

Board of Governors Monthly Update

Perspectives for UC's Alumni Volunteer Leaders

April 2008

“The success [of our alumni] reflects positively on UC, and they realize they owe some measure of that success to their alma mater. We must spread the word in our communities about the great strides our university has made. And our own successes can only make those strides look more impressive.”

Chris Demakes, in a 1988 message to UC alumni

“The Ultimate Bearcat.” There is no other way to describe Chris Demakes, who passed away March 19 following a lengthy illness that had precipitated his 1999 retirement after 22 years as UC’s alumni director. During my association with the university, no one has exhibited the unfailing love and devotion to one’s school more than Chris did. I will forever cherish my association with him, from the early days of his alumni leadership role to his continued memory via the Demakes Legacy Scholarship Fund. You’ll find [a tribute to Chris](#) on the UC Alumni Association’s Web site, including [personal memories from several of our “veteran colleagues”](#) who worked closely with him over the years. Of course, the greatest tribute to Chris lives on in the hearts of all dedicated UC alumni.

Upcoming Events

April 4 – [UCAA Casino Night](#) scholarship benefit event

April 26 – [Bearcat Bowl II](#) (spring football game)

May 2-4 – [Sibs Weekend](#)

UCAA Scholarships

Fittingly, Chris left us during the UC Alumni Association’s “scholarship season,” as our volunteers and staff are working through the application and evaluation process for [our various scholarships available to current and future Bearcats](#).

Offers are out to 46 prospective members of our 2008 class of Demakes Legacy Scholars. Each is a lineal descendent of a UC alum, and it’s an impressive group of outstanding students and emerging leaders. Meanwhile, we have received over 100 applications for our UCAA Legacy Scholarships for current UC undergraduates; these scholarship offers will come in May. Finally, we expect to offer about a dozen scholarships via our regional alumni networks to students who live in cities where networks are flourishing. The Regional Alumni Network Scholarship Program has grown a great deal in the last couple years, and we’re thrilled to see top students choosing UC over so many alternatives that may be “closer to home.” Clearly the word is getting out that UC is a “destination university,” and our regional alumni networks are making an impact in their areas.

Enrollment Picture Continues to Brighten

Scholarship news naturally connects to enrollment. At the March meeting of the UC Board of Trustees, Caroline Miller, senior associate vice president and associate provost of enrollment management, offered an encouraging admissions update. Building on last fall’s largest-ever freshman class, we’re poised to break that record this September as we expect about 4,500 incoming freshmen to start classes at the Uptown campus — new students at Raymond Walters and Clermont colleges are in addition to that! Remember that this historic increase comes in the wake of the new admissions standards that ensure new UC students are more prepared to succeed than ever before. Keep in mind our retention rates are climbing right along with freshman enrollment, meaning even more future alumni are working their way through the university. Further, our regularly scheduled campus tours continue to run at capacity, and the UC Web site saw its overall user satisfaction ratings rise significantly in a new survey of nearly 1,000 users, many of whom are prospective students and their parents (to whom the site is largely targeted). While many issues swirl around a university as complex as

ours, UC remains focused on providing a high-quality education and preparing students for success in life, and it's clear these efforts are being rewarded. Speaking for the vast, devoted constituency of UC alumni, it is heart-warming to see this happening.

Bearcat Chats

In considering the UC|21 goal of “Establishing a sense of place,” we realize the “place” is virtual just as much as it is physical, due to the information-gathering habits of our critical audiences (especially prospective students) and the excellence of UC’s web environment. Many elements drive our positive enrollment news, especially the need to create fulfilling experiences for prospective students doing online “comparison shopping” among various colleges and universities. The [Web site of our Office of Admissions includes chatrooms](#) where high school students can talk with current UC students about what it’s like to go to school here. While UC has compelling printed and online marketing materials, nothing beats the unfiltered, peer-to-peer dialogue generated in these chat sessions, which can branch off into other chatrooms that address such topics as financial aid. Monthly e-mail invitations to interested students drive traffic to scheduled chats, but the site gets traffic on a fairly regular basis. Recently an Instant Messenger function was added for even more timely opportunities for real-time chats with our Admissions’ student “telecounselors.” This is a good example of how the university must meet the evolving marketplace and communicate with its “customers” as they prefer — and this *is* how the new generation interacts. As our Enrollment Management leaders are quick to point out, there are many people at UC who are taking care of the countless “little things” behind the scenes that make the “big things” work well.

‘Bearcat Bowl II’ Provides ’08 Kickoff

Whether it’s recruiting future students or engaging our alumni, “getting them on campus” is always a primary goal, because “pleasantly surprised” is invariably the reaction of those who visit today’s UC. Last fall this was a very visible benefit of [a surging football program](#) — it draws attention and brings more alumni and friends on campus for shared good times. Yet this phenomenon isn’t limited to six home dates in the fall. For our “Alumni Night” basketball pre-game event on March 6, a packed house at the Myers Alumni Center greeted guest speaker Brian Kelly, who mixed “pigskin” with the evening’s “hardwood and hoops.” Captivating the crowd in his signature way, Coach Kelly talked about the elevation of the program and the benefits UC derives from it. At the end, he described the 2008 goal to take the Bearcats (and all of us) to an “edible bowl game” — and he visually emphasized the point by tossing out an orange (for the Orange Bowl in Miami), a bag of Sugar Babies (Sugar Bowl in New Orleans), a bag of Tostitos (Fiesta Bowl in Phoenix), and a stuffed alligator (Gator Bowl in Jacksonville). As you read this, the football team is beginning spring practice, which will culminate in the April 26 [Bearcat Bowl II](#), the red-and-black spring game that unofficially kicks off [the 2008 season](#). The UC Alumni Association is treating it as the year’s first home game, meaning a Bearcat Blitz and tailgating prior to the Bearcats taking the field. The game is free and open to all, and the campus should be in spring’s full bloom, so I encourage you to spread the word. Remember, good things happen when we “get them on campus.”

New UCAA Web Site

If you’ve been clicking the links embedded in this newsletter, you’ve probably already noticed the [UC Alumni Association’s Web site](#) looks different. A long awaited transition recently took place when our new site launched, and it will offer visitors a more fulfilling online experience, which should draw even more visitors, which over time should boost overall alumni engagement. The new site offers more intuitive navigation, a more vibrant look and feel mirroring the university’s web environment, more photos and graphics, cleaner and more usable content, and the ability to add new functionality as we go. As with any major Web site overhaul, lots of little details and links are still working themselves out. As part of our “inner circle” of key volunteers and stakeholders, if you see anything that needs to be addressed, or just want to offer any general feedback, drop an e-mail to Keith.Stichtenoth@uc.edu.

In closing, let us again use this time to reflect on everything that Chris Demakes represented as the leader of UC's alumni relations. If we all shape our personal relationship with the university to match Chris' example, and then carry that pride and sense of ownership to others, the UC Alumni Association would be the premier example of alumni engagement that others would strive to equal.

GO BEARCATS!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Robert E. Dobbs". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Bob Dobbs
President, UCAA Board of Governors