

From: Jennifer Dillavou, University of Illinois Alumni Association President and Associate Vice Chancellor for Alumni Relations

To: University of Illinois Board of Trustees

Date: February 26, 2020

Re: University of Illinois Alumni Association

As the Alumni Association begins a new decade in Urbana-Champaign, we find ourselves looking back over the recent past—celebrating our successes, thinking about the alumni we have met all over the world, and feeling fortunate to be associated with this world-class institution and all the opportunities it affords. Here at the Alumni Association, we finished the 2010s strong, with the launch of several projects and partnerships that have transformed and rejuvenated the organization.

First, something new: in 2020, we will begin providing the Illini family with access to PeopleGrove, an online networking and mentorship platform that will allow alumni and students to connect, explore career opportunities, and reinforce the (orange and blue) ties that bind us. We are very excited to offer this network as a way to strengthen and expand Illini connections around the globe.

In the fall of 2018, we opened the Richmond Family Welcome Gallery at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center. The Welcome Gallery serves as a showcase for the university's rich history, traditions, and global impact, featuring interactive exhibits about the university and personal stories of alumni, faculty and students from the past 150+ years. Since its opening, more than 80,000 visitors have experienced the Welcome Gallery's museum-quality exhibits. Many of these visitors are prospective students and their families; through the Alumni Association's partnership with the Office of Admissions and Records (OAR), the Alumni Center serves as home base for OAR's daily admissions programs and tours. Each year, the Alumni Center hosts approximately 435 OAR programs, in addition to approximately 150 additional events hosted by university offices and community groups.

Outside of the Alumni Center, the UIAA has built a strong on-campus presence. While we have always contributed to annual celebrations such as Homecoming and Commencement, in recent years we have taken our participation to a higher level by creating new traditions and strengthening our collaboration with the Division of Student Affairs. Our successful 2019 Homecoming Week celebration featured a variety of UIAA events, including a 5K race, a pancake breakfast and fountain-dyeing party, the annual Student Leader Luncheon, campus-wide office and Block I decorating contests, and an alumni awards gala, where we shined a light on seven Illini who have made major contributions in medicine, engineering, chemistry, education, politics, and a host of other fields.

Off-campus, we got to know even more alumni at more than 50 events in 2019, from Illini Club functions in New York City, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C., to the Redbox Bowl game in Santa Clara, CA. Our close relationship with the Division of Intercollegiate Athletics has helped us connect with more alumni than ever before, and this past fall, we hosted football pre-game parties at Michigan State and Minnesota, as well as basketball pre-game events at Maryland, Grand Canyon, and Arizona. On March 2, Director of Athletics Josh Whitman will speak by phone about his vision for the athletics programs and take questions as part of the Alumni Association's ongoing virtual town hall series. The series launched in December 2019 with a virtual town hall featuring President Killeen; almost 6,000 alumni from around the country dialed in to hear his update.

We have been proud to collaborate with our colleagues in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement on Illini Days, a traveling program that brings together alumni in cities across the country for a day of presentations, receptions and other events. At Illini Days Chicago last fall, the Alumni Association organized panels on women's leadership and Illinois athletics. Upcoming Illini Days programs feature our "Alumni College" program, a series of presentations by some of the U of I's most engaging and entertaining professors. On February 13, approximately 75 alumni in Naples, FL heard presentations on media during the Cold War, healthy eating and the gut microbiome, and interpersonal gift giving. On February 29, we will bring this program to Scottsdale, AZ and feature presentations on social media and in vivo and in vitro tissue generation.

In 2017, the UIAA was proud to welcome Executive Director Emeritus Lou Liay back to our staff. Lou has rebooted our Senior Illini program with great success, organizing on-campus lectures and tours and off-campus travel opportunities—from Mississippi River cruises to museum visits—for hundreds of seniors from our Illini family.

But Lou is not the only traveler on our staff. UIAA staff members have led dozens of alumni groups to popular travel destinations through our EXPLORERS program; each year, approximately 650 alumni and friends travel with the Alumni Association. Our 2019 trip destinations included Alaska, Iceland, the Egyptian pyramids, and Normandy for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day. In 2020, we will host 57 tours to locations including the Galapagos Islands, Ireland, the Arctic, and many other dream spots around the world.

*Illinois Alumni*, our flagship magazine publication, also helps the Alumni Association expand its impact. This past fall, the magazine received two Folio Eddie Awards, judged by senior editors at leading consumer, trade, and association publications. The Alumni Association also recently launched a digital edition of *Illinois Alumni*, which allows readers to view the magazine in both replica and mobile-friendly formats. Currently, the Alumni Association communications staff is building a library of back issues that readers can access at [www.illinoisalumnimagazine.org](http://www.illinoisalumnimagazine.org).

As we look forward to the year ahead, we are excited to continue to grow many of these initiatives, as well as to launch new ones. For example, this year we will recognize the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the admittance of women to the university. The first women students enrolled on this campus in the fall of 1870, and the UIAA will mark this sesquicentennial milestone through special exhibits, publications, and programming.

Finally, we are working with our campus partners to help develop a more cohesive brand that people throughout Illinois, the United States, and the world will recognize definitively as the U of I—a global symbol of excellence in higher education.

We are confident that the momentum we have built over the past few years will help us paint the world orange and blue in the years to come. We hope you and our 470,000+ other alumni will be an important part of that effort.