

# McDermott Alumni

The Eugene McDermott Scholars Program Alumni Association

FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT DALLAS

OCTOBER 27, 2015

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### WHITE COAT OF SUCCESS

Raheel Ata BS'15 began his medical school training at Stanford this fall, but besides joining a top school, Ata also earned a \$5,000 Phi Kappa Phi Fellowship for his dedication to the intersection of medicine and technology. While at UTD, Ata was also an Archer Fellow who did clinical rotations at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.

### CONTINUED LEADERSHIP

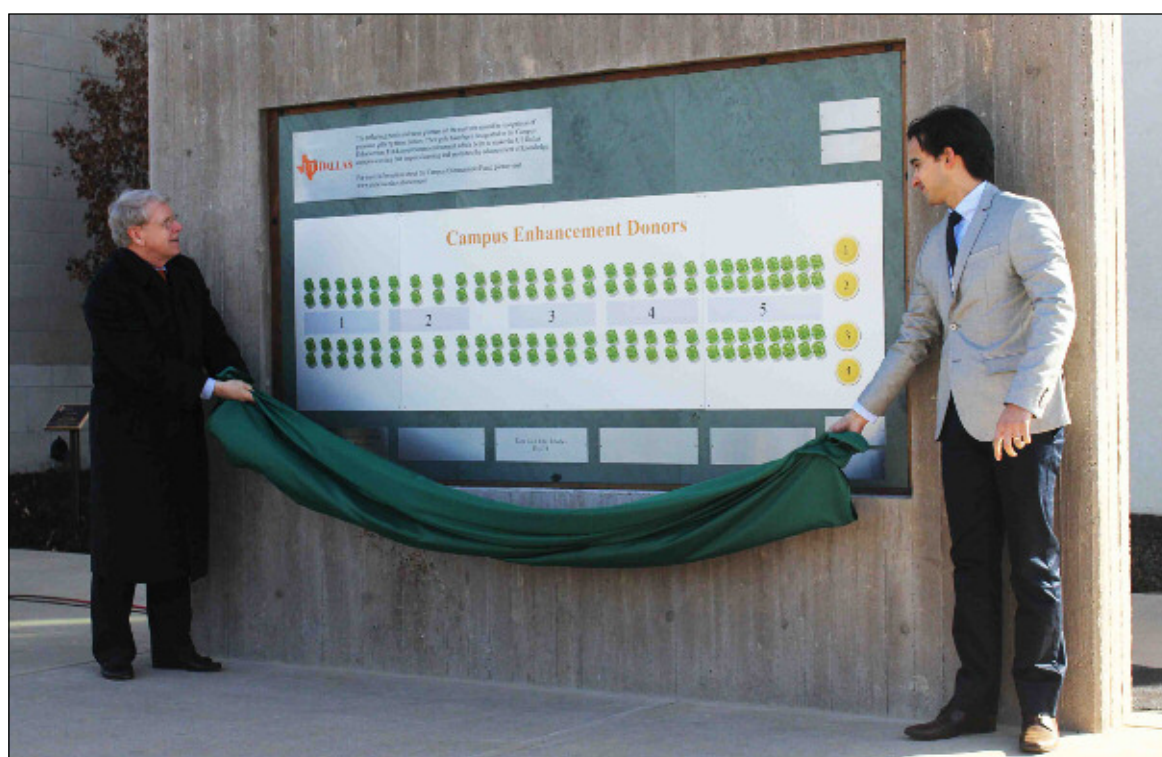
Andres Correa BA'05 and Lisette Villarruel BA'10 were recently accepted into the Latino Center for Leadership Development (LCLD) inaugural Leadership Academy class. This is a great leadership and educational training program that seeks to provide future possible leaders with the skills they need to assume leadership positions and impact their communities.

### CRAFTING THE FUTURE

Dr. Walter Voit BS'05, MS'06, working with a lab of individuals over several years, has launched 'Polycraft' - a mod version of the super-popular 'Minecraft' - as a competitive manner for students to earn scholarship money to UTD. Access more information about the 'Minecraft' modification at [polycraft.ut-dallas.edu](http://polycraft.ut-dallas.edu) and instructional videos on YouTube.

