



**KENYON COLLEGE
ALUMNI COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Fall, 2023**

Friday, September 29

Alumni Council Opening Session

Kimberly called the meeting to order at 10:17 a.m.

In attendance: Susan Apel, Edgar Arceo, Ubongabasi Asuquo, Alison Black, A'Biel Hammonds, Darnell Heywood, Kurt Karakul, Ellen Leerburger, Kiro Mikhaeel, Stewart Peck, Janae Peters, Jarrod Sowell and Nicolyn Woodcock. Attending virtually: Ronald Maheia and Jerry Mindes. The senior class president was invited but unable to attend.

Staff attendees: Colette Cosgrove, Shawn Dailey, Colleen Garland and Annie Gordon.

Kimberly opened with norms and expectations: What do we expect of our fellow members, and how do we want to interact with each other as a group?

- Respect and appreciate diversity of thought; appreciate the experience of more seasoned alumni while learning from the new alums
- Work together and recognize the diversity of the alumni body
- Actively participate to take advantage of our short time together
- Be our authentic selves
- Use our talents and gifts with a focus to the alumni body
- Come prepared; also share materials in advance to allow time for preparation
- Take space, and share space: Be willing to speak up and also recognize when to give others the opportunity to speak.
- Be present, focus on the task at hand, and be mindful of everyone's time and space to share thoughts. Narrate your thoughts to push conversation forward.
- Have fun, and laugh!

Kimberly reminded us of our closed Executive Session on Saturday for council members to share openly.

Shawn shared schedule changes for the weekend and other housekeeping items.

Shawn Dailey shared about Engagement and Fundraising

Engagement Update

- Campaign engagement goal was achieved a year ahead of schedule.
 - Goal was to grow the number of alumni who engaged between FY19-21 by 10% between FY22-24.
 - 9,433 alumni engaged between FY19-21 and the 10% increase resulted in 10,376 engaged alumni.

- o As of Friday, September 29, 2023, 11,226 (52%) alumni have engaged with the College since FY22.
- Swim Reunion
 - More than 400 alumni swimmers returned to campus earlier this month to induct Coach Jim Steen and other athletes into the athletics Hall of Fame.
 - There was an alumni swim meet, a networking and career panel hosted by the Kenyon Athletic Mentoring Program, campus tours, and the induction dinner for Coach Steen.
- Homecoming 2023 (this weekend)
 - o Historically this has been a volunteer event.
 - o The College is building towards a broader engagement event, both for students and alums.
 - o Student engagement is growing steadily in partnership with Student Affairs.
 - o More than 200 alumni are on campus attending various events this weekend.
 - o Athletics and affinity engagement, in general, is growing.
 - The school will launch the Kenyon Athletic Network this fall, with some rebrands of some existing events such as coach meet and greets, Alumni “night” at sporting events, and enhanced communications from current coaches.
 - Watch for more information in October
- Upcoming engagement possibilities
 - o Opportunities to meet President Kornfeld
 - o Bicentennial engagement, like the oral history project and various regional events
 - o Reunion Weekend 2024

Construction Update

Bexley construction is almost complete, and Alumni Council (AC) will have a chance to tour it this afternoon. The building is now student housing with 40 beds, and it will be available next semester, spring 2024.

The new dormitory construction is progressing. The dorm east of Old Kenyon is being faced with stone and should be available in the spring of 2025. The building west of Old Kenyon is undergoing structural work, and its opening date has not been specified. The south end construction will culminate in the demolition of Bushnell and Manning, and a third dormitory will be constructed behind Old Kenyon. All of the buildings will house approximately 100 students.

The Campus Safety Office was relocated to Gund, and the former home of Campus Safety will be renovated to become the new home of the Alumni Office. Updates were made to the laboratories in Samuel Mather and Tomsich Halls. Comment: It would be great to bring someone from Facilities in to speak about construction and the state of current buildings, perhaps for the February meeting.

U.S. News and World Report Update

Kenyon was ranked 39th out of 204 liberal arts colleges in the most recent edition of the *U.S. News and World Report* college rankings, a drop from 31st in the previous edition. *U.S. News* changed its formula this year, dropping some areas where Kenyon scored highly and which the College still values, including average class size, high school class standing, and faculty with terminal degrees. The report added more weight to the percent of lower-income students a college enrolls and graduates, which heavily favors colleges with considerable institutional wealth. Kenyon increased from 19th to 15th for undergraduate teaching.

Questions

- How is Kenyon doing with student retention? That was interrupted by the pandemic, so figures are skewed.
- What is the status of the PEL-eligible student admissions as a result of the Schuler campaign? That is not reflected in our current data. Those students are in their second year as students.
- What makes Kenyon stand out amongst its peers in liberal arts institutions? The writing programs, the Kenyon Review. We continue to have strong numbers of applicants.

