



**University of West Georgia Alumni Association**

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2020, 10 a.m.

UWG Biology Building, Room #114

**Members Present:** Steve Anthony, Ashlyn Arp, Ashley Bush, Philip Cochran, Abbie Collie, Michael Davis, Nancy Frank, Greg Goodlett, Amy Goolsby, Melanie Hildebrandt, Danielle Jenkins, Wanda Johnson, Jason Kennedy, Alison Key, Lisa King, Michael McDowell, Wanda McGukin, Brad Mock, Artagus Newell, Donnie Newsom, Brian Nichols, Terie Phillips, Judy Rowell, Christopher Sanders, Peggy Smith, Rob Sparks, Tracey Thompson, Troy Vollenweider, Donald Walker, Dexter Williams, Robert York

**Members Absent:** Joy Butler, Laura Garland, Gere Helton (life member), Edna Huey (life member), Warren Jones (life member), Melanie Lambert, Semeka Samuels, Barbara Tanner (life member), Joy White (life member)

**Past Presidents/Chairpersons Present:** Jason Thogmartin

**Staff/Others Present:** Jami Bower, Interim Vice President of Advancement, Jennifer Jordan, Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management, Xavier Whitaker, Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management, Allyson Bretch, Lauren Ledbetter, Denice Perdue

- I. **Call to Order and Welcome** at 10:15 a.m. by Brad Mock as a proxy for Board Chairperson Melanie Hildebrandt who was present but ill and unable to talk at length.
- II. **Group Photo** was taken at 10:00 a.m. prior to the start of the meeting.
- III. **Transition and Staff Introductions** Jami Bower introduced Lauren Ledbetter as the new Assistant Director of Strategic Communications in Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, Melissa Cox as the new Director of Development for the College of Science and Mathematics and the Tanner Health System School of Nursing, and Allyson Bretch as the Interim Executive Director of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving. She also announced that Molly Crum, Athletics Annual Giving Coordinator, will be leaving UWG for a position at IronMan in Tampa, Florida.
- IV. **Approval of Minutes**, Secretary Wanda McGukin. No changes or corrections noted. Motion by Christopher Sanders, second by Brian Nichols to accept the November 2,

2019 meeting minutes as submitted (Motion carried).

## V. **Staff and Officer Reports**

**University Update** (Jami Bower) - Interim President Dr. Stuart Rayfield could not be at the meeting because she was attending Leadership Georgia. New president Dr. Brendan Kelly will start April 1. Once settled, we will get a date on his calendar to meet with the Alumni Board. Dr. Kelly is a visionary and community connector, and Jami thinks he will come in with a vision and will work quickly. He has a positive energy and is very student-centric. At his current institution, he and his wife, Tressa, have a dog named Lucy and walk around campus as a chance to meet with students.

Budget Update - Leadership is continuing to meet and will present a budget to the Board of Regents (BOR) in March, and we will get our state allocation in April. All BOR institutions are in a critical hiring process. UWG leadership meets weekly to look at every new position to make sure it is relevant and necessary before rehiring; looking to be as efficient as possible. Enrollment management will present on recruitment efforts.

Our co-ed cheerleading squad took home 7th consecutive national championship (25th national title for the team).

U.S. News and World Report ranked UWG online programs among the best; online master's in nursing (#31), online master's of business administration (#62), among others.

The women's basketball team is doing well (record: 13-7).

**Enrollment Update** (Dr. Jennifer Jordan, Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management and Dr. Xavier Whitaker, Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management) - There was a decline in enrollments for Fall 2019. We are 1 of 15 (out of 26) institutions in the University System of Georgia that had a total enrollment decline. There was an increase in graduate students and other enrollment sectors, but not enough to make up for the decline in undergraduate student enrollment. Out of state schools are recruiting Georgia's best students and setting up satellite campuses in Atlanta.

