

# **Talladega College National Alumni Association Strategic Plan 2018**

## **Executive Summary**

In December of 2017, Talladega College National Alumni Association President, Eugene Cain asked Degan, Christopher Jones to lead a strategic planning committee for the TCNAA. This plan is the product of that effort. This plan is the result of many hours of research in to the history of Talladega College, the prior work of the TCNAA, the operations of other alumni groups, and the views and desires of current Talladega College students and alumni.

This is a “general” strategic plan. That is, it identifies several strategic initiatives and initial tactics. However, the plan does not provide direction at a granular level. It does not set timelines or identify the specific persons who should be involved. As Degan, Christopher Jones indicated to TCNAA President, Cain early in this process, the expectation is that the TCNAA will identify and appoint individuals to carry out the plan. The common thread that runs through the plan is that these initiatives should be carried out through specific TCNAA committees. So, the expectation is that the TCNAA will appoint chairpersons to build out and lead these committees in the work.

Many of the initiatives may seem basic. However, they are so because in many areas, no formal, nationally- led work is currently being done by the TCNAA. So, this plan will help the TCNAA to move in a more structured and intentional direction. Importantly, while these initiatives are presented in no particular order, it might be wise for TCNAA to approach them based on which initiatives will yield the most immediate results, so as to build momentum. Also, there is some overlap in the work, most notably in the area of fundraising. This is understandable because many of these areas are interrelated and interdependent.

Importantly, like any strategic plan, this will be an ongoing and never-ending project. There is no magical destination at which the TCNAA will arrive. Rather, consistent strategic planning is required to take the TCNAA to greater levels of effectiveness in the years to come.

## **Strategic Initiative 1: Enhance Capacity Building**

Capacity Building is somewhat of a nebulous term. So, as a preliminary matter, we define capacity building in the following manner:

*“Capacity building is whatever is needed to bring a nonprofit to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, or organizational maturity, so it may more effectively and efficiently advance its mission into the future. Capacity building is not a one-time effort to improve short-term effectiveness, but a continuous improvement strategy toward the creation of a sustainable and effective organization.”*

To effectively serve Talladega College and its members, the TCNAA must continually upgrade its capacity- its ability to do its work. As such, we suggest the following initial tactics:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Appoint a national governance chair, who will then establish a standing governance committee. The by-laws should be amended accordingly.
- **Initial Tactic 2:** This committee should continually research and adopt the best practices of leading alumni groups and nonprofits.
- **Initial Tactic 3:** Consider adopting new mission and vision statements, which comport with best practices for mission and vision statements.
- **Initial Tactic 4:** Strategically recruit, develop, and appoint Degans from all eras for board service.

## **Strategic Initiative 2: Improve Fundraising**

Fundraising is key to the success of the TCNAA. It is crucial to the TCNAA's ability to financially support the college. But, it is also crucial to the TCNAA's ability to support itself. The current TCNAA by-laws prescribe that the TCNAA maintain a standing fundraising committee. Yet, as of the writing of this plan, there is not one. So, we suggest the following initial tactics:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Appoint a national fundraising chair and build out a national fundraising committee from Degans of all eras.
- **Initial Tactic 2:** The national fundraising committee should research and adopt the most applicable fundraising strategies from leading college alumni groups and other non-profits. These strategies should seek to raise money to support the college and to support the activities of the TCNAA.
- **Initial Tactic 3:** Include fundraising for TCNAA operations into the yearly fundraising plan.

### **Strategic Initiative 3: Improve Student Recruitment**

Effective student recruitment by alumni is crucial to attracting quality students to Talladega College. The current TCNAA By-laws prescribe that the TCNAA maintain a standing student recruitment committee. But, as with fundraising, there is no such committee. Thus, we suggest the following initial tactics:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Appoint a national student recruitment chair, who will build out a national student recruitment committee from Degans of all eras.
- **Initial Tactic 2:** This national student recruitment chair should develop a comprehensive student recruitment plan- drawing from the best strategies of similar liberal arts colleges and in conjunction with the efforts of the college.

