Alumni Council and Volunteer Weekend

October 11—12, 2013

Work Session Summaries
Dear Alumni Volunteers:

The Office of Development and Alumni Relations hosted the fall 2013 Alumni Council and Volunteer Weekend Oct. 11-13, 2013 for a weekend celebrating Philanthropy at Grinnell College. Etymologically, philanthropy means “the love of humanity”- love in the sense of caring for, nourishing, developing, or enhancing; humanity in the sense of “what it is to be human.”

During Volunteer Weekend, over 98 Grinnell volunteers gathered together to engage in critical dialogue about how class leaders and College ambassadors can share the message of Grinnell College philanthropy: how giving of time, talent, and resources advances your alma mater. A variety of events and seminars presented different dimensions of the Grinnell College experience: volunteers learned about Grinnell’s need-blind admissions selection policy, ways to discuss philanthropy, alumni networking on the Web, international experiences in education, and the power of a liberal-arts education in career development.

At its core, the weekend was an opportunity to take stock in what makes Grinnell College distinctive, and worthy of support.

To help our volunteers in their ongoing leadership on behalf of Grinnell College, we have compiled the enclosed summaries of each seminar, authored by Editorial Fellow Luke Saunders ’12. The PowerPoint presentations and other supplementary materials used during the seminars have been posted online at: forum.grinnell.edu/activities/events/2013-fall-volunteer-weekend

The enclosed materials, along with the online supplements, are designed to provide talking points about Grinnell College today. We hope you will use this information for class letters, appeals, emails, and social media postings.

We stand ready to help you with your work and with interpretation of these materials. If you have questions, please contact us, or another member of the alumni relations or Pioneer Fund teams. Our full contact information is on the next page.

Year after year we are consistently amazed by the loyalty, commitment and generosity of Grinnell volunteers. So to all of you, we extend our sincere thanks and our deep appreciation. Your gifts and volunteerism ensure that Grinnell will continue to thrive for the next generation and the one after that. We look forward to new chapters in our partnership in the months and years ahead.

Warmest regards,

Jayn Bailey Chaney ’05, director of alumni relations
Mae Turley, director of the Pioneer Fund
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Defining Grinnell's Distinctive Identity

with Joe Bagnoli, vice-president for enrollment/dean of admission and financial aid, and Jim Reische, vice-president for communications

As Grinnell’s Trustees and other leaders have considered the future, it became clear that the College struggles to attract the mix of students it wants. Many students who are accepted don’t enroll.

That situation and others led to a discussion of the College’s image, and more specifically its brand.

Now, Grinnell is undergoing an assessment of its institutional identity. The institutional identity project is more than re-branding — it goes deeper — digging into the College’s history and legacy.

We’re talking about way more than a logo or tagline here. An institutional identity involves a set of associations that each individual carries in their head about a particular institution.

The question becomes how to influence those perceptions. Grinnell has contracted with Crane MetaMarketing to help with that.

Crane visited campus in the fall to meet with faculty, students and staff for interviews and focus groups. They discussed, among other things, the image those people had of Grinnell before they got there, and how that has changed, if it has.

In December, Crane plans to give a “Category of One” paper, which is their processing of what they heard on campus and what they culled from College documents. The paper will detail what Crane found to be truly distinctive and compelling about Grinnell with reference to both our own authenticity and what students want.

The College plans to share this information with alumni, who are in a unique position as stewards of the brand. Alumni will be asked to read and reflect on the paper to judge the authenticity of Crane’s conclusions. The college is counting on the participation and engagement of alumni in the coming months to vet this portion of the Institutional Identity Project.

A big part of Grinnell’s identity is its accessibility. Grinnell offers an educational experience of the highest quality with the promise of meeting need, and that is how applicants perceive it. The College provides a ladder of access for students who excel and who want an excellent college experience, but can’t afford it.

However, there has been substantial discussion about the sustainability of the current admissions and aid policies.

