

# ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN TRANSFORMATION REPORT



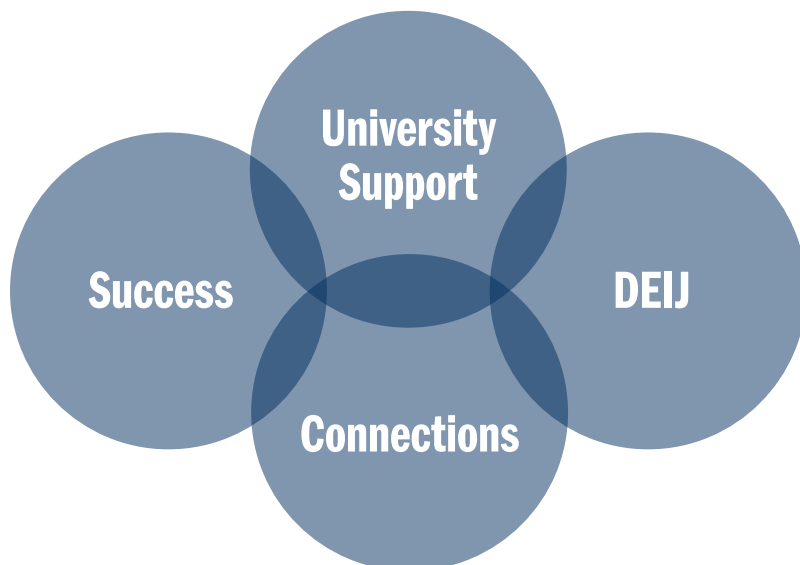
# OVERVIEW

The Alumni Association's transformation started during the January 2015 board meeting in Los Angeles. Over the last six years, the top objective for the Alumni Association has been to evolve into an organization that proactively supports an inclusive community of alumni of all identities, and that is positioned to serve the changing needs of our alumni for the next 50 years.

At the core of the transformation were three interconnected priorities: **Success, Connections, and University Support**; we later added a recommitment to **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ)**. These pillars have guided the work we've done to achieve a full organizational transformation, including:

- Creating programming that engages more alumni around the world and better meets their ever-changing needs.
- Developing data and digital capabilities to be more targeted and make smarter decisions.
- Increasing efforts to foster an inclusive and collaborative organizational culture.
- Upskilling staff across the organization to not only make market-driven decisions, but have a digital-first mindset, allowing us to fulfill the needs of our alumni and mission while maximizing ROI.
- Developing a more comprehensive alumni experience across all Alumni Association programs and touchpoints.
- Integrating the principles of Success, Connections, University Support, and DEIJ into everything we do.

Membership and fundraising remain core to who we are as an organization. Our shift to an inclusive membership organization and focus on redefining our philanthropic mission allowed us to be smarter and more efficient with how we reached prospective members and donors, **shifting 70% of membership acquisition efforts to digital and achieving the highest membership net revenue in five years**. This, along with significant improvement in our fundraising efforts, allowed us to responsibly fund a successful transformation.



Before the transformation we engaged less than 25% of our alumni. Now, the Association is engaging nearly 50% of our alumni across a wider variety of life stages and backgrounds.



# SUCCESS

Help our alumni and students be successful both personally and professionally throughout the course of their lives.

**Launched the Alumni Education Gateway (AEG) in January 2019** to provide alumni access to educational content from across U-M. We used behavioral data and learnings to pivot the product from a search product to a curation product.

Average of 13,300 alumni per month have engaged with U-M content through the AEG since launch.

- Successfully helped partners across campus get more engagement on relevant educational offerings. For example, sharing a new Ross Executive Education course through the AEG resulted in a 28% uptick in brochure downloads and 47% increase in traffic on their course page.
- Continuing to closely partner with units across campuses to develop educational content directly, like with the University of Michigan Museum of Art (UMMA) partner event in May 2021 that focused on sharing UMMA's Asian, Asian American, and Pacific Islander (A/API) art collection during A/API Heritage Month.

**Michigan Alumni Travel conducted market research at the beginning of the transformation** to better define alumni needs, behavior, and to reposition our travel marketing campaign. The program continues to proactively adjust its strategic approach as travelers' needs change, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We saw a 31% increase in yearly travelers since the start of the transformation.\*

- The tasks of sending 10,000 manual emails per year to individual travelers and hosts after they booked a trip, were moved into 2 automated email journeys. These journeys help to steward travelers and hosts, drastically reduce manual work from the Michigan Alumni Travel team, and improve overall customer service.
- The program continues to work to diversify trip offerings and communication efforts to appeal to a more diverse alumni audience.

**Relaunched the Alumni Career Program in August 2019**, and quickly learned through behavioral data, research, and other insights that we needed to shift focus from becoming a mentoring powerhouse to a career support hub for alums at every stage of their career, especially recent grads and mid-career professionals who are navigating career transitions.