## A DECADE OF SUCCESS

*President Dr. David Daniel provides parting words of wisdom*



*Dr. David Daniel and former EMSPAA President Andres Correa unfurl the banner during the 2013 McDermott Finalist Weekend highlighting the plaque acknowledging the Association's commitment to UTD.*

Dear McDermott Scholar Alumni:

I was pleased when your fellow McDermott, Benedict Voit BA'08, invited me to share thoughts regarding how you can help shape the university's future.

My ten years at UT Dallas were very special. I have fond memories of Margaret McDermott and the Eugene McDermott Scholars. Mrs. McDermott's gift

was truly transformational and placed UTD on the national stage to compete successfully for the very best talent.

Everything about the program conveys excellence. McDermott Scholar alumni can ensure this is always the case by staying actively engaged in the program and with the University as a whole. (Story continued on page 4.)

## *The (McDermott) Force Expands*

While one Force awakens, help expand the McDermott Force by reaching out to high schools in your area. Contact Mac Hird to help!

## *McDermott Blog!*

Visit the new scholar's website: <https://mcdermottscholars.wordpress.com/>

## *Finalist Weekend*

Mark your calendars! Finalist Weekend 2016 is March 4th - 6th.

## McDERMOTT BOARD

### YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

Alex Garcia Topete '07  
President

Benedict Voit '04  
VP of Development  
IMPACT! design

Bobby Janecka '02  
Secretary  
Chair of Programs

Eric Bao '08  
Treasurer

Andres Correra '01  
Chair of Grants

Charlie Holman '10  
Chair of University  
Relations

Katie Pier '05  
Chair of Strategic  
Interviews

Megan Coker '06  
Chair of Membership

Mac Hird '07  
Chair of Recruitment

Lauren Sechrist '09  
Chair of Recent Grads

Mitchell Owens '10  
Chair of Communications

## PRESIDENT'S DESK



### *The Association's Exciting Expansions*

The year has been not only quite busy for the Association, but also quite fruitful in terms of meaningful accomplishments.

We've reached a new milestone with our UTD donation that will allow us to have more of an influence on campus with our financial support, namely through our Worsfold Grants.

We've improved our logistics to make our recruitment efforts more efficient, covering more schools and reaching out to more students directly, while also making more connections between current scholars and alums than ever before.

Classes that never interacted with one another in the past now have interconnections thanks to the Association's efforts. And this November we will host our first Signature Event at the Dallas Museum of Art (appropriate, isn't it?), in which we will be giving out the inaugural Quasar Vision Award, meant to honor those who support education and innovation—much like the over-arching mission and vision of Eugene and Margaret.

The Signature Event and the Quasar Vision Award will serve not only as fundraising tools, but also as a beacon that will give us more of a presence in the North Texas scene as an active organization and valuable resource for the community at large.

All those accomplishments have been possible thanks to every single



one of you, and there are 180 of us now to thank. All 180 have “paid forward” (or perhaps we should “back”) all the support that the Program, the university, and fellow alumni have given each of us in the past.

Moreover, our areas of expertise and influence keep diversifying and expanding. If anyone thought still that we're solely a bunch of doctors, lawyers, and sciency-engineers, then that would be a gross misconception of our true collective mind (as infographics in this newsletter will show—I encourage you to take a look). Today, our reach covers from theology and philosophy to fine arts to geology and astrophysics and everything in-between.

I'm certain that in the near and long-term future, we will grow not only in numbers, but also in making a meaningful impact on each other's successes and our world, way beyond any initial expectations. Onward!



# INITIAL SIGNATURE EVENT

*This event and the Quasar Vision Award will continue to expand our presence in the North Texas area*



The Association is excited to host our first annual Signature Event on November 6th at the DMA. As President Garcia Topete said, at the event we will be giving out the inaugural Quasar Vision Award, meant to honor those who support education and innovation—much like the overarching mission and vision of Eugene and

Margaret. The Signature Event and the Quasar Vision Award will serve not only as fundraising tools, but also as a method of expanding our involvement in the Dallas community.

Make sure to visit the [website](#) for more information.

