



# ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

# STRATEGIC PLAN

A ROADMAP TO GUIDE

THE UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE'S OFFERINGS TO ALUMNI

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# INTRODUCTION

Dear Blue Hens,

Like many of you, my time at UD and the lifelong friends I made mean so much to me and it helped shape me personally and professionally. My wish for every Blue Hen is for you to have a connection to UD through every stage and down every road life takes you.

The landscape of the world around us has shifted significantly over the last five years, which means the needs of our alumni are changing as well. To ensure we're adapting to these changes, the Office of Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) began a comprehensive effort to assess and advance the University's alumni engagement efforts.

The planning process started in July 2022 with the development of a task force made up of representatives from the UD Alumni Association and nine key stakeholder groups across UD, charged with helping to define and confirm values, vision, mission and priorities for a university-wide Alumni Engagement strategic plan.

In early 2023, DAR partnered with Performance Enhancement Group to conduct UD's third Alumni Attitude Study (AAS), which offered us insight into alumni opinions and attitudes concerning loyalty and giving, communications, programming and volunteering. The results were also helpful when assessing our constituents' interests and the current state of Blue Hen engagement.

The UD Alumni Engagement Strategic Plan will serve as a road map for our programming and activities over the next five years and its priorities are grounded in the concept of meaningful, active and mutually beneficial relationships between the University, our students, alumni, faculty, staff, friends and parents. A highly engaged Blue Hen community will help us to strengthen loyalty, increase alumni participation, enhance career development, sustain our strong Admissions pipeline and grow ambassadors around the world.

I invite you to join us in a shared vision for all our Blue Hens to feel undeniable connectivity and pride in their relationship with UD wherever they are and through all stages of their lives. Together we can strengthen our community and build a culture of *Blue Hens Forever* among all alumni.

Go Hens!



A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "L. Simione".

Lauren Murray Simione, BE95

Associate Vice President, Alumni Engagement

# OUR VISION

All Blue Hens will have a meaningful, interactive, lifelong connection to the University of Delaware community.

# OUR MISSION

Create, nurture and strengthen connections that enhance the lives of Blue Hens and advance the University of Delaware.

# OUR VALUES

These values are the foundation the priorities and strategies detailed in the strategic plan are built upon and they help guide our decisions to ensure our work provides value to our alumni and UD.

## COMMUNITY

We seek to ensure that all Blue Hens feel a sense of belonging and inclusion in all UD communities and programs.

## COMMITMENT

We are passionate about and take pride in advancing the lives of our alumni and UD.

## CONTRIBUTION

We encourage volunteerism and support of one another, the world and UD.

## CONNECTION

We enable Blue Hens to meaningfully engage with each other and UD.

# OUR PRIORITIES

We recognize that the university's future and its ability to enrich lives and improve communities around the world depends upon the development of meaningful, lifelong relationships with our 210,000+ alumni. As we cultivate new resources for the University and equip students to begin their lives and careers after graduation, alumni involvement is essential to achieving our shared aspirations. Recognizing the importance of these relationships, we seek to add value to the lives of alumni, and we are committed to doing so in a way that is fresh, substantive and energizing in its approach. It's all about building the right opportunities for connections among our alumni and with the university community.

Over the next five years, we will focus on four key priorities that help build a stronger Blue Hen community and amplify the impact and reach through the contributions of as many alumni as possible. The highlighted strategies shared below each priority are examples of how we plan to fulfill this work.

## SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

Enhance our connection to current students and inspire them to be loyal to UD and engaged as alumni. We want UD students to experience the value of the global alumni community, one that can help launch their professional successes especially as they transition from students to alumni.

- Increase collaboration with UD's Career Centers and other campus partners, including academic units, to leverage more professional opportunities offered by alumni for students.
- Identify and expand opportunities for alumni, parents and friends to offer student internships, job shadow opportunities and mentorships across a variety of industries and fields.

## PROVIDE LIFELONG PROGRAMMING

Provide enrichment opportunities for the Blue Hen community at every age and stage of life, with a focus on younger alumni, as their needs and interests evolve quickly. Programming will consider a diverse array of interests, locations and formats to ensure all Blue Hens have access to lifelong learning opportunities.

- Increase programming specifically for our youngest undergraduate alumni (within five years since graduation) to demonstrate the value of alumni engagement early on. Whether through programming created by regional Blue Hen Networks, on-campus events such as Homecoming or Life After UD programming, these early engagement programs help cement the identities of our Blue Hens within our alumni community

and cultivate a pipeline of lifelong alumni supporters and leaders.

