

Gentlemen Callers set stage for future

The way that Mark McKone-Sweet '92 remembers it, the first Gentlemen Callers had no idea that they were forming a group that would last beyond the semester. That makes it all the more remarkable that the male a cappella ensemble is approaching the 25th anniversary of its founding.

To celebrate, and to put the group in position for another 25 years or more, former members of the Gentlemen Callers decided to create a formal organization, the Gentlemen Callers Alumni Union, and establish a \$100,000 endowment to support the student group into the future.

The fundraising effort pays forward the generosity that helped the original Gentlemen Callers prosper.

"We should never let go of the fact that we wouldn't be here without the help of the Whims and the Wheatones, the Alumnae/i Relations Office, the dean of students and many others," said McKone-Sweet, who serves on the group's board of directors along with fellow alumni and a current student.

Funds from the endowment, when it is complete, will be used to underwrite travel and recording projects as well as events with alumni. The group also hopes to use some of the endowment to support a scholarship. Beyond that, the establishment of the union represents the opportunity to build and strengthen the connections among alumni and students.



NICKI PARDO

Gentlemen Callers board members: Austin Simko '09, Alexander Grover '09, Mark McKone-Sweet '92


"There's been a current of alumni interest and support in staying connected and helping students all along," said Austin Simko '09, who also serves on the board of directors. "That set the table for all of this to happen."

Members of the Gentlemen Callers say that the tight bonds among alumni mimic the experience of being in the group. "The close relationships are the end result of working together, being on stage and making music," says Alexander Grover '09. "You spend four years with the same group of guys, practicing twelve hours each week, forty weeks a year,

plus road trips and other adventures."

While alumni from different periods might not have performed together as undergraduates, they all know the lines to the GCs' anthem by heart and can relate to each other's experiences. "I always find it interesting to hear about what other groups of GCs did when they were on campus," Grover added. "Some groups traveled quite a bit, for example, while we didn't during my four years at Wheaton."

The sense of camaraderie is evident in the strong attendance and participation in each year's Reunion concerts as well as for their 10th and 12th Reunion celebrations. That sense of loyalty and interest has helped the fundraising drive get off to a good start, according to the members, who estimate that they have received \$40,000 in commitments already.

And Simko says the momentum is building. "Every conversation that we have had about this effort with our fellow GCs has just energized us." 

—Michael Graca

Board members

Austin Simko '09, president
Alexander Grover '09, vice president
Benjamin White '12, secretary
Cullen Hagan '05, treasurer
Mark McKone-Sweet '92, director-at-large
Christopher Allan '92, director-at-large
Matthew Strelak '03, director-at-large
Ross Brennan '12, director-at-large
Jacob Dunn '13, president of student group