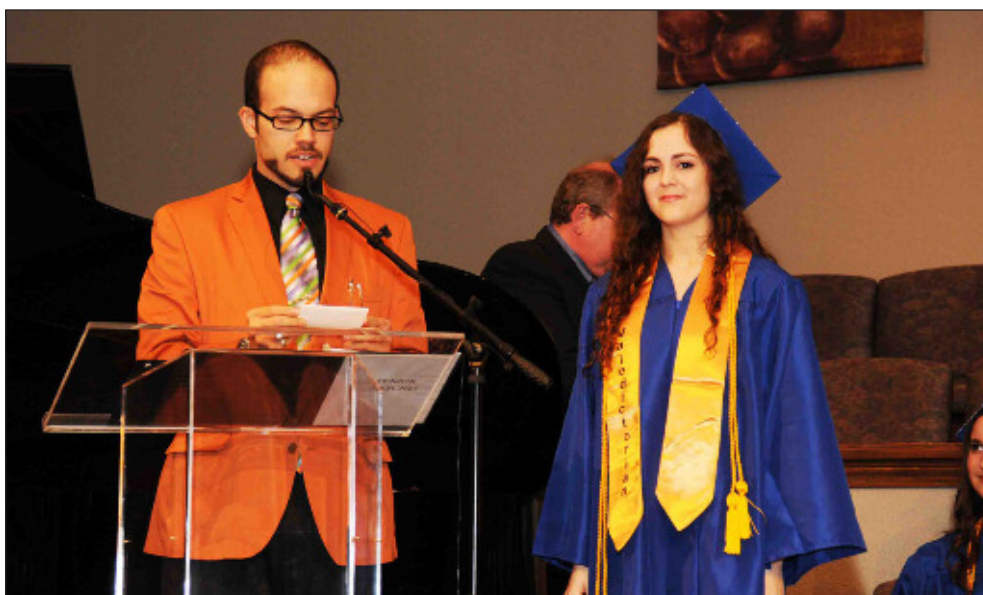


# ASSOCIATION INVOLVEMENT

*President Alex Garcia Topete presents the McDermott Scholarship to incoming Scholar Rachel Meade*

The Association was thrilled to be part of a special night for an incoming scholar. President Alex Garcia Topete joined the Collin County Commencement on Saturday, May 16 to present the McDermott Award to Rachel Meade, now a 2015 Scholar.

Meade is from Plano, Texas where she attended Coram Deo Academy. Meade is a National Merit Scholar and a National Hispanic Recognition Scholar. She was the assistant director of her school's choir, primary teacher aide and student mentor of the speech and debate team, president of Student Government for the academy's House of Lewis and treasurer of the senior class. Meade also has played classical piano for 13 years. She will study molecular biology.



(“Decade of Success” cont’d from Page 1)

When I came to UT Dallas in 2005, I had a clear sense of what was expected of me: to lead the charge for advancement to status as a top-tier research university, the founders’ original vision for UT Dallas.

I relied in part for guidance on a U.T. System-commissioned study by the Washington Advisory Group. This study nailed it: “The main obstacle that UTD faces in achieving its goals relates to scale – UTD is simply too small in terms of the total number of faculty...”

I often used the Chemistry Department as an example. UT Dallas had fewer than 20 tenured or tenure-track chemistry professors, compared to a typical number of 40 or more in the nation’s best chemistry departments. With too few faculty, UTD’s course offerings and research opportunities were not as broad as those at the leading departments. Our faculty collectively did not have as great an opportunity as those in much larger departments to shape the knowledge base of their discipline.

Bigger isn’t always better, but to compete, critical mass is necessary. When that mass is present an atmosphere of focused effort and discipline, change is possible. Staying focused has never been a problem for UT

Dallas, but building scale is hard. That’s why so few institutions (especially private ones) attempt to make themselves into world-class research universities – it’s very difficult and very expensive!

To me, research is a cornerstone of the best educational experience. In many ways it does not much matter what subject a student researches. All that matters is that the student is challenged to take the risk inherent in thinking about the unknown, forming hypotheses, testing those hypotheses, critically examining the outcome, and tackling the problem at hand. This is what the human creative spirit is all about, and this is what I think universities do best.

I always worried about the downside of increased scale—the risk that we would become just another big research university. I am proud to say that there is something special about the UTD culture that seems to be deeply embedded in the institution.

