Mission Statement
The mission of the Alumni Association Board of Directors is to promote pride in and loyalty toward Gettysburg College; to assist alumni in marshaling the value of their Gettysburg College liberal arts and sciences education; to encourage lifelong engagement with Gettysburg College and the mutual sharing of talents and resources; and to ensure the brightest of futures for our alma mater.

Background
The Gettysburg College Alumni Association (Alumni Association) was founded on September 16, 1835, just three years after the founding of what was then Pennsylvania College, making it one of the oldest alumni associations in the country. Formed by eleven members of the classes of 1834 and 1835, its purpose was “the cultivation of friendly and social feeling among its members, the advancement of the cause of education and literature, and the promotion of the best interests of the Alma Mater.” Today the Alumni Association serves more than 27,000 alumni across the country and around the world. We are vital stakeholders of the institution.

The Alumni Association is governed by a 25-member Alumni Board of Directors (ABD) and operates in accordance with a constitution and by-laws. The work of the ABD is accomplished through four standing committees—Awards & Administration, Campus Programs, Development, and Outreach. The Development Committee is further divided into four teams focused on gift solicitation (Team 1), philanthropy education (Team 2), annual giving promotion (Team 3), and donor stewardship (Team 4).

In fulfilling its role, the ABD has been guided by the mission of the Alumni Association and a Strategic Plan that is periodically refreshed to ensure the “brightest of futures for our alma mater.” Over the course of 2013-2014, the Awards and Administration Committee led the ABD through a review and revision of its Strategic Plan. The endeavor culminated in the creation of a Mission Statement for the ABD (above) and a Strategic Plan that were approved in September 2014 and will guide the work of the ABD through May 2019. The following is the final and approved version of the ABD’s Strategic Plan.

Introduction
The mission of Gettysburg College—as a national, residential, undergraduate college committed to a liberal arts and sciences education that prepares students to be active leaders and participants in a changing world—has remained largely unchanged. It has shaped the common experience shared by alumni. Similarly, the constitutionally assigned role of the Alumni Association—to cultivate a lifelong relationship between alumni and their alma mater—has also remained consistent over the years. Within this broad context, however, both the College and the alumni base continuously evolve.

Some of the major forces that drive change within the College and the alumni base include:

- Innovative pedagogy which provides a liberal arts and sciences education responding to the increasingly complex world into which our graduates emerge.
- Shifts in geographic, ethnic, and other demographics of college-eligible students; leading to differences in both the student base and, increasingly, the alumni base.
- Sharpened parental and student focus on the “return” of their investment in higher education; in particular, the ability to begin their career or enter an advanced degree program of their choice.
- Proliferation of media-driven (and, potentially, government-based) college rankings that increasingly
inform views and decisions.

- Technological advances which are enabling alternatives to how and where students receive their college education.

In response to these forces, the ABD decided in February 2013 to refresh its Strategic Plan approved in 2008 and amended in 2010. Working through the standing committees of the ABD, major strategic priorities were developed that address the purpose of the Alumni Association influenced by the environmental forces cited above. Activities for each of the major priorities were developed, with one or multiple committees contributing to their completion. In addition, a strategy was developed for periodically assessing the progress being made in achieving the aim of each activity and advancing the overall plan. The ABD is set to approve the revised Strategic Plan during its September 2014 on-campus meeting, the timing of which will coincide with the public launch of the Gettysburg comprehensive Campaign and signify the ABD’s enthusiastic support of the Campaign.

In July 2013, the Awards & Administration Committee along with representatives of the ABD’s Executive Committee and the Development, Alumni and Parent Relations division (DAPR) conducted a comprehensive SWOT analysis (Addendum A). As a result of the analysis, the following seven priorities surfaced as focal points for the ABD’s work over the next five years:

- The ABD needs to know what alumni need/want from their Alumni Association.
- The ABD needs to help the alumni understand today’s Gettysburg while celebrating the College’s heritage.
- The ABD needs to deliver and champion the value proposition of the liberal arts and sciences education.
- The ABD needs to engage other alumni in building the College’s brand value.
- The ABD needs to build “loyalty” and “pride” into our Mission Statement and activities.
- The ABD needs to engage the faculty in furthering our Strategic Plan and Mission Statement.
- The ABD needs to be prepared and strategic in responding to an alumni base (including current students) that is changing.
Priorities

I. The ABD will ask and understand what our alumni need/want from their Alumni Association.

Gettysburg College absolutely relies on its alumni for support. Without enthusiastic backing from our alumni in large numbers, the College may not be able to continue many programs. We need our alumni to engage with Gettysburg College in several areas: financial support, engagement with students, mentoring students and young alumni, involvement in campus programs, involvement with faculty, assistance to DAPR, involvement with Gettysburg sports, and more. To this end the College and the Alumni Association developed an infrastructure designed to reach out to alumni to obtain the support needed. We have a highly defined understanding of what we need from our alumni. We have far less definition around what our alumni want or need from the Alumni Association.

