

The background of the page is a vibrant orange. A central vertical band features a repeating pattern of chevron shapes pointing up and down. These chevrons are filled with various shades of blue, green, and orange, creating a dynamic, layered effect. The text is centered within a dark blue diamond shape in the middle of this band.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
College of LITERATURE, SCIENCE, and the ARTS

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College Connections Program:
Three-Year Analysis

Abstract

The College Connections Program is an alumni outreach and market research project that has been funded and conducted by the University of Michigan's College of Literature, Science, and the Arts (LSA) and run out of the office of Development, Marketing, and Communications. The program employs recent LSA graduates to conduct in-person interviews and analyze the responses.

College of LSA Dean Terrence J. McDonald endorses the program and has allowed it to become a permanent part of the College. It is modeled off the Georgetown Discovery Initiative¹ and has been adapted to meet LSA's unique needs. In its first three years, the College Connections Program has interviewed more than 3,000 LSA alumni and parents to promote the Dean's priorities and encourage support and engagement. This report presents an overview of the project.

"LSA empowered me to embrace my passion. To this day I'm still thankful for the opportunity to pursue such a broad range of academic and extracurricular activities."

We are listening.

Neel Hajra ('95, Physics), the CEO and Vice President for Community Investment for the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, met with College Connections Coordinator Elizabeth Williams ('09) in 2010.

HAJRA'S EXPERIENCE AT LSA:

He took a wealth of English courses even as a physics major; was part of the marching, symphony, and concert bands; and was elected president of his service fraternity.

Program Goals

The College Connections Program seeks to engage LSA alumni and parents and gather their insights. Our goal is to enhance the LSA experience, improve alumni relations, and increase the likelihood of giving.

We use the information to:

- record alumni experiences at the College;
- record thoughts about the current state of the College and of the liberal arts;
- record feedback about what alumni believe to be important to the College's advancement and sustainability;
- obtain more accurate alumni data and personal information;
- represent the alumni voice to the College; and
- build a pipeline of engagement and philanthropy.

Questions Investigated

Through the College Connections Program, we sought to answer the following questions:

- Are our alumni satisfied with the education they received from LSA? Are parents happy with the education their students are receiving from LSA?
- What do LSA alumni and parents think about a liberal arts education, the state of the College today, and the Dean's priorities?
- Do alumni and parents want to be more or less involved with the College and/or the University of Michigan?

- Will alumni and parents begin or increase giving to the College after a College Connections interview?
- Will the interview results be useful in creating more strategic partnerships with College and University units on campus?

Hypothesis

We expect that the elevated personal contact in interviews between the College and its alumni and parents will translate into a higher likelihood of giving and willingness to be engaged. Additionally, a better understanding of alumni interests and volunteer capacity will allow the College to construct more valuable partnerships that better the student and alumni experiences.

Three Key Findings

- Alumni are incredibly loyal to U-M and LSA. They believe their LSA education positively influences their lives and that a liberal arts education is an important foundation for undergraduates.
- Parents would like students to have a better advising experience, more career preparation, and more support outside the classroom.
- College Connections participants are likely to become donors or continue to give to the College at the same or a higher level after an interview.

More significant results can be found on pages 6–9.

Methodology

— Research and Planning

We reach out to LSA alumni and parents by drawing contact information, giving and volunteer records, and degree and/or student degree information from U-M's alumni and donor database. Our travel is based on the concentration of alumni in a particular region as well as our past involvement with an area, purposely including cities the College has not explored (i.e. Portland, Oregon). Our travel has focused heavily on Southeast Michigan, primary metro areas of the United States, and regions that have alumni with previous giving histories to the College and University.

— Categorization of Interviewees

- REGION (*primary metro area*)
- GRADUATION YEAR (*reunion year, recent graduate, etc.*)
- GIVING HISTORY (*amount, lapsed, non-donor, etc.*)
- GIVING DESTINATION (*LSA, Annual Fund, U-M, Athletics, etc.*)

— Outreach

Dean McDonald shows his support by introducing the College Connections Program through an initial letter to alumni and parents. After sending the Dean's letter, coordinators reach out to alumni and parents via email or phone to set up an in-person meeting.

— The Interview

Each coordinator conducts an in-person or phone interview using a proprietary set of questions designed by the team. The questionnaire covers the following areas:

- the student experience and life on campus;
- personal lives and career paths;
- attitudes about the University of Michigan;
- opinions about the College of LSA and College priorities;
- thoughts on the value of a liberal arts education;
- feedback on how they would like to be engaged; and
- what an undergraduate student needs out of an educational experience today.

— Follow-up/Stewardship/Next Steps

Each interviewee receives a handwritten thank you note. Further follow-up may include sending the alumnus or parent:

- information about programs and volunteer opportunities;
- marketing and communications content;
- holiday cards;
- annual solicitations for Dean's priorities;
- program updates; and/or
- regional event invitations.

Each fall, our team produces an annual report for College Connections participants, which includes trends, demographic information of interviewees, regions visited, program highlights, and tips for how alumni and parents can stay involved with the College.