New recruiting strategies - revamped marketing materials to stay relevant; more recruiters going into high schools in fall and spring with a particular focus on high schools where enrollments had declined most; focusing on transfer students in Alabama and Tennessee coming out of 2-year schools; creating concierge model for transfer students - showing them the path to graduation and what jobs are available after; more focus on campus visits / decision days (come on campus, take tour and know by the end of the tour if you are admitted).

A question was posed about allowing students from surrounding states to get in-state tuition like at Valdosta State University. Dr. Xavier noted they are considering this but that has to be approved by the BOR. Since allowing Alabama students to get in-state tuition, the number of students from that state have doubled.

A question was asked about adding new programs to attract more students. Dr. Jordan shared that Academic Affairs is considering 3 new cutting-edge programs in the areas of engineering technology and computer science.

Big takeaways from Dr. Whitaker: It is a competitive time in higher education in Georgia; the Board and alumni matter. He encouraged everyone to make connections with family and friends and tell the good story at UWG and encourage prospective students to take a campus tour as they increase the likelihood a student will enroll by 10%.

**Alumni Survey Data Review** (Jami Bower) - A survey was conducted in Fall 2019 to collect feedback from UWG alumni, friends, and supporters to measure communication and engagement levels. The survey was deployed to a list of 22,427 valid email addresses, and 1,461 alumni, friends, and supporters participated in the survey. Respondents were majority female (60%), ranged in ages with low participation among those under 35 (28%), and majority from Georgia (84%).

Connection to UWG: Most viewed the UWG student experience as positive and the value associated with UWG degree was high. Alumni are proud of their status - great programs and faculty get much of the credit. Net Promoter Score (NPS), the propensity to positively promote UWG, is 42. Average scores for higher education are 20-40.

Alumni Communications: Most alumni feel UWG communicates well, and the majority feel UWG communicates just the right amount, but 22% feel they are hearing from UWG too much. Alumni prefer to be communicated by email (75%) and have an interest in social media (44%). The website and digital eNewsletter are also important. Alumni are most interested in hearing about overall university growth, academic success stories, events at UWG, fellow alumni stories, and are least interested in current student stories. The NPS based on communications received is 18.

Alumni Engagement: Alumni could feel more connected; only 27% identify as being a member of the Alumni Association; only 18% are currently participating in alumni events. Those who do not attend state they do not have the time or do not live in the area. Events that alumni would consider attending are off-campus events in their communities, professional/networking events, mentoring, volunteering, social mixers. Successful events to continue include reading the eNewsletter and printed newsletter, athletic events, on-campus events, donating, Homecoming, and football games/tailgates.

Staff addressed questions about communicating with new graduates about their automatic membership in the Alumni Association. New graduates will receive a “welcome” email within 1 month of graduation with a request to update their contact information. There was a discussion about whether or not we should charge a small fee for admission to the Association to add value or provide graduates a small gift at graduation indicating their membership. There have been previous discussions around this topic including research about what other universities do for their new graduates that can be found in previous meeting minutes.

Next steps: Staff will develop a plan to address the survey responses and determine how to communicate more strategically with alumni and will present at the next meeting.

**Chair’s Report** (Melanie Hildebrandt) - Melanie shared that the Board’s Executive Committee met with Dr. Kelly when he visited campus in January. He shared a very encouraging and positive message. Building a community and staying relevant were the key takeaways from their meeting. She shared the best thing to do as Board members is to stay positive, take opportunities to debunk myths about the University, and spread the good word about UWG. Reminded members that we are not having Alumni Weekend this year, but instead are focused on making Alumni Awards a signature event. She requested that all members attend the event on April 4. Reminder that the Alumni Relations staff is in a transition, but they are doing great work. Finally, she asked that everyone review their contact information and send any updates to Allyson or Lauren.

