



**SAA Transition Meeting
October 2, 2015
Agenda**

- I. Call meeting to order
 - a. Roll call
 - b. Welcome Remarks

- II. Recap
 - a. Background
 - b. Current Activities

- III. Alumni Association Board Meeting on 9/11/15
 - a. SAA Transition endorsed as a priority for this quarter
 - b. Role of Working Group
 - c. Role of Urbana CAAB

- IV. Next steps
 - a. Secure schedule for ongoing checkpoint meetings between SAA and UIAA Leadership.
 - b. Call for SAA alumni and current students to volunteer for Working Group.
 - c. Create a landing page for the Working Group's activities, scheduling, and link to ongoing feedback to be posted on website.
 - d. Form the Working Group (Matt Wilson will be the staff liaison).
 - e. Meet with Urbana CAAB for direct input and recommendations.
 - f. By December 31, 2015: Create a formal transitional plan with recommendations for:
 - i. Defined scope of SAA in the future
 - ii. Proposed organizational structure
 - iii. Expected budget

- V. Call for commitment

- VI. Adjourn

Minutes

The meeting started at 9:06 am. Ms. Ballinger welcomed everyone and took roll call.

Roll Call

Alumni Association:

- Al Harms, Alumni Association Board of Directors and Chair of Operations Committee
- Andrea Ballinger, Vice President and Chief Information Officer
- Matt Wilson, Associate Vice President for Alumni Community Development

SAA:

- Alex Smart, SAA President
- Nick Tarleton, SAA VP of Alumni Relations
- Samantha Blumenthal, SAA VP of Student Engagement
- Sydney Bauer, SAA VP of Membership
- Kip Kuster, SAA VP of Business Operations

Recap

Ms. Ballinger then provided the background below and shared that the formal charge for the SAA Transitional Team plan came from the Board of Directors last meeting (September 11) and she is thrilled to finally get these conversations going.

Andrea talked about where we have been. She shared that SAA Leadership (first Chris Isenhower and more recently Alex Smart) have been involved with the Strategic Plan since we started. The strategic plan derived from input sought and received from a very diverse set of stakeholders including alumni, club and constituency leaders, university advancement stakeholders, and Alumni Association Board Members – all in all over 1300 stakeholders provided feedback about what the Association had been doing and what their opinions were on what the Association should be doing in the future to support the future needs of alumni. In addition to that feedback and professional analysis (consultants were hired to help), a very diligent introspective assessment and analysis was done by the entire Alumni Association staff. The combination of the knowledge gained from analyzing and assessing current market for alumni relations yielded the high level aspiration statements included in the Strategic Plan.

Although some of the information we learned about ourselves sounded less than positive, we recognized that we also had achieved significant accomplishments in the past. The Association is one of the largest Alumni Association in the country with the goal of engaging close to 700,000 living alumni. We have often been known as the University Alumni Association to beat when it comes to the engagement of alumni for the purpose of creating strategic value for the university. What we could tell from the reports is that over the past 10 to 15 years there has been deterioration in our ability to meaningfully engage alumni beyond our highly successful political advocacy operations. The university's priority has been for alumni participation in fundraising, and combined with our struggles to adapt, has hindered engagement with large growing populations of young alumni and international alumni, in particular. The economic crash in 2009 may be an additional cause for many to back out of funding but we can't say the economic environment was the sole reason for all engagement deterioration. Regardless of the root cause, the Association has paid a high price for not being as agile and adaptable as we could have been.

Our CFO Jack Peirce often speaks of the Association losing over \$1.5 million dollars in the past three fiscal years and another \$376,100 budgeted loss for fiscal 2016 by not making the tough decisions required that have been readily apparent for some time. The lengthy delay was primarily accepted so that an industry-leading consulting firm, GG+A, could validate the situation and findings with key stakeholders, including university and advancement leadership. We accepted those findings and are executing them now including those relating to student programs. It is not accurate to say that the Association set a plan in place or acted unilaterally without significant stakeholder input.

The bottom line is that although we've been successful and alumni generally like us (survey results), anecdotal information indicates we generally only touch approximately 35% to 45% of alumni in any given year, and often the same group of people. When it comes to alumni participation rates, the recent numbers show alumni participating at single digits level with a history of significant declines. The Alumni Association, just like the University at large, needs funding to do the things we do and we need to focus our investment on activities and programs that directly support our mission to connect, engage and celebrate alumni.

After we posted the draft strategic plan on the web site and asked for input and feedback (feedback button is still open), the Board of Directors unanimously approved the Strategic Plan in January 2015. At that time, the Board charged the Operations Committee (Al Harms, Chair) with guiding and overseeing the implementation of that plan – moving the aspirational statements into actionable steps for the next 3 years. Management then drafted the Tactical Plan and after it was thoroughly vetted by the Operations Committee, set Year 1 goals. The Transitional Plan for SAA was included as Year 1 goals.