Grinnell is one of 45 institutions that is need-blind in its admission selection process, and meets 100 percent of demonstrated financial need
for those who enroll. The College has far fewer full-pay students that other need-blind schools. Grinnell’s full-pay students account for approximately 10 percent of enrollment; the average for the remaining need-blind institutions hovers around 45 percent.

It costs the endowment $1,341 a year to replace a single full-pay student. There are other challenges.

More domestic students are applying to Grinnell, with the number needing a significant amount of financial aid nearly doubling over a four-year period. The College must find a sustainable model that will allow it to continue the need-blind policy while also meeting 100 percent of demonstrated need.

Right now, there is an estimated $4 million gap between the total operational costs and the College’s revenue. That leaves Grinnell with three main options: borrow from the endowment, increase net student revenue, or increase philanthropic gifts. Or a combination of the three.

The College already has been using money from the endowment to bridge the gap, so the options it is putting forward now are increasing net student revenue by attracting more full-pay students, and encouraging alumni philanthropy.

It’s easy to lose track of the full amount of aid students get. In fact, even those who are considered full-pay are subsidized.

Here’s why. Grinnell College spent $105 million to cover operating expenses last year. When divided by the number of enrolled students, the cost of a year at Grinnell comes to $66,000 per student. No student pays that much, not even full-pay students. Other institutions would call this a hidden scholarship. The bottom line: each year, whether a student receives aid or not, that student still gets $16,000 off the true price of a year at Grinnell.

**Need-blind Admission, Need-based Aid**

*with Joe Bagnoli, vice-president for enrollment/dean of admission and financial aid; Beth Halloran, vice-president for development and alumni relations; and Jim Reische, vice-president for communications, for updates and discussion on the current state of the College pertaining to the Board decision to retain need-blind admission but reassess in 2015.*

Compared to other institutions that have a need-blind admission policy and meet 100 percent of demonstrated financial need, Grinnell receives significantly less net tuition revenue and private gifts per student. Grinnell has supported its admission and financial aid policies through the endowment, which is less able to sustain the growing costs of operation and financial aid over time. To increase tuition revenue, the College has
introduced a number of recruitment and enrollment management initiatives without compromising its need-blind commitment. For example, we introduced a graduated loan cap and increased the number of entering international students, who are admitted in a need-aware context, and lowered the total discount awarded to them. If enrollment management measures are insufficient to generate sufficient revenue and we are unable to increase philanthropic support, by the fall of 2015, the Grinnell Board of Trustees will consider “whether to pursue more aggressive strategies or become more openly need-aware.”

Less than a third of alumni are giving back to the College on an annual basis, and less than 7 percent have given specifically to financial aid, based on records for 16-credit alumni. The 32 percent of alumni, or 6,529 of the 20,157 alums who donated to the college between July 1, 2012 and Oct. 7, 2013, gave a combined $4.8 million with an average gift of $737, including estates. That was below the giving level of Alumni Council members (average $2,203); class agents, $1,355; class fund directors, $1,142; and committee and reunion planners ($890).

Many donations go to need-based aid. Between July 1, 2012 and Oct. 7, 2013, 1,882 donors gave $500,376 for need-based aid, for an average donation of $266. Alumni gave an average of $301, or a total of $408,022 from 378 donors.

Among all donors, $132,911 of the $500,376 in need-based aid donations came in response to an appeal after the Trustees’ vote.

Through the fall of 2015, the College will inform parents, students, and alumni about the potential need-blind change coming in 2015. It will also provide frequent updates on progress to a clear goal and prepare audiences for all possible outcomes.

The Grinnell Magazine will keep its readers apprised of the situation; President Raynard S. Kington will be delivering speeches to alumni in 23 cities; and there will be updates on the alumni-networking site, Forum. The College is counting on alumni to keep each other informed too, through class letters and other communications.