Our interviewees have also been a valuable resource for surveys. We have asked them about new initiatives, and the feedback they provided has helped design University-wide reunion programming and College stewardship offerings.

— Information Recording/Analysis

The College Connections Program uses a database designed by the College to collect and analyze the responses to our questionnaire. Annually, we also review the giving behavior of our College Connections interviewees. We use this data to determine if the interview had a positive impact on a person's likelihood to donate to the College.

Significant Results

ALUMNI

(2,825 Total Records)

RESPONSE RATES

Approximately **30%** of our alumni respond positively to our interview request.

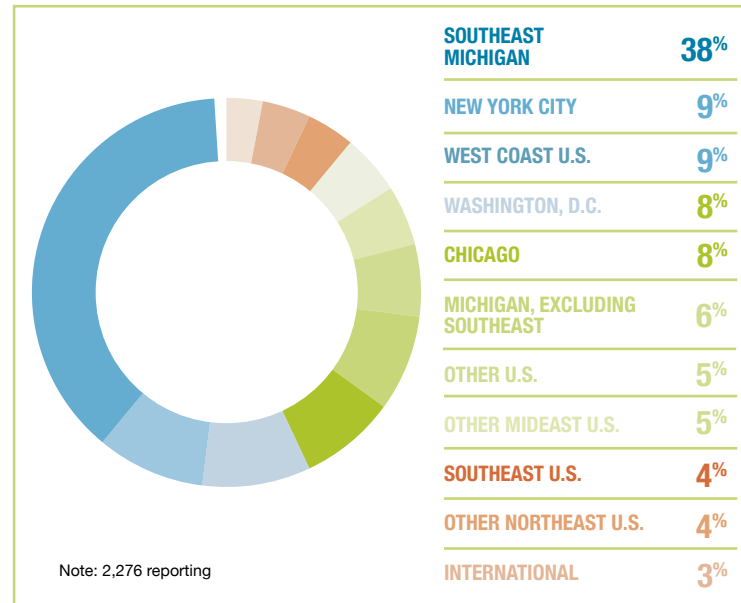
DONOR INTERVIEWEES

74% made a gift to U-M prior to the College Connections interview.

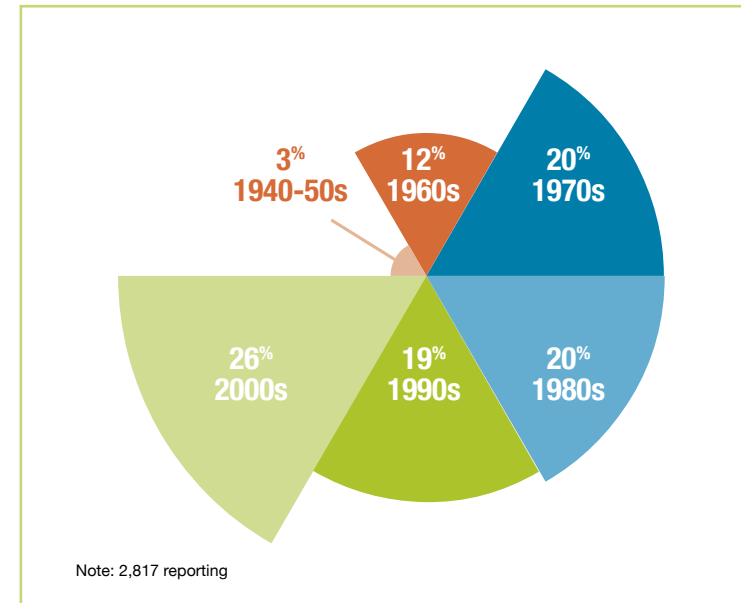
KEY FINDINGS

- Alumni represent a diverse group of interests and industries.
- They feel incredibly loyal to U-M and are willing to be more involved.
- Alumni believe their LSA education influences their lives positively.
- They believe that a liberal arts degree is an important foundation for undergraduates.
- Alumni are supportive of the Dean's priorities, especially with regard to career preparation.
- They are concerned about the challenges facing higher education today.

