

Truman State University

National Alumni Association Board of Directors

October 18, 2019 Meeting Minutes



The Truman National Alumni Board met in the Alumni Room of the Student Union Building on October 18, 2019. At 8:38 a.m. Natalie called the meeting to order and began with introductions.

Members in attendance were: Tania Cook, Hillary Prendergast, Jean Kaul Brown, John Nash, Jamie Matthews, Natalie Gerhart, Hope Harms, Stacy Tucker-Potter, Susan Scheurer, Adam Childers-Arnold.

Guests in attendance were: Steve Justice, Luke Callaghan, Lisa Marty and Tyana Lange

Approve the agenda Tania motioned Hope second. Motion passed.

Minutes from April meeting John motioned to approve. Jean seconded. Motion passed.

Chapter reports

Tania – MidMissouri tried to address elevating the liberal arts and lifelong learning. For example, they hosted a Churchill Museum tour as well as an observatory event. They also worked to connect with younger alumni and incoming students. The sad thing was that participation at all of those events was low which is concerning.

Hillary – the last event as a chapter was about a month and a half ago. They asked for someone to step up and coordinate some events. Hillary interested in connecting with the office on that.

Lori – starting to plan some upcoming events and assessing what the desires of the alumni in the area are.

Jean – very busy. Hosted a tailgate in conjunction with the Truman/Drake football game. It was a lot of work that required members to do extra work and went well. At the beginning of the year, they hosted a letter writing event for incoming students. They keep a busy event schedule with an event every month or every other month. They are going to have a booth at the Homecoming tailgate and a November event touring a historic theatre in Des Moines .

Jamie- summer is slower in Arizona. They continued TruCare with service events, and those are being planned by new people. Good to see new people get involved. For engaging future generations, there were are a few incoming students from Arizona. The chapter tried to host some

events for the incoming students but didn't have luck with students attending. The alumni who attended enjoyed the events. Beer tour in Tucson, trying to expand the geographical reach of the chapter

Omaha – Natalie Also tried to host a send off event. None attended. It was a good event for alumni and attracted new people. They would like to do outreach for students moving forward

Kansas City – Hope – Attendance at some key events has been down. Royals tailgate during the week – will continue to do that to see if the lower attendance was because of the day of the week. Golf tournament was exciting because we brought in new leadership. KC is rebuilding a bit with new leadership and acquainting them with the process. A new member did a social at the beginning of the year. Send off was relatively well attended but also down. Going into a slower time and revamping for the end of the year.

St. Louis – Lisa in May they hosted walking tour of St. Louis with a Truman alum; June Cardinals/Cubs game. Didn't do the before game nacho bar because it was a lot of expense for maybe not a lot of return. Also did a social hour that was smaller but new faces; send off in August was at a new location; wine event drew new faces. A couple weeks ago, they hosted a cemetery tour that was really popular.

NEMO – Susan; a lot of our events are student centered; May graduate picnic. We don't have a sendoff, we brand ours a student welcome. Only about 10 students showed up even though there are a huge number of students from the area. This fall we have done a tailgate and an event with volleyball. This is the second year we hosted a long drive competition instead of a golf tournament. The tournament didn't raise as much money as you would hope given the amount of work involved. We host the long drive competition in conjunction with another tournament. The board is seasoned, and we need to recruit new people to generate new ideas.

Student update – Adam Childers-Arnold

Good to be back on campus after his internship semester. The opening of the plaza is great. On the whole, there is some cynicism among the students based on the decline in enrollment and the decline in the decrease in revenue from the state. Natalie asked how that manifests. Adam said things aren't always as positive as they could be. Students aren't affected by the lawsuit as much as they are about decreased enrollment. Susan shared that students seem to be more likely to leave school altogether for mental health issues than they used to. They used to work with professors more to try to find ways to stay on campus and now she more often just hears that they left campus. Natalie asked what changes they made in policies about leave. Tyana spoke to the changes in generations based on grit. But she likes about Truman students is that they are willing to have hard conversations. They are likely to identify a problem and seek help quicker, which might be why students are taking medial leave faster.

Natalie – in our experience, the people who engage with this board enjoy working with students. We're thankful for Adam's report, and at the BFF this afternoon will give us more chances to talk to

students. We also have the opportunity to spread the word to alumni about how great our Truman experience was.

