

Five-Year Strategic Plan

2008 - 2013

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs)

at

Cornell University

CALS Alumni Association

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History

Cornell's College of Agriculture (and Life Sciences, as renamed in the 1960s) Alumni Association was founded on February 25, 1909, when Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey presided over a meeting of current and former students gathered to discuss the need for the college.

The group proposed a formal organization with the name "The Student Association of the New York State College of Agriculture." The organization had two sections, one for undergraduates, and one for former students. The name was changed to the Alumni Association in 1917.

The first constitution, adopted in 1910, had as its aims and purposes: 1) to promote fellowship among all students, past and present; 2) to advance the interests of the college in all ways; and 3) to further the interests of country life. Projects related to problems of farm production, rural schools, fairs, roads, and the like.

Throughout its history, the association has been interested in helping to interpret the college to its public. Some of the ideas upon which the association embarked included securing information on agricultural matters for members, representing the college to local communities and state officials, and promoting occupational discussions and reading circles.

Today, nearly 100 years later, association projects and programs have shifted with the changing needs of a diverse alumni population, but the objectives remain similar. It helps to connect over 45,000 alumni around the world with the College, Cornell, classmates, faculty and administration.

Rationale for an Alumni Association

The Association provides an opportunity for ownership, leadership and commitment in helping to shape the future of the College. In partnering with the Dean, the Association will ensure that it addresses pertinent issues to support the College in maintaining its excellence in teaching, research, and extension.

Alumni involvement in key leadership roles provides an opportunity to suggest and/or support change to meet the needs of the College and its alumni association. Alumni-sponsored events bring alumni and friends together to receive updates on the College, to be exposed to the spirit generated by enthusiastic leaders and to be reunited with classmates and professors.

Mission Statement

The Association exists to promote fellowship and leadership among alumni, students, and faculty and to advance the teaching, research and extension functions of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University.

Purpose

For the College

The Association provides an opportunity for alumni to stay connected with the College. The Association encourages alumni to influence teaching, research and the extension agenda (most important in New York State). Also, the Association serves as an unofficial public relations, development and marketing arm for the College through financial and volunteer activities.

The Association will consider each of the following items when developing and directing alumni events and activities:

- Focus on the academic priorities of the College:
 - a. Renewable Energy
 - b. Adaptation to Climate Change
 - c. Science and Business
 - d. Structural Biology, Cell Signaling, Computational Genomics and System Biology
 - e. International Agriculture, Food, Economic and Environmental Systems
 - f. Information Sciences/Technology and Social Sciences
- Provide a venue for development and support of the Capital Campaign.
- Promote fellowship among alumni.
- Leverage faculty speakers.
- Land Grant Mission.
- Engage and support current students and assist in recruitment of new students.

For Alumni

The Association provides networking opportunities and career benefits. It provides a social meeting place for friends of the College and encourages contact among alumni to enhance the value of the Cornell degree through networking with professionals in related fields.

For Students

The Association actively assists in student recruitment, providing interaction between students and alumni to enrich the educational experience through contact with the working world beyond the campus setting. This helps ease the transition by creating informal networks, career and other professional or vocational advising. Association members can also play a helpful recruitment and mentoring role through the Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network (CAAAN) for prospective students, registering on the Alumni Career Link through the Career Development Office, participation on alumni panels, and hosting career exploration trips.

For Cornell Alumni Federation

The Association actively participates in Federation activities and supports in principle its' goals and objectives. The Association believes both in a strong Federation organization and an independent Association that meets the unique needs of CALS alumni.

For the University

The Association fosters and promotes the idea of lifelong education and an on-going relationship with our "alma mater," which supports development efforts.

Organization Structure

The organizational structure of the Association is designed to serve local alumni in the communities where they live and work and to ensure representation on the Board of Directors.

Directors

Directors serve as one of 28 members of the Board of Directors of the Association and may serve as Chairs of their respective District Leadership Teams. Directors serve one of the following roles:

- **New York State Directors** –The district structure, in New York State, includes 14 regions with each region and Director representing specific counties in the state.
- **At-Large Directors** – At-Large Directors represent metropolitan areas where there are significant numbers of CALS alumni. These areas currently include: New York City, Boston, Chicago, Northern California, Northern New Jersey, Philadelphia and Washington, DC. There are six additional At-Large Director positions on the Board. These positions are filled with other alumni who represent a specific alumni population, have a specific skill, or have a strong interest in serving on the Board.
- **Other Directors** – Other Directors serving on the Board include the President, Immediate Past President, Faculty Representative, Graduate Student, Senior Student, and Junior Student.