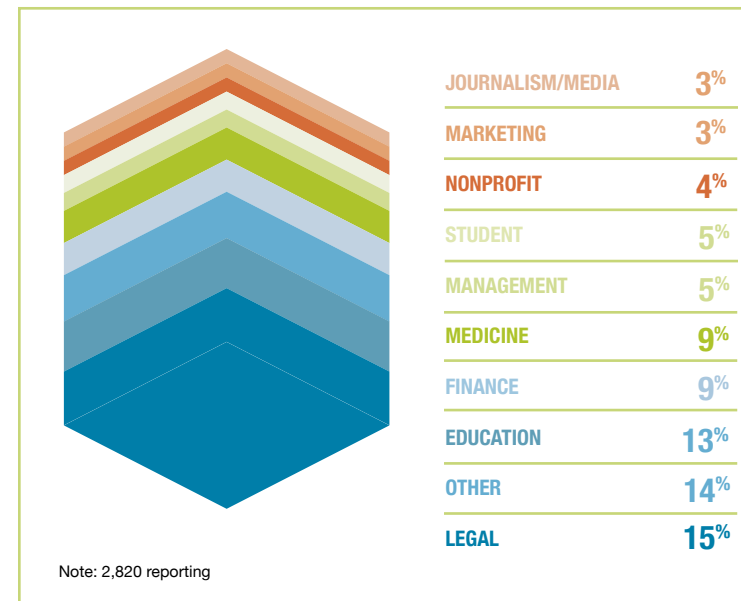
REGIONS



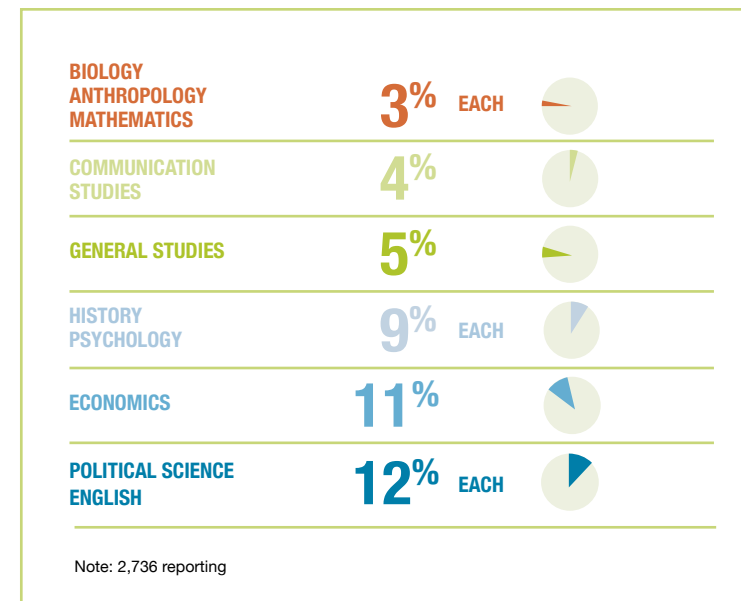
DECADES REPRESENTED



TOP 10 INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED



TOP 10 DEGREES REPRESENTED



LSA alumni feel loyal to their institution.

83% of the alumni reporting (2,736) ranked themselves as being an 8, 9, or 10 when asked "How loyal do you feel towards U-M on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest?"

74% of alumni reporting (992) answered "Yes" to "Is U-M headed in the right direction?"

44% of the alumni reporting (1,993) specifically mentioned that they were "Proud to be part of our alumni network."

LSA alumni are willing to be more involved with U-M.

88% of the alumni reporting (929) were ranked by coordinators as a 5 or higher on a "willingness to volunteer" scale of 1-10, with 1 being the least likely to volunteer for U-M and 10 being the mostly likely.

58% of the alumni reporting (2,821) said they would be willing to mentor a student intern.

LSA alumni would recommend a liberal arts degree to undergraduate students.

An average of **79%** of alumni reporting (1,161) responded in the following ways when asked if they would recommend a liberal arts degree to a current student:

1. "Yes, everyone needs a liberal arts degree" **45%**
2. "Yes, it's your chance to explore different interests" **34%**

ALUMNI

LSA alumni are engaged in their communities.

68% of our alumni volunteer.

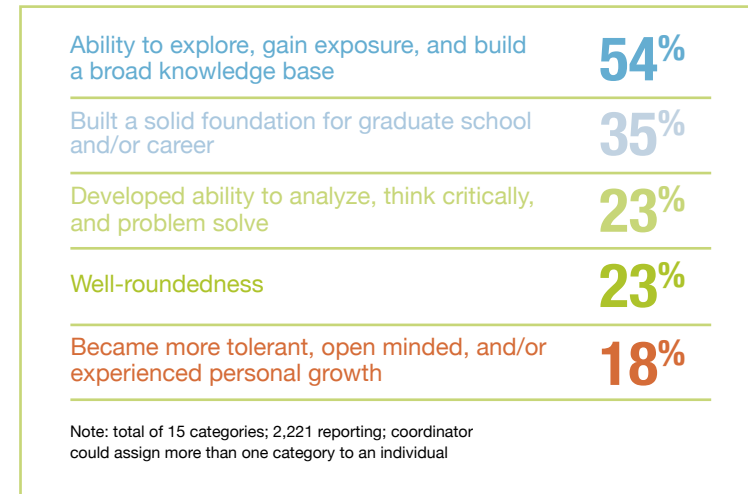
30% of our alumni are on a board.

“Education” and “Societal/Community/Political” are the top two categories of community involvement.