The College strategizes to communicate information frequently and in various forms—including Bullet Points, Gettysburg Magazine, stories on the website, fundraising appeals, etc. For the most part, these are one-way conversations; although, to be fair, we do ask alumni for their ideas and opinions. Our alumni body is composed of a large variety of people in different age groups, different affiliations, different geographical areas and different professional and personal interests. It is not reasonable to expect a single answer to the question, “What do you want?”

The rationale behind this theme is that the better we understand what our alumni communities want, the better chance we have of engaging more alumni. The good news is that all the communication methods we created can be of great aid in this endeavor. We have to turn our thinking around and ask the right questions and then analyze those answers.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

- Working with and through DAPR, Awards & Administration will ensure that the comprehensive and periodic surveys undertaken by the College are asking questions that can ascertain what the different alumni segments want/need from the Association, that the relevant survey results are being shared with the ABD, that the ABD is incorporating the results into our work, and is using them to gauge the progress and continued relevance of our Strategic Plan and activities.
- Based on the personalized contact made with alumni in the course of conducting its solicitation and stewardship activities, Development (via Teams 1 and 4) will share with the ABD the information it garners from alumni regarding what they want/need from the Alumni Association.
- The representatives from the Student Alumni Association and BOLD Council who attend the ABD meetings will keep the ABD informed about what the youngest segment of the alumni base wants/needs from their Alumni Association.
II. The ABD will help our Alumni Association to better understand today’s Gettysburg while celebrating our heritage.

The College’s mission as a national, residential, undergraduate college committed to a liberal arts and sciences education that prepares students to be active leaders and participants in a changing world hasn’t changed dramatically since the College’s founding in 1832. Yesterday and today’s curriculum are structured around four key elements: multiple inquiries, integrative thinking, communications skills, and informed citizenship. However, pedagogy and delivering a Gettysburg education has evolved, and must continue evolving, to remain cutting edge and relevant in a more complex world and competitive marketplace.

Our Gettysburg College alumni are proud of their own college experience. The ABD recognizes the need to preserve familiar traditions and experiences while championing the cutting-edge pedagogy that has transitioned the College from a regionally-ranked to a nationally-ranked private, liberal arts and sciences institution. Our ABD will undertake activities that find a common denominator between the current and the past experiences of Gettysburgians. The end result will be students whose education is improved by valuing the long-standing traditions and utilizing the Gettysburg network of alumni, and alumni who champion and serve as ambassadors of today’s Gettysburg.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

• Campus Programs will celebrate Gettysburg College traditions through the ages by developing activities on campus that enable returning alumni to experience newer traditions (ex: Twilight Walk) and to share past traditions (ex: Dinks) with current students. In addition, Campus Programs will continue leveraging social media and digital technology to connect people with the campus virtually from remote locations.

• As part of its solicitation and stewardship activities, Development (via Teams 1 and 4) will foster among donors an appreciation of the environment graduating students face today and how a Gettysburg Education helps prepare them for it.

• The ABD Executive Committee will integrate into the orientation session for new board members a “Then & Now” retrospective as a primer for learning about the Gettysburg of today and honoring the College’s history and heritage.

• The ABD Executive Committee will continue to consider and provide what the board members need to know from all divisions of the College (Academic Affairs, Admissions, College Life, DAPR, Education & Enrollment Services, Finance, etc.) so that the ABD can understand and respond to the challenges the College is facing today.
II. The ABD will deliver and champion the value proposition of the liberal arts and sciences education.

Gettysburg College provides a highly selective liberal arts and sciences, residential education experience. Since liberal arts and science colleges educate only 2–3 percent of United States students, our alumni possess a unique and distinctive diploma; one which has been shown to well-equip them for leadership roles in a changing world. The current environment, however, is testing our value proposition.

The current economic climate has, among other things, increased the focus on college costs and made obtaining a job upon graduation more difficult. Additionally, students are being offered new ways to obtain a college degree—most of which leverage new video/voice/data technologies. There is an ongoing national debate about the value of higher education and many myths about a liberal arts and sciences degree.