Committees

Work of the Association is primarily done through committees made up of directors, other alumni and staff and students of the College. These committees include, but are not limited to:

- **Executive** – *Carries out and oversees the business of the Association in between meetings of the Board of Directors.*
- **Planning** – *Develops, for the approval of the full Board, the Association's goals and strategies outlined within the 5-Year Plan and is responsible for tracking progress toward these goals. Deals with other issues of policy, structure and new initiatives as they come before the Board.*
- **Events** - *Showcases the unique expertise of the college and its alumni, and enhance participation in campus and regional events and celebrations.*
- **Membership** - *Increases the dues paying number of alumni and renewal of memberships*
- **Finance and Investments** - *Maintains sound fiscal decisions regarding funding of association activities. Generate additional income from existing and new sources.*
- **Awards** - *Selects and recognizes outstanding alumni through an awards and public recognition program.*
- **Nominations** - *Recommends Association members for appointment to the Board of Directors and nominates a slate of officers for the Board of Directors.*

- **Student Leadership** - *Fosters stronger relationships between current students, potential students, the Association and College.*

Leadership Teams

The Association strives to establish active leadership teams throughout the country. Leadership teams are local groups of CALS alumni members who organize events and promote membership in their geographical region. Successful leadership teams have a Director and a team of 6-10 alumni with responsibilities often rotating among them. Involving alumni that represent the full diversity of the area's alumni population is critical to building a strong team.

Relationship with Local Cornell Clubs and Associations

A goal of the Association is to establish a successful relationship with local Cornell Clubs or other alumni groups and to promote cooperation between the organizations. A member of the CALS leadership team will offer to serve on the Cornell Club (or other alumni group) to represent CALS interests and assist in CAAAN activities.

Executive Committee

1. **Goal:** Provide direction and support to all committees of the Association

Action Plan:

- Executive Committee members will serve as Chair or play an active role in other Association committees.
- Delegate assignments to Association committees for analysis and review and request recommendations to the Board.

2. **Goal:** Continuing education and training for new and existing directors.

Action Plan:

- New directors shall meet by teleconference with the President and a staff member within 30 days of being appointed for New Director Training.
- Place the entire handbook on our website for review
- The President will remind existing directors at the beginning of each year to review the current 5-year plan, director's handbook, and bylaws.

3. **Goal:** Keep online and written literature current

Action Plan:

- Update handbook online every June.
- Update director information within 30 days of changes.

4. **Goal:** Communication

Action Plan:

- The Executive Committee will meet monthly via teleconference to ensure that the goals of the association are being met.
- The Association president or staff will provide quarterly updates to the Board via the Board listserve on Association business, activities, membership and other news items from the college.
- The Ithaca Office staff will keep the Executive Committee informed of any changes to the College priorities so that the Association can assist the College in attaining its goals.

Planning Committee

1. **Goal:** Address issues of governance, structure, and new initiatives.
Action Plan:
 - Consider issues of broad impact to the Association, in collaboration with applicable committees, and report findings and recommendations to the Board. Such issues may include redistricting, funding structure, and programming.
 - Review and make recommendations for updating the By-Laws of the Association.

2. **Goal:** Monitor progress in meeting the goals in the 2008-2013 Five-Year Strategic Plan.
Action Plan:
 - Request annual reports from each committee of the Association at the spring meeting on their progress toward achieving the goals identified in the plan.
 - The reports will be due to the planning committee by March 31st and used to develop the Annual Report presented by the President at the Annual meeting.

3. **Goal:** Develop the 2013-2018 Five-Year Strategic Plan for the Association.
Action Plan:
 - Begin development of the plan in 2012.
 - Engage all committees of the Association for input in the development process.

4. **Goal:** Contact the Dean of the College for annual feedback on the activities and functionality of the Association.
Action Plan:
 - Send a letter to the Dean requesting feedback by the spring meeting.

Events Committee

1. **Goal:** Plan and produce strategic, effective, quality programs, events and communications that highlight College priorities (especially during the Capital Campaign years), promote alumni fellowship and encourage alumni to reconnect and give back to the College. Look for partnership opportunities with other groups and identify target audiences, especially during the campaign years, to bring new faces back to campus for the above events.

Action Plan:

- 2008-2009: Celebrate the CALS Alumni Association Centennial with an on-campus event, such as “Back to the Classroom.”
- 2009-2010: CALS Open House event.
- 2010-2011: Department/Program specific event specific to campaign priorities.
- 2011-2012: CALS Open House event.
- 2012-2013: Department/Program specific event specific to dean’s priorities.

Membership Committee

1. **Goal:** Improve marketing processes to keep materials and activities updated and current to call positive attention to CALSAA.

Action Plan:

- Revise print materials as needed
- Revise existing and develop new electronic media
- Provide easy payment options
- Develop branding materials for display at all CALSAA events
- Develop meaningful communications calendar to include graduating senior mailing, fall 'after graduation' mailing, 1-year after graduation, renewals, lifetime membership appreciation mailing and our new member drive mailing.

2. **Goal:** Increase recruitment activities to all alumni with emphasis on recent graduates.

Action Plan:

- Emphasize communications media preferred by recent graduates
- Promote membership benefits preferred by alumni groups
- Identify ways to identify and engage graduate students of the College, such as field specific activities.

