

THE CAVALIER DAILY ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

2003 STRATEGIC PLAN

FINAL

January 2003

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I. INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1983, The Cavalier Daily Alumni Association (CDAA) is a collection of past and present Cavalier Daily (CD) editors and staff members at the University of Virginia. Since its beginnings, the CDAA has sought to provide professional, technical, financial and other support toward the efforts of those publishing The Cavalier Daily newspaper for the University of Virginia community.

As the organization prepares to embark on its 20th year, the CDAA Board of Directors determined the need to assess current strategic efforts and refine the direction of the organization. This document was compiled from the outputs of a day-long strategic planning session conducted on March 9, 2002 in Chevy Chase, Maryland.

The goal of this meeting was to develop the strategic plan for the CDAA for the next five years. The meeting followed the standard process for strategic planning, including: A review of the organization's mission and past accomplishments, an environmental assessment, the creation of the organizational vision, and the development of the subsequent strategic goals and action plans.

The following eight CDAA Board Members were participants in the meeting as members of the Strategic Planning Committee: Andrew Csontos ('95), Bob Cullen ('70), Michael Fagan ('79), Lisa Guernsey ('93), Diane Krehmeyer ('91), Scott Ramsey ('92), Candice Shepherd ('97), and Gregory Trevor ('86).

Once this document was edited and approved by the participants of the session, it was presented to the CDAA Board of Directors in its entirety for review and approval at the September 28, 2002 Board Meeting in Charlottesville, Virginia.

II. THE CDAA MISSION

A mission statement defines the role of the organization. The Strategic Planning Committee affirmed the mission of the Cavalier Daily Alumni Association as three-fold:

1. *To support the Cavalier Daily organization and its overall continued well-being;*
2. *To serve the newspaper's alumni and foster strong connections among its members; and*
3. *To successfully manage the operations of the CDAA organization.*

In support of each of these efforts, the Strategic Planning committee determined that the CDAA conducts the following activities:

To support the Cavalier Daily organization and its overall continued well-being:

- ⇒ The CDAA maintains a Programming Committee, which works with the CD Managing Board to conduct a Fall Journalism Conference for CD staff and University members, and organizes specialized workshops for CD staff throughout the academic year.
- ⇒ The CDAA maintains a Scholarship Committee, which awards three scholarships to deserving CD staff members. These scholarships – the Herring Scholarship, the Pierson Photography Scholarship, and the Community Journalism Scholarship (co-sponsored with the Virginia Press Association) – are all designed to provide financial support to students with media-related summer internships so that they might bring valuable skills back to the CD staff.
- ⇒ The CDAA works in partnership with the University of Virginia Library to ensure the digital preservation and availability of all issues of CD. The CDAA provides research assistance and shares in the funding and promotion of this technical initiative.

To serve the newspaper's alumni and foster strong connections among its members:

- ⇒ The CDAA supports an Events Committee, which spearheads alumni events during Homecoming and Reunions weekends, as well as special events such

as the 100th anniversary of the CD, the Millenium (Y2K) CD Reunion Weekend, and the CDAA's 20th anniversary celebration in 2003.

- ⇒ The CDAA supports a Communications Committee, which reaches out to alumni through its twice-yearly newsletter publication, College Topics, and which oversees the content and maintenance of the CDAA website: www.cdalumni.org.
- ⇒ The CDAA supports a Networking Committee, whose purpose is to assist CD staff members and alumni seeking guidance related to their current or desired career fields. This newly formed committee maintains the CDAA networking database, conducts career-related workshops, and works to promote the goals of this new initiative among all alumni.
- ⇒ The CDAA supports a history project to document the history of the CD. The project will compile oral and written histories of individuals involved with the CD, with the end goal of completing a book on the subject.

To successfully manage the operations of the CDAA organization:

- ⇒ The CDAA maintains a board of directors of 21 members, currently representing the graduation years of 1934 –2002. The four offices of President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer make up the Executive Committee, which conducts business on behalf of the CDAA throughout the year.
- ⇒ The CDAA supports a Fundraising Committee, which oversees the development and distribution of the annual CDAA holiday letter solicitation, as well as ad hoc fundraising efforts that may occur throughout the year. The CDAA Treasurer monitors and disburses these funds as designated by the donor or determined by the Board.
- ⇒ The CDAA holds twice-yearly board meetings in Charlottesville and works with the University of Virginia Alumni Association as an Affinity Interest Group (AIG).

III. AN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The environmental assessment of the organization is a review of the CDAA's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats as perceived by its members. The Strategic Planning Committee reviewed the events/conditions the CDAA currently faces and evaluated their overall impact on CDAA efforts.

