

SOUTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

**ALUMNI SELF-STUDY COMMISSION  
STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

AS PRESENTED TO AND ENDORSED BY THE EXECUTIVE  
COMMITTEE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
JANUARY 25, 2002

ACCEPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES  
APRIL 19, 2002

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Alumni Self-Study Commission (“Commission”) presents its recommendations (“Recommendations”) to the Board of Trustees for an alumni strategic plan intended to complement *The Strategic Plan for 2010* (“Plan”). The Alumni Association Board of Directors (“Alumni Board”) first conceived of an alumni strategic plan in April 2000, based principally on the recognition that alumni were not prominent in the Plan. Alumni intend to play a significant role in Southwestern University achieving its lofty aspirations as envisioned by the Plan. The Alumni Board met in October 2000, and heard Rick McKelvey, Vice President for Institutional Advancement, give an overview of an alumni strategic planning process implemented at Emory University. McKelvey asked the Alumni Board to consider a similar planning process for Southwestern’s Alumni Association.

The Alumni Board met on February 9, 2001, and formally requested that President Jake Schrum appoint a Self-Study Commission. A Commission roster is included in Attachment A. He appointed a 15-member Commission which convened in September 2001. President Schrum charged the Commission with reviewing alumni programs, identifying all facets of Southwestern’s relationship with its alumni, finding and visiting “best practice” alumni programs, inviting leaders in the field to visit campus and critique our program, and developing and presenting a strategic plan for alumni programming.

The Commission met during the fall, eventually dividing into task forces focused on Leadership, Financial Support, Programming and Communications. A number of “best practices” alumni programs at national liberal arts institutions were identified and studied, and three such programs were visited. Eustace Theodore, a nationally recognized consultant on alumni programs, was invited to campus to critique Southwestern’s program and offer his insights and suggestions. The Commission met in early December and finalized its Recommendations. A more detailed statement on the background leading to the formation of the Commission, the situation confronting it, its target, and the process used in arriving at these Recommendations also is included in Attachment A.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **A. LEADERSHIP AND FACILITIES**

1. There are not enough ways for alumni to be engaged meaningfully as leaders in the current governance structure. A new governance structure,

- perhaps an Alumni Assembly (“Assembly”), should be established to involve more alumni. Members of the Alumni Board should be merged into the Assembly, whose core purpose should be focused on alumni relations and programming and not on development or the annual fund.
2. The Assembly should have an Executive Committee whose members have specific areas of responsibility such as Programming, Development, Class Structure or System, Local Alumni Clubs, Nominations, Campus Connectivity, Communications, and Greek Life.
  3. The Alumni Board currently serves in an advisory role, primarily to the Alumni Relations Staff. The Executive Committee should have a more meaningful role. It should work with the Board of Trustees to develop stronger links between alumni and the Trustees and to participate meaningfully in matters impacting Alumni Relations. Examples include participation in budgeting, on search committees, and in the selection of alumni members on the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee should make use of Task Forces appointed from the Assembly and the broader alumni base to work on specific programming or problematic issues.
  4. A formal orientation and training program should be established for new members of the Assembly. New members of the Executive Committee should participate in an orientation to be conducted in conjunction with orientation for new members of the Board of Trustees.
  5. Alumni need a dedicated facility as their “front door” to campus. Alumni Relations staff should be located in the facility. The current offices of the Alumni Relations staff are inadequate, not easily accessible and unappealing. As an interim solution, Southwestern should consider realistic and cost effective options for relocating or refurbishing existing staff facilities.
  6. An Associate Vice President for Alumni Relations position should be established within Institutional Advancement and staff working in Alumni Relations should be focused solely on the alumni constituency and not responsible for parent relations.
  7. Increases in staff and funding will be required to implement these Recommendations effectively, including consideration of an endowment for alumni programming.

## **B. FINANCIAL INVESTMENT IN ALUMNI PROGRAMMING AND STAFFING**

The Commission reviewed the alumni programs of three national liberal arts institutions considered to be among the best in the country—Washington & Lee University, Amherst College and Smith College.