Gettysburg alumni highly value and benefit almost daily from their college education and experience, and they offer their alma mater and the concept of liberal arts and sciences a vast network of supporters. Stories of how alumni have used and benefitted from their Gettysburg degree and how their Gettysburg education and experience have persistently and powerfully impacted their character and career are testaments of the lasting value and influence their alma mater holds in their personal and professional lives. When shared, their stories can personify the value of a higher education in general and of a Gettysburg College degree in particular, and dispel the popular myths about a liberal arts and sciences education.

The ABD can cultivate and tap into this abundant resource by keeping alumni abreast of the economic and cultural trends that threaten the College’s value proposition, by providing them with anecdotes that reinforce the value of the liberal arts and sciences degree from their alma mater, and by encouraging alumni to share their own accounts of the fruits born over a lifetime from the education they received over four years at Gettysburg College.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

- Awards & Administration will explore the feasibility of moving the annual Distinguished Alumni Award presentations from Commencement Weekend to a more opportune time (such as Homecoming Weekend) for exposing a larger and more diverse pool of alumni and students to the award recipients who epitomize the value of a liberal arts and sciences education from Gettysburg College.
- Awards & Administration will work with and through the other ABD standing committees, DAPR, the Communications & Marketing Office (C&M), and other assets of the College to showcase the Distinguished Alumni and Young Alumni-Career Award recipients in myriad and sundry ways that propagate the value of a liberal arts and sciences education from Gettysburg College among past, present, and prospective alumni.
- Development will compose talking points (via Team 2) for the ABD that underscore the value of a liberal arts and sciences education, particularly from Gettysburg College. In addition, it will continue to partner with DAPR and C&M in expanding the visibility of prominent Gettysburg College leaders and alumni.
- Development will also ensure that members of the ABD are enthusiastically supporting the Gettysburg-great Comprehensive Campaign with 100% of its members contributing and actively participating in events and other yet-to-be determined ways.
IV. The ABD will engage other alumni in building the College’s brand value.

Part and parcel to the Gettysburg College brand is the quality, distinctiveness, and value of the education offered here. While that encompasses the College’s strong academic tradition and commitment to the liberal arts and sciences education, there is much more than that to the Gettysburg brand. A beautiful campus located in a world-famous town, small class sizes and accessible professors, generous merit scholarships and financial aid packages, and first-year seminars and semesters abroad are just a few of the other elements that comprise the Gettysburg College brand.

All alumni are stakeholders in their alma mater’s brand. It is what attracts the best and brightest students to Gettysburg College in the first place, and the brand’s value increases for all alumni as graduates advance in the workplace and leave their mark in the world. Although there are constant brand features that all alumni recognize and relate to, new elements emerge and others wane as educational needs and trends change in a competitive marketplace. If the ABD wants alumni to help in building the College’s brand, then we must help them understand the brand’s components and the ways in which they can affect its recognition and value in the contemporary marketplace with their deeds and dollars.

Alumni boost the value of the College’s brand when they wear or bare the Gettysburg College logo, when they credit their alma mater for powerfully impacting their character or career, when they connect promising high school students with the admissions office or current students with promising career opportunities and, perhaps less obviously, when they contribute to their alma mater each and every year. The College’s reputation and resources for providing a first rate education rely on its financial strength and ability to raise funds, and alumni contributions are vital to the College’s fundraising capacity. Additionally, organizations that rank colleges and universities typically identify alumni giving as the sole measure of alumni satisfaction. Hence, the ABD must continue to partner with DAPR in soliciting and stewarding alumni donors and dollars and increasing alumni awareness of the correlation between consistent annual giving and the College’s national ranking and reputation and, consequently, its brand.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

• Given the strong correlation between alumni engagement with and support of their alma mater, the weight given to alumni support in college rankings, and the impact of college rankings on Gettysburg College’s brand value, Development will continue soliciting and stewarding alumni who support Gettysburg College through the sharing of their time and talents (Team 1) and/or treasures (Team 4). The talking points developed by Team 2 (under Priority Three) will also help in this regard.

• In addition to inviting former Alumni Board directors to attend the ABD’s April reception and dinner and having its current committee members serve as ambassadors to former directors, Outreach will develop additional programs and activities for keeping former directors informed about and connected with the ABD and engaged as ambassadors for the College.
V. The ABD will build “loyalty” and “pride” into our Mission Statement and activities.