CDAA Strengths

- ⇒ Longevity of the organization (20 years old in 2003)
- ⇒ Increasing financial strength as an organization
- ⇒ Solid institutional base from which to operate (donor base has potential)
- ⇒ Solid alliances with key organizations (e.g., AIG affiliation with Alumni Hall, scholarship work with the Virginia Press Association)
- ⇒ Dedicated core of board members
- ⇒ Solid committee efforts – scholarships, communications, events all very much improved in last 10 years
- ⇒ Successful implementation (approx. 90%) of last strategic plan
- ⇒ Strong institutional memory
- ⇒ Steady crop of new alumni available to assist the organization

CDAA Weaknesses

- ⇒ Limited efforts to tap star power and/or financial resources of key alumni
- ⇒ Finances are constrained; fundraising is contingent upon alumni goodwill, no ongoing strategy in place
- ⇒ Scholarships could be enhanced – more applicants needed; need to assess why interest seems muted
- ⇒ Regular programming has lapsed from years of monthly workshops
- ⇒ Networking efforts could be improved
- ⇒ Event attendance for Homecoming and Reunion events has dropped
- ⇒ Meetings are rushed – too much information is "tabled" to a later date
- ⇒ Slowness of the organization to "get things done"; can be frustrating to new alumni who are used to speedy results – they can lose enthusiasm
- ⇒ Inability to recruit 4th year students from all levels of the CD, not just the managing board (CD autocratic structure does not help)
- ⇒ Have not adapted the organization to the resource pattern (new influx of bodies once a year, etc.) to avoid board member burnout
- ⇒ Need to have tasks available so people can help in a "small way", rather than taking over a whole committee, etc.
- ⇒ Logistics (proximity to Charlottesville, geographic disparity of board members) pose challenges

- ⇒ Current relationship to CD affects our ability to get things done; CD has evolved, we need to make sure we have evolved with them (e.g., In 10 years, their size/structure has changed; finances improved; freedom/clout better established. We need to understand how can we better manage their expectations.)
- ⇒ Relationship with Alumni Hall could be used more effectively (ex: career database – could we team up with them here?)

The end result of this discussion revealed that while the overall strength of the CDAA organization is quite solid, the weaknesses of the organization can limit the value and potentially minimize the impact of the accomplishments we have been able to achieve to this point. The Committee agreed that the Strategic Plan should focus on ways to improve upon the aforementioned areas of improvement.

IV. THE CDAA VISION

An organization's vision is a substantive statement of intent or direction, describing a realistic, credible, attractive future for the organization.

The Strategic Planning Committee developed the draft CDAA vision as follows:

"The CDAA works to ensure the long-term survival and success of The Cavalier Daily through managing an active partnership with the newspaper staff that allows the two groups to focus on common goals and support special projects of interest to the University, newspaper, and alumni."

V. CDAA STRATEGIC GOALS

Based on the organizational mission, vision, and current environment, the Strategic Planning Committee determined there are four strategic goals upon which the CDAA should focus over the next five years.

The importance of achieving these goals and the means by which to achieve them are discussed in detail in section VI, CDAA Action Plans, of this document:

- **Improve Work Efficiencies**
- **Strengthen Relationship with The Cavalier Daily Staff**
- **Recruit New Volunteers at both Committee and Board Level**
- **Improve Current Committee Efforts**

VI. CDAA ACTION PLANS

Once the strategic goals were loosely defined, the Strategic Planning Committee developed a series of action steps to achieve the goals.

1. Improve Work Efficiencies

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that the CDAA could strive to be a more effective organization by realizing some key efficiencies, accomplishing more in less time. The following items were suggested to improve in this area:

- ⇒ For Board Meetings, need to focus less on transmission of information, and more on Q&A/discussion: e.g., submit all committee reports in advance of the meeting
- ⇒ Committees should meet in advance of Board meetings, or time should be set aside on the days of Board meetings so that committees may meet then
- ⇒ Each chair should only discuss urgent or “action needed” items with full Board
- ⇒ Conduct more frequent strategic planning sessions – every 2-3 years, or have the Fall meeting be a Strategic Planning session, every other year?
- ⇒ Use the CDAA website for full discussions of key issues (specifically the Director discussion board)
- ⇒ Work with Alumni Hall on closer basis to maximize its manpower/financial abilities

2. Strengthen Relationship with The Cavalier Daily Staff

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that positive working relations with the CD are critical to a successful year for the CDAA. While we recognize that some CD Managing Boards are more receptive to the support of the CDAA than others, the CDAA should make every effort to work effectively with the current year's staff. Some actions that may help facilitate this relationship:

