



PRINCETON UNIVERSITY AND ITS ALUMNI

A Joint Statement by the Trustee Committee on Alumni Affairs and the Executive Committee of the Alumni Council

September 2002

INTRODUCTION

From its earliest days, Princeton University has benefited enormously from the devotion, engagement, and support of its alumni.

By 1826 alumni were already playing important roles as leaders and benefactors of what was then the College of New Jersey when the Alumni Association of Nassau Hall was formed, under the leadership of James Madison, "to promote the interests of the College and the friendly intercourse of its graduates."

Over the years, alumni found more and more ways to become involved in the life of the University and with each other. Class loyalties developed, regional associations were formed, and traditions of returning to campus were established. In 1975, the Trustees of the University issued a report on the University and its alumni that had been prepared by the Board's recently created Committee on Alumni Affairs. The report stated that, "To a greater degree, perhaps, than at other American universities, Princeton has been sustained through the years by the loyalty of its alumni," and it observed that alumni "have nourished Princeton, they have guided her, and they have challenged her to be all that she ought to be." It then concluded as follows:

Finally, a word is in order about the goal. We wish to maximize support for the University on the part of its alumni, support which is not only financial in character, but which includes all the many ways in which Princeton's alumni now serve the University. We support the idea that Princeton is a lifetime experience, not limited to the time on campus, and thus that the University must do all it can not only to facilitate the preservation of the relationships that were developed at the University but also to incorporate the insights and energies of alumni in the on-going life of the University, and to maintain a continuing educational interplay with alumni... Our goal is full participation by all alumni who wish to do so in the broader community of Princeton-and in the continuing search for knowledge and learning.

In April 2000, the Trustees adopted the Wythes Committee report which identified strategic directions for Princeton in the early years of the 21st century. In a discussion of the central purposes of the University, the report highlighted several of the University's distinctive characteristics. Among them was "an unusually loyal and supportive alumni body that is composed of individuals who have had a disproportionate impact on the local, national, and global communities in which they live." As part of its 250th anniversary celebration, the University installed a plaque on the front campus that memorializes its gratitude to its alumni "for their devotion to the University and its mission of education, scholarship, and service," and reaffirmed its commitment to fostering alumni connections to the University and with each other.

Alumni serve in many ways. At the installation of President Tilghman, Diane deCordova '83, the president of the Alumni Association, noted that alumni are "counselors, ambassadors, critics, and cheerleaders. We serve as Trustees, interview potential students, offer career advice, provide opportunities for community service, tirelessly express our opinions, and maintain the strong Princeton culture of giving back and coming back." Much of this service is organized, coordinated, and supported by the Alumni Council. As described in the constitution and bylaws of the Alumni Association, the Council is both a volunteer leadership organization and a University office. As a volunteer organization it is the governing body of the Alumni Association, composed largely of the presidents of classes and regional



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associations, representatives of graduate alumni and affinity groups, chairs of standing committees, and at-large members. As a University office it provides staff support to the volunteers and is responsible for strengthening the University's multiple relationships with its alumni through programs of communications, participation, and service. The principal goals of the Alumni Council-as volunteer leadership organization and as University office-are to assist, inform, and engage alumni and to provide opportunities for alumni to be of service to each other, to students, and to Princeton.

As the Trustee committee with special responsibility for alumni affairs and the leaders of the Alumni Council, we pledge our continuing best efforts to sustain strong, lifelong, and mutually beneficial relationships between the University and its alumni and to achieve the mission and goals of the Alumni Council as set forth below.

THE MISSION OF THE ALUMNI COUNCIL

Mission: The mission of the Alumni Council is to engage as many alumni as possible in the ongoing life of the University in mutually beneficial ways and to support alumni initiatives that promote the goals of the University.