I think the McDermott Scholars program had a lot to do with establishing that culture of personal interaction, keen interest in discovery, and exceptional values among students that are shared across the entire campus. Your leadership and engagement can ensure that this culture is permanent at UTD even as it continues to grow.

What can you do to cement this culture in place? McDermott Scholar alumni can help by identifying research topics (including the social sciences and liberal arts) that current scholars can pursue, and helping with those projects. It will be fun and invigorating!

I also encourage you, as I believe most of you already do, to make an annual gift to the University. Your gift of any size will help UTD show the world in a measurable, quantitative way that its alumni are in support of its quality and its mission, and assist other students who are making their educational journey. Giving back to UTD is very rewarding personally and to the university.

As I move on my position as Deputy Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer at the U.T. System, it is great to keep a close eye on UTD’s progress and to help where I can. I am very optimistic about UTD’s future. All the fundamentals are in place to ensure continued progress and success, especially with your watchful eye and active support. I say thank you, and I encourage you to work as energetically as you possibly can to help UTD and future students!

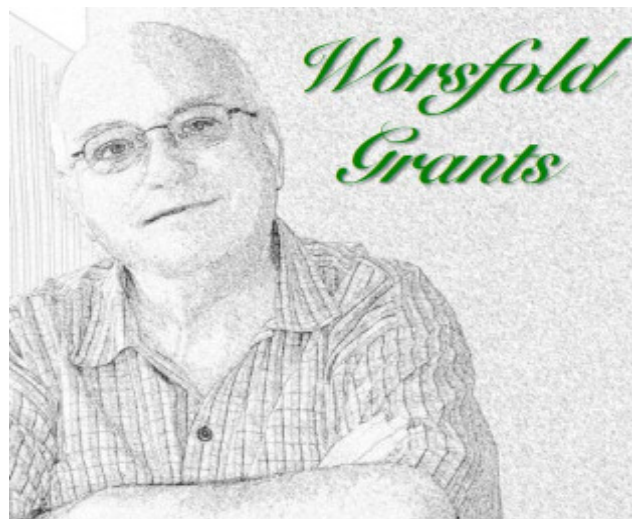
With gratitude,  
David E. Daniel

# WORSFOLD GRANTS BEGINS

*The Alumni Association's Grants Committee unveils its new initiative: the Worsfold Grants program*

**The Alumni Association of the Eugene McDermott Scholars Program Invites All UTD Undergraduates to Apply for a Victor Worsfold Grant for Community Service**

The Eugene McDermott Scholars Alumni Association is inviting all University of Texas at Dallas undergraduates to apply for one of its inaugural Victor Worsfold Grants for community service. Named after long-time UT Dallas School of Arts and Humanities faculty member Dr. Victor L. Worsfold, the Association intends to fund projects that target the broad array of challenges that our local, national, and international communities face.



“We are looking for creative solutions to important community problems,” said Andres Correa, Chair of the Association’s Grants Committee. “And since the Worsfold Grants is a new initiative, our aim is to impose few limitations on the type, structure, and scope of community work and encourage innovation instead,” he added.

Students can apply on their own or in groups, and the grants will not be limited to any one type of community work or discipline. Whether the project proposes to alleviate poverty, support education, or spread the arts, and whether it seeks to do so in our University, city, nation, or even abroad, the Worsfold Grants offers grants as low as \$250 and as high as \$1,500 per project, depending on the project’s proposed budget and needs.

“The Worsfold Grants is one way in which the Association wishes to preserve and extend the legacy of service and leadership of the McDermott family,” explained Alex Garcia-Topete, President of the Association.

The Grants Committee will be composed of UT Dallas faculty, staff, and alumni, and it intends to award up to \$3,000 in grants in the Fall of 2015. It expects to fund a set of grants each Fall and Spring semester. When selecting projects to fund, the Committee will evaluate things like the significance of the community problem to be addressed, the soundness of the approach, how innovative the approach may be, and whether there will be any collaboration with existing community resources, among other considerations.

Applications are now available at [www.mcdermottalumni.com](http://www.mcdermottalumni.com) or by emailing [worsfoldgrants@gmail.com](mailto:worsfoldgrants@gmail.com), and they must be submitted to the Committee no later than October 30, 2015.



