

University of Minnesota Duluth

Office of Alumni Relations

2020-21 Annual Report

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# I. Executive Summary

The Alumni Relations model of alumni engagement focuses heavily on in-person activity through events and volunteerism. Beginning in March 2020, this model changed drastically due to COVID-19 and the associated public health restrictions enacted by the University. By the beginning of 2020-21, Alumni Relations had a new plan for connecting alumni with UMD, investing heavily in an online presence. This new model yielded unexpected benefits across several alumni programs including larger audiences and greater access for alumni to events and volunteer programs. Several highlights from the past year are described below:

- Hosted 15 Bulldogs Behind the Scenes virtual tours, collaborating with campus and regional partners to provide access and information to alumni and guests. The tours were viewed live by over 1,600 total guests; recordings of these tours have been viewed over 4,000 times on the Alumni Relations YouTube channel.
- Launched new virtual projects including Resiliency Webchats (4 episodes) and Alumni Skills Series (3 webinars), and the holiday message from the Music Department (532 views).
- Increased participation in the UMD Mentor Program to 101 students, each paired with an individual mentor. Broadened mentor participation to include alumni from across the United States.
- Led virtual Homecoming Week and Family Week celebrations.
- Collaborated with departments and student groups to host 6 virtual alumni reunions with 141 total participants.
- Coordinated a Back to Class program with 24 faculty members to host alumni in 31 different virtual classes in October and March. Over 300 alumni registered for the one-day class offerings.

## II. Mission and Vision

**Mission:** The Office of Alumni Relations creates opportunities for alumni to learn, reconnect, contribute to the direction of their university, and celebrate their UMD pride.

**Vision:** The Office of Alumni Relations will identify where the needs and priorities of alumni overlap with those of students and the university. We will work with alumni to create programs that address these interests. These efforts will give alumni a greater voice in the present and future of UMD.

## III. Goals

### **Goal Areas:**

1. Volunteerism
2. Anti-Racism and Inclusivity
3. Outreach
4. Collaboration

### **Goal Area 1: Volunteerism**

Develop programs that enable alumni who want to contribute their time and talent to UMD to find meaningful volunteer roles. Identify volunteers, guide them to appropriate roles, and acknowledge their contributions.

### **Goal Area 2: Anti-Racism and Inclusivity**

Design programs and communications that accurately reflect the student and alumni experience, acknowledge the impact of racism and other forms of prejudice, and work toward building a more inclusive culture at UMD.

### **Goal Area 3: Outreach**

Create methods of outreach that bring UMD resources and institutional pride to alumni in places where they live and work.

### **Goal Area 4: Collaboration**

Focus on collaboration and partnerships with internal and external units to help further the mission of Alumni Relations.

## IV. Objectives and Assessment

### Objectives:

1. Develop the Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD) leadership team to strengthen the identity, communication, and programming of recent alumni initiatives.
2. Continue to create new volunteer opportunities for alumni both at UMD and in their communities while abiding by social distancing guidelines.
3. Expand the Mentor Program to include more students.
4. Build on recent success of new virtual programming including Virtual Bulldogs Behind the Scenes, Resiliency Webchats, and other programs.
5. Transition to leadership role of Family Weekend.
6. Create virtual Homecoming in fall 2020.
7. Enhance the ability to assess events and programs.
8. Create new opportunities for alumni to learn about anti-racism perspectives and training.
9. Improve staff awareness of anti-racism and inclusivity through training and group activities.

**Objective 1:** Develop the Bulldogs of the Last Decade (BOLD) leadership team to strengthen the identity, communication, and programming of recent alumni initiatives.

*Assessment Strategy:* 2-3 co-sponsored AR virtual events (host or provide topic ideas). Monthly communication targeted for recent alumni (e-news, targeted email, social media).

*Action Steps:* BOLD leadership team developed and participated in the Senior Send Off Week alumni networking night.

*Outcome:* Planning events and marketing campaigns with the volunteer committee was difficult due to issues related to the pandemic. Members are historically most energized by in-person events, and thus had less enthusiasm for the options available to the team in 2020-21.

The alumni networking night was successful, with 80% of the BOLD leadership team participating. Regular meetings continued after a brief hiatus in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The group conducted bimonthly meetings via Zoom coordinated by Assistant Director Mollie Kleven.

*What We Learned:* Developing programming was difficult during the pandemic, but the leadership team maintained their connections through the regular meetings; this was an encouraging sign for staff. Following the success of the networking night, several BOLD members suggested the department pursue career-focused events for young alumni. This suggestion resulted in several planned collaborative virtual events with Career & Internship Services in 2021-22.

