UW-Platteville Distance Education Alumni Board
Quarterly Meeting
April 16, 2015

Present: Melissa Gavin, Kristin Carroll, Lucky Pataky, Scott Anderson, Jill Bisco, Dan Avenarius

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 pm. CST.

The minutes from the December 18, 2014 and the February 12, 2015 were unanimously approved.

Old Business:

- A discussion was held regarding ways to promote attendance at local chapters of the UW Alumni association. Melissa stated that there were several local chapters where the Alumni Association connects with alumni; however she was unsure if there were regional networks in other areas of the country. It was suggested that the board members could contact the Alumni Association for members in their geographic region and maybe this would be a way to connect with fellow grads. Jill suggested that maybe a listing of nearby alumni could be created for those board members living outside the Wisconsin area.

- Melissa reported to the March Matchness initiative. She indicated that between March 1 and April 7 there were seven gifts with two of those being matched by an employer. A total of $304.11 was raised through this project. A discussion indicated that the members liked this project as it was a simple way to help out.

  Dan announced that the distance education program received a National Science Foundation to increase the enrollment in online master’s degree programs in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. The grant award was over $600,000 and will allow the university to offer ten grants per year with amounts of around $10,000 each. Master’s degree programs that would be eligible are integrated supply chain management, engineering, and project management. The grant is for a five year period. To see more about the NSF grant, you can visit the UWP Alumni – Distance Education homepage.

- Melissa provided an update on the funding request for 2015. The Alumni Board will make the final vote this weekend. The executive committee has made a recommendation that the Distance Education Alumni board’s request be approved for funding of $1,000. Melissa will let Jill know when the vote is done.

- A lengthy discussion as held regarding the scholarship criteria. The board previously voted to offer two $300 scholarships beginning with selection in the spring of 2016. Jill had asked that board members forward a list of their recommendation prior to the board meeting. These listing of these recommendations were forwarded to the board prior to the meeting. Each recommendation was discussed. After the discussion, the board unanimously agreed to the following:
o To follow the format of the Dawn Drake Scholarship with modifications to the application as submitted by the board members. This includes a GPA of at least 3.0 and that the applicant must have successfully completed at least one course in the distance education program and planning to continue with the program.

o To require an essay of no more than two pages. The essay should include a brief description of the applicant, why they selected the UW-P distance education program, an explanation of why they should receive the scholarship, and information on how the applicant will stay engaged with the university following graduation.

o To offer the scholarships with a selection timeframe of spring for a summer or fall award. The scholarship dates will be created to coincide with the selection at the university. The committee agreed to stay with the two $300 scholarships planned and consider expanding this in the future.

o The board agreed that the selection of the scholarship recipients will be made by the board rather than delegating this to the scholarship selection committee at the university. The board felt that they would learn more about ways the applicants will stay engaged at the university if they keep this aspect of the scholarship themselves.

o Create a fillable PDF application which will be easier to forward to the board members for selection. Dan suggested that a draft be put together and forwarded to him and he will have those at the university help put it together. Jill volunteered to do this.

Melissa wanted to let the committee know that the Dawn Drake winners were announced. Lisa Wilson, a master’s student, and Kate Sopha, a bachelor’s student, were selected. One of these recipients received their $500 award from the Distance Education Alumni board. Melissa will find out which one of the recipients received the board’s scholarship and Jill will send a personal congratulations letter to the award winner.

New Business:

• Kristen had asked for some enrollment and alumni membership information for distance education. Dan provided the numbers. There are currently 1,264 distance master’s students and 700 undergraduate students. The most current list shows that there are 1,480 distance education alumni of which about 75 are alumni members. This is around 5%. This may seem low, but the alumni association overall only has about 6% of the graduates as members.

• Melissa reported that this year there are around 120-150 distance students graduation in May. She also reminded everyone that the Distance Learning Center Spring Commencement Reception is going to be held on May 8th from 4 to 6 pm. There are currently around 36 or 37 students that have RSVP’d for the event. This is the largest response to date. Some of the board indicated that they did not receive the invitation. Melissa will have the invitation resent to the board members.

• The board discussed engagement ideas for connecting with alumni. One suggestion was to send hand-written congratulation notes to the graduates. Melissa mentioned that this year, the advisor for each of the graduating students is going to send a hand-written congratulatory note to each. They will include some photos that are taken at graduation. The letters should be sent out around the end of May. Instead of duplicating this effort, Melissa suggested that we hand write “welcome to alumni” notes. We could get the list of graduates around June or July. Dan and Melissa said they could come up with the card and the language for the note and then work
on some logistics. They’ll get some help from the communications department. We will include a ¼ page sheet which lists the links to the Alumni Association, Facebook, etc.

A suggestion was made that the alumni board pay for half of the annual membership for individuals who respond showing an interest in becoming a member of the alumni association. For each of these individuals, a mentor from the board could be assigned. The goal is to help these individuals keep connected with UW-P through the Alumni Association.

Kristen made a motion to proceed with the handwritten notes and to pay for all associated costs. Also, the board will pay for half of the annual membership ($20) for those individuals that respond to these notes. Melissa seconded and the board unanimously approved the motion.

Other Business

- Scott asked if the Alumni Association is using infographics. Melissa indicated that she hasn’t see any but that the Alumni Association is always looking for new ways to engage with alumni.

  A suggestion was made that maybe one of the social media staff could attend our meeting in July to provide insight to what they are doing and to brainstorm ideas for the Distance Education Alumni board. Dan also said that he could check with the social media group to see if they could provide us with updates on what they are doing. They are a fairly new group and so their work is evolving.

- Lucky suggested a promotion of having alumni members plant a tree and then post themselves next to their tree on social media. Sometimes these types of promotions are very successful and can encourage others to become involved. This is something that we can discuss with the social media representative at the next meeting.

- Future meeting schedule (7:30 pm. CST):
  - July 16
  - October 15

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 pm. CST.

Respectfully submitted,

Jill Bisco, President