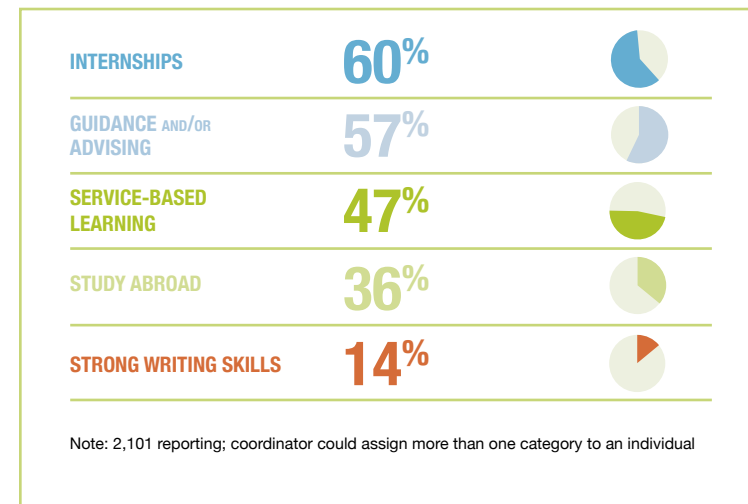
The main concerns of LSA alumni are general higher education concerns:

1. Affordability of higher education
2. Decrease in state appropriations
3. The state of liberal arts in today's economy

TOP FIVE RESPONSES — HOW DID LSA INFLUENCE YOUR LIFE OR CAREER?



SUPPORT FOR DEAN'S PRIORITIES



PARENTS

(179 Total Records)

RESPONSE RATES

Approximately **15%** of parents responded positively to our interview request.

INTERVIEWEES WHO ARE DONORS

50% made a gift to U-M prior to the College Connections interview.

KEY FINDINGS

- Parents trust the quality of an LSA degree.
- They believe that their student(s) are enjoying their experience(s).
- They would like to see their students have a better advising experience, more career preparation, and more support outside the classroom.

LOYALTY

An average of **82%** said their student would choose U-M again. (136 reporting)

81% agreed with the statement: “I trust the quality of a U-M degree, and I am not concerned about the quality of instructors.” (112 reporting)

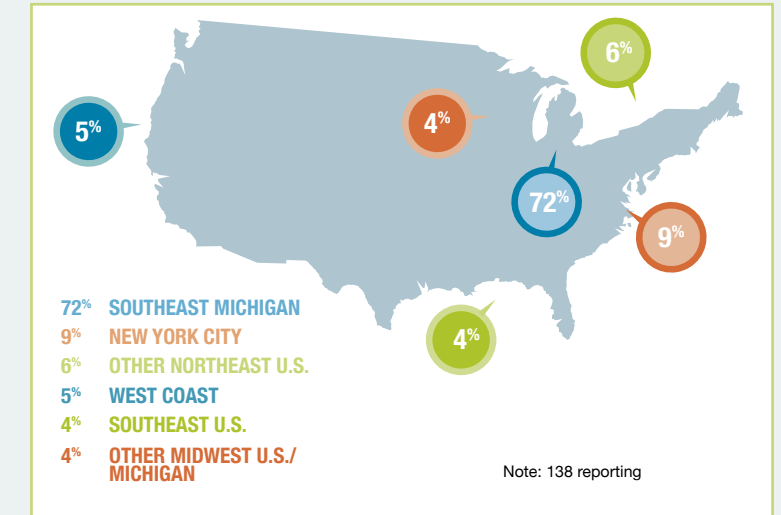
74% would recommend U-M to another parent and/or perspective student. (141 reporting)

53% of the parents reporting (122) ranked themselves as being an 8, 9, or 10 when asked “How loyal do you feel towards U-M on a scale of 1–10, 1 being the lowest and 10 being the highest?”

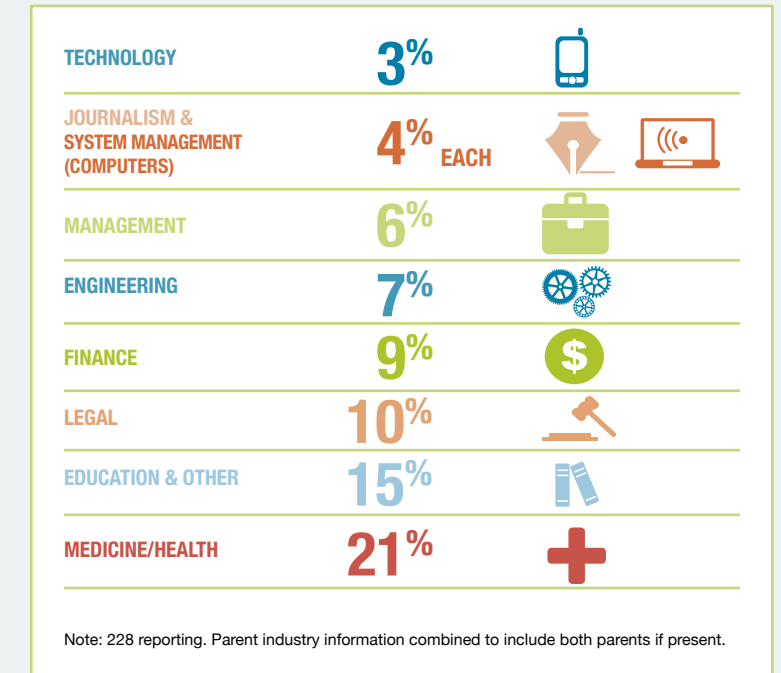
CONCERNS

60% of LSA parents mentioned concerns regarding U-M housing. (50 reporting)