# PROGRAM STARTS STRONG

*The Eugene McDermott Graduate Fellows Program gains even more significant support*

In March 2014, Mrs. McDermott made another substantive donation to the university in order to support exceptional graduate students. This program is off to a great start.

Reena Schellenberg leads the program, and has an exciting announcement:

“The Founders Distinguished Graduate Fellows Program, UT Dallas’s initiative to prepare outstanding doctoral students for careers leading research enterprises, was recently renamed and enhanced.

Now known as the Eugene McDermott Graduate Fellows Program, it has a newly-enlarged endowment of \$24M thanks to a grant of \$10M in [TRIP](#) matching funds. Further philanthropic support from Margaret McDermott and the Eugene McDermott Foundation has created additional endowments honoring Dr. Hobson Widdenthal and supporting the McDermott Scholars and Fellows programs’ offerings.

The Fellows program endowments help UTD to attract and support high-caliber doctoral students with a comprehensive Fellowship award package that includes a discretionary research budget and professional development and other enrichment activities.

Currently there are seven Fellows, in fields ranging from neuroscience to materials science; recruitment for the next cohort is underway.”

As the [official website](#) notes,

“The goal of the Eugene McDermott Graduate Fellows Program is to provide powerfully supportive environments in which Fellows can progress with maximum efficiency through their doctoral studies while also developing their talents for leadership of research undertakings.

Upon graduation, Fellows will have the outstanding research records appropriate to prestigious post-graduate appointments, and have the experience to make rapid progress towards leadership positions in universities and research organizations.

A distinguishing hallmark of the Program is that Fellows are responsible for managing many of the resources required to carry out their research. The discretionary budget that Fellows receive permits them to gain the experiences of leading their own research program, such as collaborating with senior associates, making decisions

about funding allocation, and leading teams of junior colleagues.

The University’s schools, departments, and programs recruit excellent doctoral students from across the nation and around the world. Each year, 15 of the most talented of these are named Eugene McDermott Graduate Fellows. They receive a Fellowship award package covering tuition, fees, insurance costs, a generous stipend, and a discretionary budget; they also benefit from professional development and other enrichment activities offered by the Program.

The Program aims to provide a career acceleration for these most promising doctoral students, offering them the educational backgrounds and research accomplishments to qualify them for high-quality professional appointments, and also the experiences and skills that otherwise would be gained over later years of post-graduate employment.

A vital component of these is supervising undergraduate students engaged in independent research, benefitting not only the doctoral students but also their mentees.”

Congratulations to Reena and the Program!

## PROGRAM RAISES THE (APPLICATION) BAR

*Qualifications to be selected for Finalist Weekend and the McDermott Program reach new heights*

The Program recently hosted a counselor workshop which was a great success. Nearly 50 high school counselors attended – and perhaps most importantly, most had never heard of UT Dallas and the McDermott Program.

Applications for the 2016 class are underway:

- 545 started applications, 16 submitted
- Deadlines are November 5 and January 5

Thank you to those who have contacted Sherry about reading files or attending Finalists’ Weekend. If you would like to help out in the application process, please email Sherry at [sherrys@utdallas.edu](mailto:sherrys@utdallas.edu).

### McDermott Award Qualifications

	Minimum	Additional
First-time college freshman	✓	
Two-part SAT = 1450+ OR ACT = 33+	✓	
Top 5%		✓
Leadership		✓
Community service		✓
Broad interests		✓
Social skills with peers		✓
Interacts easily with adults		✓

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*Highlighting the success and uniqueness of our alumni*

**IMPACT!** caught up with '11 Ryan:

**Name:** Ryan Marcotte

**Class:** 2011

**Major:** Electrical Engineering

**Graduate studies:** University of Michigan (Go Blue!), PhD in Computer Science and Engineering (in progress)

**Hometown:** Billings, MT

**Home team(s):** Denver Broncos, Michigan Wolverines

**Current location:** Ann Arbor, MI

**Occupation:** Student

**Coolest part of your job:** I get to play with robots all day, every day. My PhD research involves developing driverless vehicles and autonomous robotic teams, so I get to spend a lot of time chasing after misbehaving robots and occasionally even see them work as planned!

