

Summary of the Alumni Board meeting on 20 September 2019

Board members gathered in the Board Room of the Maths Institute amidst the swirl of eager children and parents attending the University's Open Day and the start of the Meeting Minds alumni weekend. Board President Nick Segal introduced the newest member, James Khan (Kellogg, 2014), the new President of Oxford10 and an ex officio member of the Board.

As has been the case in the past Dr Robert Easton, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Development and External Affairs provided an update on some of the issues that were top of mind for his Portfolio: namely, the impact of a number of recent announcements including Oxford's place in the rankings (#1 for the fourth year in a row!), the consolidation of two new access schemes, a project to fund more accommodation for students and staff in the city and the potential impact of Brexit on the University. The Board also discussed how to support the University's aim of growing the offering of funded internships for students as alumni might well be an important resource for this.

The focus of the meeting then shifted to a presentation by representatives from Forrester Research, a marketing consulting company appointed by the Alumni Office (with funding from the Board) to undertake a project focused on providing greater insights into behaviours that can help shape the overall alumni experience. Through a process of individual interviews and an online survey, which received over 3,000 responses from alumni across the world, they identified a series of 'personas' based on alumni needs, motivations and context. They walked the Board through each of these profiles, which have been built to enable a shared understanding of alumni and provide a base for future alumni engagement. Whilst these profiles are by no means exhaustive, they provide the Alumni Office with a more reliable roadmap for shaping its outreach efforts to the global community of alumni. Throughout the process of data gathering, the Forrester team was encouraged by the fact that alumni expressed their strong desire to help the University as, for example, advocates, mentors, etc. That said, it was clear they were unsure how to go about accessing those opportunities. The Alumni Office will now take the results of the Forrester project, share them with colleagues across the University and think collectively about how best to use them to inform the design of communications, events and benefit strategies.

The Board then turned its attention to how best to encourage more alumni to recognise the benefits of remaining in touch with the University. The advent of new data privacy regulations has meant that we are having to re-evaluate the integrity of our database and, in the case of a high proportion of alumni, collect more explicit consent before contacting them via email – a slow and challenging process to say the least. This effort is currently underway and we look forward to re-establishing meaningful contact with those eager to remain engaged and informed.

Finally, before adjourning, the Board approved applications from two groups in the US eager to establish local alumni networks: one in Charlotte, North Carolina and the other in Raleigh, North Carolina.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for January 2020.