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# Cultivating Connections

Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association  
Strategic Plan 2020-2024

“In all affairs, it’s a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the thing you have long taken for granted.”

– Bertrand Russell  
philosopher, historian



**MISSION:** Cultivating a network of alumni and students in order to share the value of Purdue University College of Agriculture (COA) for the betterment of society in both local and global communities.

Since 1895, Purdue Ag Alumni have been promoting the university and its initiatives to farmers and citizens throughout Indiana. From the early “institutes” for farmers in local communities to numerous initiatives to serve communities around the globe, Purdue Ag Alumni have been committed to producing more safe food, protecting environmental resources, fighting hunger, sustaining communities, developing effective leaders, and pushing the boundaries of innovation in agriculture and other fields.

The Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association in the 21st Century faces numerous challenges as its alumni:

- work in jobs and causes around the globe
- include diverse races, national heritages, and lifestyles
- serve in emerging sectors as agriculture continues evolving beyond production agriculture
- value relationships with classmates, fellow graduates, work colleagues, and College of Agriculture faculty and staff
- appreciate the skills and connections afforded them with a Purdue education and experience
- contribute to the outstanding reputation of the Purdue College of Agriculture and Purdue University as a whole

In response, the Purdue Agricultural Alumni Association is developing a strategic plan to provide a decision-making framework for future endeavors. The PAAA values its long history

and traditions. Yet, it must evolve to keep pace with the changing needs of alumni and students (future alumni). This plan is built to address four key questions:

1. Who are our alumni and how are they connected?
2. How does the association invest in students and student organizations to plant seeds for life-long connections?
3. How does the PAAA leverage its unique social capital and cultural resources to share the great success story of American agriculture and Purdue University's contributions to that success?
4. How does the governance structure sustain the association as a vibrant organization and represent the diverse makeup of its alumni?

To answer these questions, we gathered input from the board directors, academic departments, College of Agriculture leaders, graduate students, undergraduate students, targeted groups of oft-overlooked alumni, and the planning committee.

Before we can build relationships and develop programs, we need to understand who our alumni are and what they seek.

First, let's examine their make-up by age groups.

- ▶ Early Career/0-10 years: The focus is on "me," *getting access to and building business networks*. Alumni in this group are trying to get established and *assembling their career development building blocks*. Those interested in volunteering and serving will often offer time rather than money as they're still getting established and face a number of adult milestones.
- ▶ Mid-Career/10-20 years: The focus changes to "we." They are getting ahead and serving in key management roles. *These alumni are often change makers, setting trends that can affect their industry sectors*. They are also preparing for the arrival of the next generation of employees, managers, and consumers/clients. From a serving perspective, they are often giving back through service and financial support.
- ▶ Full Career/20 years to retirement: The focus on their *service and leadership in their industry starts to emerge in this group*. They see an opportunity to *share their perspectives on service, leadership, facing challenges, and lessons learned with younger leaders and managers*. They have more giving options and often choose some combination of time, talent, and treasure.