Tyana shared enrollment management is more than admissions. The three things we are focusing on are excellence before value. That's a small tweak, but the students she's spoken to say they come for the value but stay for the experience. From the marketing point of view, we don't want to be better than expected. We want to live up to expectations. Excellence promotes value because you get more than you pay for. We are done apologizing about Kirksville. We are not changing our admissions criteria, but we are removing highly selective from our language. It is very subjective, and there are students self-selecting and not applying because they think they can't get in. Retention factors in highly too, so we want to make sure we are addressing the student experience.

Natalie thanked Tyana for sharing her perspective

Committee Reports

Nominating committee report - Natalie Gerhart

Finding new members can be a challenge. New members, please introduce yourself. Hillary is coming from Denver. Had emailed the office expressing interest in getting involved, and there was an at-large opening. She had a great experience as a student, and she loved the small town experience and the professors she had. Susan is replacing Don Bindner for the NEMO chapter. She loves what students bring to Truman. Zach is new to the board but wasn't able to join us today. The St. Louis chapter has nominated Lisa Marty. Lisa introduced herself sharing that she was the president of the St. Louis Chapter. She has lived internationally teaching and now works in supply chain at Boeing. She enjoys being there because there is a large Truman alumni representation there. Natalie dismissed Lisa for discussion. John motioned to accept; Tania seconded. Motion passed. Two positions currently open, one in Chicago and one in Dallas. Both are struggling in terms of recruiting leadership.

Executive Committee – Natalie Gerhart

The bylaw revision came to the board in June. They are going to go before the BOG this afternoon.

There are several committee vacancies created by openings on the board, which creates more work. But if we can motivate cross-committee work, that will help. It's important to find ways to motivate ourselves to get work done in between meetings. Use time in lunch today to connect with your committees. We are here to support the staff here to keep momentum going. Walk away from this meeting with a charge – what can we do to make things better at the university between now and April? This speaks to the chapter of the future conversation. How can we engage alumni not in chapter areas? Many of them are already meeting with people in their area. How can we piggy back on that and engage those alumni?

Past President's Report – Hope Harms

As we think about the vacancies we have on the board and as we ask how to engage people, those are related. We aren't looking to just drop chapters, but we want to make sure our engagement funnels back up to the board.

Vice President's Report – Jamie Matthews

She's excited about the BFF. It's the culmination of conversations we have been having for a long time. We want concrete ways to utilize the energy of the students and alumni who are going to be in attendance. We want to make realistic goals that we can accomplish between now and April and in the long term.

Secretary's Report – Stacy Tucker-Potter

Stacy reported that membership is down in chapter areas. She encourages chapters to address this at their planning meetings. Centralized communication doesn't necessarily motivate people to join, and it's important for chapters to better define the value so they can articulate benefits of membership.

Advancement Update – Dr. Ernie Hughes

Dr. Hughes came to talk about the alumni directory and PCI and to have frank conversations. This is his third directory, and this is the first one that has had this kind of response. We almost killed the contract. We changed all the scripts. It was so bad that the president got involved writing the scripts. It was a sincere attempt to connect the alumni. It's been since 1999 since we produced a directory. We wanted a document that captured our alumni. I've always worked with Harris Connect. I like getting the data. There is no way I can get that much data from alumni in such a small time frame. We are working on getting a consultant in to work with Stacy. There is a steep decline in annual fund giving nationwide. If that pool keeps decreasing, we are going to have fewer people giving back. I called my alma mater, LSU. They do a directory every four years. The last one they did was great and they got great engagement. The next one they did was much smaller. One thing we are doing with this directory is just publishing name/year of graduation/degree for people who didn't respond. We could have put a surcharge on the directory as a donation, but we said no. They are going to do a kinder, gentler tone moving forward. Stacy will be monitoring calls. If they misrepresent, we are going to pull the contract. Your data is important to us. We need the data to come back to us so we can learn to steward alumni better. I apologize. The intent was pure to connect people. I apologize for the aggressive sales tactics. Lisa, is there a reason we didn't go with an online option? Feedback she got said that their generation doesn't appreciate having to make a call. The current system allows for an online update, but it has to go through the Office of Advancement. Steve Justice paid for the directory and was under the impression that the University was getting some of the money. Dr. Hughes clarified that none of that is coming to the University. Natalie thinks lots of people assume some of this is coming back to the University. Lori called a few people to hear their experience. People went in thinking it was just a directory and then were in a sales call. The people who were already connected to the university feel they don't need to have