Gettysburg’s Alma Mater urges students and alumni to “love,” to “defend” and to “honor” the “glorious Orange and Blue.” Indeed, the alumni of Gettysburg College have much to be proud of. They received a top notch liberal arts and sciences education at a venerable institution that is both steeped in history and primed to prepare students for the future. Whether it was that one professor who changed your life, a study abroad experience that opened your mind to an expanding global world, or simply meeting a lifelong friend, all alumni have at least one, if not several, reasons to look back on their years at Gettysburg College and feel an overwhelming sense of pride. As stewards of our Alumni Association, the ABD has a duty to cultivate that sense of pride and encourage alumni to give their time, their talent and their resources back to Gettysburg.

Fostering a sense of pride in and loyalty to Gettysburg benefits the entire College community: our current students, our future students and, of course, our alumni themselves. Engaged alumni, instilled with a strong sense of pride and loyalty, will more readily see the value in helping future generations of Gettysburg students and are more likely to actively participate in the College’s future.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

- Awards & Administration has drafted and the ABD will approve a Mission Statement that includes promoting pride in and loyalty toward Gettysburg College as part of the ABD’s charge.

- Development (via Teams 1 and 4) will partner with the Annual Giving Office (AGO) to develop a society that recognize and stewards consecutive contributors and the pride and loyalty conveyed by their consistency.

- Campus Programs will continue to grow alumni engagement through “remote” activities across the nation around Founders Day, and engage current students with the College and each other through new and creative on-campus activities (ex: Twilight Walk).

- Outreach will leverage new and existing affinity groups and associations (ex: young alumni with children) in developing programs and activities (ex: Alumni Family Weekend) to draw alumni to each other and to their alma mater through common experiences and established ties. Increased engagement of alumni with each other and the College will foster alumni pride in, loyalty to, and support of Gettysburg College.

- Outreach will develop new forms of engagement for traditional alumni clubs (ex: a Web-based “Alumni Clubhouse”) so that club officers can learn from and collaborate with each other. Outreach will also redefine and expand the Alumni Club Awards to acknowledge the challenges and efforts of smaller clubs and recognize innovative programming.
VI. The ABD will engage the faculty in furthering our Strategic Plan and Mission Statement.

Gettysburg’s College’s faculty, nearly 300 strong, is a rich resource for advancing the ABD’s strategic plan and mission. 95% of them hold a PhD or terminal degree in their field. They have many Fulbright and Luce Fellowships among them and together have garnered more than 50 HSF and NEH grants. And Gettysburg’s faculty are increasingly gaining national and international acclaim for their work: in 2013 alone, they were referenced or featured in over 150 news articles, radio spots, and television shows in the U.S. and as far away as Japan. With their growing reputations, recognition and exposure, the ABD has in the faculty a bountiful resource for engendering Gettysburg pride and embodying the value of a liberal arts and sciences education from Gettysburg.

Additionally, Gettysburg’s faculty is an essential resource for building the Gettysburg brand, alumni loyalty and engagement, our grasp of alumni wants/needs, and a nexus for past and present Gettysburgians. The brand features of a low student/faculty ratio (currently 10:1) and small class sizes (currently averaging 18) bring many students to Gettysburg College in the first place, and the concomitant opportunities for personal attention from and one-on-one interactions with faculty help many students thrive as learners while they are here. But it is the resulting rich and rewarding relationships between students and professors, often enduring well beyond graduation, which can transform graduates into loyal and engaged alumni and ardent ambassadors of the Gettysburg brand for life. Furthermore, as a common denominator for both past and present Gettysburgians, the faculty are perfectly poised for aiding the ABD in connecting yesterday’s students with the students of today and uncovering what alumni of all ages are seeking from their Association.

The faculty’s increasing diversity may also be of some value to the ABD in preparing for and responding to the changing composition of the Alumni Association. The faculty’s male/female ratio (currently 1.4 to 1) is leveling off and the number of faculty from minority groups and nations other than the U.S. (currently 15.7%) is gradually growing. Whether by coincidence or design, those trends closely resemble what we are seeing in the pool of incoming students, like the Class of 2013 which entered Gettysburg College with a male/female ratio of 1 to 1.1 and a minority and international population of 12.9%. With concurrent trends moving through Gettysburg’s faculty and student body, the ABD can leverage faculty diversity to capture segments of our increasingly more diversified alumni base.

Given the prolific manner in which Gettysburg’s faculty can advance our Strategic Plan, the ABD must have in its arsenal a comprehensive plan for faculty engagement that provides some structure and direction for standing committees to tap into the faculty asset in carrying out their work. It also make sense that Campus Programs leads the way in developing such a cooperative between Gettysburg’s faculty and ABD because of its mission focus and involvement on campus.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

• Working with and through the other standing committees, Campus Programs will identify specific ways to strengthen and employ the connection between faculty and alumni in a mutually supportive and beneficial manner that advances the interests and objectives of all parties.