Annual programmatic (non-staff) budgets are Washington & Lee, \$400,000; Amherst, \$625,000; and Smith, \$1,250,000. By way of comparison, Southwestern's annual programmatic budget for Alumni and Parent Relations is \$75,000. Staffing levels are Washington & Lee, 8; Amherst, 20; and Smith, 12. By way of comparison, Southwestern has two-and-a-half staff positions for Alumni and Parent Relations. Attachment B provides a more detailed comparison of Southwestern to these "best practices" institutions. The development of Southwestern's alumni program and alumni participation have not kept pace with its emergence as a national liberal arts college. Southwestern must increase annual program funding and Alumni Relations staff in order to build an outstanding alumni program.

1. In the short term, Southwestern should carefully consider the allocation of financial resources used to support alumni programs and commit to a fiscally responsible but significant increase in funding for alumni programming and staffing over a five-year period. There are many demands upon Southwestern's annual operating budget, but adequate funding for alumni programs and staff is essential to improving the program. Implicit in this recommendation is the understanding that Southwestern will determine that the additional programs are reasonably likely to improve alumni involvement and support. As an interim measure, Southwestern might consider funding some of these Recommendations through the budget for the anticipated capital campaign. This would allow for evaluation of the effectiveness of the programs without burdening the annual operating budget. Programs that are effective would be included in subsequent annual operating budgets and those that are not would be discontinued.
2. In the long term, the current alumni volunteer structure should be reorganized to encourage greater alumni participation in either development / annual fund or the other alumni programs outlined in these Recommendations. An Annual Fund Giving Board should be created to cooperate with, but act independently from, the Alumni Board or the Assembly and Executive Committee called for in these Recommendations. The Annual Fund Giving Board would be responsible for developing new and effective programs to increase the success of the annual fund and alumni participation in it.

3. The anticipated long-range capital campaign should include goals and objectives related to the support of alumni programs.

### **C. PROGRAMMING**

1. Alumni programming should be developed in support of Southwestern's core value of promoting lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth, and be present in all aspects of Southwestern's interaction with alumni.
2. A plan should be developed within five years to involve alumni in mentoring students.
3. Programs should be developed to integrate faculty into alumni activities. Examples are faculty-led trips and a faculty speakers' bureau, which would make presentations to alumni groups.
4. Improve and enhance Homecoming and reunion programs. They should be evaluated and an increase in the frequency of reunions to every five years considered.
5. Programs should be developed to leverage relationships with campus affinity groups. Examples include the Greek organizations, choir, sports teams, and religion majors now in the ministry.
6. A plan should be developed to enhance alumni relationships by geographic location and class year. Chapters or clubs should be established in Texas and across the country where significant clusters of alumni reside. The development of chapters or clubs in other states should be coordinated with the *Named Scholars Program* outlined in the Plan in order to support the recruitment of students into that program.
7. An alumni class year system or structure should be established. It would include programming for students to facilitate student / alumni connectivity for each year of the student experience. It would also include more significant alumni participation in traditions such as matriculation and graduation.
8. A plan to enhance the transition from student to alumnus/a should be developed so that students are encouraged to become active alumni upon graduation.

## D. COMMUNICATIONS

1. The alumni on-line community should be enhanced. An on-line alumni discussion group, similar to *My SU* for students, should be investigated and developed in order to foster greater alumni connectivity. Although targeted at alumni, this discussion group should be open to students, faculty and other Southwestern constituents in furtherance of Southwestern's Core Values of fostering diverse perspectives and encouraging activism.
2. Information on the alumni Web page should be updated frequently to aid in maintaining connectivity. Visitors to the alumni Web site are less likely to return and participate in this aspect of alumni communications and programming if the information is outdated.
3. The existing on-line historical alumni directory should be expanded and publicized to enhance alumni connectivity and traditions.
4. Alumni should have greater access to student publications such as the *Megaphone* and *Southwestern Magazine*. Posting the *Megaphone*, or portions of it, and the *Southwestern Magazine* on the Web would foster greater alumni awareness of the current student experience and campus events. In addition, there should be an opportunity for alumni feedback to these publications to encourage communication between alumni and students.
5. Southwestern does not currently have adequate resources dedicated to meaningful on-line connectivity with alumni and should consider outsourcing the development, expansion, and maintenance of the alumni on-line community.
6. A Communications Advisory Group ("Advisory Group") composed of alumni, students, and other constituencies should be established. It would have a representative on the Executive Committee discussed in the Leadership and Facilities Recommendations. The purpose of the Advisory Group would be to foster alumni feedback, advise staff on an on-going basis concerning communications with alumni, students, faculty, and other constituencies, and provide support and encouragement to "grass roots" alumni communications efforts such as the 50+ Society newsletter.

