

# ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT: 5 YEARS OF MILESTONES

Provided by the St. John's College Alumni Association  
for attendees of the 2015 Alumni Leadership Forum

## A RETROSPECTIVE

Alumni engagement means many things — from informing alumni of college news and events, to expanding volunteer leadership positions.

As we look forward to the future of alumni participation, it is important to celebrate our successes and constructively reflect on our efforts. This report provides background and summarizes our progress over the last five completed years.

## 2009

**The Task Force on Alumni Relations delivers recommendations to raise the level of St. John's College alumni engagement in the life of our institution.**

This task force was comprised of eight alumni serving in various volunteer leadership roles, and three staff members (two of whom were also alumni). The process of arriving at their recommendations involved several months of research and deliberation. All recommendations were not enacted; however, those that were can be understood as the underpinnings of the evolution in alumni engagement over the past five years.

An extensive alumni survey provided data for the work of this task force. It showed that, compared to other institutions, we rank in the highest percentiles in satisfaction with our student experience and in how positive we feel about our college today.

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*Over 90% of alumni survey respondents indicated a desire to stay involved with St. John's College in some way*

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Unfortunately—according to college records at this time—less than 3% were serving in any volunteer roles. Less than a third were donating to our annual fund. We were also “underperforming” our peers in attending events like homecoming. Not surprisingly, respondents to the survey viewed the college as performing below average in providing ways to engage.



# 2010

**The restructuring of the Alumni Association** as recommended by the Task Force and motivated by a driving philosophy that the participation of more alumni, more often, was essential to the vibrancy and sustainability of St. John's.

This restructuring resulted in:

- ✚ The reduction in size of the governing board to allow for increased effectiveness and a focus on strategy and policy governance.
- ✚ The requirement of each non-officer board member to take a liaison role working with staff and volunteers on a core function area, such as admissions, career services, and alumni giving.
- ✚ Cessation of dues collection, and announcement requesting that alumni formerly paying association dues redirect their giving to the college's annual fund. In turn, the college increased its support of alumni programs, including a stipend for the association.
- ✚ The absorption of Philanthropia, now the Alumni Giving Council, to create a relationship between the association and the fundraising efforts needed for the wellbeing of our college, its students and the Program.

**A pilot of the Alumni Leadership Forum takes place in Annapolis.**

The Alumni Leadership Forum grew out of the task force recommendations and the association's restructuring mandate to achieve broad-based alumni engagement. The goal of ALF was to bring together staff, faculty, and alumni to explore possibilities and begin tackling the challenges facing our much loved alma mater in the 21st century. Participants were given access to key information, the opportunity to delve deeper, and to provide feedback to college officials. This pioneering group of 40 alumni blazed a trail for the hundreds of alumni to come, passionate about giving back to the college community through leadership and volunteerism.


**The Class Chair Program launches with recruitment at ALF.**

Class Chairs volunteer to keep their classmates connected with the college by informing them of current issues at St. John's and providing feedback to the college regarding classmates' interests and concerns, and to work closely with staff and classmates on activities related to reunion years.

# 2011

**ALF Opportunity Grants are created to assist alumni in attending the Alumni Leadership Forum.**

Five alumni with financial need and a passion for volunteerism are supported in traveling to ALF on the Santa Fe campus.



MORE THAN 20 ALUMNI WERE ASSISTED BY THE OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM BETWEEN 2011 AND 2014. A RECORD NUMBER OF GRANTS IS PROJECTED FOR 2015.

## **ALFies are awarded for the first time.**

These volunteer service awards, given at the Alumni Leadership Forum, honor and thank those who have volunteered their time and talent to the college in extraordinary ways. ALFies can be given for many different types of service, such as special success in the Class Chair Program, a particularly effective fundraising activity, or other new engagement effort.

## **The online alumni e-newsletter starts to provide regular communications to alumni.**

The goal of the newsletter is to send out timely information about St. John's, including messages from the college Presidents, news and events, and announcements from the Alumni Association.

# **2012**

## **The first Lifetime Service Award is bestowed at the Alumni Leadership Forum.**

This new award distinguishes those who have dedicated themselves through volunteer service to the college over a lifetime. Allan Hoffman, A49, received the award at this ALF in Annapolis.

## **Homecoming attendance records are broken with collaborative efforts to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the New Program.**


The event included roundtable discussions on both campuses featuring members of the faculty and distinguished alumni discussing topics about the Program, the founders' vision of the college, and their continued relevance in today's world.

