

# UR's hand should extend toward minority alumni

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This is the last of three articles by the Minority Student Advisory Board.

In order to expand the conversation of diversity that we have had for the past two weeks, I would like to move from faculty diversity to the issue of the involvement of minority alumni in our institution. Recently, I sat in on a meeting with UR President Joel Seligman, Vice President Paul Burgett and Executive Director of Alumni Relations Kevin Wesley. This meeting brought up the lack of involvement by minority alumni.

This is an issue that is relevant to me as a Latino student on campus. Seeing alumni who I can identify with is critically important to my college experience. Many times, it is difficult to find mentorship from a college graduate who has had some of the same experiences as I have. Seeing successful minority alumni can be encouraging to minority students and shows them that they can also be successful after graduation, and can be critical in supporting the capital campaign we are preparing to endeavor upon.

It is clear that the University does a good job of maintaining the involvement of non minority alumni when you look at who actively participates in Meliora Weekend and who gives back to the institution. I recognize that many minority alumni have historical sentiments that have led to their lack of involvement in the institution. However, we must ask ourselves if, as an institution, we are doing as much as we can to reach out to minority alumni and if we have dedicated enough resources to this effort.

In order to address the first question, we should turn to current events that are geared toward alumni, such as programs that we do across the country to encourage alumni involvement. These events appear highly successful if we look at the overall picture of alumni who attended but appear less successful when counting the number of minority alumni who attended. There needs to be more diverse programs that will attract alumni of underrepresented groups. There should also be events and perhaps weekends throughout the year geared specifically toward minority alumni. This should be an entire effort that is part of the already existent effort to attract alumni.

As to the question of whether or not we have dedicated enough resources to this effort, I recognize that, over the past several years, the Office of Advancement has worked closely with the newly formed Multicultural Alumni Advisory Council. However, I think that this effort has come short of addressing very complex issues and that organizing cultural associations might be a better way to attract alumni involvement. For example, schools that have organized black alumni associations and other affinity groups have seen significant increases in the level of involvement amongst their minority alumni. Alumni are more willing to become involved when they feel that they can relate to the programs and events that they are being invited to. In order to assist in the creation of these cultural

associations, there should be an increase in the number of staff members working to get this effort off the ground. Once the associations are well established, they will be able to function through active minority alumni.

The involvement of minority alumni is not only important to minority students, but also to the overall culture of the University. We need to reconsider the current efforts being made to reach out to them and do all that we can to improve. We will only be successful with a concentrated and diligent effort led by the administration, staff and the University community. Meliora!

*Estrada is a member of the class of 2008.*