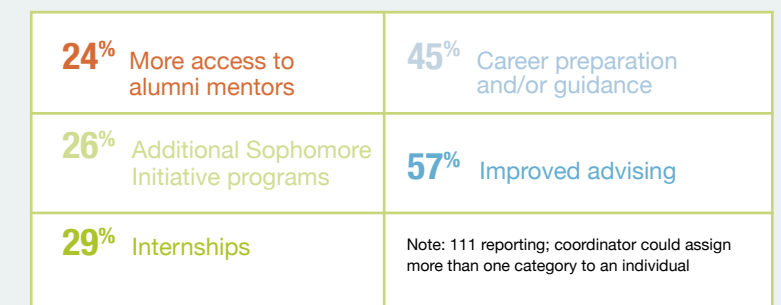
REGIONS



TOP 10 INDUSTRIES REPRESENTED



PARENT PRIORITIES



GIVING

GENERAL LSA POPULATION

Percent of LSA alumni who donated (anywhere at the University) in each Fiscal Year:²

FY 2009: 5.54%

FY 2010: 5.43%

FY 2011: 5.2%

KEY FINDINGS

- College Connections interviewees are more likely to be donors than average LSA alumni.
- College Connections interviewees are likely to continue their giving at the same or a higher level after having an interview.
- The College Connections Program has helped us discover major gift prospects for the College.

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS INTERVIEWEES

3,000 reporting (2,079 donors and 921 non-donors for FYs 2007–2012)

140 alumni were identified by the coordinators as major gift prospects for the next campaign, exhibiting both high philanthropic potential and willingness to meet with a fundraiser.

An average of **36%** of College Connections interviewees between FY 2009 and FY 2010 continued their giving at the same or a higher level in the next immediate FY after having an interview.

58% of people who had an interview in FY 2009 and gave in FY 2010 gave at the same or a higher level in FY 2010.

34% of people who had an interview in FY 2010 and gave in FY 2011 gave at the same or a higher level in FY 2011.

21% of lapsed³ donors who also had an interview in FY 2010 gave a gift in FY 2011.

We are listening.

(Left) Stephanie Powell ('99, History and English); former attorney, and a current author, poet, and teacher; met with College Connections Coordinator Jennifer Howard ('09) in 2010 in Powell's second-grade classroom in Oak Park, Michigan.

POWELL'S EXPERIENCE AT LSA:

She volunteered with groups such as Project Outreach, Project Serve, and Alternative Weekends; and conducted research with LSA's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program.



"I realized my dedication to helping people wasn't limited to the legal field. Now, my worst day at school is ten times better than my best day as a lawyer."

Strategic Partnerships

While created to improve external relations and major international fundraising efforts, College Connections has also established a number of strategic partnerships across the university.

College Connections interviews have revealed that many of our alumni and friends are interested in volunteering with the College or the University or learning more about specific programs. We work continuously to connect alumni to already existing programs, form partnerships with programs looking for alumni involvement, and create new programs that will engage specific groups of LSA alumni and friends.

COLLEGE OF LSA ANNUAL FUND AND TELEFUND⁴

The College Connections Program closely aligns with the College's Annual Fund as both programs invite participation from all members of the LSA family. The Annual Fund has begun leveraging this connection by using its annual fall solicitation to reference a College Connections interview (if applicable) in the direct mail solicitation letter.

In addition to the annual direct mail pieces, Nini Poore, Director of External Relations and Annual Giving Programs, trained the Telefund student callers with an innovative script designed to support the College of LSA internship priority.⁵ The callers are successfully collecting small donations for the LSA Internship Fund, and they have gathered more than 100 internship suggestions for current LSA/U-M students.

LSA DEPARTMENTS

Coordinators provide departmental information to participants interested in learning more. Occasionally, participants serve as guest speakers for department concentrations.

COLLEGE OF LSA MAJOR GIFTS TEAM

The College Connections Program interviews act as discovery visits for Major Gifts Officers (MGO). When coordinators identify a potential major gift prospect, we alert an MGO. Additionally, an MGO may request that a coordinator reach out to a prospect for an interview. This partnership has resulted in several successful relationships between MGOs and alumni and parents.

COLLEGE OF LSA DIRECTOR OF INTERNATIONAL GIVING

College Connections coordinators are now reaching out to international alumni to request phone or Skype interviews. This has been a successful introduction for Klementina Sula, the Director of International Giving, who may follow-up with specific information on international giving priorities.