Since the late 1980s, when the College adopted its need-blind policy, Grinnell has prioritized access to academic excellence for those who otherwise couldn’t afford it. The policy has benefited many alumni, and many more hope to preserve it. To do so, a sustainable model must be established. Until then, and until a decision is made by the Board of Trustees in the fall of 2015, the College and its alumni network will work to keep students, alumni, and friends of the College informed about how they can help to be a part of the solution.
Class Agent Volunteer Workshop

Class agents met to discuss their volunteer role and strategies to help them in this position. They also learned about the nomination process for Alumni Awards.

Class agents shared ways in which classmates can be encouraged to submit entries for the class letter. Ideas ranged from sending class e-mail blasts to doing personal outreach. Creative strategies for writing a class letter without many entries were also discussed. The idea of sharing creative class letters with all class agents in order to learn from each other was well received and the Alumni Relations Office will facilitate this in the future. Also, the need for more conference calls, webinars, and conversation between class agents was emphasized and will help with the goal of class agents learning from each other. Class agents discussed the need for alumni to keep their Forum profiles updated with their most recent contact information to help aid in the distribution of class letters on-line. It is clear that class agents are a dedicated group of volunteers who are open to learning new strategies to engage their classmates!

The selection process for Alumni Awards has changed slightly, but the criteria have not. Awards are given to alumni for contributions or service to the College, their profession, or their community. The criteria are intentionally broad to capture as much diversity of volunteer and alumni recognition as possible. It is important for nominators to tell as much of the story of a nominee as possible. Class agents should suggest nominations that include letters of support and additional documents that will broaden the understanding of the nominee’s contributions and why they are deserving of being considered for an alumni award. Nominators should also consider reaching out to family of the nominee for more information.

The Grinnell College Alumni Council receives 30 to 60 nominations for the 10 awards they give out each year. One or two of the annual awards are given to an alumnus who graduated within the last 10 years. The rest are spread out among class year, background, and profession. A recent change to the award rules now allows posthumous awards, but they are intended to be awarded rarely and mostly in the case of an unexpected death. Another rule change allows award nominations to stay in the pool for two additional reunions, which is usually about 10 years.
GRASP Volunteer Workshop:

GRASP Coordinators gathered in three separate training sessions during Volunteer Weekend to gain more knowledge and share ideas regarding their work with admission outreach in their regions. Joe Bagnoli, vice president for enrollment and dean of admission and financial aid gave an update regarding the state of admission at Grinnell today and the vision for the future of Grinnell admission. Volunteers had the opportunity to participate in a mock application session reviewing three applications of which they could admit one more student. Lively discussion ensued about the importance of various aspects of an applicant’s candidacy and Jennifer Hirsch, assistant director of admission gave insight into the application reading and review process at Grinnell. Participants left with a better understanding of what Grinnell looks for in an applicant. In session two, GRASP coordinators had the opportunity to meet with current senior students who are on-campus interviewers for the Office of Admission. Students and alumni volunteers shared best practices when interviewing prospective students along with challenges they have encountered. All participated in a story-telling workshop through which they learned the importance of sharing your Grinnell story with prospective students and families. A final session for GRASP coordinators involved a campus tour from Grinnell student tour guides, giving these volunteers the opportunity to see more of the campus of today in order to better represent Grinnell when recruiting students in their regions.

Class Fund Director Workshop:

Class Fund Directors returned to campus for two full sessions during Volunteer Weekend. These sessions covered recent updates in the job description, edits and updates to the handbook, a recap of fiscal year 2013 and a look into plans for fiscal year 2014. Volunteers worked through new calling initiatives with classmates and how they engage in potential conference calls or webinars in the future. Follow up materials for CFD attendees and those CFDs unable to attend were sent via email.
Careers, Life, and Service: Preparing Grinnellians for the Future

with Mark Peltz, associate dean and director of the new Center for Careers, Life, and Service (formerly the CDO) and a panel of five students

A Gallup poll conducted last spring showed that parents of college-bound students are more likely to believe that not attending college is a better path to a good job than a liberal-arts education. The job market has changed sharply since 2007, and it will likely take five or more years before the economy recovers to pre-recession levels.