- How much does Kenyon want to build its efforts around rankings? Many schools are choosing to drop out of rankings – will this be a metric that high school students care about in the future? What about rankings globally? The rankings do guide the pools of schools that students apply to, but are not heavily weighted in the decision to attend.
- Is there a new policy with regard to legacy admission? There are no changes, and it is something Kenyon continues to examine.

Fundraising Update

The Our Path Forward to the Bicentennial Campaign continues to exceed all expectations. We have currently raised \$524,570,579 against a goal of \$500 million. We successfully completed the first \$25 million phase of the Kenyon Access Initiative goal, and we continue to secure gifts to support the initiative. Campaign participation stands at 61% representing nearly 12,000 alumni. The growth challenge beyond 61% is to reach donors who have not given in the last eight years.

The Kenyon Fund finished at \$3,988,326, an increase of a little more than \$50,000 over the previous fiscal year. The [Athletics giving challenge](#) is going on now; this is the second year with that challenge, and the College finds that alums are passionate about and willing to donate in support of their team. The goal is 800 donors, and we are currently at 458 donors totaling \$56,000.

Strategic Plan Update

[Strategic Plan Presentation](#)

Kimberly reported on the Strategic Plan Update, which has been in the works since Spring 2023. Kimberly opened the floor to discussion of the plan, including sharing some of the feedback that was received. In its current iteration, she suggested thinking of the plan as an outline for a launching point going forward. There was a comment appreciating the intent to codify our plans, and a member asked about the plan for launch. The Values Committee is the first committee that the AC wants to launch to work on projects that are agreed upon and supported by the college. The blessing and the curse of AC is alums rolling on and off, so it behooves the committee to begin working on things as soon as possible.

Question: How does this align with the current college strategic plan? The AC initially looked at that plan to align goals between the college and the alumni body.

There was a comment that strategic plans do take a significant time to develop, and an inquiry about the timeline for the plan development and duration. The current outline is for 2023-2028, but that is open to evolve as necessary. The Values Committee will start in Spring 2024, to finish in Spring 2026, which can be adjusted. The goal is to keep that committee functioning even with the changes in the Alumni Council body. In 2028, the AC can review the current plan going forward. The aim for committees is to solicit volunteers for leadership and participation.

Kenyon's strategic plan is [available online](#), and President Decatur did two sessions with Alumni Council as he developed the strategic plan.

Questions and Comments

- Is there a group focused on transition planning? It might be good to have people focused on onboarding new participations. The Council Support Committee is designed to support those efforts.
- Would it be worth it to extend the amount of time someone serves on the committee? The feeling is that people roll on, and then their terms are ending as they are becoming more comfortable and capable. It would be interesting to look at the history of bylaws. A “buddy system” would help to integrate new members and get them up to speed quickly and efficiently.
- What happened to the system of alums voting for Alumni Council representatives? Shawn explained that voting participation had declined to approximately 1.5% of alumni. Financially it didn't make sense to

continue to vote-by-mail. The school tried various methods of voting and to encourage voting without success, and then evolved to electing members within council after putting out calls for nominations among the entire body. It would be worth discussing how our work is relevant to alumni.

- The Alumni Survey contains longitudinal data, and this would be great to share with new members as they roll on. Shawn suggested holding a virtual discussion to share the information and also to provide context on the results.
- Has there been fallout from the name change? It seems most people have moved on, and that there is room for all.

A'Biel Hammonds moved to vote to pass the Strategic Plan as presented. Ellen Leerburger seconded. The council voted by a show of hands, and the plan passed unanimously with no abstentions.

The morning session ended informally.

Alumni Council Afternoon Session

The afternoon minutes were taken by Ellen Leerburger, as Kyla Carlson attended her class reunion planning session.

Instagram Account

AC welcomed Abigail Rose (Assistant Director of Student and Young Alumni Giving), and Emily Shackle (Assistant Director of Young Alumni Engagement). They shared about the new Kenyon alumni Instagram account (@kenyonalumni) as well as current goals and plans.

- Increase engagement and giving with younger alums. Hope to use the platform to share content, stories, pictures, class letters, faculty features, videos made by students, and support The Generosity Project.
- Promote major events – homecoming, regional events, reunions, giving days, and the Bicentennial.
- Talked to peer institutions and got feedback – most importantly is that people want to see FACES and hear stories. Families, pets, etc. in their college gear.
- Thinking about the best ways to market/introduce this new account. If you come across cool things on Instagram from other schools – please send to Emily and Abigail.
- Highlighting alumni who are doing great things off-campus – getting awards, taking over the Instagram account for a while, personal stories of giving, and how giving back to the College impacts students – where money is going.
- If anyone has suggestions, please email Emily at shackle1@kenyon.edu, DM the @kenyonalumni account, or use the Google form that will be available after the weekend.

