

Successful Reunion Strategies: What It Takes to Get Alumni Back and Giving



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**Association of American Law Schools
Section on Institutional Advancement**

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Why are we here?

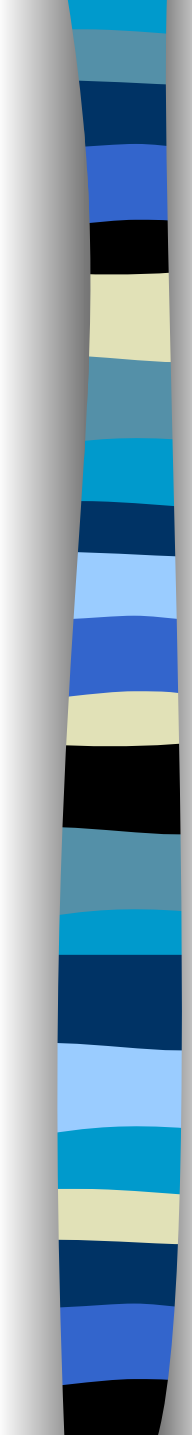
We are a critical part of something much bigger.

Academic planning

+ Budgeting

+ Fundraising

= **Support for institution's strategic goals**



What's so special about Reunion? Why do it?

Is this a program meeting a development objective not met elsewhere?

- Reunions provide the institution an unusual opportunity over most other advancement programs
- Reunions serve a variety of alumni interests and needs
- Reunions utilize a cadre of volunteers at varying levels who serve the institution in a myriad of meaningful ways



How effective is our program...

- ... in providing an on-going stream of unrestricted revenue to be used for budget-relief?
- ... in developing and sustaining connections between our alumni and the institution?
- ... at developing and supporting alumni volunteers and leaders?



Answer?

We think we know **but we are not sure**

Desired Outcome?

A “model” reunion program

How?

1. Recruit a volunteer advocate
2. Establish a task force
3. Conduct a formal evaluation of the program
- both social and financial



Our Plan of Attack

1. Internal evaluation of program strengths and weaknesses
2. Look at the big picture – both social and financial
3. Conduct a ten-year review of reunion data and giving trends
4. Research best practices –
Stanford, U Penn, Yale, Columbia, Northwestern, Duke, UVA and Georgetown
4. Brainstorm, plan and develop model and draft recommendations



Proceed with the premise that the three primary objectives of a strong reunion program are to:

1. Facilitate capital and unrestricted giving to the institution through class identity
2. Serve as the primary vehicle by which we develop and sustain the connection of alumni with the institution
3. Serve as the primary means to identify, train and utilize a significant number of alumni volunteers



Reunion Program Task Force

Charge:

1. Determine the extent to which the current Reunion Program is and can be effective; make a formal recommendation to the DEC regarding proposed changes for a strengthened program.
2. Create the framework within which a successful Reunion Program can be built and implemented.



Reunion Program Task Force

Composition:

- Leadership provided by National Reunion Chair
- Six-member committee – chair and five active alumni who have demonstrated success within their own class organizations, and who have expressed commitment to the long-term health of the Reunion Program at CLS
- Staff support provided by Director of Major Gifts, Director of Annual Fund and Director of Alumni Relations



