

Wheaton College
Alumnae/i Board of Directors
New Member Primer

Composition of the Alumnae/i Association

As the governing and planning body of the Alumnae/i Association, the Alumnae/i Board of Directors (the “Board” or “ABD”) represents Wheaton’s more than 14,000 alumnae/i with their diverse experience, talents, time, and giving. These alumnae/i represent a vital and ever-renewable resource for the College. We recognize that any plan for the future of Wheaton must involve and engage alums. The Board is comprised of dedicated alumnae/i who volunteer their time to make sure the alumnae/i voice is heard at Wheaton.

The gateway back to campus post-graduation for all alumnae/i is through the Office of Alumnae/i Relations and Annual Giving (ARAG). ARAG supports the work of the ABD and the Alumnae/i Association as a whole.

Past Strategic Planning Methods

Over the years, the Alumnae/i Association and the College as a whole have developed and implemented several successful strategic plans. In the past, strategic planning focused on examining our current position as the basis for the future, which may mean building on an unsound foundation.

Our current strategic plan is focused instead on our vision for 2014. We have established a vision and are working towards this goal. This approach is the key difference between the current strategic plan and past plans.

A New, Vision-Based Strategic Planning Method

Since 2006, the Alumnae/i Board of Directors has been actively working on Strategic Planning that is part of the College’s overall Strategic Plan for 2014. The College enlisted the expertise of Alumna Trustee Lou Ann Daly ‘76 to guide the Alumnae/i Association in this process. First, Lou Ann taught the Board how to create a vision-based strategic plan that defines how we want the Association to operate in 2014. Each year the ABD develops outcomes and action steps to ensure that by 2014 we will have achieved the Vision. In addition, the Alumnae/i Board Directors works with its constituent groups (regional coordinators, Wheaton Fund volunteers, APAC volunteers, reunion and non-reunion chairs, LGBTA, recognition, and nominating committees) to develop yearly outcomes and action steps that will align the entire Alumnae/i Association with the College’s 2014 Vision.

Our current strategic planning process requires us to envision our destination and “keep our eyes on the prize” as we work toward it each year. We are focusing on data-driven, measurable goals, rather than ethereal ideas. This ensures tangible results that allow us to capitalize on what is working, and fix what is not.

Vision 2014

The cornerstone of the Alumnae/i Association's strategic plan is the Vision 2014 statement mentioned above, which declares:

The Wheaton College Alumnae/i Association inspires pride in and passion for a lifelong commitment to the College by motivating all alumnae and alumni to connect with Wheaton and with each other in innovative and diverse ways.

What does this mean? It means that the Association believes all alums have valuable information and experiences to share requiring their collective participation and support in making Wheaton an ever-more special place. We want to provide a wide range of opportunities for alums to become involved, stay involved, and communicate with the College and with each other. Not everyone cares to serve on a committee and the Association is committed to providing diverse volunteer opportunities through various mechanisms for participation. Some examples include: hosting an event, speaking with students, or helping design a webpage. As an Alumnae/i Association, we strive to ensure that even as we remain focused on the Vision, we also are innovative in our efforts to engage the diverse talents, gifts, and expertise of our alumnae/i.

The Vision Statement as a Benchmark Standard

Part of the strategic plan requires identifying where we want to be in 2014, and then making sure that all our programs, events, communications, and decisions point us in the direction of the Vision (so that nothing we do is extraneous). This is why having a broad, yet meaningful, vision statement is so important. The statement is being used as a benchmark for everything we're doing:

- Increasing our efficiency as an Alumnae/i Association
- Identifying and mining previously untapped resources to help us become a thriving organization
- Widening the circle of alums who are actively involved with the Association by looking at critical populations
- Measuring our progress and making mid-course corrections as needed

Critical Growth Populations

Wheaton recognizes that an active, involved, and giving Alumnae/i Association is key to its success in every regard. The Board is working hard through its strategic planning to reach out to critical populations to promote their continued, and increased, involvement within the Association and with the College. The Board compiled a list of more than 20 critical growth populations which were then prioritized for outreach. The Board chose to focus first on two critical populations whose increased participation has

the potential to make a great impact in a short time: young alumnae/i and former athletes. These populations were chosen because they include a significant number of alums, representing a wide range of class years, who have recent and/or demonstrable loyalty to the College, and who can be easily identified for data gathering purposes.