What does that mean? That means that although the strategic plan stated a vision/idea of what the new SAA inside of the Alumni Association might look like (a strong student advocacy team), no formal decisions have been made to date. The Goal for Year 1 included starting the discussions with Campus Advancement and current SAA students and SAA alumni to help define what that future state might look like with the goal of realigning current SAA activities accordingly. That means that if the activities involve engaging alumni and/or are advocacy related, they are likely going to continue to be sponsored by the Association. If however, the activities are related to engaging current students and/or are campus focused, we should consider realigning those somewhere else. Bottom line is For Year 1, expanding the student advocacy component is a priority due to current externalities. That is not the entire strategic plan's vision however. For the plan, if alumni are involved and/or are the targeted audience of the SAA activities, the Association absolutely plans on continuing to endorse and generally fund these activities and/or events (depending on financial plans).

Alumni Association Board Meeting on 9/11/15

The Strategic Plan and its aspirational goals are neither small nor inconsequential; and it takes a lot of courage to discontinue programs and make changes. Painful changes of course do not happen overnight. We have said since the beginning that the transition is going to take an entire year and since February we have accomplished a great deal. At their last meeting the Board of Directors endorsed SAA transition as one of 3 priorities for this quarter. The other two priorities are to assess and develop a plan for International Alumni Engagement, and the continued larger discussion about what does Advancement means for University of Illinois. For the SAA Transition plan, we need to dive into the details of what SAA does, who are the audiences for these activities, what does it cost, what is the return on investment, etc., and importantly, what does SAA want to do in the future. This is a very formal process and will require a great deal of input so we are creating a Working Group to focus on

this project. We need to get going so we can write a proposal back to the Association's Board of Directors by December 31, 2015.

Next Steps

Matt Wilson will be driving these discussions as our staff liaison and we are planning to ask a Board Member to Chair it. That person has not yet been named. The idea is for us to send out a call for volunteers to be on this Working Group. The Association will seek out SAA alumni volunteers and we would like for the current SAA Leadership (Alex and team) to seek out student volunteers and decide who will be on that Working Group for the student side. Ms. Ballinger shared that Chelsea and her team have created a designed email to be sent out to alumni, and she suggested that Alex send the same call for volunteers to the current SAA student community. We need volunteers that have time and the desire to be part of this Working Group. Please note that the Working Group will work very closely with the Urbana CAAB. The charge for the Working Group will be to come up with a proposal of what will SAA be in the future, including what advocacy looks like, what activities will SAA be engaged with, what would the ideal organizational structure look like and what budget would it take to deliver on these activities and/or programs.

In the meantime, as we shared with SAA Presidents in the past, SAA should continue to operate as it has been in the past until a plan has been fully endorsed. The only difference from the past is that if and when there is a need for funding, the request needs to come to Matt Wilson before any commitments are made. The Association has invested close to half million dollars for SAA in the past 10 years. The Association has and will continue to support and endorse SAA well into the future.

Admiral Al Harms then shared his thoughts as SAA leadership thinks about the potential volunteers. He said that there are two types of people that volunteer for committees – the finger pointers who always want to focus on what happened in past, and solution builders who look towards the future and how to make things better. He asked SAA Leadership to be cautious when selecting the students for the Working Group and look for the solution builders.

Ms. Ballinger then asked if there were any questions and/or concerns. Alex Smart asked how many people would be participating in the Working Group and Andrea suggested no more than 15 total. She is not currently concerned about the breakdown of SAA alumni to SAA current students. Alex asked when they would need the student names by. Andrea suggested 10 days from now (which would be Oct. 12) and all agreed. Alex shared that he will send this information to the SAA board and get input.

Ms. Ballinger also shared that in addition to getting the Working Group, we will schedule two additional meetings between SAA Leadership and the Association. One will be biweekly checkpoint meetings and Matt will meet with Alex and his delegates. These meetings will be booked but if there is nothing on the agenda for that time, then we can cancel, but it is better to have the meetings set up in advance. Alex will work with Becky Pope (Ms. Ballinger's assistant) to get those on the calendar. In addition, we will schedule 3 additional meetings between SAA Leadership and Ms. Ballinger. These meetings will be called the Steering Team meetings and if available, Mr. Harms will virtually join us. There will be a virtual environment for all the information to get posted and we will be publishing minutes on the SAA web site. The first checkpoint meeting will be held at 2 p.m. on Oct. 23 (Homecoming Weekend), within the CAAB meeting.

Mr. Harms reminded all of us that the plan needs to get done from October to mid-December in order to meet the deadline. Time goes fast. Ms. Ballinger said that time management is a great skill to have.

The Working Group will have rules of engagement. This group will be a formal subcommittee of the Board of Directors, so there will need to be detailed minutes taken. This group needs to be very formal and transparent.