117,805 alumni have engaged across career programming since the launch, including support for navigating career transitions, exploring new job opportunities, expanding their networks, and growing further in their careers.

**Relaunched our student program and student life membership offering through a pilot in April 2021**, and officially August 2021, to proactively engage our student population from the time they step on campus, helping to set them up for success during school and beyond.

- Includes taking a fully digital-first approach with student life member acquisition efforts, driving about \$195,000 in revenue since launch, and providing unique value to student life members by working to acquire unique benefits.

\* Not including 2020 - 2021 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



*"As someone whose health has had a bumpy road of it since two years into my first job post graduation in 2007, the informative Alumni Association webinars and their encouraging and supportive guests have been key to career re-entry. They have been comprehensive in scope... tackling associated complex personal struggles and anxieties that may impede progress or success, and addressing alumni holistically. This has been invaluable and I am extremely grateful."*

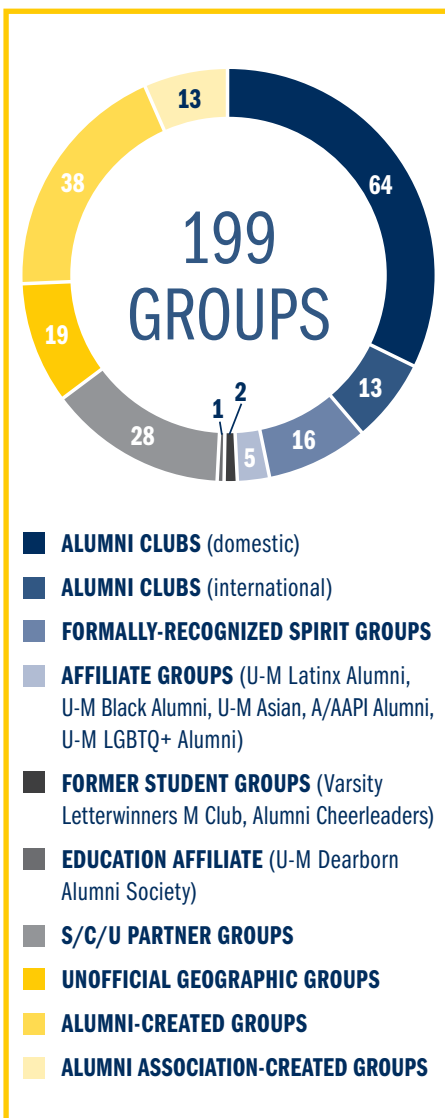
—Kristin Stepanek, '07

# CONNECTIONS

— Create meaningful ways, both in-person and virtually, to connect alumni with each other and the University across their identities, passions, and interests.

## Expanding the types of communities alumni can join and the ways alumni can connect:

- 162% increase in the number of alumni communities (from 76 groups to 199 groups) since the start of the transformation with a variety of new dynamic ways alumni can connect with each other across identity, geography, and interests. In addition, the Alumni Association has helped to foster the growth of existing community groups.



- Various tools, like the Wolverine Forum that launched in August 2018, help to facilitate a variety of connections, allowing alumni an easy way to organically create their own community groups, and providing a low-cost way for the Alumni Association to support a new affiliate or geographic-based group. For example, since the launch of the new U-M A/AAPL affiliate group in July 2020 on the Wolverine Forum, 283 members have joined.

**Pivoted solely to virtual events during the COVID-19 pandemic**, allowing clubs to share out relevant programming with a wider audience of alumni and connecting more alumni across the world.

218% increase in participants in club events from FY19 - FY21.

**Committed to improving our CRM system** with Salesforce and better reaching alumni.

- Allowed us to create more relevant reporting, like Club Dashboards, which, for the first time, share a comprehensive set of data with our club volunteers about their events and alumni, allowing them to better understand how to improve their engagement efforts.



**Launched the largest, full U-M Alumni Directory in August 2018**, which has been used by **more than 20,000 alumni users since launch**. The platform allows alumni to directly message each other in a private space.

*“I was looking at the Alumni Directory the other day, trying to remember this guy’s last name, and it suddenly came to me. I looked him up, found him, and sent him a contact request, and just received a wonderful response (back from him). I haven’t spoken with this guy since 1973, but am looking forward to renewing a great relationship with him.”*

—Herb Bowie, ‘73

**Launched the Small Business Directory in April 2020**, enabling us to support alumni-owned businesses during the pandemic.

750 alumni-owned businesses have been viewed over 13,000 times.

- Continuing to build out the small-business directory so alumni can better identify and support minority-owned business.

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED



**Completed a full renovation of the Alumni Center, set to reopen in the fall of 2021**, with a goal of creating an inclusive environment and destination on the Ann Arbor campus that alumni from all three campuses, students, and the broad U-M community can enjoy. Visitors can immerse themselves in the past, present, and future accomplishments of our alumni via static and digital interactive experiences. We want everyone who visits the Alumni Center to feel that they are represented and celebrated as a member of our community.

