

# SUMMARY

## USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board Meeting

Saturday, September 6, 2025  
Noon-3:00 PM Eastern Time  
Virtual Meeting – Not Recorded

- Attending:** Jonathan Bray, Arkena Dailey, Katherine Daniels, Stephen Elam, Paige Funderburk, Kristin Haas, Nicolas Harrington, Lee Ann Hoffman, Rebekah Jarrar, Bob Kentner, Kayla Lambert, Tomika Lowe-Lopez, Kellan Quigley, Shaun Reghabi, Sara Story, Linda Wise, Polly Crabtree (Staff)
- Absent:** Brittany Andrade, Morgan Beard, Jacqueline Hardison, Tiffany Hilton, Katie Hohman, Katey Howland, Cristine Johnson, Steve Weyandt
- Guests:** Maria Puzziferro, Interim Chief Academic Officer and Vice President, Teaching, Learning, and Innovation  
Corey Miller, Chief Marketing Officer

I. **Welcome and Introductions**

Stephen Elam, President of the USAHS Alumni Association Advisory Board, called the meeting to order at 12:01 PM ET. All members present introduced themselves.

II. **Meet and Greet**

Dr. Maria Puzziferro, Interim Chief Academic Officer (CAO), Vice President, Teaching, Learning and Innovation and Corey Miller, Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) shared insights regarding the University and answered board member questions.

Dr. Maria Puzziferro has been with the University for nine years supporting faculty and students with innovation and learning. She assumed the mantle of Interim CAO following the departure of President Brian Goldstein in August. This fall, USAHS will be launching a new OT curriculum, following the recently implemented new PT curriculum. Under Dr. Puzziferro's leadership, the Academic Leadership Council is launching the Academic Blueprint Committee tasked with coordinating a comprehensive and inclusive process to inform and advance the Academic Blueprint, which serves as the roadmap for the University's academic priorities aligned with the Institutional Long-Range Plan. Dr. Puzziferro indicated that she would like to include the alumni board in this process.

Corey Miller, CMO, joined USAHS earlier this year, and is looking to grow the USAHS story nationally, and would like to continue to include the Alumni Board in marketing efforts.

Puzziferro and Miller asked the board for specifics on what the University can do help expand the reach and impact of alumni.

- a. Assistance with implementation of an alumni engagement platform requested. The initial funding for an engagement platform launch is in the alumni department budget. A

vendor has been selected (Aluminati), but ongoing approval is still pending. This project has been presented to University Leadership. Puzziferro requested that the presentation deck be forwarded to her. Miller and Puzziferro both indicated they would advocate for the platform during upcoming budget discussions.

- b. The board is seeking an amplified social media presence. Miller indicated his team could help with social media content provided by the marketing department video team. The marketing team also has social media expertise that we can tap into to promote stories of alumni – our Alumni Advisory Board members most specifically.
- c. Provision of a platform for the sharing of alumni input and feedback. Puzziferro welcomes alumni board contact by email at mpuzziferro@usa.edu.
- d. How do we collect more external data on our alumni? We currently collect Net Promoter Score (NPS) data from students and employees. New graduate survey data is collected the year after graduation. It has been recommended that we invite USAHS Institutional Research to a meeting to share NPS and graduate survey results and determine how the Alumni Board might participate in the collection of alumni feedback.

### III. **Board Openings and Committee Structure**

- a. Committee structure of the Alumni Association Advisory Board to be discussed during 2026 goals portion of the meeting.
- b. Dr. Rebekah Jarrar will be transitioning to the role of President as of January 1, 2026, leaving an opening for the VP of Advocacy.  
**UPDATE:** Dr. Lee Ann Hoffman has volunteered to assume the role of Advocacy Committee VP as of January 1, 2026
- c. Anticipated open board positions include the positions of Brittany Andrade, Morgan Beard, and Cristine Johnson who will be leaving the board as of January 1, 2026. We will run a request for board applications in the September issue of the *Accolades Insider* electronic newsletter. The Selection Committee, chaired by Immediate Past President Steve Weyandt will review all applications and provide a slate of suggested board members for the Executive Committee's approval before December 31, 2025.

### IV. **2025 Accomplishments and Goals**

President Stephen Elam covered 2025 accomplishments so far, and goals for the remainder of the year

- a. **Cultivate alumni to expand strategic relationships that facilitate clinical partnerships, employment for students, and alumni engagement opportunities with the University community.**
  - i. Alumni Association Advisory Board to provide input and feedback on university strategy and direction
    - 1. Two meetings per year, Alumni Board heard from campus units on info related to sale and curriculum changes
    - 2. Advocacy Committee provides alumni with calls to action and a concise recap of pertinent pending and enacted legislation
  - ii. Hold events for alumni, partners, and the University community to build relationships and provide networking opportunities. Goal is to engage 800 attendees in 2025.
    - 1. APTA/CSM Conference Reception in Houston, TX, 2.13.2025, 112 attendees
    - 2. AOTA Conference Reception in Philadelphia, PA, 4.3.2025, 79 attendees