Ms. Ballinger talked about the SAA page in the UIAA website and that it has not been redesigned yet, pending what the outcome of what this group decides. The old website still up, but needs to be updated (for instance, current leadership still shows the previous team). Once the Working Group is formed, we will post the names of the steering committee and the minutes of the meetings on the site. There will also be a feedback button on the site. As we discussed, we will have checkpoint meetings to make sure we are on the same page at all times.

Mr. Harms reminded us that transformation is difficult and there is a lot of misinformation out there. If the facts aren't coming from Loren Taylor, Andrea Ballinger, Jack Peirce or Matt Wilson, then they are not real facts. When the plan is finalized, Ms. Ballinger will present the plan to the Operations Committee and the SAA President will be asked to join. Al suggested that this meeting will likely be within the first 10 days of January.

Alex mentioned that the new SAA President will start at the beginning of the 2nd semester, and that both presidents will be there. Andrea agreed that both Alex and the new president should attend the January Operations Committee meeting. She advised that the plan should be very specific addressing all aspects of current and future SAA activities. She recommended not starting by discussing organizational structure - who is reporting to whom. The best practice approach would suggest discussing what should be the activities/programs that SAA will do in the future and then discuss what alignment makes the most sense. You should then ask the questions about organization structure – do we need to split SAA into two arms – advocacy and current student activities on campus? Is it one SAA with two missions that “report to” different units? The Association does not have a prescribed solution, but the focus for us has to be student activities engaging alumni and student advocacy. Everything else is a clean slate.

Al Harms reiterated that the Working group may want to focus on the mission first, not budget first. Samantha said that they always start with the why and not the what.

Andrea asked if anyone had any questions. Alex asked if SAA was still able to use the space within Alice Campbell. Matt informed Alex that nothing has changed since they covered this topic. Until the formal transitional plan is endorsed, SAA may continue to use the basement space allocated to them at the Alice Campbell Alumni Center. Andrea reiterated her statement that SAA should continue operations as before, and that anything with budget questions/approval needs to be sent to Matt first. Andrea said that the space we provide SAA free of charge equates to about \$30,000 a year and we will continue to support SAA but in the future, all funding requests need to tie into the Association's mission. Kip asked if this also includes budgeting for the spring. Matt suggested that he and Kip talk details before we commit for anything in spring.

Andrea reminded them to worry about the focus first and then budget. Samantha wanted everyone to know that they have been working on this for a while and they don't take it lightly and know how important it is. Alex asked if the SAA website and structure will stay the same. Andrea responded that until we finish the transitional plan we will keep it as is. Afterwards, the portions that align with our mission will be redesigned to fit the new look and feel of the Associations' web presence. Meanwhile however, we do need the content of the SAA site updated. Andrea mentioned Chelsea is the contact for any updated information. We do have a formal process for requesting web changes and

Chelsea will share that with Alex.

Samantha said that Kaylen is the VP of Communications and she is the right person to work with Chelsea. Alex asked if they still had permission to use board room for elections. Matt said they can use it if it is available and recommended Alex email Jim Runyan.

Andrea shared a hard copy of the SAA Alumni call for volunteer's email we plan on sending out today. She asked if anyone had a question or concern. Hearing none, she asked Alex to stay after this meeting to discuss the current SAA students' email.

Mr. Harms closed his remarks by sharing that he has sat in more meetings than he can count and said that is important to not misinterpret things in our upcoming proceedings. He said that someone needs to take specific notes with everything that is discussed and after the meeting, solidify everything and send them out within 24 hours. Those who attended the meeting would have a chance to read them and ask for any corrections that needed made. Then once you start next meeting, those minutes/notes are the only thing that counts. This will keep the process transparent and clean and it helps everyone remember what the topic was and what everyone agreed on at the last meeting. Memos for the record is how to do it. Samantha said that they usually take real copious notes that get approved. Matt said that they will continue to do same thing.

Ms. Ballinger asked again if there were any questions or concerns. Nick said that he just wants to ensure that during this whole process that they have open communication with the Alumni Association and that they just want to be in the loop of everything. Andrea asked if what she just proposed as the checkpoint and steering team meetings, and the posting of minutes on website would cover his concern. Nick said yes and that they just want to make sure everyone knows what is going on.

Matt said that the only time they work on SAA items is with the SAA President. Sydney suggested that their whole board should be involved. Matt said that 7-8 SAA will be on this committee and will share notes. Andrea said that if that is not enough, then let her know. They will be putting formal steps in place to be sure. The information will be posted on the website so others can be involved. Andrea reminded them to work with Becky on scheduling meetings.

Call for Commitment

Ms. Ballinger then asked for commitment to work collaboratively and openly on forming the solution from this group. After receiving their commitment, she asked the SAA leadership present to share the information with the VPs that were not in attendance in this meeting.

Ms. Ballinger adjourned the meeting at 9:45 am.