

COMING BACK, GIVING BACK

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS BOARD OF ADVISORS

ALABAMA ALUMNI MAGAZINE
SPRING 2019

Community
Collaboration

BY CARLA JEAN WHITLEY
YOUNG ALUMNI
WORK TOGETHER
TO SERVE THE
UNIVERSITY THROUGH
A DIVISION OF
COMMUNITY
AFFAIRS EFFORT

TYRELL F. JORDAN counts himself fortunate. He practices law in Birmingham, the city that shaped him as he grew up in its inner city. During college, Jordan earned a bachelor's in accounting and a juris doctorate from The University of Alabama. Now, as a professional with more than a decade of experience, he's able to give back in a significant way. Jordan created the TFI Law Scholarship, which provides an income stream for students who are presenting an idea for a business plan. Financially, he's able to help students who are presenting an idea for a business plan. Financially, he's able to help students who are presenting an idea for a business plan.



Katie Boyd Britt serves as board president of the group, which was formed in 2016.

Community Collaboration

BY CARLA JEAN WHITLEY

**YOUNG ALUMNI
WORK TOGETHER
TO SERVE THE
UNIVERSITY THROUGH
A DIVISION OF
COMMUNITY
AFFAIRS EFFORT**

TYRELL F. JORDAN counts himself fortunate. He practices law in Birmingham, the city that shaped him as he grew up in its inner city. During college, Jordan earned a bachelor's in accounting and a juris doctor from The University of Alabama.

Now, as a professional with more than a decade of experience, he's able to give back in a significant way.

Jordan created the TFJ Law Firm Endowed Scholarship, which targets low- to moderate-income students around Birmingham, people who are historically underrepresented in higher education. Without financial aid, Jordan wouldn't have been able to pursue his education. Without an education, he wouldn't be an attorney. "We all have an obligation to pay it back, to pay it forward," Jordan said.

Jordan learned about endowment opportunities after joining the University's Division of Community Affairs board of

advisors. Division of Community Affairs Vice President Dr. Samory Pruitt formed the group in 2016 to capitalize on the leadership of young, outstanding alumni. The board includes alumni who graduated within the past 15 years, during the time when the University shifted from a mostly in-state population to a student body that largely came from out of state. The members were campus leaders, and Pruitt saw an opportunity to harness their ideas and energy. Rather than a traditional, financially focused board model, Pruitt organized people who understood how to navigate the University's growth and change.

Students from underserved populations, including rural areas and inner cities, are among the groups the board aims to serve. For many board members—and the division's leader—the mission is personal. "I was one of those students,"





VISION DAYS

Members of UA's Division of Community Affairs board of advisors is made up of UA alumni who have graduated in the last 15 years.



said Pruitt, who earned his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at the University, but heard plenty of warnings along the way. "I was first in my family. I was a lot like Tyrell. People didn't really believe I was coming here, and it was scary."

The board's academic success and student retention committee specifically works to support such students. Its other committees—global and community leadership, student entrepreneurship and innovative initiatives—also address challenges facing today's students.

Board members have spent time on campus for a firsthand look at how they can support current students and faculty. Solutions include a "Shark Tank" style entrepreneurship program, study away/study abroad efforts and more. An event called Vision Days brought 400 high school freshmen to campus to learn about majors, admission and financial aid. UA President Stuart Bell wants to identify these students in recruitment and admission systems and ensure they're supported throughout the process. Ultimately, that's what it's about: supporting students and giving back.

"Everybody here on this board obviously has day jobs, but each of them is trying to find ways to use what they do during the day to make an impact on the University by night," said Board President Katie Boyd Britt. "People are coming from not only all over the United States, but all over the world, to make sure they have an opportunity to give back in this way."

Carla Jean Whitley, MA '04, is a communications coordinator for Brasfield & Gorrie.