Those factors have contributed to a lot of debate about higher education, some of which casts liberal-arts education in a false light. Some think that higher education either educates for the life of the mind, or focuses on vocational preparation for students. It’s a false dichotomy that hurts the reputation of liberal-arts colleges.

That misguided view ignores the possibility of producing well-rounded, educated graduates with skill sets and experience that would make them a very attractive hire. This is the kind of student who graduates from Grinnell — thoroughly educated and prepared for a career.

Grinnell’s Center for Careers, Life, and Service (CLS) assists students in career planning and finding internships, externships, and job-shadows.

Much of the CLS’s ideology is based on Tim Brown’s concept of the T-shaped person. The job candidates’ depth of skill is represented by the vertical line. The horizontal line stands for a disposition for collaboration across disciplines. Brown is the CEO of IDEO, global design consultants who help organizations innovate and grow.

By advancing partnerships between the CLS and the Office of Development and Alumni Relations, Grinnell students are exposed to a wider variety of opportunity to enhance both their depth of skill and their breadth of knowledge. Through the CLS, students are gaining a better understanding of the power of a liberal-arts education, and of active alumni. Here are a few of the powerful stories shared:

- Jennelle Nystrom ’14, a fourth-year computer science/art student, appreciates the fact that an alumnus recommended her for an internship at Microsoft and gave her advice that helped her ace the interview. During the internship, advice from alumni in the tech industry helped her succeed. Coming to Grinnell, she had no network, but through the industry tour in Silicon Valley and advice
from the CLS and alumni, she has found a way forward. Jennelle has a full-time offer from Microsoft as well as several other prospects.

- Tefiro Serunjogi ’15 is a third-year environmental and social entrepreneurship major from Kampala, Uganda. He was surprised to find poverty when he went to Joplin, Mo., for two weeks gutting and building houses during an alternative break trip in 2012. With alumni help, he organized his own trip to Texas this spring to help people in a disadvantaged neighborhood of Houston.

- Javon Garcia ’14 spent the summer of 2013 as a public-health intern at a community HIV/AIDS center in New York City. Without the help of Grinnell and internship funding through the Rosenfield Center, it wouldn’t have been possible. Javon is very interested in social work and hopes to pursue it as a long-term career goal. In New York, he worked with mobile testing units, testing sex workers and drug users for HIV/AIDS. Javon also received training on how to counsel HIV positive people. The experience was life-changing and was so hands-on that it helped make Javon sure of what he wants to do with his life, doing direct service and therapy work internationally.

- Corina Varlan ’14 has taken advantage of as many of the CLS options as possible. She was an alternative break volunteer, went on the industry tour of Silicon Valley, and thanks to a Rosenfield Grant to intern with a U.N. representative in Romania. Her first immersion into the professional world was a two-week externship in Washington, D.C. with Ed Senn ’79. During her externship, she met several alumni who were happy to offer advice on research, leadership, and the professional world. She learned how to both entertain dignitaries and function effectively in the professional world.

- Natalie Richardson Gentil ’14 spent three summer weeks at the University of Chicago’s Booth School of Business for the Summer Business Scholars program. It provided an introduction to accounting, finance, and marketing. Natalie was able to attend thanks to a full scholarship provided by Grinnell College. The program taught her skills and expanded her network. The previous summer, she received funding from the Wilson Program in Enterprise and Leadership at Grinnell to work with Team Rubicon in Los Angeles, where she stayed with an alumnus. Natalie is grateful for the alumni support that has allowed students to receive the best possible education at the College while also providing supplementary opportunities outside Grinnell.
Get Social for Grinnell: Building Community Through Social Media

with Gary Kuhlmann, associate director of electronic media and communications, and Jackie Aanes, director of operations for the Office of Development and Alumni Relations