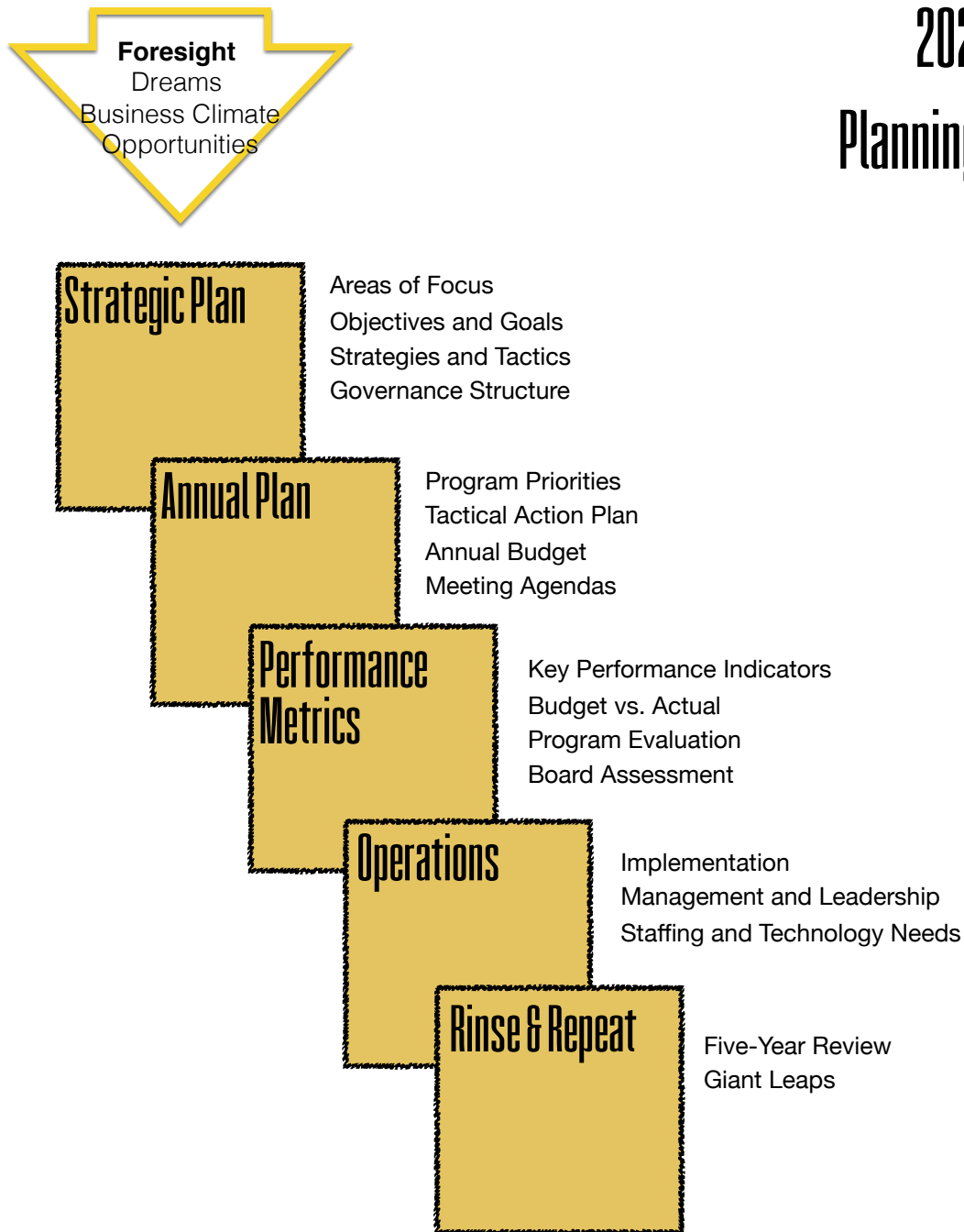
- ▶ Legacy Alumni/Post-retirement: *Giving-back and reconnecting* are the themes that drive actions of these alumni. Having completed their careers, they are *eager and willing to share experiences and lessons learned*. They often pose hard questions to students and faculty knowing that searching for the answers lead to greater understanding and deeper knowledge. These alums often want to reconnect physically and virtually with fellow alumni whose relationships waned during their careers. They have a new reservoir of time and may be interested in giving back through service as well as money.

Next, we discovered other alumni groups that stand out from the traditional age groups.

- ▶ Geographically-dispersed alumni: There are a number of alumni who are located internationally and beyond the Midwest. Typically, these alumni *want to be connected to each other and to the college, but distance keeps them away from campus-based events or those nearby, e.g. Fish Fry, Homecoming*. To address the needs of these groups, the PAAA must query available datasets to identify these individuals and groups and survey them to better understand their needs.
- ▶ Underrepresented alumni: When joining a group, *we tend to migrate to “people like me.”* We have to *create new ways to help people find their cohort* - demographically or psycho-graphically. Oftentimes, graduate students represent a higher percentage of international alumni than the undergraduate population so we need to address this. One opportunity to reach a key audience of minority students/alumni is to work with the MANRRS (Minorities in Agriculture and Natural Resources and Related Sciences) Chapter at Purdue.
- ▶ Alumni from lesser represented majors: Any university alumni group tends to cater to its largest potential audience. *An unintended consequence is that some departments and majors can be overlooked or underserved*. For example, that means that Animal Science and Ag Econ grads are more easily served than Biochemistry or Botany alumni because there are more to reach. PAAA will create and administer a needs assessment for these underserved departments and majors.

