

Queen's University Alumni Association (QUAA)

Strategic Priorities for 2006/07

As of January 2006

Prepared by:

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Feedback incorporated from:

QUAA Board
Key Members of Alumni Relations and Annual Giving, Queen's

Primary Audience:

Alumni Branches and members of Alumni Assembly

Purpose

Over the past six months the QUAA has undergone significant and important change. The QUAA has actively participated in the Strategy Review and Development process as part of the Principal's Taskforce and is now focused on planning and execution. To facilitate this, we have focused on internal matters to re-position and begin to grow the QUAA – in terms of infrastructure, people and priorities. This document sets out the objectives of the QUAA between now and Assembly in September.

Context for Setting our Priorities

In addition to the observations, analysis and direction set out in the Taskforce's report, the QUAA's priorities are set in the context of the University's emerging strategy (global engagement), those of the Board of Trustees (namely the Advancement Committee and its focus on the Annual Fund and Queen's Centre), the needs and priorities of the Advancement Office (Alumni Engagement), and issues relevant to Alumni and about Alumni (eg. events on Aberdeen St.). In short, our priorities are set by us, but influenced – at the outset and ongoing – by the larger set of stakeholders who we aim to represent and support. For 2007, I will seek out and incorporate more significant direct input from the Branches and Assembly into the priorities for the Alumni Association.

Focusing our Energy and Resources

There are five priorities for the upcoming January – September period. The order set below is purposeful and reflects timing and level of importance.

1. Build and Grow the QUAA

Building alumni engagement requires local leaders showing the way by example. As a result, we need improved infrastructure to source, mobilize, activate and recognize alumni leaders, local and worldwide. We must add to the quantity and quality of our alumni volunteer base – and do so in a systematic and regenerative way to ensure that our pool of leaders is growing and sustainable. Changes to our Constitution and Bylaws, our Leadership Development and Nominating process and results, Alumni Assembly and the enormously important interface with Region and Branches will help facilitate growth. This will support the critical goal of ensuring that the QUAA and alumni in general continue to be viewed as a key stakeholder in the affairs of the University including the right type and level of impact on the student and alumni experience.

2. Improve Homecoming for 2006 and Beyond

Events create and consolidate experiences, and Homecoming is the premiere event for alumni. We must be active and decisive in our influence on the planning and execution for Homecoming 2006. This will contribute to averting, or at least mitigating, any potential negative issues by ensuring that material changes are in place to help stabilize the future of Homecoming by smoothing out the cycle of street-partying and any behavior deemed harmful to the university and its place in the community.

3. Improve the Transition from Students to Alumni

QUAA and alumni leaders worldwide are often drawn from the deep pools of local student leaders, so engaging graduates writ large, with a focus on student leaders, will be important as we look to develop, emphasize and communicate what is meant by the "rights, privileges and responsibilities" of being a Queen's alumni. In many measures, the most important alumni are recent graduates since they reflect the

current experience on campus and therefore foreshadow the future profile of the growing alumni population. Their experiences are fresh, raw and immensely important in determining how Alumni can help enrich and enlarge the student experience. As a start, the Convocation experience requires a significant re-thinking if we are to better use this key opportunity to influence the student mindset about their transition into becoming alumni. This priority has an important connection to increasing volunteerism, as well as establishing and conditioning the practice of annual alumni giving to Queen's.

4. Revitalize Alumni in the Toronto Market

The size, concentration and wealth of this market demands attention. It is our largest market of alumni and yet metrics appear to point toward lower engagement than the national average. As a result, increasing engagement in Toronto is essential for affecting alumni engagement broadly. Moving national measures on engagement is only possible if we affect Toronto. Lessons about engagement in other large cities where engagement is good - notably Calgary and Ottawa – must be sourced and applied where suitable, together with lessons from other non-Queen's causes in Toronto that successfully engage our alumni. A rapid and practical diagnosis that seeks to uncover the barriers to higher engagement and better understand the current status of Queen's mindshare will be an important step to pave the way for solutions. We already know that a continued increase in the number of activities and events in Toronto is likely required in order to build a greater presence. Making headway in Toronto will have significant spillover benefits across the full range of QUAA committees (see attached Board Committees).

5. Establish firm platform for Queen's Annual Fund

The Principal's Task Force outlined a new Alumni engagement model that placed fundraising as the outcome of good alumni engagement practices; specifically the first four priorities should contribute to broader, deeper and more sustained giving to Queen's, both in non-financial and financial terms. We have learned that participation in the Annual Fund is one of the key measures of alumni engagement and with the "Think Big" campaign currently underway and enjoying good early wins, we must support that new approach and learn from it as we look to establish the Annual Fund as a growing ongoing source of recurring funding for Queen's. The success of our engagement activities and the funding they help to generate will be directly responsible for creating the margin of success: between a good University and our great University. If we are successful, we will have affected a shift in Alumni mindset, away from a dominating series of Capital Campaigns towards one that is complemented by a steady-stream of renewable giving toward the University's most pressing priorities.

Having Measures of Success is Important

Since I report regularly to the Advancement Committee of the Board, and given the solid partnership with Alumni Relations and Annual Giving Department, I propose their metrics become ours, and vice versa. On a quarterly basis we report event participation, dollars raised, and so forth – measures that matter to alumni engagement and therefore to our work and our priorities. As a starting point, I attach the most recent quarterly report for reference. This report may evolve somewhat and form the basis of recording our successes and informing our lessons learned.

Laying Groundwork for 2007

Next year's priorities will be informed by what went well and what is remaining from the 2006 list, combined with the overall needs and direction of the University, students, and Alumni around the world. Developing these integrated priorities will begin in advance of next Assembly, and will form a key element in the agenda for our time together in September. Direction and feedback from the Branches needs to be a formal input into the process. This is essential and has been absent in the recent past owing

to the need for the improvements in the centre of the volunteer governance – namely the QUAA Board and its Committees. As a result, Branch / Regional relations as well as Classes / Reunions will likely surface as key Alumni needs and major contributors to our priority list. I also anticipate that a couple of our current priorities will continue as priorities, however, relative importance may shift down on the basis of a successful Homecoming, rising indications of Toronto engagement and so forth.

I hope this brief overview and its attachments help you understand and explain the priorities for this year. The Committee mandates that are associated with these priorities are being actively developed by the QUAA Board and where you have an interest in a particular area, please let us know. We will be posting mandates on the QUAA site as part of our communication and formally soliciting for volunteers to sit on various Committees as and when the mandates require.

As I always, I welcome your feedback. And thank you for everything you do for Queen's!

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