**Dream end-of-career job:** Travel editor of a golf magazine. If that doesn't work out, I will probably just continue researching next-generation autonomous transportation systems.

**Future non-career ambitions:** Most importantly, I want to have a family, and be a good husband and father! [Married to McDermott Kayla Klein, Class of 2010, currently in medical school at Michigan]

**Outside talents:** I am a once-and-future scratch golfer. I even helped start

a golf lessons program for McDermott Scholars while I was at UTD.

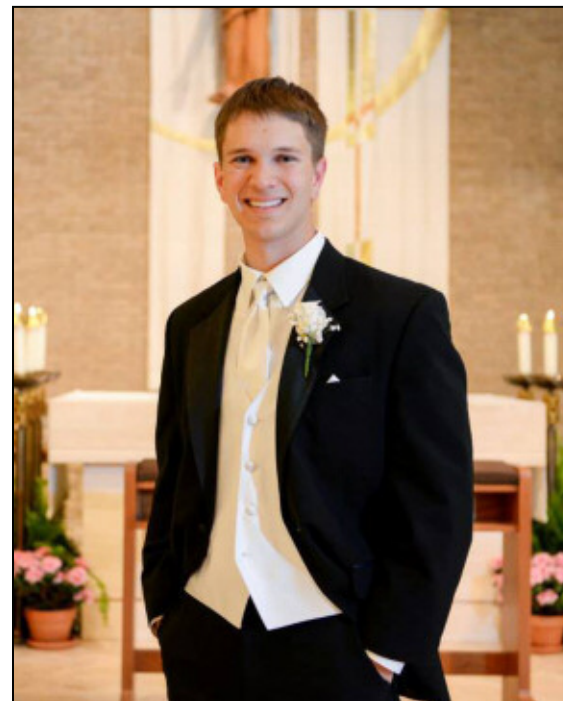
**One surprising thing Alumni wouldn't know about you:** I have not yet seen all of the Star Wars movies, Lord of the Rings, Star Trek, or any other similar classics. As you can imagine, this makes me a little bit of an outsider in the computer science world. We are currently working on fixing this problem.

**The most dangerous / exciting thing you've done:** Statistically, probably driving to work every day. There are a lot of really bad drivers out there! This is why I am researching autonomous vehicles. Apparently I don't lead a very dangerous life if this is all I have to say for this question.

**Favorite part about UTD:** The McDermott Program and its awesome staff! And the school's proximity to Braum's.

**A favorite McDermott memory:** While backpacking across Europe, Kayla and I met up with three fellow Scholars (Raheel Ata, Nikhil Karnik, and Tabitha Terrell) in London. We were only in the city for one full day, but it happened to be the day that Prince George was born. We were at Buckingham Palace for the birth announcement, which was pretty awesome.

You could be next! Send in your information and help spread the McDermott love!



Ryan and Kayla married in May of this year after Ryan's UTD graduation.

## FEELING SOCIAL?

### Keep us updated!

The Alumni Association wants to hear about exciting news in your life.

- \* Get engaged or married?
- \* Add a little one to the family?
- \* Wild world travels?

Post on our facebook page:  
[facebook.com/groups/emspaa/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/emspaa/)