- Aggregate, cultivate and promote continuing education and lifelong learning opportunities for alumni, including those offered by university units and partners, leveraging digital options to increase the scope, scale and frequency of engagement. Access to a variety of contemporary academic, social and professional programs will be critical.

The groupings below are used as guides when thinking about life-stage-related programming:

| <b>Years Since Graduation</b>     | <b>Average Age Range</b> | <b>Common Career Stages &amp; Shared Experiences</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 1-5 years out (UD's Young Alumni) | 21-27                    | Entering workforce, grad school, active social life, developing relationships, networking  |
| 6-15 years out                    | 26-37                    | Early Career, earning an advanced degree, home buying, managing student debt, travel, starting a family  |
| 16-29 years out                   | 37-51                    | Career advancement, raising a family, balancing professional and personal life, pre-college children/paying for college, aging parent considerations |
| 30-49 years out                   | 51-71                    | Late Career, Empty Nesters, financial planning for retirement, more travel, possibly more time for hobbies or volunteering                           |
| 50 years & out                    | 72+                      | Retirement, completing bucket list – hobbies, learning, group travel, spending time with family and friends, managing health                         |

## IDENTIFY AFFINITY CONNECTIONS

Expand opportunities for all alumni to connect their passions and interests to a purpose, engaging through their profession, identity, common interests, region and college/unit. These groups of Blue Hens with shared interests and affinities help build and foster valuable connections, both personal and professional, among alumni, student organizations and university units and partners.

- Learn more about our diverse alumni population and how they want to engage so we can connect our alumni to each other and to UD through their current passions or interests and continually offer value to all Blue Hens.

- Increase and improve experiential opportunities for alumni, collaborating with relevant campus partners when applicable, through programs built around the following attributes:
  - Profession
  - Region/Geography
  - College/school/department
  - Shared Interest
  - Identity

## CULTIVATE ALUMNI PARTICIPATION

Create meaningful and fulfilling experiences for all alumni who want to volunteer, helping to build a stronger community of proud Blue Hens who are inspired to support the university with their time, talents, skills, expertise and financial resources. Alumni are a fundamental part of a university's brand experience, assuming roles as loyal and engaged ambassadors who actively contribute to the way people think, feel and act toward a university and the communities it serves.

- Build a culture of volunteerism through a varied inventory of meaningful opportunities, both short- and long-term, and on campus or from wherever Blue Hens live; recruiting alumni with diverse talents, backgrounds and experiences and developing relevant training and meaningful recognition for all.
- Leverage alumni engagement metrics to identify and steward potential alumni ambassadors, volunteers, leaders and donors, as well as those programs and activities that meet the needs and abilities of a large majority of Blue Hens.

# MEASURING OUR WORK

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) responded to the need for an industry-wide measure of engagement by launching an Alumni Engagement Metrics (AEM) survey. This tool enables institutions like UD to measure alumni engagement on an annual basis representing the key engagement areas of **event attendance (experiential), volunteer activity, philanthropy and interactive communication**.

UD's participation in the CASE survey allows us to compare our metrics with aspirational peers, as well as make informed, strategic decisions regarding future investments in programs and activities. We will continually work to build a shared commitment from our alumni engagement strategic partners across UD to help coordinate and focus data collection activities across colleges and units, ensuring we are tracking as much activity as possible and the most relevant metrics.

While 2023 was the first time UD submitted figures to the CASE AEM survey, we also gathered data for each engagement area for 2021 and 2022. This provided a baseline to use when goal setting across the five-year strategic plan. We can evaluate trends and areas of opportunity across our entire alumni community, by college and by life stage (ex. Where and how do young alumni engage?) to help drive our programs and offerings. We look to grow the total percentage of engaged alumni, the number of alumni engaged in each of the four areas, and those alums engaged in multiple areas and all four areas as that is a great indicator of depth of engagement. Additionally, we will continue to track first-time event attendees, developing a robust follow-up strategy for this unique subset to learn more about what attracted them to the program and what offerings might be of interest in the future.

## FY23:

- Total legally contactable alums: 204,290
- Total alums engaged in any of the 4 modes: 38,267
- % engaged alum: **18.73%**
- Total alums in all 4 areas: 401
- # engaged in Experiential: 6,460 or 3.1%
- # engaged in Volunteer: 2,762 or 1.3%
- # engaged in Philanthropy: 12,312 or 6.02%
- # engaged in Communication: 29,706 or 14.5%

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work summarized in this document would not have been possible without the dedication and assistance of many people, just some of which are noted below.

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With special thanks to Chris Marshall, Founder and CEO, Chris Marshall Advancement Consulting for his invaluable guidance through this process.