their information updated because they are currently involved in the University. We have gone backwards in our trust factor and credibility. Dr. Hughes said the strong sales tactics played a role. Lori shared that any time you get a call from Truman, you will be hesitant to engage. Natalie shared that it wasn't just the sales pitch and that she is still unclear on the value proposition. Her generation is not excited about giving data out. She also doesn't understand what people can get out of this that they can't get from LinkedIn or Facebook. Lori said the concept is antiquated. Dr. Hughes shared that he uses a directory from his alma mater when he's moving to a new city. The goal is to have a static document. We intend to do this every 10 years. Natalie asked why a static document is of value. He answered that online doesn't capture where we are at this place and time. He likes the online piece but also sees the value of having a book in hand. Hope shared that it is useful to hear why people see the value. The thing that struck her from the communication that has come through hasn't felt very personal. Being able to communicate in a more personal way that Truman is known for. She didn't get the sense that this was a community building opportunity. The next wave of communication is key, and we need to tread lightly. Dr. Hughes is sending an email out under his signature introducing the new roll out of information. Susan shared that they recently did a Pershing directory project that was handled better and Stacy is going to pursue more information on that.. Natalie asked if the issue where people think their directory benefit the university will be resolved. She shared that the email communication should clarify that purchase of the directory does not benefit the university. Susan said it should be posted to Facebook. We aren't going to sell data. That is unethical. Tania talked to people from opposite perspectives. Some said they wouldn't answer another call from the University. Others were excited about the opportunity to connect with long lost classmates. Hope – could we draw a parallel to the Class Notes from the Truman Review to help people see the value? Adam asked if there was a way to connect graduating students with this project. The board is interested in making data available to young alumni.

Committee Reports

Chapter and Club Development

Jean Kaul-Brown shared that they have been busy with the Executive Committee planning BFF. They try to have monthly calls to keep everything moving. We hosted a president's call this summer to preview some of the things coming up with BFF.

Programs & Awards – Hope Harms

She addressed the new awards process that was utilized for the first time this year. We are making some strides there. In addition to awards, we are looking at Spirit Day, the travel program and TruCare. You will be hearing more from us on those things moving forward. Spirit Day was the first Friday of October. The committee leans heavily on staff for this one. There was some rebranding this year that might have contributed to lower participation. It would be good for the committee to evaluate how to market this in the future. The travel trip this year will be to California. Registrations are lower this year than previously. We need to survey our alumni to get a sense of

future locations. We will be reaching out to alumni groups before TruCare to promote that not just in chapter areas. We want to make sure that we get information out early enough so people can build it into their end of year planning meetings.

Student and University Relations – John Nash

Leadership of the committee is in flux. Don had been trying to bring a biology speaker to campus to talk about careers in bio but that didn't end up happening. John Millemon was working on an essay contest that he was willing to donate money to. The committee also discussed a grass roots Truman Traditions page. It would have to be grass roots and not driven by the university. The Greek reunion that was hosted a little over a year ago was so successful because it was organic. Don took the opportunity to survey students about what they want from alumni, and they found that students don't really know. Two students came to speak to the committee in April to talk about what students want from alumni. They communicated that they are looking for mentoring from people who graduated in their major who have been in the field for more than 2 years. They talked about a couple of initiatives that John would be willing to spearhead. For instance, they were interested in profiling alumni in the SUB and in academic areas. We could profile graduates and what they are currently doing so we can see the professions people go on to.

Foundation Board Report – Jim Cherrington

The Foundation has grown in the last year. The portfolio is managed by Commerce bank, and they have had stable growth a little above the norm. It's a conservative approach, but we are doing okay. We have around \$58 million in the endowment for scholarships and other purposes. The market has slowed. Jobs are increasing, not at a huge rate but still growing. We aren't in a recession. We have put an RFP out for a new investment firm, and 19 firms have responded. The state has allocated money for Greenwood. Times are tight, but Truman has hung in there.