## **Alumni affinity groups created and promoted online and at ALF.**

The concept quickly catches on and is expanded by alumni to include Johnnies in Medicine, Johnnies in Education, Johnnies in Law, and Johnnies in the Arts to name a few.

## **The St. John's College Alumni Facebook page surpasses 1000 "likes".**

The goal was to create a page made vibrant through interviews with students, trivia questions, and other interesting and noteworthy items. A number of informal St. John's Facebook groups are started by alumni with significant traffic and postings, as well as a LinkedIn group which hosts a number of discussions about St. John's, job postings, and other issues.



CURRENTLY, MORE THAN 100 ALUMNI DRIVEN GROUPS AND PAGES EXIST ON FACEBOOK ALONE, FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON CLASS YEARS, CAREER AFFINITIES, CHAPTERS AND OTHER GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS.

# 2013

**The One Alum | One Referral campaign is created** to help the college discover the next generation of Johnnies.

Alumni referrals are one of the most effective sources for prospective applicants, so all Johnnies are asked to refer promising high school students to the St. John's admissions offices.

**Career networking events are piloted** at Chapter meetings in Annapolis and D.C.

The goal of these events was to allow alumni, students, and others in the SJC community to connect and discuss career goals and opportunities. Volunteers began to increasingly work on career networking with chapter leadership, the Career Services department and Alumni Relations offices. In addition to chapter-based events, this collaboration led to initiatives such as developing more student internship opportunities and the "Roadmaps" project in which alumni produced career guidance documents specific to their field for use by current students who are exploring their next steps.

**Johnnies Make a Difference Day launches** with three chapters: Annapolis, Baltimore, and Santa Fe.

This initiative brings alumni together through chapters and other loosely structured groups to spend a day volunteering in their respective communities.

**The first-ever webinar for alumni is produced** and facilitated via a collaboration between the association and college.

The purpose of the event was to provide a comprehensive picture of the reasons for the college's rebranding and what the rebranding consisted of — specifically providing clarification about the intentions, process, and outcomes of the project.

# 2014

**The virtual chapter online seminar program begins** exploring everything from Homer to Faulkner with undergrad and GI alumni, from here to Slovenia.

Participants are happily surprised that the quality of the virtual conversation is like the tried and true seminar gathered around the actual table.



VIRTUAL EVENTS ON A VARIETY OF TOPICS ARE NOW DEVELOPED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ALUMNI RELATIONS AND CAREER SERVICES DEPARTMENTS.

**The fifth anniversary of the annual Alumni Leadership Forum is celebrated** as volunteers came together for a variety of sessions led by new and seasoned alumni.

Highlights included the first ever “Completely Engaged Alumni Heptathlon” and an “Evening of Conversation” at the Smithsonian. In the course of the weekend, alumni shared ideas on chapter engagement, produced career roadmaps, and wrote thank you notes to acknowledge the Class of 2014 for its exceptional giving among many other activities.

**A new online survey of alumni is conducted to answer three questions...**

- ✚ How have we been doing so far in developing activities for alumni?
- ✚ What other types of activities for alumni would you like to see us develop?
- ✚ How do you want to hear about Alumni Association activities?

Results collected are used to start informing the next iteration of the association’s strategic plan.

**IntroMaps is selected as a new alumni networking tool to help alumni more easily connect in their area and around the globe.**

The association and college worked to implement a new way to search for and network alumni who share common career or general life interests. IntroMaps provides the look and feel of Google Maps, and the networking capabilities of LinkedIn.

**Record attendance at Homecoming, once again.**

More than 500 alumni and friends marked the 200th anniversary of alumnus Francis Scott Key’s “Star-Spangled Banner” in Annapolis and over 300 alumni and friends were on hand for the kick-off to the year-long 50th anniversary celebration in Santa Fe.

## ENGAGEMENT LINKS

Sites that involved alumni should know and use:

[Alumni Chapter Directory](#)

[Award Nomination Form](#)

[Class Chair Program](#)

[Homecoming](#)


[IntroMaps](#)

[One Alum | One Referral](#)

[Piraeus](#)

[Virtual Chapter Seminars](#)

Share these with your former classmates and local chapter!



THE INCREASE IN HOMECOMING ATTENDANCE AND ALUMNI GIVING PARTICIPATION RATES CAN ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE SUCCESS OF THE CLASS CHAIR PROGRAM. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 180 CLASS CHAIRS.