3. St. Augustine New Campus Celebration Barbecue, 5.17.2025, 164 attendees
4. Alumni Association Chapter Events in Atlanta, Miami, Austin, and San Diego with planned attendance of 245
5. Alumni Benefit CPE Sessions facilitated by faculty and alumni and attended by alumni (10 sessions in 2025) with planned attendance of 200
- iii. Leverage social media to provide opportunities for clinical partners and alumni to post open positions for alumni and current students
  1. Continue building social media presence focusing on LinkedIn
  2. Actively encourage weekly job posts with 2025 goal of 100 posts
  3. We currently have 1,648 users on social media accounts
- b. **Build constructive relationship opportunities that engage alumni to assist with the recruitment and retention of highly-qualified students.**
  - i. Actively engage alumni in the recruitment of students. Goal for 2025 is 300 enrollments from alumni referrals.
  - ii. Alumni referrals through the Lighthouse Alumni Award
    1. Spring '25 – 68 enrolled
    2. Summer '25 – 53 enrolled
    3. Fall '25 – 105 commitments
    4. 174 Lighthouse Award referrals in 2024
    5. Invite prospective students to all Alumni Association chapter events
  - iii. Provide opportunities for alumni to engage directly with students through mentoring
    1. Geographic alumni mentors provide students with clinical and fieldwork rotations in unfamiliar areas with the opportunity to learn more about the location
      - a. 223 active geographic mentors
      - b. Goal is 100 mentor matches in 2025
    2. USAHS Alumni Community on Upnotch (free, third-party mentoring platform) for self-guided mentor matches between DPT students and alumni
      - a. Currently have 124 community members
      - b. Goal is 200 members by year end
  - iv. Recruit volunteers to assist enrollment team with college recruitment events and student organization meetings at colleges and universities increasing USAHS reach at targeted schools
    1. Currently have 17 volunteers
    2. Goal is 25 from target recruitment markets

V. **2026 Goals**

In 2026, the USAHS Alumni Engagement effort will enter its fifth year. The board was asked to break down each of the goals for 2026 as follows:

- a. How do each of the goals apply to each of the Alumni Association Advisory Board Committees?
- b. Should there be realignment of the committees? If so, what does that look like?
- c. What are the targets for goal accomplishment? Timing, responsibility and tasks.

**Engagement goal: Significantly expand strategic relationships between alumni and the University community to drive clinical partnerships, enrollment efficiency, and employment opportunities.**

**1. Introduce an alumni engagement platform**

- i. Platform would include event planning, mentoring, business directory, career planning, social media and news feeds, and fundraising resources
- ii. Components would provide improved efficiencies and allow for more robust engagement tools and activities
- iii. Back-end reporting tools would provide immediate feedback on activity performance including mentoring matches, event attendance, and fundraising success

**Advocacy Committee:** Use the platform for timely communication for calls to action from professional organizations.

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Use the platform to streamline and improve technology allowing for increased support of engagement efforts. Effective outreach to more alumni with less time and effort.

**TIMING:** Waiting for USAHS leadership approval to move forward with platform implementation.

**2. Continue to hold events for alumni, partners, and the University community to build relationships and provide networking opportunities**

- i. Goal is 900 attendees across all events
- ii. Events in 2026 include conference events, Alumni Association chapter events, and the Austin Campus Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend event April 10-11
- iii. Alumni Benefit CPE Sessions facilitated by faculty and alumni and attended by alumni will continue as a coveted alumni benefit with 10 sessions during the year

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Look to add more family-themed/oriented events to Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend in Austin. Focus on holding events in conjunction with professional organization conferences to attract a critical mass of alumni and employee attendees.

**Advocacy Committee:** Encourage alumni facilitation of Alumni Benefit CPE sessions improving advocacy outreach and communication to all alumni.

**TIMING:** Events already planned for February, March, and April of 2026. Planning underway for 2026 Alumni Benefit CPE sessions.

**3. Refine the construction of the Alumni Association Advisory Board to closely represent the activities of the board. Ensure the board mirrors the larger alumni population.**

- i. Upon approval of the University Foundation website and planned donation activity, add a scholarship committee
- ii. Review alumni demographics to ensure accurate board member representation

**Governance Committee:** Draft changes to the bylaws to add a fourth standing or ad hoc committee – **SCHOLARSHIP COMMITTEE**. Add Force for Good Award selection process to the activities of the Governance Committee. Solicit nominations and select a recipient to be recognized during the Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend event each year.

**Scholarship Committee:** Select a chair for the committee once fundraising has been established and approved by the USAHS Foundation. Determine if structure is to be as a standing or ad hoc committee.

**TIMING:** Waiting for approval of Foundation website (due September 30, 2025) to take site live and begin soft launch of alumni fundraising outreach. Planned addition of USAHS Alumni Advisory Board Scholarship Committee in March 2026.