LSA OFFICE OF UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION

The Sophomore Initiative,⁶ run through the College of LSA's Office of Undergraduate Education, is a special program designed for all second-year students in LSA. It focuses on many areas of student life, such as interdisciplinary coursework, internship and work opportunities, special advising opportunities, and events. College Connections partnered with LSA's Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, Philip Deloria, and U-M faculty member Margot Finn to include alumni as guest speakers for UC 270, "A User's Guide to the Liberal Arts."⁷

LSA's Office of Undergraduate Education recently hired an Internship Coordinator who will work closely with College Connections and U-M's Career Center to continue to make internship and work experiences for LSA students a priority.

THE CAREER CENTER⁸

College Connections partners with Kerin Borland and Geni Harclerode, the Director and Assistant Director of U-M's Career Center, to connect alumni and friends who express interest in lending their time, professional expertise, and resources to career services at U-M. Our participants may post jobs online, bring their organizations to career fairs and campus presentations, host Immersion Excursions, post alumni profiles online, help with mock interviews and résumé reviews, and/or connect directly with Career Center staff for their particular interests.

SEMESTER IN DETROIT⁹

Semester in Detroit is a Michigan Learning Community¹⁰ open to all U-M students, organized through LSA's Residential College. Students live on Wayne State University's campus for a semester. They intern at a community organization in the city and take special courses taught by U-M faculty. They receive an Urban Studies minor, valuable work experience, and an understanding of the city's culture. College Connections has worked with former Residential College Director and Director of Semester in Detroit Charlie Bright and Assistant Director Craig Regester to create an informal mentorship program that connects LSA alumni and friends to student projects and public events hosted by Semester in Detroit.

MICHIGAN IN WASHINGTON¹¹

Michigan in Washington (MIW) is a Michigan Learning Community open to all U-M students. Students intern for a public entity in Washington, D.C., for a semester, and they take courses taught by U-M faculty. During the fifth anniversary year of MIW, College Connections worked with LSA Development staff to connect D.C. alumni to the MIW program.

CAREER EXPLORATION CLASS (PSYCHOLOGY 211 PROJECT OUTREACH)¹²

College Connections provided young alumni volunteers to serve as guest speakers for both semesters of the class in 2011 and 2012.