It is important that we understand the value of a strategic plan and its role in setting the organization's direction.

# 2020-2024 Planning Model



From these conversations, four areas of focus emerged that provide a strategic framework for the organization's future:

- **Builders (Relationships)**
- **Multipliers**
- **Storytellers (Outreach)**
- **Stewards (Good Governance)**

# ACTION PLAN

Key  
 X = New Initiative  
 > = Continue program or group  
 = Within time frame

## BUILDERS OF RELATIONSHIPS

**Objective: Cultivating connections to and across the various strata of alumni and university stakeholders**

BUILDERS OF RELATIONSHIPS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal B1 - Increase awareness of the value of a Purdue degree, happenings at Purdue COA, and alumni achievements and activities.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Develop a Content Strategy to gather and share alumni stories and events.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Collaborate with college and department communications staff</li> <li>▶ Solicit stories from alumni, friends, and partners</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Develop a Delivery Strategy to reach various alumni audiences.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Use social media tools to connect and engage alumni, current students, faculty, staff, and other supporters.</li> <li>▶ Improve the accessibility and functionality of the PAAA website</li> <li>▶ Establish an e-newsletter and/or annual impact report to share alumni stories, college happenings, and alumni events.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>
		X	>	>	>

BUILDERS OF RELATIONSHIPS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal B2 - Create awareness that PAAA can assist alumni in establishing and accessing networks to strengthen relationships and create connections.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Finding friends and classmates</li> <li>▶ Finding business connections</li> <li>▶ Locating contacts during career changes or relocations</li> </ul>		X	>	>	>
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal B3 - Cultivate good relationships with faculty and staff throughout the College of Agriculture and with other groups within the University.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Dean and College Administration:</u> Work with the College of Agriculture to promote alumni relationships and achievements, and support its mission.</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Departments and Associate Departments:</u> Work with Departments heads and liaisons to operationalize alumni connections.*</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>College of Agriculture Development Office:</u> Partner with them to engage alumni to support the College of Agriculture. The Development Office stewards the Ag Alumni Trust Fund.</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <u>Retired Faculty and Staff:</u> Cultivate ongoing relationships with retired campus faculty and staff and Purdue Extension retirees as members of the Purdue Ag family.</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purdue University</li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>Purdue Alumni Association:</u> Partner with Purdue Alumni Association and other schools within the University to exchange ideas and best practices.</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ <u>Purdue Athletics/John Purdue Club:</u> Use opportunities to partner so as to reach critical ag alumni cohorts who have an affinity for sporting events.</li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>

BUILDERS OF RELATIONSHIPS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal RB4 - Identify partners and friends to assist with emerging PAAA projects</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To be determined by other programs and priorities in the strategic plan</i></li> </ul>					

\*For example, an animal science alum may be chosen to receive the Certificate of Distinction, but because it is chosen by PAAA rather than the department the relationship may not be as robust as possible. Also, PAAA hosts the Fish Fry and Homecoming events so departments need to be encouraged to leverage alumni connections during the festivities.







## MULTIPLIERS

**Objective: Cultivating connections between alumni and students and their organizations, recognizing individuals for outstanding success and service within the industry, and connecting to faculty and staff.**

MULTIPLIERS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal M1 - Leverage alumni resources to assist students and student organizations</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Expand the Ag Alumni Mentoring Program using qualitative and quantitative metrics to track progress.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assist freshmen and sophomore in increasing the value of their early college experience in internships, research, and/or organizational involvement. Benchmarks - Currently 50 relationships - increase 25% by Spring 2021</li> <li>▶ Introduce a Career Coaching program for juniors and seniors to improve college experience, internships, and involvement to improve job placement upon graduation. Benchmarks - Establish 50 new relationships by Spring 2022</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Improve the effectiveness of PAAA Ag Alumni Grants to assist student organizations with special projects.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Increase awareness of the fund</li> <li>▶ Improve the application process</li> <li>▶ Budget \$2,500 per semester and allow for rollover of unused funds</li> <li>▶ Require follow-up reports from recipients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Improve the effectiveness of the Ag Alumni Trust Fund Grants to assist individuals and groups</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Review and update the guidelines for approved uses — special equipment, travel to industry events (individual/group), study abroad for groups, DC policy internships</li> <li>▶ Maximize use of the funds ~\$20,000 awarded annually</li> <li>▶ Require follow-up reports from recipients</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>

