

TO: University of Illinois Board of Trustees

FROM: Jennifer Dillavou, President, University of Illinois Alumni Alliance & Associate Vice Chancellor for Alumni Relations, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

DATE: January 31, 2019

RE: University of Illinois Alumni Alliance

The previous year and a half has been a period of stabilization for the University of Illinois Alumni Alliance (UIAA or Alliance). Following the Alliance's reorganization in September 2017, the organization took on the mantle of providing System-level services to alumni, overseeing program and service areas including but not limited to alumni legislative advocacy, communications, affinity partnerships and programs, and management and maintenance of the Alice Campbell Alumni Center in Urbana. The reorganization provided an opportunity for the Alliance to refocus its efforts and strategy, and both staff and alumni volunteers are experiencing renewed senses of energy, purpose, and excitement.

Organizational Updates:

The University of Illinois Alumni Alliance Board of Directors last met on Thursday, September 13 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Their next meeting is scheduled for Friday, February 22 at the University of Illinois at Springfield. During this meeting, the Board of Directors will receive program area updates from Alliance staff, as well as reports from ex officio board members. The meeting agenda will focus heavily on strategic planning for the Alliance, as board leadership identifies strategic priorities and develops tactics that advance the interests of the University of Illinois System and its alumni. The board's next meeting, to be held on Thursday, May 9 and Friday, May 10 in conjunction with the Urbana-Champaign commencement activities, will see a heavy focus on the board's committee work, as the various committees convene to discuss and develop their strategic priorities in conjunction with the Alliance's overall goals. A highlight of the meetings for this academic year will be the travel component; the Board of Directors will have the opportunity to visit each of the three universities, allowing them to observe in person on-campus happenings and enabling each Director to deepen his or her connection with each of the respective institutions.

The board's strategic planning efforts have been underpinned by the work of Illinois Business Consulting (IBC). IBC is housed in the Gies College of Business and is the nation's largest professionally managed, student-run consulting organization. A team of IBC students worked with Alliance staff and board leadership throughout Fall 2018, seeking to answer the question, "Where do we take the Alliance next?" During their research, IBC surveyed students from each of the universities, as well as alumni from UIUC. They also conducted case studies of successful alumni relations programs from Illinois and across the nation. Their work culminated in an end-of-semester report to the Alliance's staff and board leadership; the report included recommendations for various services and programs the Alliance might offer, as well as an assessment of the student survey data. The report was both extensive and detailed, and recommendations included establishing career services and professional development offerings (including online networking and mentorship platforms), increasing the organization's social media presence, implementing a mobile application for alumni, and more. Over the course of the coming months, the Alliance will use IBC's reports and data to determine which recommendations might be adopted and to explore possible new directions for the organization.

In addition to kick-starting its strategic planning process, the Board of Directors has also worked to grow not only the Alliance board, but also the University of Illinois Board of Trustees. Following several weeks of research and exploration, the Nominating Committee recommended to Governor Pritzker a slate of individuals for consideration as Board of Trustees nominees. Simultaneously, the Nominating Committee sought recommendations for its own board; the committee will now begin to consider and prepare a slate of proposed new members for election this spring.

Program Area Updates:

The Alliance currently oversees System-level alumni programs and services, including affinity programs, communications, legislative advocacy, and management of the Alice Campbell Alumni Center, including the newly opened Richmond Family Welcome Gallery.

Affinity Programs

The Alliance's affinity partnerships continue to thrive. The partnership between the UIAA and the University of Illinois Community Credit Union saw a total of 14,606 credit cards in circulation as of September; the Alliance is awaiting the credit union's report from the most recent fiscal quarter. Compensable transactions showed a year-over-year increase between July-September, rising by 1.63%, and the program generated \$174,986 in revenue for the UIAA during the same time period. In addition to this revenue, the Alliance's agreement with Mercer and Liberty Mutual Insurance includes a fixed royalty amount for 2018-19 of \$550,000. Finally, the EXPLORERS travel program has booked 736 travelers to date for FY2019, compared to a total of 649 travelers in FY2018. FY2019 bookings to date are expected to bring roughly \$194,000 in commission, an increase from FY2018's expected commission of \$190,000.