3. **Goal:** Promote the development of programs and activities that provide perceived value to the CALSAA membership

Action Plan:

- Conduct useful needs assessments (i.e., simple surveys of undergrads at on-campus events, electronic surveys)
- Share listings of regional "programs that work"
- Sponsor on-campus events

Finance Committee

1. **Goal:** Maintain sound fiscal decisions regarding funding Association activities, and Membership Dues.
Action Plan:
 - Review membership dues annually with the Membership and Finance committees and make recommendations to the Board.
 - Promote the sale of Life Memberships to reduce costs and increase earnings of Life Membership Long-Term Investment Pool (LTIP).
 - Promote responsible financial decisions to ensure a balanced budget.

2. **Goal:** Generate additional income from existing and new sources.
Action Plan:
 - Explore funding opportunities to support programs the College deems resonant to its priorities.
 - Consider reducing the traditional 2-year free membership for new graduates a 1-year membership.
 - Consider offering an automatic renewable process for Association dues similar to class dues.
 - Develop fundraising activities that do not interfere with the fundraising goals of the college.
 - Raise funds to cover the costs of attendance of the Outstanding Alumni Awards Banquet and Reunion Breakfast.
 - Apply for Cornell Alumni Federation grants for new and innovative programs.
 - Annually assess the sales, profits, and marketing of CALS merchandise.
 - Continue to explore other opportunities of revenues from other sources, such as Cornell Alumni Federation grants.

3. **Goal:** Responsibly Manage the Life Member Investment Pool.
Action Plan:
 - Develop a plan to amortize the Lifetime Membership dues so that funds will be available to properly service the membership during their lifetimes.
 - Use a portion of the annual income from the LTIP for student scholarships.
 - Draft a policy, for Board consideration, to use LTIP funds for unbudgeted expenses, unique events or special requests from the Dean.

Awards Committee

1. **Goal:** Strengthen alumni leadership for the Association and College through public recognition of outstanding achievements in life and service to CALS by alumni as well as the CALS faculty who have taught them.

Action Plan:

- Annually solicit nominations, and re-nominations of unusually successful CALS alumni and unusually effective CALS faculty members from members of the Alumni Association and the CALS faculty. Select the most deserving nominees in each year after reading and discussing the documentation. Annually, up to five alumni will be chosen for an outstanding alumni award, and up to one will be chosen for a young (age 40 or younger) achievement award. Up to two faculty/staff members will be chosen annually for an outstanding faculty/staff awards.
2. **Goal:** Recognize efforts of leadership team members.
- Action Plan:**
- Consider creation of an award to recognize outstanding contributions by a leadership team member.

Nominations Committee

1. **Goal:** Identify and fill board vacancies in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Action Plan:

- Fill board vacancies for district directors in a timely fashion.
- Align representation to reflect current alumni demographics.
- Develop a slate of officers for the Executive Committee.
- Identify leaders for board positions who:
 - a) Embrace the important role they play as ambassadors for the college.
 - b) Advocate to position the college for support among alumni, legislators, and other key stakeholders.
 - c) Connect with alumni and friends in their local area and help to engage in college programs and deeds.
 - d) Explore new ways to build an effective partnership with the Dean and CALS administration.
 - e) Represent key demographic areas important to College alumni population.
 - f) Embrace diversity.
 - g) Recruit alumni interested in planning local events or other activities to further promote the College.

Student Leadership Committee

1. **Goal:** Enrich student educational experiences through recruitment, recognition, strategic events, communication, and connections to alumni, careers and employment.

Action Plan:

- The Association's undergraduate and graduate student directors will organize and host one on-campus event during the fall semester that promotes and raises the awareness of the Association to CALS students.
 - The Association's undergraduate and graduate student directors will work with the Office of Academic Programs to organize and host one on-campus event during the spring semester that promotes and raises the awareness of the Association to the CALS student body. This event will only take place if the Office of Academic Programs is available to co-sponsor and help coordinate.
 - Sponsor a spring semester activity that raises the awareness of the Association to seniors and creates a lasting impression, an event such as an alumni speaker/panel, career coaching, etc. If speakers cannot be confirmed for the spring this event can take place in the fall. The goal is to provide the best programming and get the best speaker's to create the most impact.
 - Consider organizing an Association event specifically for graduate students in the College.
 - The student directors will draft an e-mail to be sent out during the fall semester (only in conjunction with an event announcement) and every spring semester (regardless if there are events) to the CALS student body (targeting specifically seniors in the spring), informing them of the activities and opportunities provided through participation in the Association.
2. **Goal:** Succession planning for continued student participation and representation in the Association.

Action Plan:

- Each spring a current sophomore student will be recruited to become the next junior student director.
- Every two years a graduate student will be recruited to become the next graduate student director. Recommendations will come from faculty members.
- Consider recruitment of members to serve on a Student Leadership committee.