MULTIPLIERS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Reach out to student organizations to help them understand how PAAA can help.</i></li> </ul>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Assist student organizations to identify potential speakers from alumni ranks</li> <li>▶ Enlist alumni to address students via online streaming platforms or face-to-face</li> </ul>			X		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Host graduation events in conjunctions with departments and the COA to welcome new alumni.</i></li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal M2 - PAAA work with department leaders to co-host alumni/university events at professional meetings and events (4 departments currently do this independently of PAAA - goal 5 departments by 2022)</b>			X	X	X
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal M3 - Recruit alumni and friends to identify with “affinity groups” to stay connected with the organization and the COA.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Initiate a form on the website to have alumni identify which department(s), programs, and/or student organizations they want to connect with and keep informed about. e.g. livestock judging teams, NAMA teams, industry connections beyond department of degree</i></li> </ul>		X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Capture updated profile information for alumni database</li> <li>▶ Personalize engagement with groups based on alumni interests</li> </ul>					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal M4 - Expand recognition of alumni achievements through formal programs. Synchronize and streamline nomination and selection processes through a written Standard Operating Procedure.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>PAAA Certificate of Distinction</i></li> </ul>	>	>	>	>	>

MULTIPLIERS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
● <i>Distinguished Ag Alumni Awards</i>			X	>	>
● <i>Pathmaker Award</i>	>	>	>	>	>
● <i>Departmental Awards - Assist and encourage in expanding award programs from seven of the eleven academic departments to recognize their alumni.</i>		X	>	>	>
● <i>Explore new categories based on strata identified within Relationship Builders – early career, mid-career</i>			X	>	>
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal M5 - Assist alumni in establishing and accessing networks to strengthen relationships and create connections</b>					
● <i>Host and/or coordinate international gatherings of alumni in different countries or regions</i>					
▶ Conduct one International gathering by 2024					
▶ Conduct one International Travel Tour for ag alumni by 2024					
▶ Coordinate student Study Abroad group meet-ups as opportunities to gather international alumni					
● <i>Host and/or coordinate City/State gatherings of ag alumni</i>					
▶ Conduct one gathering within the Midwest by 2024					
▶ Conduct one gathering beyond the Midwest by 2024					
▶ Explore opportunities to partner with PAA and/or the Office of Development					
● <i>Host and/or assist ag alumni gatherings at key Purdue events or Big Ten sporting events - one event by 2022</i>			X		

## STORYTELLERS (OUTREACH)

**Objective: Cultivating connections between alumni and friends to serve as agriculture’s storytellers and share the industry’s success story, hosting events that celebrate the achievements of Purdue Alumni, and raising money to support the organization’s initiatives.**

STORYTELLERS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<p><b>Goal SO1 - Increase the effectiveness of the alumni and friends to tell a more comprehensive story (i.e. Story Arc) of agriculture’s heritage and evolution at the Indiana State Fairgrounds year around and, especially with Pioneer Village during the Indiana State Fair.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <p>● <i>Establish a Task Force to work with the Indiana State Fair and its partners to evaluate PAAA’s role in the future of Pioneer Village.</i></p> </li> <li> <p>▶ Create continuums of technologies and equipment to demonstrate changing practices, e.g. a succession of tillage equipment from moldboard plow to today’s tools or harvesters from reapers to threshers to modern combines.</p> </li> <li> <p>▶ Tell the Agricultural Revolution Story – effectively communicating the industry’s evolution – from subsistence agriculture through the industrial era, service era, information era, leisure era, to the life science era – helping people connect the past to modern uses and practices.</p> </li> <li> <p>▶ Work with partners at the Indiana State Fair/ Fairgrounds to create a story arc about agriculture’s success story – Glass Barn, Indiana Farm Bureau, Indiana FFA, Indiana DNR, Pathway to Water Quality, and private vendors.</p> </li> <li> <p>▶ Include artifacts acquisition and collection maintenance in budget</p> </li> </ul>					
	X				