**Treasurer’s Report** (Phillip Cochran) - Presented three financial reports with balances as of December 31, 2019. Operating budget - balance of \$58,037; Alumni Association Endowment - balance of \$94,810; Alumni Legacy Scholarship Endowment - balance of \$38,725. Reported that giving by Board members as of January 7, 2020 was at 51% and encouraged everyone to make a gift today. Those that are behind in donations will get a friendly reminder from staff. Giving to any area at the University counts towards participation percentages. Gifts are counted on a fiscal year basis (July 1 - June 30). Check with staff or Phillip if you think you have given this fiscal year and want to confirm you are on the list. Staff is preparing a budget from the last 3 years and will consult with EC and present to whole Board at a future meeting.

**Executive Director’s Report** (Allyson Bretch) - 32 days in interim role. Excited to grow engagement which gives more value to UWG degrees. Pointed out the new Alumni Board Identifier that was used on all meeting materials and signage. Staff will send in email for Board members to use in emails and Board materials. Allyson is meeting with each Board member to collect thoughts, suggestions, comments and is making a list and prioritizing those projects. A list of dates to save is in your meeting packet. The new

folder cover sheet has all Board meeting dates through 2021. Adding a St. Patrick's Day mixer on March 19 in the Alumni House from 6-7:30 as a social time to get to know each other. Reminder to fill out the survey provided in the meeting packet. If you need a polo, fill out order sheet or email Allyson. If your nameplate is incorrect, let us know.

## VI. **Committee Reports**

**Alumni Awards** (Tracey Thompson) - Committee met this week to select Alumni Award winners. The Alumni Awards Ceremony will be on April 4. Committee is working to improve and streamline the selection process. Thriving Under 30 nominations close on April 30. Committee will meet June 2 to make selections. Thriving Under 30 event scheduled for Saturday, September 12. A point was made that the date might be a conflict with a night football game. Staff will confirm and reschedule if necessary.

**Alumni Engagement** (Michael Davis) - Scholarship Day is February 17, President's Day. If you signed up to volunteer, you will receive an email from Mason. Would like Board members to get more involved in Graduation - Final Toast is on April 7 and Spring Graduation is May 7. Alumni Association is inviting all new graduates to the Alumni House on graduation from 10 am - 4 pm to welcome them to the Association. Asking Board members to attend. Marketing idea - have video of Chair to promote event and welcome people to the Alumni Association. Committee would like to send alumni newsletters from the Alumni Association with stories about the Board members. Committee will promote buying bricks at graduation events. Mentoring Program - Brad championed the pilot program but there were snags. Committee is working to launch pilot program #2. Allyson is reaching out to deans to get 3-4 juniors and seniors from each college to participate. Board members - if you are willing to mentor, sign up with Michael and indicate any college preferences. The committee will develop more resources for mentors to help you facilitate the relationship with your student.

**Board Development** (Steve Anthony) - Committee is working on timeline and process for board applications. People who don't get selected will be notified with ways to get involved. Committee has received 34 applications for the Board and will meet February 24 to pick a slate of new members to be voted on in May. Can have up to 48 members including life members. Will determine in February 24 meeting how many to add to the board. New terms will begin July 1.

VII. **Old Business** - No old business to discuss.

VIII. **New Business** - A question was posed about getting the Alumni Board more involved in Homecoming to address continuity/logistic issues that may be barriers to alumni participation (i.e., the events are spread out over multiple days rather than condensed into Friday evening and Saturday). Staff relayed that plans for 2020 Homecoming were set but this could be a discussion for the 2021 Homecoming. It was suggested that a

member of the Alumni Board sit on the Homecoming committee. It was also suggested to invite the chair of the committee to present at a Board meeting.

Dr. Pauline Gagnon, Dean of the College of Arts & Humanities and Interim Dean of the College of Science & Mathematics welcomed the group to the Biology Building and introduced Dr. Gregory Payne, the Chair of the Biology Department who led the tour of the building after the meeting was adjourned.

IX. **Adjourn** - The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Submitted by Lauren Ledbetter