

4-15-2020

## Alumni Outreach

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### Recommended Citation

Henderson, Kyle, "Alumni Outreach" (2020). *Archiving Kenyon's COVID-19 Story in Words*. 60.  
<https://digital.kenyon.edu/covid19words/60>

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## Reaching out to alumni during the COVID-19 crisis

Kyle W. Henderson '80, Associate Vice President for Planned Giving – 4/15/2020

As director of Kenyon's planned giving effort, I work in our Advancement Office and my principal job is to raise money from donors, mostly alumni, to support the College. I've been doing this job for 12 years and have gotten to know quite a few of our alums over that time. Most of them are older, mostly men who graduated from Kenyon before coeducation began in 1969.

During the COVID-19 crisis all of us in the advancement office have been reaching out to alumni to ask them how they're doing. It's not primarily to raise money right now, but really just to touch base. Almost all of my reach outs have been by email. I've had a very good response rate – I would say that about 2/3 of the alumni who I've emailed have replied.

So far, nobody has told me that they have contracted COVID-19. I know that one man who graduated in the early 1950s is hospitalized but it's apparently for an unrelated problem. People in all parts of the country have shared similar experiences – some are regularly dining in with their spouses or nearby children, and most have found ways to procure groceries and other necessities. Everyone who has replied seems genuinely touched that I'm asking how they are, and many are asking whether I'm all right too (and we each ask about each others' families as well).

I've heard the occasional political comment but that hasn't been a major feature. Alumni are interested in how the College and our students are handling the situation, and some have expressed anxiety about what will happen next – to the College and to themselves. A lot of people are using the words “safe” and “stay safe” or “take care” in their messages. I've been a little bit surprised that I haven't heard more direct stories of people being sick, but it may be that the people who are well are more likely to reply. In general I would say that these people are somewhat anxious but not terribly anxious – but certainly uncertain about what to expect.

Our phonathon students who would normally be calling alumni to ask for gifts have also been calling just to touch base, and other development officers are also reaching out as I am, so we have really contacted a lot of alumni – thousands by this point.