### **Strategic Initiative 4: Improve Alumni Engagement**

It has been difficult for the TCNAA to sustain meaningful alumni engagement across the different eras of Degans. The number of due-paying members relative to the number of actual living alumni is dismally low. One realization that our committee had was that we cannot assume that the average Talladega College alum will join the alumni association and pay money out of some sense of obligation to do so. Rather, our alums need to recognize some benefit or advantage (even a small one) to joining and engaging with the TCNAA. Additionally, if we want them to “engage,” the TCNAA must provide easy, meaningful, and rewarding ways in which our alums can “engage”- beyond paying dues, donating money, and traveling to campus Founder’s Day and Alumni Weekend. As such, we suggest the following initial tactics:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Identify and appoint a national alumni engagement chair, who will build out a nation alumni engagement committee from Degans of all eras.
- **Initial Tactic 2:** Develop an effective alumni database, which includes alumni skill sets.
- **Initial Tactic 3:** Think critically about membership levels in the TCNAA- life membership, young alumni, student membership, etc. and develop a plan for increasing membership.
- **Initial Tactic 4:** Engage alumni through social media- appeal to their skill sets, source compelling alumni stories, which can be shared with the public relations office of the college.

- **Initial Tactic 5:** Develop events, which would benefit from an alumni presence- either on campus or virtually through Skype, GoToMeeting, or some other virtual platform.
- **Initial Tactic 6:** Work with the Talladega College Office of Quality Enhancement to develop and implement an alumni ambassador program.
- **Initial Tactic 7:** Develop programs to serve the needs of Degans at each stage of their lives, young alumni, mid-career, retirement, etc.

### **Strategic Initiative 5: Improve Communication**

Currently and historically, the communication of the TCNAA has been below par. While we have had some official publications and dispatches, those methods have been insufficient to keep up with the pace of modern life. As such, information has been passed through the informal networks of Degans in a casual manner that has failed to unify the alums, keep alums updated, and allow alums to use their skills and networks to benefit the college. The result has been that connections have deteriorated and opportunities have been missed. To remedy this situation, we suggest the following initial tactics:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Identify and appoint a national communications chair, who will then develop a national communications committee.
- **Initial Tactic 2:** Develop a digital alumni magazine.
- **Initial Tactic 3:** Create a Twitter account for the TCNAA.
- **Initial Tactic 4:** Create a Facebook Account for the TCNAA.
- **Initial Tactic 5:** Develop a plan for funding and updating the TCNAA website.
- **Initial Tactic 6:** Develop an Instagram account for the TCNAA.

### **Strategic Initiative 6: Improve Engagement With Current Students**

One of the historical weaknesses of TCNAA has been the lack of meaningful relationships between alumni and current students. Simply put, current students do not have meaningful relationships with alums during their college years and, thus, fail to develop an affinity with the TCNAA. To remedy this problem, we suggest the following initial strategies:

- **Initial Tactic 1:** Identify and appoint a national on-campus programming chair, who will then build out a national on-campus programming committee.

- **Initial Tactic 2:** Develop a calendar of on-campus events to serve the needs of current students and provide engagement opportunities for alums.

### **Conclusion**

As previously stated, this is a general strategic plan. The to-be-appointed committee chairs and committees will be responsible for supplying the salient details of each initiative and tactic. Also and again, some of these steps might seem elementary. However, since the TCNAA has never had a strategic plan, these initiatives are needed to set the Association on the path to greater levels of effectiveness in years to come.

### **TCNAA Strategic Planning Committee**

Christopher Jones, Chair  
Darron Willis  
Carlton Philpot  
Eugene Cain  
James Arnold  
Joann Myers  
Krista Lawrence  
Kwan Baker

Mary Margaret Roberts  
Meredith Lilly  
Nikky Finney  
Norman Campbell  
Norman Pitts  
Rachelle Williams  
Seddrick Hill  
Darron Lockett