**Objective 2:** Continue to create new volunteer opportunities for alumni both at UMD and in their communities while abiding by social distancing guidelines.

*Assessment Strategy:* Design two socially distanced service projects; create at least one new role for volunteers to give back to UMD.

*Action Steps:* Created one service project: the Alumni Cares Campaign in March 2021. Recruited alumni to volunteer as presenters for Virtual Bulldogs Behind the Scenes (BBTS), interviewees for Resiliency Webchats, and networking volunteers during Senior Send Off Week.

*Outcome:* The Alumni Cares Campaign was a unique program led by UMD Alumni Relations to partner with other regional colleges and universities. Each school was tasked with asking their alumni to donate goods (especially food, personal hygiene products, and clothing) to charitable organizations in their area. The program was marketed as a competition between the schools to generate the most support for charities among their alumni. At UMD, the campaign resulted in 15 individual donors contributing 70lbs of food and personal hygiene products and over 200 items of clothing.

The department was highly successful in recruiting alumni to volunteer for BBTS, Resiliency Webchats, and the alumni networking night during Senior Send Off Week. The BBTS series included alumni presenters in 7 different virtual events. Resiliency Webchats featured alumni interviewees in all

four installments. One of the highlights of the first-ever Senior Send-Off Week was the virtual alumni networking night; the event included 15 alumni volunteers.

*What We Learned:* Creating meaningful volunteer roles for alumni is difficult in an environment where in-person activity is severely restricted. Volunteer events like service projects are best done in person when people can be together, and share in the joy of being part of a giving community. Virtual event settings proved to be the most fruitful way for Alumni Relations to create new volunteer roles for alumni. Volunteers in these roles had good experiences sharing their expertise and personal stories. This is an area of focus the department will continue to expand on in coming years.

**Objective 3:** Expand the Mentor Program to include more students.

*Assessment Strategy:* Minimum of 90 student participants.

*Action Steps:* Worked with Mentor Program Committee to recruit additional students in spring 2020. Expanded pool of prospective mentors through Alumni Relations communications and personal volunteer recruitment by staff.

*Outcome:* By creating an entirely virtual experience for the 2020-21 Mentor Program, staff were able to expand the program to 101 student participants (matched with 101 volunteer mentors).

*What We Learned:* The department was able to save considerable resources by moving away from an in-person event for the student-mentor introduction. In past years, these introductions occurred at a kickoff dinner hosted at UMD in October. The events were well attended, but costly. Eliminating this event and shifting to virtual introductions allowed the staff to expand the student participants in the program while simultaneously creating a significant cost savings. Plans for the 2021-22 Mentor Program include continuing virtual or in-person introductions for students and mentors without the use of a formal kickoff dinner.

**Objective 4:** Build on recent success of new virtual programming including Virtual Bulldogs Behind the Scenes, Resiliency Webchats, and other programs.

*Assessment Strategy:* 24 virtual events and programs.

*Action Steps:* Staff designed and executed 15 BBTS events, 4 Resiliency Webchats, 3 Alumni Skills Series events, and collaborated on numerous virtual events with staff and faculty (Back 2 Class programs in fall and spring; Senior Send Off Week; and virtual reunions with American Indian Studies, Art & Design, Outdoor Program, Student Association, and World Languages & Cultures).

*Outcome:* The total number of new virtual events and programs exceeded the goal of averaging 2 per month in 2020-21. The events proved popular with alumni throughout most 2020-21, although attendance at virtual events began to decrease in spring 2021 likely due to changes in COVID restrictions.

*What We Learned:* Virtual programs are tremendously effective at reaching both large numbers of alumni and targeted alumni groups. In early virtual efforts in spring and summer 2020, virtual events were designed for mass audiences only. These will continue to be a staple of Alumni Relations programming going forward because they are cost effective and well-attended. On a more surprising note, alumni also responded well to smaller, targeted events. This provides an excellent opportunity for greater collaboration with departments across UMD, and helps the university connect with alumni in the areas where they have the greatest affinity (major, student organization, etc.).

**Objective 5:** Transition to leadership role of Family Weekend.

*Assessment Strategy:* Design and implement virtual Family Weekend program in fall 2020.

*Action Steps:* Created new parent Q&A with Chancellor and Vice Chancellors: fielded questions in advance, recorded the Zoom conversation with campus leadership, and then distributed a video link to parents. Invited parents to attend three different BBTS events during Homecoming week, each focused on a different area of campus (building history, Music Dept., and Athletics). Created a social media engagement tool on Facebook (profile picture frames).