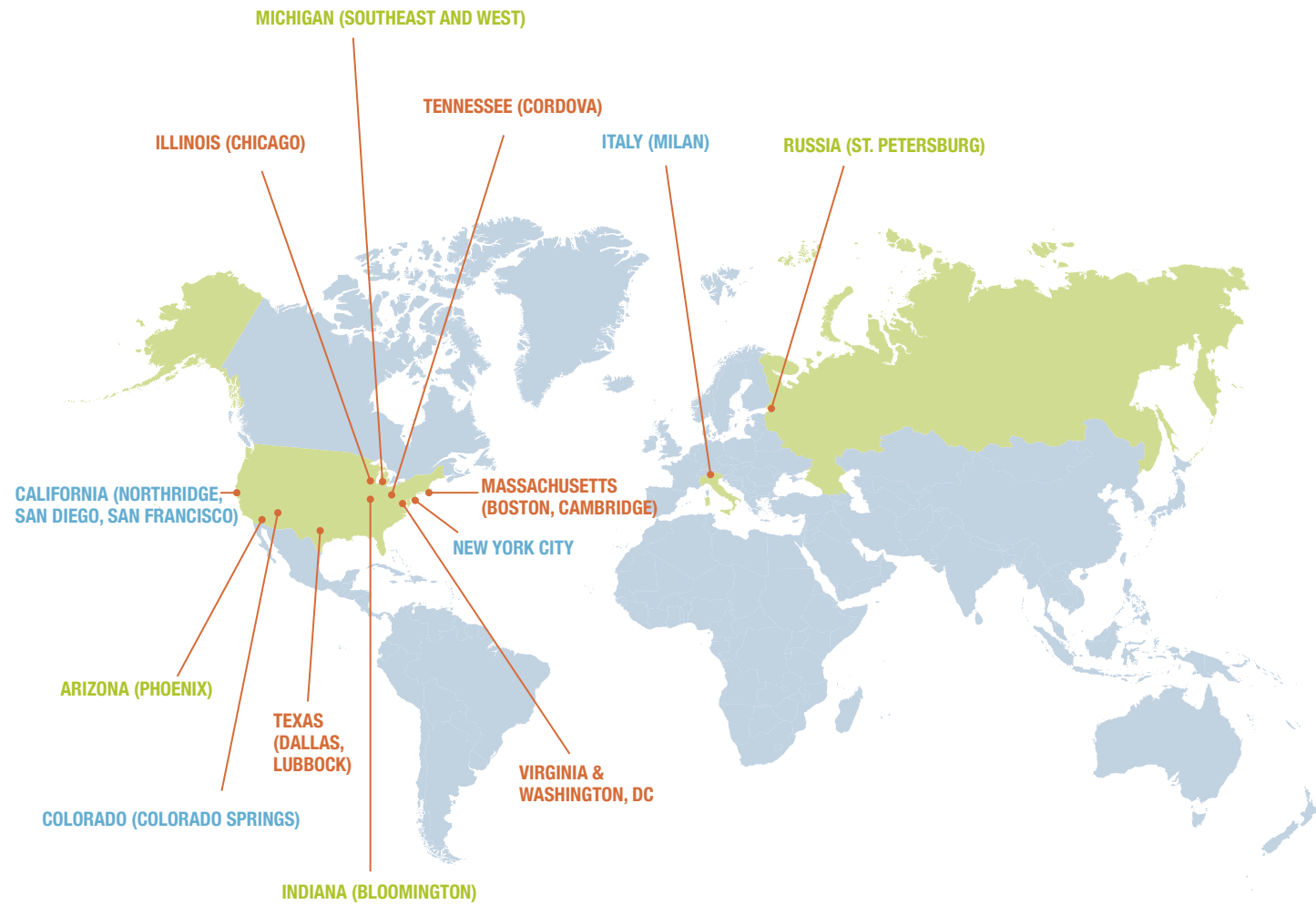
LSA PARENTS AND FAMILIES¹³

Parents and families of LSA students can now serve as volunteer fundraisers. College Connections refers interested parents to LSA's Office of Development, Marketing, and Communications. The volunteers may welcome new parents to the College, solicit for financial support, provide internship contacts, attend events, and thank donors.

THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION¹⁴

College Connections partners with various contacts at the Alumni Association (at the central office in Ann Arbor and through regional alumni club officers) on a regular basis to keep alumni informed of program needs, special events, 30-Minute Mentors, and other volunteer and mentorship opportunities. In the future, we hope members of our Dean's Young Alumni Council will join the boards of regional alumni clubs.

DYAC REPRESENTATION AND REACH



DEAN'S YOUNG ALUMNI COUNCIL¹⁵

College Connections coordinators Jennifer Howard and Elizabeth Williams created an advisory group called the LSA Dean's Young Alumni Council (DYAC), in line with the University's goals for recent graduate engagement. The council recruits LSA alumni who have graduated within the past five years.

The mission of the DYAC is to engage young alumni with the College of LSA, to encourage them to articulate the impact of their liberal arts education, and to create a culture of giving at the nation's preeminent liberal arts college.

According to Diamond Consulting Group, if alumni donate to their alma mater within three years after graduation, they are 175 times more likely to donate later in life.

The DYAC currently consists of 122 members. Each fiscal year, the DYAC champions one of the Dean's priorities with a peer-to-peer fundraising campaign, regional events, and advocacy for the liberal arts through social media.

Other DYAC volunteer efforts:

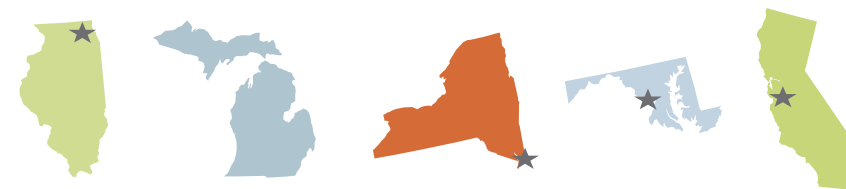
- Spoke to LSA students in classes
- Met with students at U-M's Career Center
- Raised money for the LSA Fund for Internships
- Mentored current LSA Students interning across the U.S. during the summer
- Supported LSA priorities and programs via social media
 - ◆ Weekly tweets, Facebook posts, and 20 blog posts total

DEPARTMENTS REPRESENTED

- AMERICAN CULTURE
- ANTHROPOLOGY
- ANTHROPOLOGY-ZOOLOGY
- ASTRONOMY & ASTROPHYSICS
- BRAIN BEHAVIOR & COGNITIVE SCIENCE
- CELLULAR & MOLECULAR BIOLOGY
- CHEMISTRY
- STATISTICS
- COMMUNICATION STUDIES
- GERMAN
- ECOLOGY/EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY
- ECONOMICS
- ASIAN STUDIES
- ENGLISH
- FRENCH
- GENERAL STUDIES
- HISTORY
- INDIVIDUAL CONCENTRATION
- ITALIAN
- MATH
- MUSIC
- NEUROSCIENCE
- ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES
- PHILOSOPHY
- AMERICAN CULTURE, COMMUNICATION STUDIES
- POLITICAL SCIENCE
- GERMAN
- PROGRAM IN THE ENVIRONMENT
- PSYCHOLOGY
- SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
- RC-ART & IDEA
- RUSSIAN & EASTERN EUROPEAN STUDIES
- SOCIOLOGY
- SPANISH LANGUAGE & LITERATURE
- SPANISH
- WOMEN'S STUDIES

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

DYAC members mentored 39 undergraduate LSA students who had internships in one of five regions.



CHICAGO – 5 MICHIGAN – 15 NEW YORK CITY – 14 WASHINGTON DC – 4 SAN FRANCISCO – 1



"I've been able to participate in history while representing my country."

Carolin Sanz Noriega

U-M STUDENT PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

College Connections has partnered with the Office of University Development's Student Philanthropy Initiative to educate students about the important role philanthropy plays in funding higher education.