The Advisory Group would develop a program to obtain alumni feedback on an on-going basis, guide the development of alumni programs, better understand our alumni base, and target communication resources.

The Advisory Group should investigate the possibility of appropriate advertising to supplement and expand the publications and communications budget.

## CONCLUSION

The focus of *The Strategic Plan for 2010*—as it must be—is on the student experience at Southwestern. Alumni, however, are uniquely positioned to enable Southwestern to meet its strategic goal of actualizing its core values at personal, institutional and “extended (University) community” levels by 2010. The Alumni Self-Study Commission is appreciative of the opportunity to address the needs and strategies for inclusion of alumni in the Plan. It is anticipated that alumni prominence in the Plan will result in the elevation of levels of: alumni engagement; integrative relationships between and among students, faculty, staff, alumni; and institutional support through alumni stewardship.

Southwestern’s core values include the promotion of lifelong learning. Alumni promote lifelong learning and a passion for intellectual and personal growth in their daily lives. These Recommendations include opportunities for Southwestern to enhance and showcase this lifelong learning. Fostering diverse perspectives is another core value. Southwestern’s alumni are a geographically, ethnically, culturally, and generationally diverse group of 12,000 people. These Recommendations tap that diversity by expanding alumni programming and involvement. Encouraging activism in pursuit of justice and the common good is a third core value. Alumni practice activism in pursuit of justice and the common good as leaders in their communities and professions and through their involvement with and support of Southwestern. These Recommendations provide a framework for the expression of this leadership and activism.

Overall, these Recommendations are aligned with Southwestern’s core purpose of “*Fostering a liberal arts community whose values and actions encourage contributions toward the well-being of humanity.*” They are intended to provide a strategic framework for alumni programming through 2010 and should be seen as a work in progress. The Alumni Self-Study Commission solicits the input, guidance and support of the Board of Trustees for these Recommendations and their implementation.

# **ATTACHMENT A**

## **BACKGROUND, SITUATION, TARGET, AND PROCESS**

### **A. BACKGROUND**

The Alumni Board convened April 1-2, 2000, for a regularly scheduled meeting. Dr. James Hunt presented a then current draft of the Plan. The Alumni Board discussed the Plan in detail and noted that alumni were not prominent in it. The Alumni Board decided to embark on the development of an Alumni Association Strategic Plan for 2010 to complement the Plan.

The Alumni Board met on July 8, 2000, to begin discussing a framework for a strategic plan. Rick McKelvey and Georgianne Hewett subsequently joined Southwestern's staff, McKelvey as Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Hewett as Director of Alumni and Parent Relations. The Alumni Board met on October 29, 2000, and heard a presentation by McKelvey concerning the strategic planning process implemented by alumni while McKelvey and President Jake Schrum were at Emory University. McKelvey asked the Alumni Board to consider adopting a similar self-study process to address the Alumni Board's strategic planning goal. The Alumni Board met on February 4, 2001, and requested that President Schrum appoint a Commission of alumni to conduct the self-study. A 15-member Commission was appointed in July-August, 2001. The Commission included 14 alumni and Richard Anderson, Southwestern's Vice President for Fiscal Affairs. Larry Haynes, '72, a member of the Board of Trustees, was appointed chair.

### **B. SITUATION**

Southwestern has emerged over the last 20 years from a top regional liberal arts college in the Southwest to a national liberal arts institution. Southwestern alumni stepped up in greater numbers to provide leadership for their alma mater during that period. Twenty years ago, 27% of the Board of Trustees were alumni compared to 63% today. Only 21.85% of alumni contributed to the Annual Fund in 1981. Today, more than 30% make annual gifts. Alumni involvement in Southwestern continues to grow. Approximately a thousand alumni attended the inauguration of Jake Schrum, only the third alumnus to serve as president.