*Outcome:* The Bulldog Parent Q&A was an effective way to answer questions and provide information to parents in a virtual format. The video has been viewed a total 288 times. The BBTS events were attended by some parents, but overall numbers for these three events were lower than other BBTS events (average of 46 viewers per event).

*What We Learned:* Family Week fit well with Homecoming Week during the pandemic. Separating these events during more normal times will allow for more staff resources to be put into parent-specific programming. In particular, it will be beneficial to focus on in-person activity in future years.

**Objective 6:** Create virtual Homecoming in fall 2020.

*Assessment Strategy:* Use of multiple platforms to offer virtual programs on several days during Homecoming week.

*Action Steps:* Homecoming Week featured the same three virtual BBTS events as Family Week as well as the social media functions. For the first time ever, Homecoming Week included virtual classroom visits for alumni.

*Outcome:* The results of the BBTS events were detailed in Objective 5. The virtual classroom visits were well received by both alumni and faculty. Nine classes were featured in the program; 62 alumni registered to attend.

*What We Learned:* The BBTS events focused on campus generated fewer attendees than those about other topics. This may mean that alumni are looking to these events as an opportunity to learn something new, and not revisit something from their past. The success of the virtual class visits led the department to spearhead another, larger program in March 2021. The second effort featured 23 classes and 242 registered guests.

**Objective 7:** Enhance the ability to assess events and programs.

*Assessment Strategy:* Individual goal-setting (alignment with department plans and metrics); standardization in post-event functions (surveys and data entry); strategic alumni outreach at events.

*Action Steps:* Department standardized post-event surveys, reporting, and data entry.

*Outcome:* Standardization of surveys was helpful in comparing attendee satisfaction across events. Consistency of data reporting was even more useful because it helped the team identify positive and negative trends in content, timing, and presentation styles. Strategic outreach at events was limited because of the lack of events that involved interaction between staff and guests.

*What We Learned:* Staff need to continue to develop strategies for goal setting prior to events. This can be aided by data reporting from past events. Strategic outreach at events is a necessity, but remains a work in progress as the department eases back into in-person event activity.

**Objective 8:** Create new opportunities for alumni to learn about anti-racism perspectives and training.

*Assessment Strategy:* Develop virtual events, service projects, and online communications with ties to UMD's efforts to combat racism.

*Action Steps:* Created virtual events and programs linked to anti-racism and increasing exposure for underrepresented identities; one service project (detailed in Objective 2); regularly used monthly alumni newsletter to feature stories about alumni experiences combatting racism.

*Outcome:* Virtual reunions for American Indian Studies (19 participants) and World Languages & Cultures (35 participants) were modestly attended, but nonetheless valuable tools for reaching alumni with ties to those departments. The new Resiliency Webchats series featured several women and BIPOC alumni (315 views across 4 episodes).

*What We Learned:* UMD and its alumni have stories to tell; it is the job of the department to identify those willing and able to share their stories and connect with alumni. Creating intentional plans around anti-racism and accurate, equal representation is an effective way to ensure these stories are told. Alumni Relations will need to continue to explore new avenues in 2021-22 to expand on its programming in this area.

**Objective 9:** Improve staff awareness of anti-racism and inclusivity through training and group activities.

*Assessment Strategy:* Read and reflect on book with anti-racism focus; complete online trainings.

*Action Steps:* Together, the team read and discussed two books related to anti-racism: *How to be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi and *A Good Time for the Truth* edited by Sun Yung Shin. Each member of the staff completed the EverFi diversity and equity training modules provided by the

