

# ALUMNI GIVE NEW PRESIDENT PERSPECTIVE AND RETROSPECTIVE

BY BRIAN KOONZ

## Besides socializing, attendees use Alumni Weekend to enhance their professional networks

The more Quinnipiac stories she heard at Alumni Weekend in October, the more President Judy Olian leaned in to listen.

Some of the stories originated on the school's first campus in New Haven. Other tales were interrupted by rounds of laughter, still going strong decades later. Olian could sense these stories were part of a shared, living narrative.

"It's impressive to me that people aren't just connected; they're connected with great affection for the institution," the president said last month. "That's very special."

As Olian navigated the various Alumni Weekend events—from a golf tournament at the New Haven Country Club and a law school reception on the North Haven Campus, to a pep rally at the Rocky Top Student Center, a men's soccer game, and women's and men's ice hockey games at People's United Center—she discovered more and more about Quinnipiac's DNA.

At the Heritage Luncheon for alumni who graduated 50 years ago—or more—Olian met people who sat in classrooms at the Junior College of Commerce and Larson Junior College, well before Quinnipiac moved north to Hamden with a new name and a new campus.

"Going back to the '50s, I was struck by the fact that there were quite a number of women at Quinnipiac," Olian said. "They were in different fields than some of the ones we're offering today, but they were there."

Shirley Gustafson '43 was one of those women. So were Marilyn Gerard, Anne Balogh and Ruth Barnett, all from the Class of 1952. Together, they were among the 1,200 alumni who came back last month to find a university that has grown to include three campuses with 10,000 students and more than 100 programs of study.

"It was amazing to see all the changes that have taken place on the main campus," said Gregory Clary, who earned a journalism degree in 2008 and returned to Quinnipiac for the first time in 10 years with his wife, Caitlyn Cleaver.

"We even went to the North Haven Campus to check out the law school and the medical school. They were both really impressive. But it was also funny how I walked down the corridors of Tator Hall thinking, 'This is exactly how I remember it.'"

These days, Clary works as a producer at CNN covering the White House and Capitol Hill. He said his education, particularly the hands-on studio opportunities, gave him the confidence and skills to succeed.

"Our professors prepared us for local news because most people will start off their careers in a smaller market and work their way up," Clary said. "I was lucky enough to get an internship at CNN my junior year. I had worked at Q30 and the [CNN] people were impressed that I already had television experience."

After Clary completed his internship, he returned to Quinnipiac for his senior year. "Having worked at CNN as an intern and then giving them a call once I got my degree to tell them, 'Hey, I'm available for employment now,' made the transition to my career so much easier," he said.

A decade later, Clary is covering the Trump administration, the confirmation hearings of U.S. Supreme Court nominees and other news of the day in Washington. In addition to his producer role, Clary writes for the CNN website.

"Whenever I introduce myself to a politician I'm about to interview, or to somebody who is a new co-worker, they always say, 'Oh, Quinnipiac. You guys do the poll.' But the recognition is more than that now," Clary said.

For recent graduates, events such as Alumni Weekend are a social snapshot, an opportunity to reconnect, tailgate, catch a hockey game and tell those timeless stories (see photos on page 53). But Olian also sees the bigger picture. She knows Quinnipiac alumni want to cultivate career-enhancing relationships, too.

"Alumni are looking to connect, not just for social purposes, but for new learning and business purposes as well," Olian said. "The demands of professional careers are changing at an unprecedented pace; by reconnecting with Quinnipiac and with each other, our alumni are sampling some of the learning and social networks they need on an ongoing basis in their professions and personal lives."

Olian is clearly eager to hear from Quinnipiac's alumni. She values their feedback on their time at the university, how they see their learning and professional needs changing, and she wishes to see them participating actively in the life of the campus—mentoring and connecting with current students and contributing as engaged and proud alumni for life.



Photo: Richard Petrosino

Above: Greg Clary '08 and his wife, Caitlyn Cleaver, relax on the deck chairs outside the Rocky Top Student Center during Alumni Weekend in October. He is a producer at CNN. At right, President Judy Olian greets alumni during one of many events she attended over the weekend.