- ⇒ Conduct joint goal-setting session with CD at beginning of CD MB term
- ⇒ Get to know CD staffers in informal manner – take new MB out to dinner
- ⇒ Hold event for 4th year staffers (dinner, party)
- ⇒ Attend CD Spring Cocktail Party
- ⇒ Offer and provide independent financial review/advice
- ⇒ Make sure current 4th year staff members receive issues of College Topics; or email each student a hyperlink to the CDAA web site

3. Recruit New Volunteers at both Committee and Board Level

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that Board member burnout is a major concern and threat to the life of the organization. An influx of fresh faces and new ideas is critical to the CDAAs success and the CDAA should work toward the inclusion of new, working membership throughout the year. Some suggestions for this improvement include:

- ⇒ Open a chair position for a new alumnus each year (ex: Events)
- ⇒ Put an ad in the UVAA magazine as well as College Topics asking for "help wanted"
- ⇒ Notify alumni well in advance of board meetings and events via postcard (not just email)
- ⇒ Improve current board participation: create Emeritus status for more senior members. These members are welcome to attend meetings, vote, and participate in long range policy for the CDAA, but are not obligated to attend.

4. Improve Current Committee Efforts

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that the CDAA committees, and specifically their directors, are the workhorses of the organization. However, since so much of the workload tends to fall in these areas, directors can burn out and accomplish less than was intended in any given year. Suggested action items for improvement are divided by committee area:

a. Communications

"The most critical aspect of CDAA operations"

- ⇒ Recruit writers/web assistance to help out
- ⇒ Ensure the CDAA 20th anniversary receives an article in the UVAA magazine talking about successes and future goals
- ⇒ Drive traffic to the web site via periodic email to alumni reviewing site content
- ⇒ Ensure CDAA URL is on all publications/information that goes to CDAA alumni
- ⇒ Add a links section to relevant web sites and/or alumni personal pages
- ⇒ Allow personal postings (pictures) to web site and to CT
- ⇒ Conduct an email survey asking alumni what they would like to see on the web site and in CT
- ⇒ Provide a link to www.cdalumni.org on both the CD and the UVAA web site

b. Scholarships

- ⇒ Ensure the CD managing editor is appropriately "pushing" them to the staff
- ⇒ Conduct a survey of previous scholarships to assess whether scholarships are serving the current needs of the staff. Ask question about whether

scholarship enabled them to bring something back to the paper – what ideas do they have to make it better?

- ⇒ Use survey results to determine whether any reallocation of the monies are needed
- ⇒ Determine whether to gear internships to rising 3rd years? (concerns about more lucrative internships, like the Post, and that by the time they are 4th year they are more career focused)
- ⇒ Keep better communication with internship winners post-summer and try to involve them more in the CDAA
- ⇒ Expand size of scholarship committee to 5-7 people, including at least one person living in the Charlottesville area
- ⇒ One of the committee members should be the liaison to the ME to ensure scholarships are advertised, filled out on time, etc.
- ⇒ Review/change application to stress loyalty to the CD as key

c. Programming

- ⇒ Programs can/ have acted as drivers to stimulate interest/enthusiasm in both the CD and journalism
- ⇒ May want to broad focus specifically from print journalism to a broader vision of writing (communication skills - including IT, electronics) to help people understand the value of such skills
- ⇒ Still need workshops that help improve the operations of the paper
- ⇒ Restore the previous practice of providing a week's worth of tear sheets to a professional for markup and review

d. Events

- ⇒ Expand this committee
- ⇒ Conduct "local chapter" events (D.C., Richmond, etc.)
- ⇒ Divide responsibilities within an event (e.g. one person to organize an event, one person to host/greet, one person to clean up, etc.)

e. Fundraising

- ⇒ Send more than 1 mailing to alumni per year: Perhaps one mass mailing at holidays, plus one "targeted" mailing to probable givers sometime later in the year – should be a much smaller list and a more complex pitch
- ⇒ Need to beef up this committee – can't be just one person
- ⇒ Need to define where we want the money to go – can't ask just for the sake of asking
- ⇒ Need to develop a strategy for how to proactively manage the CD's recent efforts/wishes to approach alumni on their own
- ⇒ Suppress address info on CDAA database to prevent outsiders from downloading addresses

- ⇒ Flesh out “intro to the CDAA” doc to further discuss “rules of engagement” for all areas: programming, networking, meeting etiquette, including fundraising

f. Networking

The networking committee was founded and approved by the Board in September 2002 as a new initiative. The goal of this effort is to assist CD staff members and alumni seeking guidance related to their current or desired career fields. Possible action items include:

- ⇒ Create a committee/chair who could draw on the resources of the other committees
- ⇒ Work with OCPP – how can we best work with them?
- ⇒ Promote CDAA database via a CDAA listserve (email hyperlink)
- ⇒ Provide better education re: the database via College Topics