President Schrum is committed to maintaining the momentum that has propelled Southwestern over the past 20 years. He appointed the Commission at the recommendation of the Alumni Board because he believes that the loyalty and commitment of alumni is critical to Southwestern's success. President

Schrum insists that alumni, if involved and engaged, have the potential to be Southwestern's greatest resource.

Leaders within the Alumni Board, alumni Trustees, and Alumni Relations staff echo President Schrum's sentiment. There is a sense of unrealized potential in the alumni constituency and a strong desire among alumni to be connected to Southwestern. However, ways in which to do so are not always evident. Meaningful and significant ways for alumni to engage in the life of Southwestern must be provided to tap into the affection that alumni have for their alma mater.

### **C. TARGET**

Engaging alumni in the life of Southwestern in meaningful and significant ways means alumni must feel enriched by the time and energy they expend on Southwestern. The keys to an enriching experience are:

1. Connectivity – Alumni impacting the student and alumni experience.
2. Life-long learning – Southwestern impacting the alumni experience.
3. Realizing potential – Recognizing and utilizing alumni resources.

### **D. PROCESS**

The Commission held five meetings between September 7, 2001, and December 8, 2001—three on campus and one each in Houston and Dallas. Two of the campus meetings were held in conjunction with the Distinguished Alumna Award and Homecoming. The Commission met with the Alumni Board at Homecoming and received their input.

The Commission heard from President Schrum, Dr. James Hunt, Sherra Babcock, Dr. Ronald L. Swain, and other senior staff members. The Commission heard presentations concerning all aspects of the Alumni Relations program and met with members of Student Foundation. McKelvey and Hewett attended all Commission meetings and were often joined by Cindy Davies, Associate Vice President of University Relations, and Kent Huntsman, Associate Vice President for Development. Commission members were introduced to and met with local alumni at the Metro Events conducted by President Schrum in Houston, Dallas, Austin, San Antonio and Fort Worth.

The Commission, working in conjunction with staff, identified model alumni programs at national liberal arts institutions cited as "best practice" programs by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education ("CASE"). The "best practices" programs were interviewed by phone and publicly available information about them was reviewed. Some members of the Commission as well as staff conducted site visits to Washington & Lee University, Amherst

College, and Smith College. At the Commission's request, President Schrum invited Eustace Theodore, former Yale Alumni Association Director and past president of CASE, to conduct a site visit to Southwestern and critique our alumni program for Commission members.

The Commission divided into four task forces at the midway point of the process to focus on Leadership, Financial Support, Programming and Communications. These task forces met formally, via conference call, and by e-mail. Commission members have invested hundreds of hours of their time in the planning process. It culminated in the December 8 meeting in Dallas at which Commission members agreed on the Recommendations to be presented to the Board of Trustees. Subsequent to December 8, this formal report was drafted and has since been reviewed and approved by the Commission, the Institutional Advancement staff, and the Executive Committee of the Alumni Association Board of Directors.

## **COMMISSION ROSTER**

Larry Haynes, '72, Dallas, Chair

<b>NAME</b>	<b>CLASS YEAR</b>	<b>CITY, STATE</b>
Richard Anderson	N/A	Georgetown, TX
Gail Beard	'72	Missouri City, TX
Lee Christie	'84	Fort Worth, TX
Scott Clearman	'85	Houston, TX
Sandra Romero de Thompson	'90	Georgetown, TX
Ned Dismukes	'74	Tulsa, OK
Bob Dupuy	'69	Dallas, TX
Mike Lade	'88	Houston, TX
Cullen Clark Lutz	'92	Amarillo, TX
John Ozmun	'67	Coppell, TX
Jack Phelps	'71	Georgetown, TX
Jamye Pressly	'55	San Antonio, TX
David Simmons	'79	Dallas, TX
Nia Tavoularis	'98	Austin, TX