**Student Recruitment Goal: Leverage improved alumni engagement to expand opportunities to involve alumni in student recruitment, retention, and facilitation of employment.**

**1. Build an alumni scholarship and referral program for the recruitment and retention of highly qualified students**

- i. Maintain the Lighthouse Alumni Award program for the direct referral of new students to USAHS
- ii. Work with the Alumni Association Advisory Board to design a comprehensive alumni-funded scholarship program
- iii. Goal is 350 alumni referrals in 2026

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Promote the Lighthouse Alumni Award at all alumni sponsored events. Continue promotion of the award program through the website and with all communications. Recognize alumni making a referral with a small gift to be awarded once referred students have been confirmed to meet all admittance requirements.

**Governance Committee:** Update bylaws to include the formation of a scholarship committee.

**Scholarship Committee:** Outline expectations, goals, and criteria for establishing alumni-sponsored scholarships.

**TIMING:** Lighthouse Referral Awards are established and ongoing. Establish the Scholarship Committee by March 2026 Alumni Association Advisory Board Meeting. Work with Scholarship Committee to draft scholarship criteria by year-end 2026.

**2. Utilize the alumni engagement platform to manage all mentoring programs**

- i. First year goal is 300 users of the new mentoring platform for both geographic and professional mentoring

- ii. Establish tools for mentors and mentees that can be accessed using the alumni engagement platform including how-to videos and checklists for managing the mentoring relationship

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Continue to secure and solicit alumni mentors for all students requesting a mentor. With the addition of an alumni engagement, platform mentoring should become a more streamlined and automated process. Students will be invited to join the platform and can easily match with alumni who have signed up to provide this service. Should a platform not be approved and implemented for 2026, this service will remain a manual process completed by the alumni engagement department.

TIMING: Ongoing process

### **3. Revamp the enrollment volunteer program in partnership with the Enrollment Field Team**

- i. Establish the feeder school target list for volunteers
- ii. Develop a training program and guide

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Edit and approve volunteer program guidelines drafted by USAHS employees.

**All Committee Members:** Sign up to be an enrollment volunteer for schools in your location.

TIMING: Draft training program guide and materials by June 30, 2026 (USAHS employee responsibility)

### **4. Expand social media effort to provide clinical partners and alumni with opportunities to post jobs for current students and recent graduates**

- i. Partner with Career Services to provide access and links to USAHS Handshake platform
- ii. Build social media presence to 2,000 users for critical appeal for clinical partners

**Alumni Engagement Committee:** Add a booth at career fairs to share alumni information and sign up graduating students for alumni social media accounts on site. Have alumni volunteers host events at state conferences and meetings to share alumni information and sign alumni up for all engagement efforts.

TIMING: Add alumni booth at Career Fairs with 2026 event. Alumni engagement staff to coordinate with career services staff. Alumni Engagement committee members will be assigned to sign up as alumni volunteers to host events at state conferences and meetings they will be attending.

## **VI. Upcoming Events**

- a. September 18, 2025: **Austin, TX** – Kick-off for Alumni Reunion and Family Weekend at Hula Hut, 6:00-8:00 PM CT
- b. September 26, 2025: **Orlando, FL** – Reception at FPTA Annual Conference at Caribe Royale Orlando Resort Calypso Pool Bar, 6:00-8:00 PM ET
- c. November 6, 2025: **Reno, NV**- Reception at AAOMPT Annual Conference at Peppermill Reno Resort, Sierra 1748 (reception room on 17<sup>th</sup> floor of the Peppermill Tower), 7:00-9:00 PM PT
- d. November 20, 2025: **Washington, DC** – Reception at ASHA Centennial Convention at Unconventional Diner (in the Washington, DC Convention Center), 5:30-7:30 PM ET
- e. February 12, 2026: **Anaheim, CA** – Reception at Annual APTA-CSM Convention, location TBD
- f. March 20, 2026: **San Marcos, CA** – Barbecue event in partnership with PRN PT on the CASM Campus, 4:00-6:00 PM PT
- g. April 10-11, 2026: **Austin, TX** – Third Annual Alumni Reunion & Family Weekend on the TXAU Campus, various events
- h. April 23, 2026: **Anaheim, CA** – Reception at the Annual AOTA Convention, location TBD

VII. **Future Meeting Topics and Other Business**

- a. Programming updates
  - i. OT curriculum changes
  - ii. SLP program growth
  - iii. Nursing credentials and other additions
- b. How do we add fundraising to board responsibilities
  - i. Foundation presentation
  - ii. Board member training
- c. Institutional Research data presentation

VIII. **Presidential Transition**

This is Stephen Elam's last board meeting as president. Rebekah Jarrar will take over on January 1, 2026. Thank you to Stephen for his amazing leadership. These last two years have flown by. Stephen will continue to lead the Executive Committee until the end of the year.

IX. **Next Meeting – Saturday, March 28 – Noon-3:00 PM ET**

A meeting invitation will be sent to all board members soon.

X. **Meeting Adjourned at 2:59 PM ET**