• Campus Programs will assess the viability of having faculty representation on specific topics, committees, and/or the full ABD for the knowledge and perspective and support they can offer in evaluating and advancing our strategic plan.
VII. The ABD will be prepared and strategic in responding to an alumni base (including current students) that is changing.

The changing demographics of college-bound high school students and recruitment strategies of the College, coupled with people living longer and having greater access to global living and working opportunities have already influenced and will continually influence the composition, location, and needs of our alumni.

Our ABD must represent the evolving mix. The ABD must also identify, as a regular course of business, the need to obtain information (both internal and external) and data to realize and strategically plan for when a statistic becomes a critical trend that signals new needs of a changing alumni base. For example, the growth of our youngest alumni segment (10 years from graduation or less), which now represents 25% of our alumni, was the catalyst for creating an advisory council, BOLD (Burgians of the Last Decade), that is focused exclusively on this first decade and how best to communicate, engage, connect, and raise financial support from them.

The mission of Campus Programs to engage with current students and the implementation of an alumni survey (under Priority One) are also vital to the ABD’s work and success toward this Priority.

Implementation Strategies/Activities:

- Working with and through DAPR, Awards & Administration will ensure that the periodic surveys undertaken by the college are providing the ABD with meaningful and useful data for understanding and responding to the changing alumni base.
- Development will provide feedback to the ABD and DAPR regarding the effectiveness of our relationship-building and communication strategies with the increasingly diverse and dispersed Alumni Association. Teams 1 and 4 will formulate their feedback based on information garnered from their personalized contacts with donors via their stewardship efforts. Team 3 will formulate its feedback based on its critique of the literature produce by the DAPR and its suitability for the alumni segment(s) to which it is aimed.
- The ABD will ensure (over the course of time) that its board membership captures and reflects the ever-changing composition and increasing diversity of the Alumni Association in terms of generations, gender, geography, etc.
- Campus Programs will leverage affinity groups and associations (ex: BOLD, LGBT, Fraternities/Sororities, sports, clubs, etc) to connect and engage students with each other, the College, and the Alumni Association both on and off campus.
- Outreach will establish “virtual” alumni clubs to connect the increasing geographically dispersed segment of the alumni population (Ex: Alumni living in Western Europe and Asia). Outreach will also encourage and facilitate alumni in planning and hosting “micro” alumni club events in areas with an alumni population and concentration that supports such events.
- Outreach will create an “Alumni Engagement Menu” (a printed piece that is also suitable for posting on the alumni page of the College’s website) to provide alumni with a variety volunteer opportunities based on their unique interests and the anticipated level of time and effort.
Evaluation:
Assessing the Overall Plan
The broad priorities in this strategic plan represent the important areas of focus within the next five years. Underlying each priority are activities which, as we implement the plan, we believe will help to achieve the mission of the ABD in serving the Alumni Association and in support of the work of Development, Alumni, and Parent Relations (DAPR). Periodically, the ABD will evaluate its progress in carrying out the plan.

Overall responsibility for evaluating progress will rest with the Executive Committee which, in turn, will delegate coordination of the work to the Administration and Awards Committee. Working with the other standing committees, each of the activities underlying the strategic priorities will be reviewed, evaluated, and assessed—including activities that have been added after the initial plan—to ensure their alignment with the Strategic Plan priorities.

Assessing Activities at the Committee Level
The plan expects that each committee, in consultation with DAPR staff, will continue to identify assessments and measurements for its specific activities to ensure they support the priorities of this plan. The types of activities that we undertake as an ABD vary widely; some are specifically focused on attaining measurable outcomes while others are geared toward building and sustaining positive engagement between alumni and our alma mater. Often, the activities which the ABD undertakes are contributing to broader initiatives of the College (e.g., the Campaign). Consequently, measuring progress against our Strategic Plan will involve a variety of methods including survey feedback, anecdotal feedback, and statistics. And, finally, we need to realize that some activities may not lend themselves to any form of effective evaluation but, nevertheless, are important to fulfill our mission. The Executive Committee will call for annual check in and reporting that committees are assessing their activities under the priorities of the Strategic Plan. This annual coordination may be delegated to the Administration and Awards Committee.

Each year, in the President’s report to the Alumni Association, the ABD has the opportunity to share the key elements of its strategic plan and important progress that has been made.