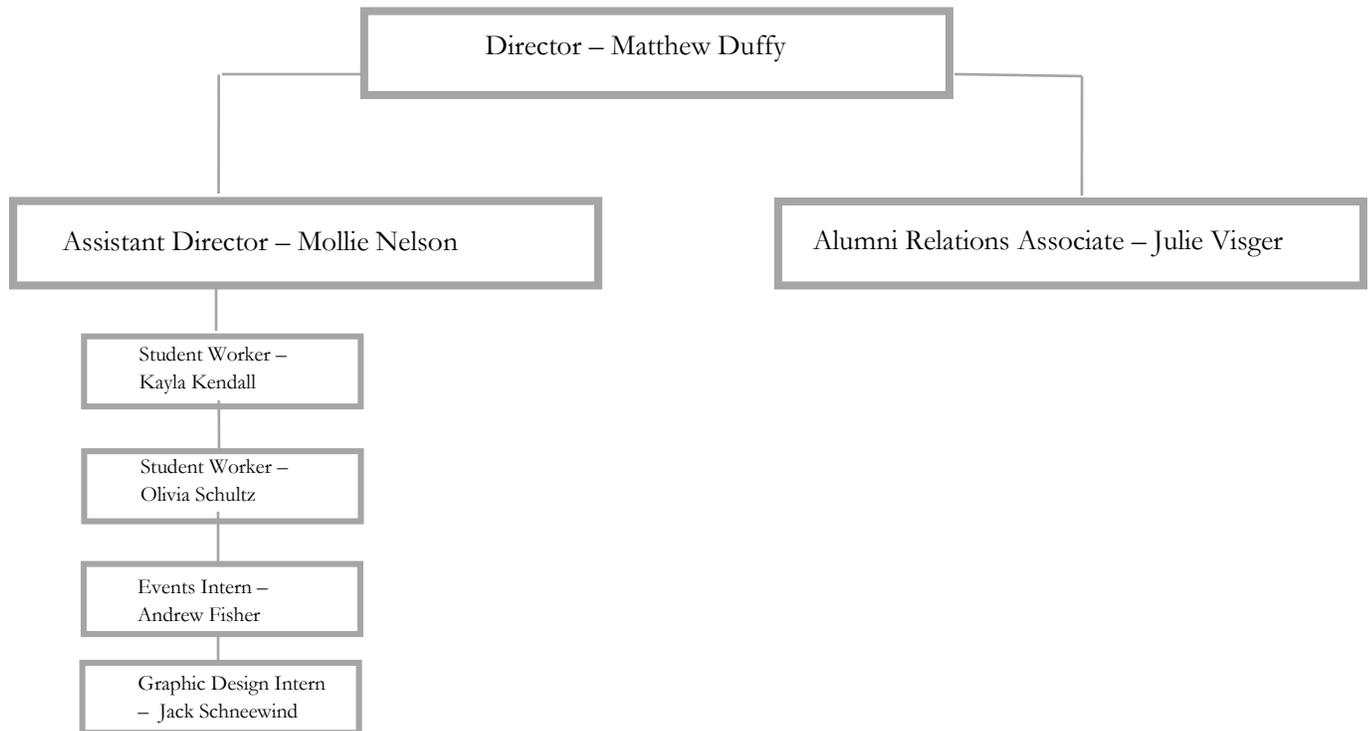
*What We Learned:* When staff from Alumni Relations are able to spend time with leadership, faculty, and staff from the colleges, common ground is readily identified and partnerships are pursued. In the future, it will be effective to streamline this approach by conducting regularly scheduled meetings between college representatives and Alumni Relations staff.

## V. Resources

### Staff

Alumni Relations added a new staff member, Julie Visger, shortly before the start of 2017-18, but otherwise experienced staff stability in 2017-18, resulting in enhanced programming.

#### Organization Chart



Thanks, in part, to Alumni Associate Visger’s prior experience with BOLD, her transition to the team was quick and her impact was immediate. New to the team in 2017-18 was the Graphic Design Intern role. The role proved valuable in helping staff create in-house graphics for events and volunteer programs during the fall semester. Beginning in 2018-19, Alumni Associate Visger will have supervisory responsibility for the Graphic Design Intern.

Assistant Director Nelson onboarded a new student worker, Olivia Schultz, and retained two other students in 2017-18 (Kayla Kendall and Andrew Fisher). Retention of student workers and interns provides tremendous value to the department due to its limited size. Assistant Director Nelson is credited with creating a valuable support system and learning environment for the students.

## Budget

Alumni Relations relied on six budgets and funds to accomplish the goals and tasks of the department in 2017-18:

- Personnel budget for staff salary and benefits.
- SE&E budget for operational expenses.
- Revenue budget for events and sponsorships.
- Apter Endowed Fund for costs associated with alumni events.
- UMD Alumni Scholarship Fund for awarding six student scholarships.
- UMD Homecoming Parade budget.

Summary of expenses and revenue:

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>2017-2018</b>	
<b>Prior Year Carry Forward</b>		
Fiscal Year End Carry Forward	40,837	
<b>Total Carry Forward</b>	<b>40,837</b>	
<b>Revenue</b>		
State O&M Appr Redistribution	230,790	
External Sales	12,462	
Gifts/Bequests	7,784	
<b>Total Carry Forward + Revenue</b>	<b>291,873</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>		
Payroll	159,840	
Fringe	50,945	
27th PD Accrual PR & Fringe	167	
General Oper Supplies and Services	22,864	
Telecommunications	268	
Travel	1,356	
Federal Non-Reimbursable	2,489	
Consulting and Professional Services	1,088	
Non-Capital Equipment	0	
Short Term Rents & Leases/Bldg/Fac	2,091	
Repairs and Maintenance	537	
Student Assistance	9,000	
Enterprise Assessment	2,780	
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>253,424</b>	
<b>Transfers</b>		

Transfers In		11,800	
Transfers Out		(231)	
<b>Total Transfers</b>		<b>11,569</b>	
<b>Ending Balance</b>		<b>50,017</b>	

ADDENDUM A

# BOLD LEADERSHIP MODEL