COLLEGE CONNECTIONS AND LSA SOCIAL MEDIA

Through social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Flickr, College Connections coordinators keep in touch with alumni, updating them on LSA current events, and connecting them to students. Each coordinator shares stories, photos, and advice. One of the primary engagement strategies for the Dean's Young Alumni Council is advocacy and education through social media.

CITIZEN ALUM PROJECT WITH JULIE ELLISON¹⁶

In early 2012, College Connections began a partnership with Julie Ellison, LSA Professor of English Language and Literature, Professor of American Culture, Professor of Art, and the Director of Imagining America: Artists and Scholars in Public Life Consortium. Ellison works with the

American Commonwealth Partnership (a program that is part of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities), and she began a project called "Citizen Alum" through the White House initiative, "For Democracy's Future."

The basis of Citizen Alum is to change the viewpoint on alumni relations at the University level and to put a plan into place that allows alumni to be engaged with their institutions as they stay engaged with their communities. Citizen Alum believes that universities play an important role in developing their alumni as engaged citizens, and they are conducting research on how universities stay connected with their alumni after they graduate. Ellison is putting together partnerships with universities all over the country to have them conduct "listening projects" on how alumni give back, with money or volunteer time, to the community or to the institution.

Ellison partners with College Connections to learn more about recent alumni that are from southeastern Michigan and the Grand Rapids area. We have modified our questionnaire for this group of alumni to learn more specifically about their community involvement, where their civic engagement originates from, and how their careers have linked to the community and public service. We will also connect Ellison to specific alumni to record their stories as Citizen Alum participants.

We are listening.

Edward Marks ('57, Political Science), career foreign service officer and former ambassador to the Republics of Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, met with College Connections Coordinator Klementina Sula ('07) in 2011 at the State Department in Washington, D.C.

MARKS' EXPERIENCE AT LSA:

In a world before Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, Marks says LSA was "an introduction to a wider world, full of people with varied interests and characters from all over."

Discussion

SIGNIFICANCE OF RESULTS

We will aim to further engage this special group of LSA alumni and parents as volunteers, mentors, and donors. We have already begun to see that College Connections participants are more likely to continue to give at the same or higher level, and they are also more likely to participate in a survey or event.

LIMITATIONS

When the program began, the available resources to document interviews were limited. Our participants are also self-selected; they're often people who have been previously involved with the college. Additionally, our questions are anecdotal and open-ended in nature, so coordinators must often categorize responses subjectively.

The program has only been in existence for three entire fiscal years and complete giving information is only available through FY 2011. Thus, we are only able to examine giving trends for a portion of our interviewees, specifically, alumni and parents interviewed through FY 2010.

Despite these limitations, our interviews have been conducted in both a useful and meaningful way. We are gathering individual feedback while increasing the relationship of the participant with the College and the University on a very personalized level.

PROJECTION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PROGRAM

The College Connections Program became a permanent part of the College of LSA in 2010. It continues to grow and adapt as the priorities of the College change. It currently employs three full-time coordinators.

As the program has grown, we have created more robust methods to collect and analyze the information from our interviews, as well as to share our results with our team and campus-wide strategic partners.

“Attending U-M gave me the chance to pursue ALL of my interests—from the study of English Language and Literature to the study of Fine Arts and Graphic Design—and opened up all kinds of opportunities for me to discover interests I didn’t even know I had.”



Rob Hess

We are listening.

Anthony Cece ('96, English), Marketing Communications Specialist for the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Michigan, met with College Connections Coordinator Kathleen Hinkley ('10) in 2012.

CECE'S EXPERIENCE AT LSA:

He graduated with honors; was the president of Sigma Phi Society; produced an arts and literature magazine sponsored by several groups and units at the university; and independently organized art shows and poetry readings on campus.

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NOTES:

¹ alumni.georgetown.edu/benefitsresources/benefitsresources_13

² Referenced from Office of University Development, Senior Associate Director of Annual Giving

³ The College of LSA deems a “lapsed donor” to be someone who has given a gift previously but has not given for at least two consecutive fiscal years.

⁴ giving.umich.edu/telefund

⁵ lsa.umich.edu/UMICH/alumni/Home/Supporting%20the%20LSA%20Vision/The%20LSA%20Undergraduate%20Experience/priorities_Internships.pdf

⁶ lsa.umich.edu/students/sophomoreinitiative

⁷ lsa.umich.edu/cg/cg_detail.aspx?content=1910UC270002&termArray=f_12_1910

⁸ careercenter.umich.edu

⁹ lsa.umich.edu/sid

¹⁰ lsa.umich.edu/mlc

¹¹ lsa.umich.edu/michinwash

¹² www.sitemaker.umich.edu/projectoutreach/section_005__careers

¹³ lsa.umich.edu/parents

¹⁴ alumni.umich.edu

¹⁵ lsa.umich.edu/alumni/youngalumnicouncil

¹⁶ imaginingamerica.org; adpaascu.wordpress.com/tag/american-commonwealth-partnership/; aascu.org

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www.lsa.umich.edu/alumni/connect