Old Business

Votes that came before the board in between meetings

New Business

Natalie is starting an ad hoc committee addressing the chapter of the future. She is engaging with former at-large representatives to discuss ways they can stay engaged after they go off the board.

Student sendoff discussion – there is decreased attendance at sendoffs, both from students and alumni.

Update from University President Sue Thomas

As everyone knows, the University is named in a lawsuit. We hired external counsel in addition to our in-house counsel. Our outside counsel didn't want us to make a comment at all, but we felt it wasn't the Truman way to say anything. The statement was that understand the pain that these

families are going through. But we also will vigorously deny the charges. People were really worried about the PR that came from this. We have filed to dismiss the charges, as has AKL. In Adair County, we have one law day a month, so this will take a while for this to all be resolved. We are very empathetic to the plaintiffs in the case, we strongly believe there is no case here. You will not hear anything else from Truman on this. The lawsuit states that in addition to financial payout, they want the university to address mental health on campus, and they allege that we only held one suicide symposium. The University has done a lot of work in this arena, and it was really frustrating. But if we respond to that element of the lawsuit, we have to respond to it all. So we have stayed really quiet. She understands how hard it is for alumni to stay quiet, but we can't discuss these things while we are currently in litigation.

Enrollment is down 200 freshmen which is 18% over the past 2 years. We have closed the book on where we are with enrollment, and we are opening a new book. We have a new vice president for marketing and enrollment management, Tyana Lange. She is fabulous, knows her stuff and is making great connections. Dr. Tara Hart is our new director of admissions who started at the end of July. They have added new events and brought a whole new energy that is exciting and hopeful. It took us a while to get to this position enrollment wise, so it is going to take a while to see results. But there is a new energy. There are hunters; and there are gatherers. Truman went through a gathering time, and we weren't as assertive as we should have been. There is enormous competition for students, and you have to be a hunter. There will be a change to our messaging. We don't want students to come here because it's cheap. We have to change that.

The budget is better than what it had been previously. We started the year with an increase to our budget for the first time in several years. That helps manage the financial challenges of enrollment being down. We got money from Mo Excels for new programs. The next year's budget includes a recommendation for a 1.9% increase based on performance funding. They are also recommending grant funding for new programs. They are also recommending a 2% increase for facilities. COPHE (Council on Public Higher Education) met as a group, and that experience was collaborative. The governor understand the value of higher education. We have a good relationship with our legislators. Very excited to report a \$1.125 million for the Greenwood Autism Center. Truman is sitting in as good of a place as we can based on our reputation and the support from legislators. We also got a gift from the Sunderland Foundation. Dr. Hughes contacted the CEO of the Sunderland Foundation to discuss funding for Greenwood. We are right on the edge of their funding area. Presented a proposal and received \$1.1 million in funding. This will allow us to leverage for matching funds. We are also working with economic development in Kirksville and SB40 for local funding opportunities. Greenwood has lots of momentum.

Everyone is invited to the Reavey Plaza dedication tomorrow. We also have a video scoreboard in Pershing that we can use to broadcast graduations. We are putting together a campaign to do a video scoreboard in Stokes.

We are doing a couple of searches – one for Arts and Letters and one for the School of Business.

We have a graduate student who has written a new alma mater and fight song. They will not replace the current one.

SME was back on campus early in the semester to do focus groups on logos and taglines. All of the groups landed in the same place on the logo. On the taglines, students fell on the opposite side of all the other groups based on one word. SME is also doing our digital marketing for this year, so we wanted them to focus on that for now. But we are going to regroup on the tagline with the hopes of unveiling that at the end of January. That has to be in place by March so we can utilize in in recruitment efforts. The cupola is gone. It's a much bolder and modern look. Our point person with SME thinks that our logo was a good way to move us from Northeast Missouri State to Truman. It was a good logo for then. Northeast Missouri State University does not resonate with people who are not affiliated with the University. It will always be a part of who we are. Changing our logo doesn't change that.

Susan asked about naming opportunities for Greenwood. President Thomas shared that there will be naming opportunities in the community campaign.

John motioned to adjourn, Lisa seconded. Motion carried, and the meeting ended at 12:00.