In order to better focus on engaging these alums, existing programs and methods have been restructured and new initiatives have been launched:

- The College Alumnae/i Association website has been remodeled allowing alumnae/i to both reconnect and professionally network.
- Young Alumnae & Alumni Leadership Receptions were held in Boston and New York City, hosted by members of the Board of Trustees and Alumnae/i Board of Directors. These events allowed us to identify and cultivate the next generation of alumnae/i leaders. A young alumnae/i resource guide, designed to provide specific examples of how young alums can connect with and support the college, was specifically developed for this event and met with considerable interest and success.
- The College hosted the program, Building Bridges: A Celebration of Wheaton Men of Color, in April of 2008. The program directly spoke to our efforts to both celebrate diversity and inclusive excellence and to reach this critical growth population of young alumnae/i.
- Small group discussions with a focus on annual giving and the College brand were held in Boston, New York, and Portland. We plan to use the feedback to better tailor our messages about involvement and philanthropic support
- Increased opportunities for networking in New York City and Boston have been developed. For example, a networking event focused on careers in the financial sector was hosted in Boston in April '09. An outcome of this event was establishing a finance email network to share news of other events or industry happenings.
- Partnerships with the Filene Center and the Lyons Athletic Club have been established. For example, for the last 2 years there have been Student/Alumnae/i Receptions during ALC/Homecoming Weekend to provide an opportunity for students to interact with alums around career issues.

Quantifiable Targets

To achieve Vision 2014, the ABD has developed quantifiable targets to assess whether our alumnae/i are giving back to the College in a shared spirit of appreciation and commitment.

These targets include:

- Increases in dollars and percentage of participation in the Wheaton Fund;

- Increases in time and volunteer service given to the Association;
- Increases in the diversity of people and services connecting alumnae/i with each other -- especially those alumnae/i identified as critical growth populations -- and with current students; and
- Increases in the pride in the College as measured by references to Wheaton in print or mass media by Wheaton graduates.

In order to measure changes in these specific target areas, the ABD has begun developing a baseline assessment for current levels of activity. We have studied and quantified the present levels of alumnae/i engagement with the College and alumnae/i giving to the Wheaton Fund. For example, we have learned that of the approximately 14,000 Wheaton alums, only about 5% are currently engaged with the College in a volunteer capacity. Similarly, annual participation in the Wheaton Fund hovers at only 30%.

Already we have designed an initiative to increase both participation and percentages within our targeted critical growth populations. One of our critical growth populations has been young alums because these are larger classes and therefore affect participation percentages greatly. There has been an initiative to encourage giving with challenges issued for 98% participation of the 2008 and 2009 senior classes. This, along with challenges issued for young alums participation rates, have helped to increase participation rates of this critical growth population.

Visibility

One of the ABD's challenges is getting the message of strategic planning to the alumnae/i community. To succeed, we need to continuously remind alums that everyone has something to contribute. By focusing on volunteer-initiated, outcome-driven methods of engagement, beginning with the various constituency or affinity groups (class officer teams, former Whims/Wheatones, Student Alumnae/i groups, former rugby players, LGBTA, etc.) we will generate a ripple effect which will spread to the entire Association.

Our Role as Board Members

As Alumnae/i Board members we are ambassadors for the current strategic plan and catalysts for alumnae/i engagement and development. We want to make it easy for alums to answer the question: Where do I fit and how do I support Wheaton? We encourage alums to get involved by running for positions on the Board or as class officers, joining APAC, participating in a regional club, starting a club, visiting the campus, networking with other alums, mentoring students, providing internship opportunities, making a gift to the Wheaton Fund, and much more. We facilitate and support Wheaton connections in every forum.