

OLIVET COLLEGE 2030: VISION FOR A PROSPEROUS FUTURE

ENGAGE BEYOND OUR HILL



Olivet College offers a relationship-based education to students, but those connections don't end after graduation. Alumni become ambassadors of the College as they enter the world into professions and communities across the nation and beyond. The strategic priority "Engage Beyond Our Hill," focuses on Olivet College's growth beyond campus, setting goals to build connections and the College's reputation with the outside world. Increasing alumni engagement is one strategic outcome.

"Alumni, regardless of where they live in the world, have the power to be our biggest advocates both in their positive press about the College and also in their capacity to give financially," said Vicki J. Stouffer, CFRE, vice president for advancement. "The reality is that tuition and fees are not enough, and we rely on generous contributions from alumni and friends of the College to keep our institution in a strong financial position.

"Alumni also incite spirit and passion in the community and can be a powerful tool in recruitment. When students see alumni supporting the College it can create a sense of belonging, knowing that our Olivet community is all-connected. Also, as Olivet College steps more into the graduate and adult degree program space, we need and want our alumni to take advantage of those opportunities. Alumni will be responsible for helping us shape those programs, which will increase our capacity in the long term."

While attending college events and financial giving are great ways for alumni to stay connected and support the College, alumni engagement can be demonstrated much more broadly. The Alumni Engagement team is digging deeper by identifying ways to build a more robust program that will engage alumni across the country and around the world, including continuing education courses and lectures, travel opportunities, philanthropy, enhanced communications, and chances for volunteerism and mentorship.

"The ideal picture of great alumni engagement is a program that offers clearly defined value to the population and that is tailored to specific alumni affinity groups and interests," said Stouffer. "Our success in increasing alumni engagement is all about relationships. We must understand what has been working and where we can improve, and create metrics to measure our impact so we can continue to grow."

Alumni Engagement in Action

Alumni engagement is also supported through the Alumni Council, a group of alumni from various graduation years, industries, cities and states, who represent the link between the College and the larger alumni base. Alex Miller '00 recently joined the Alumni Council with a unique perspective on higher education. He serves as the vice president for student life at Denison University, a private liberal arts college in Granville, Ohio.

"One of the reasons why I started serving on the Olivet College Alumni Council, even while living out of state, was because of the great alumni at Denison," Miller said. "They inspired me to think about how I could do similar work at Olivet and how my experiences as a college student contributed to who I am today. Many alumni of the 2000s-era, like myself, are just starting to engage with the College. I'm able to serve as an example for this generation by showing how I am giving of my time, talent and treasure. Serving on the council further allows me to share my story and connect with others about additional alumni engagement programs and how they benefit the College. This will perpetuate over time as other alumni reflect on their college experiences and are motivated to find ways to plug in to these programs and provide their support. I'm proud to be part of the millennial class, and I'm excited to see what that impact could mean over time."

Just as relationships shape the student experience at Olivet College, relationships are imperative to engaging alumni and building a stronger base, no matter where alumni live. Using ambassadors and word of mouth are key to forming connections and creating a personalized approach for each alumna or alumnus to engage in their own, unique way.

"I think the strategic plan is an extension, a continuation, of the foundation that has already been laid," Stouffer said. "This is a path to improving our operations and evolving to remain relevant in an ever-changing higher education landscape. This plan is really an opportunity to create better benchmarks for ourselves so that we can improve and then look back at the progress to see what is working, what isn't working and how we can continue to evolve."



Alex Miller '00