STORYTELLERS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Identify methods for introducing students and others to the Pioneer Village skills, interpretation, and craft through internships, apprenticeships, volunteer hours, and other mechanisms, including, but not limited to, the Homesteaders Student organization)</li> </ul>	X	X			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Maintain collaborative relationship between PAAA and the Indiana State Fair Executive Director, board and commission</i></li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal SO2 - Explore ways to improve current offerings and identify new opportunities to gather alumni and friends to share agriculture's success and conduct biennial evaluations.</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Work with Purdue Ag Fish Fry Committee to plan event and conduct a biennial evaluation</i></li> </ul>		X		X	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Pursue Ag Alumni group travel in conjunction with international and city/state events. (see M5)</i></li> </ul>					
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal SO3 - Establish annual goals and strategies for fund-raising programs offered through PAAA (see SG3)</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Cheese Sales - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Expand marketing opportunities through the Purdue system</li> <li>▶ Update consumer marketing campaign</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		X	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Pioneer Village Auction</li> </ul>		X	>	>	>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Golf Outing - \$6,000± for study abroad programs</li> </ul>		X	>	>	>

## STEWARDS (GOOD GOVERNANCE)

**Objective: Cultivating connections by having board directors from across the college, encouraging volunteers to serve in board and committee roles, and developing strong leaders to sustain the organization and steward its resources.**

STEWARDS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal SG1 - Strengthen the Board by defining roles and responsibilities</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Ensure fiduciary accountability</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Prepare and approve an annual operating budget based on established priorities</li> <li>▶ Conduct an annual review of the Association’s financial activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Conduct a periodic review of governance documents and operating policies and procedures to identify and resolve gaps in good governance. Review in conjunction with strategic planning cycles.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation</li> <li>▶ Risk and Liability</li> <li>▶ Serve as liaisons to the departments they represent</li> <li>▶ Decision Making Hierarchies and Matrix</li> <li>▶ Communication</li> <li>▶ Data Collection and Sharing</li> <li>▶ Executive Committee Authority</li> </ul> </li> <li>● <i>Prepare an annual performance review of the Executive Director to provide to the COA Dean</i></li> <li>● <i>Conduct an annual board self-assessment</i></li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>
		X	>	>	>
	X				X
			X	>	>
		X	>	>	>
	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal SG2 - Develop an On-Boarding Orientation program for incoming directors</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Develop and provide an orientation including the association’s strategic plan, expectations, roles and responsibilities, calendar of events, and committee opportunities</i></li> </ul>	X	>	>	>	>

STEWARDS	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Goal SG3 - Encourage greater participation in PAAA Committees to ensure continuity and accountability. Develop guidelines for the establishment of standing and short-term committees and working groups.</b>					
● <i>Nominating Committee - maintain a rolling list of potential nominees</i>	>	>	>	>	>
● <i>Awards Selection Committee</i>	>	>	>	>	>
● <i>Establish Budget Planning Committee</i>	X	>	>	>	>
● <i>Establish a Fund-Raising Committee to assist with Golf Outing, Pioneer Village Auction, and Cheese Sales</i>		X	>	>	>
● <i>Establish Ag Alumni Fish Fry Committee</i>		X	>	>	>
● <i>Create a Pioneer Village Committee to provide direction to State Fair activities and year around input for the State Fair Farm Plan</i>	X	>	>	>	>
● <i>Strengthen the Alumni Trust Fund Committee</i>					
▶ <i>Ensure that the Committee works with the PAAA staff to invest funds according to established guidelines and funds are used to maximize impact</i>	>	>	>	>	>
● <i>Create other committees, work groups, and task forces as determined by program priorities.</i>					

# PAAA Strategic Plan

## Mind Map 2020-2024