The implementation of the new alumni networking website, Forum, was split into two phases. In phase one, the goal was to replace the key features and basic functions of the former networking site, Loggia. To be sure to give the users what they want, the minimum viable product was released, and now users are able to provide feedback on what they want to get out of the site. This barebones site is already outperforming Grinnell’s former alumni networking site. Compared to Loggia, Forum had significantly more unique visitors, page views, and average number of pages per visit than Loggia over the same dates one year apart.

As soon as phase one of the project has more of the bugs worked out, the Office of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) will proceed with phase two. In 2014, DAR will begin work on two major additions to Forum. Alumni will be granted access to certain academic journals, specifically JSTOR and Project Muse, through their Forum accounts. And the search engine on Forum will be optimized to allow multiple filters and other features of the search platform.

Two features that alumni volunteers might be interested in using are the directory and the group pages:

- Through the directory, volunteers have tools for finding and reaching out to other Grinnellians, identifying and learning about a target audience, and offering their expertise and service. In the profiles that make up the directory, Forum members can provide personal and professional information and share ways they can help other Forum members, with career advice, graduate school information, volunteer opportunities, internship opportunities, and even short-term housing.

- Through different kinds of group pages, alumni volunteers can spread awareness, cultivate stronger relationships, communicate in a personal and engaging way, and reach out quickly. Class leaders can use the class pages to start a discussion post or create a poll around a current concern and ask classmates to respond. Class agents, fund directors, GRASP coordinators, Alumni Council members, and others can use group page discussions to bounce ideas off one another or to engage other Forum members.
Global Grinnell

with David Cook-Martin, professor of sociology and director of the Center for International Studies, and Karen Edwards, associate dean and director of International Student Affairs

Grinnell College is located in a small town in the Midwest, but its campus covers the globe. The student body hails from 50 countries. Professors come from all over the globe. Two-thirds of Grinnell students end up studying off campus, often in other countries. This diversity makes it possible to have global discussions in and out of the classroom. The Center for International Studies works to instill a way of thinking about the world as a network rather than a series of national silos. It seeks to foster learning and inquiry through global connections and engagement.

Being connected globally is not just about sending students abroad or bringing international students or professors to Grinnell. The global perspective must be reflected in how the College operations are organized, in the staff, as well as in the curriculum and campus activities.

In fact, the global orientation shows up in a number of ways:

- Collaborations and partnerships with other institutions such as Nanjing University in China and Jawaharlal Nehru University in India.

- Visiting international scholars, artists, instructors at Grinnell.

- International study.

- Policies that encourage student to study languages, seek international internships, and work on international Mentored Advanced Projects.

- The College has offered five course-embedded trips since 2012, in part because teaching and learning don’t just happen in the classroom.

- Grinnell also offers a non-credit, co-curricular travel grant, which allows student leaders to travel abroad and integrate what they learn into their positions on campus.

The global education does not stop in the classroom, however. From student-organized clubs to residence life to cultural celebrations, students are driving and investing in global diversity. It helps that the College’s international enrollment continues to grow. Grinnell has actively recruited international students since the 1970s, and the number enrolled has more
than doubled since 1998. Each year Grinnell receives more than 1,500 international applicants. On average, roughly a third of all applications came from abroad. The College currently enrolls 206 international students from 52 countries, comprising 14 percent of the student body and the retention rate of international students approaches that of the general student body at nearly 93 percent. The international students are a diverse group in nationality, socioeconomic status and type of secondary school attended. The recruiting continued this fall, as three admission staff members planned to visit 13 countries.

The College’s goal for international students is that they fully engage in the classroom, the local community, and campus life. International students form cross-culture friendships. They connect to peers and together shape the world into a less abstract, more connected space with greater meaning.