

Let's

Talk

By Hallie Nicholson

In spring 2012, Chapman University launched a program to bring alumni and students together with the goal of gathering the stories, opinions and perceptions of Panther graduates from multiple generations.

Along the way, the Alumni Discovery Initiative has facilitated more than 350 interviews, helping the University gain a deeper understanding of alumni members' time as Chapman students, their lives as working professionals and their relationship with the University today.

The Alumni Discovery Initiative hires and trains current Chapman students, known as Alumni Discovery Ambassadors, to connect with alumni for face-to-face interviews throughout Southern California and across the nation. Interviews are often conducted while students are in their hometowns for the summer, spring and winter breaks.

The program was recently expanded to include online interviews to overcome geographical barriers and reach more alumni. For instance, a recent interview was done via Skype with Mohammed Al-Nuaimi '11, who started at Deloitte Consulting as a student and now works at the company's office in Abu Dhabi.

By bringing students and alumni together, the Alumni Discovery Initiative not only strengthens alumni connections with the University, but it also gives the student Alumni Discovery Ambassadors an opportunity to build their Chapman Family network and get a glimpse of what life is like as a Chapman graduate.

The Alumni Discovery Initiative brings Panthers together, gathering insights and showing students real-world pathways to success.

A Day in the Life

Several Alumni Discovery Ambassadors got an inside look into the careers of the alumni they interviewed. Stefan Metrakos '16 interviewed Michelle (Medeiros) Chang '09, a people programs specialist at Google, at the company's headquarters in Mountain View, Calif. Olivia Dadgari '18 visited Laura Aiken '07 at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif., where Aiken is a quality analyst.

"I thought it was amazing that Laura would take the time out of her day to talk to me. I was able to get a personal tour of Facebook headquarters," Dadgari said.

Kelly McCarthy '16 interviewed Congresswomen Loretta Sanchez '82 at her office in Garden Grove, Calif. Sanchez offered insight into her political career and her involvement with Chapman as a member of the Board of Trustees.

"It was so wonderful to hear the Congresswoman's Chapman experience. It's great to know that we have alumni doing amazing things in the world," said McCarthy.

A Small World After All

Though Chapman University has grown significantly over the decades, many aspects of the Chapman student experience have withstood the test of time.

One theme that resonated throughout the interviews was the value of Chapman's close-knit community and commitment to personalized education. Alumni from across the decades reminisced about their close relationships with faculty members and classmates.

"My most significant memory of my time at Chapman is an overall sense of family," Moe Caryl '96 said during her Alumni Discovery Initiative interview. "From my softball team to my Disciples on Campus group, the Chapman community represented my home away from home."

Disneyland also has a long tradition as beloved part of the Chapman student experience, for both work and play. Kristine Avena '16 was interested to learn that interviewee Leon Duty '66 worked at Disneyland as a student and went on to enjoy a 30-year career in human resources with the company. Kathleen Fleming '58 shared with Olivia Del Rio '16 that she attended Chapman the year Disneyland opened and frequently visited the park with fellow students.

"It's great to see that some Chapman traditions never change," Del Rio said.

To learn more about the Alumni Discovery Initiative, contact the Office of Alumni Engagement at (714) 997-6681 or alumni@chapman.edu.

90 percent of alumni would recommend Chapman to future students.

72 percent believe that with their Chapman education they got more or somewhat more than they paid for.

91 percent said their Chapman experience was very or somewhat significant to their success.

46 percent are happy with the communication they receive, while 22 percent would like to see information targeted to specific interests.

69 percent say Chapman offers interesting and rewarding opportunities to get involved.

84 percent think Chapman is headed in the right direction.

ALUMNI REPORTED THAT THEIR MOST POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AS STUDENTS INVOLVED:

27%
faculty and staff

22%
campus organizations

15%
the people they met

13%
their classes

LOCATIONS OF ALUMNI PARTICIPANTS