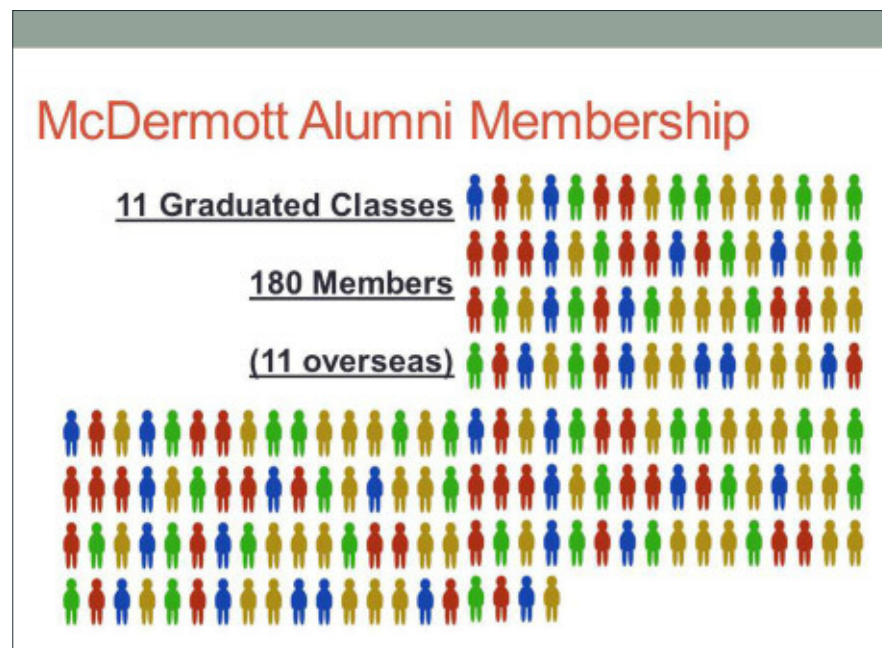
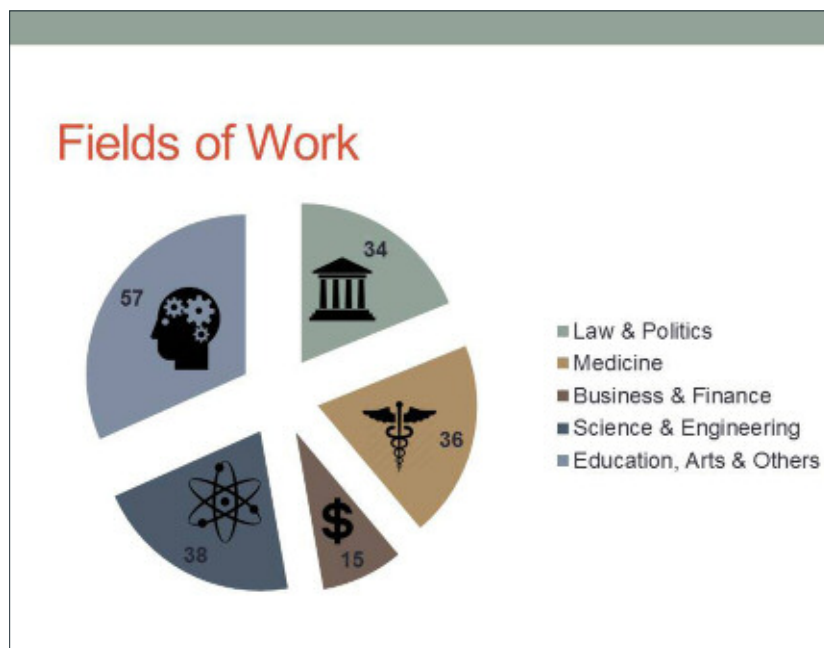
Inform us via the website:  
[www.mcdermottalumni.com/](http://www.mcdermottalumni.com/)

Or, email Mitchell & Benedict at  
[mcdermottalumni@gmail.com](mailto:mcdermottalumni@gmail.com)



# A NETWORK OF STRENGTH

*Compiled information on the Alumni Association shows a powerful and expanding network*



As the Alumni Association grows in numbers, in diversity, and in influence, regional McDermott groups will (and need to!) form and grow. Bobby Janecka, Class of 2002, is a key part of the Events and Programs Committee.

“We have been working to organize the usual year-round social events,” Janecka noted, “but are also trying to organize regional Alumni Association Chapters! If you live in Albuquerque, Ann Arbor, Austin,

Dallas, Ft Worth, Houston, New York, or Washington, D.C., watch for updates because YOU are in prime McDermott territory. The Association is in process of organizing Alumni chapters in these cities.”

Please email Bobby at [janecka@gmail.com](mailto:janecka@gmail.com) if you'd like be a chapter liaison and help organize occasional, but recurring, social or volunteer events.



*The Ann Arbor chapter got together in September. Members of the group include (top) Linda Bi, Sid Nivas (visiting from NYC), Jessie Voit, Liz Fogarty, Ryan Marcotte, Kayla Marcotte, Elizabeth Peterkort, and Benedict Voit.*