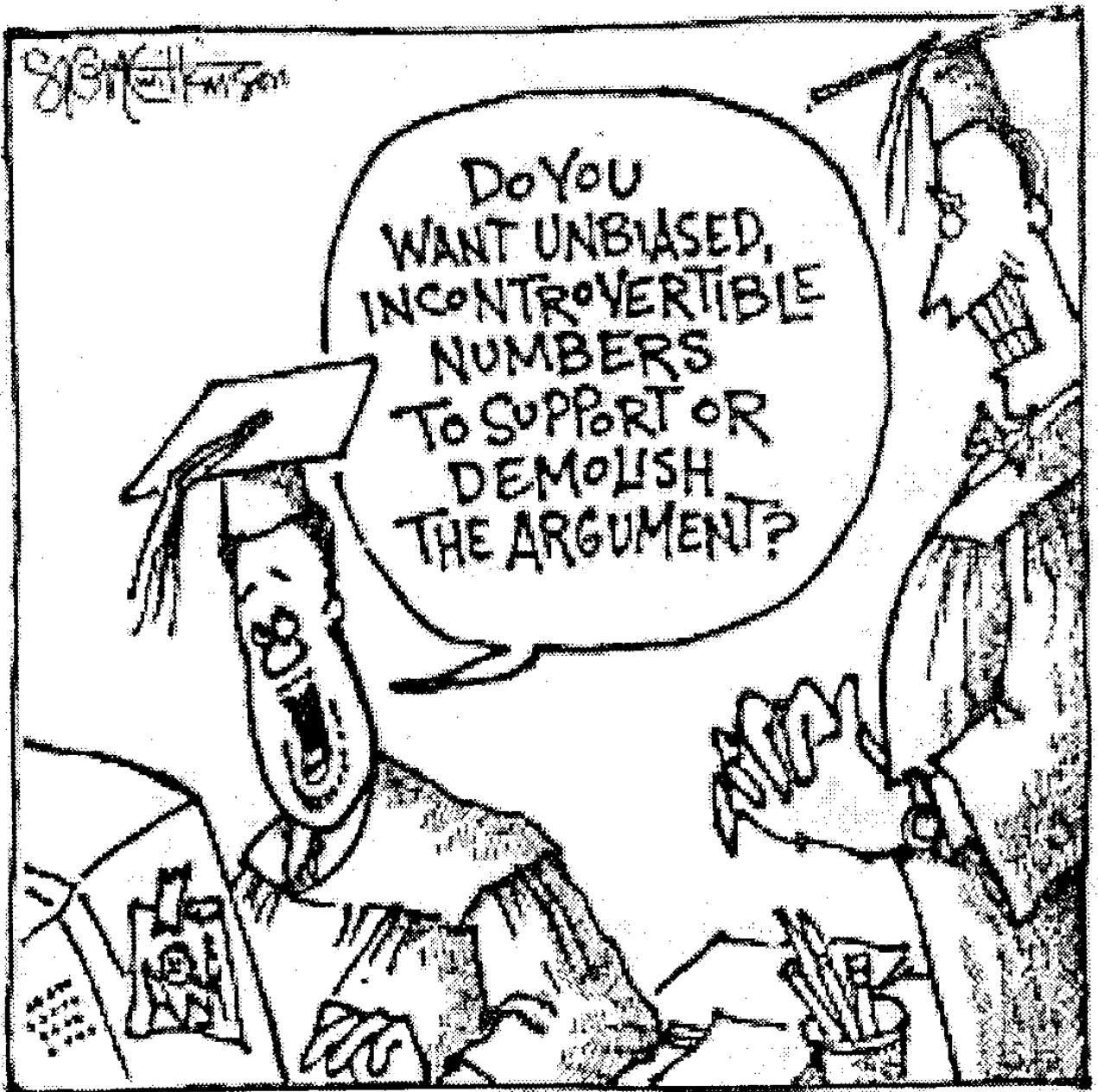
Reunion Program Task Force

Time Commitment:

- An 18-24 month period commencing July 1, 2001
- Monthly commitment of 3-4 hours
- TF members expected to attend three DSLC meetings a year: September, January and May
- Additional meetings and conference calls will be conducted as necessary
- Logistical support will be provided by the Development Office

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DO YOU
WANT UNBIASED,
INCONTROVERTIBLE
NUMBERS
TO SUPPORT OR
DEMOLISH
THE ARGUMENT?





Notable Observations

- Undeveloped constituencies:
 - Women
 - Single-degree holders
 - LL.M graduates
 - Minorities
- Reunion class donor participation growing steady; significant inconsistency in reunion dollars raised
- Insufficient low-end and mid-level gifts
- Need more effective strategies for prospect identification



Critical Issues

- Volunteer and donor recognition
- Volunteer (and staff) evaluations
- Volunteer placement strategies
- Preserving institutional knowledge
- Planning documents and timeline
- Volunteer training, on and off campus
- Use of affinity groups
- Database needs
- Tracking results, identifying credible goals and measuring success
- Leadership and committee recruitment
- staff and budget resources dedicated to program
- Leveraging gifts and Reunion attendance



Critical Fundraising Issues

- Gift crediting guidelines
- Class project guidelines
- Class case and mission statements
- Restricted vs. unrestricted support
- Gift potential assessment & size of gift table



Critical Alumni Relations Issues

- Programming
- CLE
- Faculty involvement
- Daycare
- Collaboration with central university efforts



The “Model” Reunion Program at Cornell Law School

From

Relationships with alumni

To

Reciprocal strategic engagement
with donors



Cornell Law School

Reunion Program Mission Statement

The Reunion Program seeks to begin or enrich the connection of alumni and friends to the Law School community through a campus-based program of social and educational activities. Additionally, it will seek to engage the intellectual and financial resources of alumni – resources which are critical to the achievement of the Law School’s broader mission of providing the highest quality legal education to our students.

DRAFT – May 2001