Alumni Trustee Nominations

- Plan to submit two nominations
- Especially interested in Asian, Hispanic and Pacific Islander candidates and those with significant volunteer experience.

After discussion, the vote was set aside until the following day to allow AC members to do more research on the candidates presented.

Saturday, September 30

Morning Session

Alumni Trustee Nominations

The day started picking up where the council left off with Alumni Trustee elections. There was discussion about revamping the nomination and election process going forward, in addition to a review of the candidates. The council voted to send Kelli Schrade and Una Fogarty to the Board of Trustees as nominees.

Regional Bicentennial Celebrations

Shawn shared that the College is trying to create a “playbook” of events for regional associations to hold during the bicentennial. Abigail Rose and Emily Shackle joined the discussion, in addition to Emily Hankla (Class of 2026 bicentennial intern).

- Bicentennial Bites, and Philanders Picnic were two ideas shared
- Happy hours are effective, but lack the tie-in to the bicentennial.
- Some successful events in D.C. have been Bike and Beer, Kayaking, and Middle Path Cleanup Days.
- The timeframe for regional events includes the entire year – perhaps with some seasonal concepts.
- 1/8/24 suggested for a winter-themed event (1824), when students are still home over winter break (or Thursday, 1/11 before students head back).
- Events that tie into the strategic plan.
- Selfies with swag (post on social media with a bicentennial hashtag)

There was a brainstorming discussion about events and swag. One idea was to create a swag design for participants to order online, perhaps with a portion of proceeds benefiting a campus fund. Simultaneous events on a specific day can help with planning and provide an anchor for regional groups. There will be a quarterly regional association meeting in November, 2023. A playbook is forthcoming. Susan, Kurt and Nicolyn volunteered to continue to work on regional brainstorming.

Shawn shared a bicentennial “matriculation book” that will be signed throughout the year at various events, including shipping to regional events.

Bicentennial Oral History Project

Oral History Project Presentation

Shawn also shared about the Oral History Project, which is aimed to celebrate an individual’s history with the College, in addition to celebrating the College. He shared information from and about Publishing Concepts, Inc. (PCI), with whom the College has partnered for this project.

- Based on experiences at other schools, we could engage up to 4,000 alumni (approximately 20% of the alumni body).
- The project creates archival opportunity and value.

PCI has worked with more than 300 colleges and universities on oral history projects. The College does not pay for this service: PCI will offer packages that include the book, online access to the stories, merchandise, and a \$25 gift to Kenyon. The book is approximately \$300, and there is a less expensive online option. There will be a greater number of stories published online. There may be multiple volumes of books; if you purchase, you would receive the book in which your story is included.

Question: Legally, who owns/controls the content and rights to information? Shawn explained that Kenyon’s legal team reviewed the contract, and that PCI confirms stories with individuals.

PCI would reach out to alumni through branded, College-approved communications (post cards, emails, etc.). All communications opt-outs will be honored. There was a suggestion to create a short YouTube video explaining the project, perhaps to play at regional events. Stories can come from phone calls (inbound calling), and also via written history and may include up to two photographs. There was discussion about reaching out to staff (not professors) to submit stories – Shawn will look into this to figure out how/if that can be done as well.

Shawn shared a rough timeline of the project, including beginning of marketing in mid-January 2024. Books would be shipped out in January of 2025.

Timeline:

- Currently in the planning and initial awareness phase.
- Launch in early January; marketing phase lasts six months.
- The next six months is dedicated to producing the publication.
- Books ship in January, 2025, though the College is asking PCI to expedite to December, 2024.
- Kenyon has been working on aspects of this project for more than a year
- Based on peer research, all colleges said they would do the project again, that the book was well received and merchandise was high quality. Indicated that they received questions about legitimacy. Cautioned us to review marketing materials and be prepared to negotiate there.
- Kenyon is currently working on data transfer, marketing materials and merchandise selection and story prompts.
- Working project categories
 - Student life
 - Love stories
 - Lifelong friendships
 - First generation
 - Legacy alumni
 - Academic influences
 - Career success
 - Other (“Moments in time”)

There was a suggestion to have a closer tie-in to Associate Provost Wendy Singer as a historian when reaching out to introduce the project and ask for submissions, so that it feels more like an archival historical project, as opposed to marketing from PCI.

Staff attendees exited in anticipation of the Executive Session

Kimerly solicited weekend feedback regarding various topics

- In-person meeting in February? People are generally in favor of that idea, particularly given the scope and gravity of the bicentennial planning and celebrations.
- General negative feedback re: making your own hotel accommodations.
- Reminder to submit receipts for accommodations and rental cars to Jauna Burke by October 31

The meeting adjourned so that the Alumni Council could hold its executive session. Our next meetings will take place February 22-24, 2024.