Method: The Alumni Council pursues its mission by:

- Providing services and programs to alumni that enrich their lives and encourage their lifelong engagement with the University, with its faculty and students, and with their fellow alumni.
- Sustaining robust lines of communication among alumni, and in both directions between alumni and the University.
- Encouraging lifelong commitments by alumni to the life of the mind by offering educational opportunities of various kinds.
- Promoting alumni service to members of the University community, including other alumni; to the University itself; in their home communities; and in the broader global community.
- Ascertaining the needs and interests of Princeton's increasingly diverse alumni body to provide services and programs that meet their diverse needs and interests.
- Seeking both to maximize participation in its programs and activities and to reach out to alumni who are not currently engaged in the ongoing life of the University.
- Providing opportunities for alumni to serve in leadership roles in their classes, regional associations, affinity groups, on the Council's executive committee and other committees, in other alumni activities that support the University, and for the University as a whole by conducting the alumni trustee election process.
- Supporting alumni who are in leadership positions or who are serving in other capacities to maximize their chances for success and satisfaction in those roles.



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Measurement: The Council seeks to establish a pattern of alumni engagement with Princeton and responsibility for its well-being.

Measures of its success include the following:

- the degree to which alumni feel responsible for and contribute to the health and well-being of the University by, for example, serving as Trustees and on departmental advisory councils, interviewing applicants, offering career advice to students and alumni, providing opportunities for community service, acting as goodwill ambassadors for the University, serving as lecturers or panel speakers, communicating their views and concerns to the University, and providing financial support;
- the degree to which alumni participate in the programs and activities of the Council and the University, including but not limited to Reunions, Alumni Day, class and regional activities, alumni education programs, TigerNet services, programs developed by and for affiliated groups and alumni with special interests, etc.;
- the degree to which alumni read and engage with the Princeton Alumni Weekly and other forms of communication (including online communication);
- the degree to which alumni derive satisfaction from the services they receive or provide, and from their engagement as leaders, volunteers, and participants in alumni and University activities;
- the degree to which alumni recognize and appreciate the value the University places on its alumni; and
- the degree to which the Council works collaboratively and effectively with other offices of the University and other organizations to promote alumni involvement in the life of the University.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ALUMNI COUNCIL AND OFFICES DEVOTED TO FUNDRAISING

One of Princeton's historic strengths has been its assurance to alumni that their participation in the life of the University is valued no matter what form it takes, just as their participation in helping it to meet its financial goals is valued whatever their particular financial capacity. Another of its historic strengths has been its expectation that alumni will be active participants in the life of the University, with real responsibilities for designing and delivering many of the programs in which alumni are involved, and that alumni can enhance and enrich the University in ways that draw on their energies and expertise, not just their financial resources.

Princeton's experience has been that this commitment to broad and lifelong engagement, to frequent communication, and to strong support for volunteer initiative redounds to the benefit of its fundraising efforts, and the more so because fundraising is seen as a beneficiary of a broader policy of engagement rather than the goal to which everything else is subservient.

There has been historically and continues to be a strong and symbiotic relationship between the Alumni Council and the University offices devoted to fundraising among alumni. Creating a culture and climate in



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which alumni not only will be receptive to fundraising solicitations but will wish to make such solicitations is an important element of the Council's all-encompassing effort to create a culture and climate in which alumni feel engaged in the ongoing life of the University and, at least in part, responsible for ensuring that the University achieves its highest aspirations.

To achieve the best results for the University as a whole, it is essential that the staffs of the Alumni Council and the fundraising offices, while serving their mutually reinforcing missions, collaborate closely and effectively to maximize synergy and mutual benefit, and that both sets of offices actively involve students, faculty, senior administrators, and other staff members in their programs and activities.

CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, a university is a community of people joined by shared experiences and aspirations. Princeton historically has benefited enormously from the active inclusion in its community not only of students, faculty, and staff, but of alumni who have valued their experiences as students and who wish to do all that they can to sustain and strengthen Princeton for the generations that will follow them. The responsibility of the Alumni Council, in active and ongoing consultation with alumni themselves, is to develop, manage, and support activities, programs, and opportunities for service that, to paraphrase the language of 1826, promote the interests of the University and a lifetime of engagement by alumni with the University and with each other.

Adopted by:

Trustee Committee on Alumni Affairs
Elizabeth A. Duffy '88, Chair
September 20, 2002

Executive Committee of the Alumni Council
Diane deCordova '83, Chair
September 28, 2002