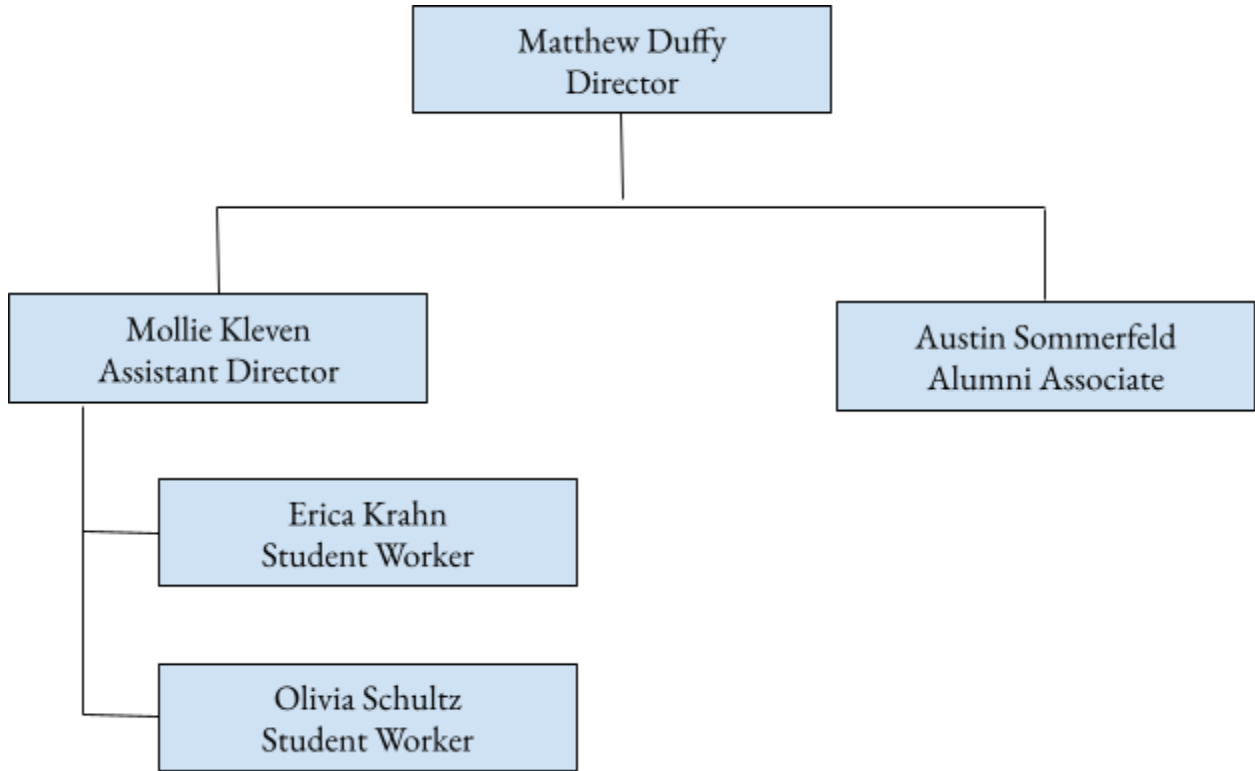
University. Additionally, in summer 2021, the staff began planning the annual alumni relations conference hosted by UMD. This year the focus of the conference was how alumni professionals are creating and executing plans using an anti-racist lens.

*Outcome:* The book discussions were well received by staff. In particular, the books gave space and time for reflective conversation on racism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination. The results of these conversations have already begun to affect how the staff approaches work on alumni events and communications.

*What We Learned:* Staff learned that this is a long process of listening and learning, and that the process is welcomed. The team will continue to work on their understanding of racism and the practice of anti-racism in the years ahead.

# V. Resources

## Organization Chart



Alumni Relations staff remained stable and unchanged from the prior year in 2020-21.

## FY21 Budget

Alumni Relations relied on seven budgets and funds to accomplish the goals and tasks of the department in 2020-21:

- O&M budget for staff salary and benefits.
- SE&E budget for operational expenses.
- Revenue budget for ticketed events and sponsorships.
- Apter Endowed Fund for costs associated with alumni events.
- Alumni Scholarship Fund for awarding student scholarships.
- Homecoming budget.
- Mentor Program budget for funding expenses related to the program.

Summary of expenses and revenue:

	Account	Account Description	Total
REVENUES	420201	State O/M Approp Redistrib	247,539.00
REVENUES	540101	Gifts and Bequests - Monetary	2,442.32
EXPENDITURES	700201	Salaries-Staff	165,778.65
EXPENDITURES	700402	Salaries-Undergraduate Student	2,243.98
EXPENDITURES	710201	Fringe	58,759.33
EXPENDITURES	720102	Published Materials	110.85
EXPENDITURES	720105	Office Supplies	1,065.15
EXPENDITURES	720107	Postage	93.43
EXPENDITURES	720303	Printing-Duplicating-Binding	23.08
EXPENDITURES	720311	Dues and Subscriptions	272.98
EXPENDITURES	720318	Courier-Express Mail-Shipping	5.67
EXPENDITURES	720322	Training and Conf Registration	15.00
EXPENDITURES	720504	Telecommunications - External	46.01
EXPENDITURES	720602	Travel Domestic	3.10
EXPENDITURES	720609	Local Transportation	-1.20
EXPENDITURES	800102	Fellowships-Grants-Scholarship	6,000.00
EXPENDITURES	820201	Enterprise Assessment	2,938.01
TRANSFER IN	600201	NMTI - Same Fund - Same RRC	5,161.25

TRANSFER OUT	610201	NMTO-Same Fund-Same RRC	-2,828.54
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