Communications

Production of the three university-specific print magazines continues, and the Alliance has also begun the process of introducing a digital magazine platform. In September, in response to a Request for Proposals, the Alliance received several bids from digital publishers to provide mobile-friendly, digital versions of the university magazines. After analyzing each proposal, the Alliance entered a three-year partnership with GTxcel, a leader in the digital publishing field; GTxcel will be responsible for producing digital versions of the Alliance's magazine publications. In December, Alliance staff met with GTExcel representatives to determine next steps in the digital magazine production plan and also developed plans with each of the universities to determine when they might launch their first digital magazines. UIUC plans to release a digital version of the current Winter 2018 *Illinois Alumni* and to release a digital back issue from Fall 2018, UIC will release their first digital issue in Spring 2019, and UIS plans to launch a digital version of the current Winter 2019 issue of *UIS Today*.

In December, the Alliance mailed more than 52,000 print copies of the Winter 2018 *Illinois Alumni*. Content for the Spring 2019 issue is in production, and the magazine will go to print in February. At UIC, Alliance and university staff planned editorial content for the Spring 2019 issue of *UIC Magazine*, which is scheduled for publication in April. At UIS, Alliance and university staff are working on the Spring and Summer 2019 issues of *UIS Today*; content for Spring 2019 is currently in production, and assignments for Summer 2019 are being made. The Spring 2019 issue will be sent to print in February.

Legislative Advocacy

Illinois Connection, the Alliance's legislative advocacy program, is growing. Illinois Connection staff and the chair of the board's Legislative Advocacy Committee are currently conducting meetings with each of the Illinois General Assembly's 52 new members. These meetings began in November and will conclude

in March, and they allow Illinois Connection to establish an early relationship with each new legislator. They also offer Illinois Connection an opportunity to provide legislators with information about University of Illinois connections within their respective districts and to share the university's legislative agenda for the year. When possible, representatives from the Office of Governmental Relations also attend the meetings.

Illinois Connection has planned small-scale Lobby Days in Springfield. These programs are designed to provide frequent opportunities for individuals or small groups of advocates to engage with their legislators on behalf of the University of Illinois. Lobby Days are planned from February to May and will be scheduled based on the availability of various University of Illinois stakeholders and advocates, including alumni, current students, faculty, and staff. Additionally, Illinois Connection has scheduled the University of Illinois Day at the Capitol for April 3. This large-scale event will provide an opportunity for alumni, current students, university faculty and staff, and other advocates to gather en masse in Springfield to meet with elected officials and discuss the importance of supporting higher education and the University of Illinois.

To aid in its legislative advocacy efforts, Illinois Connection has updated its advocacy software, replacing outdated programs with new platforms that will provide Illinois Connection with new and enhanced avenues to communicate with advocates. First, Phone2Action will expand communication opportunities for alumni advocates to engage their legislators through email, phone, Facebook, or Twitter. Additionally, RAP Index will aid with "grasstops" efforts by providing a forum through which alumni advocates can self-identify their relationships with elected officials. Perhaps most importantly, these new platforms will make it simpler for alumni and friends to enlist as Illinois Connection advocates; sign-ups can be done via text message and other digital means.

Alice Campbell Alumni Center and the Richmond Family Welcome Gallery

The Alliance hosted the Richmond Family Welcome Gallery's grand opening during UIUC's October Homecoming celebration. Since the welcome gallery has opened, over 13,000 visitors have enjoyed the space's exhibits, artifacts, and other amenities. The current exhibits highlight dozens of topics and cover decades of history, and visitors to the space are able to deepen their connection to the University of Illinois by learning more about the accomplishments and experiences of this institution's alumni, students, faculty, and staff.

Many of the welcome gallery's visitors are attendees of events held at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center, which hosts approximately 150 events per year. In addition to these events, the Alliance has also partnered with UIUC's Office of Admissions to host the Daily Visit program for prospective students and their families. As part of the program, these guests gather in the alumni center's ballroom to hear a brief presentation about the University of Illinois before departing for a tour of the Main Quad and a residence hall. Hosting these programs at the alumni center allows the program participants to have a "full circle" experience: as soon as they arrive as prospective students, they are immediately connected with the alumni experience and begin to gain an appreciation of all the University of Illinois can offer.

Conclusion:

2018 was an exciting year for the University of Illinois Alumni Alliance, and 2019 is shaping up to follow a similar path. As the organization continues to focus its strategic priorities and explore opportunities for growth and success, the Alliance hopes to find new ways to support University of Illinois alumni and enhance their connections with their alma mater. The Board of Directors and staff remain focused and

committed to serving, connecting, and celebrating the University of Illinois's diverse and accomplished alumni base.