**Expanded Camp Michigania offerings by launching cabin rentals in September 2020** to engage a broader community of alumni.

- 137 total cabin rental reservations since launch.
- Continue work to diversify camp programming and appeal to a more inclusive alumni audience.

## UNIVERSITY SUPPORT

Foster and nurture meaningful university partnerships across all three campuses that help create more opportunities for connection and success for our alums.

**Launched Alumni Volunteer in January 2021** to allow alumni to access and sign up for volunteer opportunities across U-M

1,140 connections made since January 2021

- The platform hosts 274 (149 Alumni Association opportunities + 125 Non-Alumni Association opportunities) volunteer opportunities across 39 U-M campus partners.

*“The portal was really helpful on Giving Blue day, we were able to post opportunities to find young alumni who are interested in sharing experiences really quickly. Within 1-2 weeks we were able to secure enough volunteers to help with our effort”*

—Kai Mason,  
LSA Advancement Office



**Created the Alumni Relations Council (ARC) in 2016**, to connect the Alumni Association and University partners to network, learn, and collaborate around a diverse set of alumni engagement topics.

- On average, 59 university partners from across schools, colleges, units, and campuses have participated in each quarterly ARC event since launch.

*“The Alumni Relations Council has been instrumental in the success of our university navigating the past few years. Building partnerships across all three campuses has proven to be the glue that bonds our institution together. With the ever-changing landscape of alumni engagement, the members of the Alumni Relations Council have shared best practices, fresh ideas, and support for each other during a tumultuous time in our community. Being able to turn to our ARC colleagues for support and collaboration has continued to prove that U-M is made of leaders and best.”*

—Cristina M. Frendo,  
Director of Alumni  
Engagement, UM-Dearborn



# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND JUSTICE (DEIJ)

A renewed commitment to educating ourselves and to better serving all alumni regardless of identity through the promotion of DEIJ, both internally and externally.

DEIJ was not originally a pillar of the transformation, but has been a focus since June 2020 after the national events surrounding George Floyd's murder. We recognized that as an organization and as individuals, we have a lot of work to do, so, in alignment with U-M, we created a strategic plan, which prioritizes:

## Ensuring our communications and program offerings are inclusive:

- Updating our mission statement to reflect an updated purpose and recommitment to serving alums of all identities.
- Launched a DEIJ page on our Alumni Association website that shares our updated mission and outlines our commitment to DEIJ values across our organization.



- Updating our magazine name from *Michigan Alumnus* to *Michigan Alum* to be more inclusive of the broader alumni community.
- By launching a specific series of events, the Diversity Dialogue Series, which features stories of members of the U-M community who are making a local and societal impact around a topic related to DEIJ. Since launch, each event has had on average 631 participants.

## Fostering an inclusive and equitable climate and culture:

- Redeveloping our recruitment process, focused around DEIJ.
- Developing regular staff trainings and staff share outs, including: Courageous Conversations, sexual harassment, and staff diversity panels.
- Redeveloping a comprehensive DEIJ strategic plan across the organization.

## Activating Alumni:

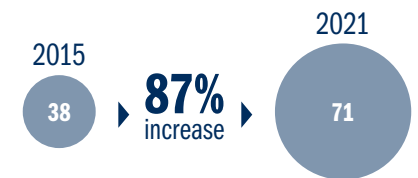
- Redefining what it means to be a notable alumni and updating our list of notable alumni featured at the renovated Alumni Center.

## Recommitting to LEAD:

- The board showcased their commitment to LEAD and building diversity within the Michigan community by supporting our LEAD Scholars and committing additional matches to the LEAD community fund.
  - Including \$10M in startup costs, a \$10M endowment match 1:1 for scholarships, a \$5M endowment match for community 1:1.

Endowment commitment has grown to \$30M, generating \$1.4M of income per year.

## NUMBER OF INCOMING LEAD SCHOLARS



- Fundraising efforts also helped to secure the largest gift to LEAD in its history: a \$2.5 million gift from the Patricia W. Mitchell Trusts.



# BEYOND THE TRANSFORMATION

While our formal transformation ended June 2021, our transformative work will never be complete because the needs of the people we serve are constantly changing. We know that in order to continue to grow and adapt for the future, we need to integrate our pillars across everything we do to be positioned to:

- Connect alumni with each other and the University.
- Help alumni on their journeys to success.
- Assist the University's mission to serve and enrich the state of Michigan and the world through knowledge, art, and developing the leaders and best.

Now, more than ever, it is important that we take a digital-first approach to better engage alumni where they are, in ways they want, and to provide a more seamless experience across touchpoints.

## MISSION STATEMENT

We enrich the University of Michigan's impact by serving as an independent gateway for alums of all identities, backgrounds, and experiences — across the globe and in our neighborhoods — in order to create and deepen belonging to the Michigan family, the Leaders and Best.





**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ROLE  
IN OUR TRANSFORMATION**

