

November 30, 2005

Dear Fellow Alum,

Last year I said much the same thing in my annual fundraising letter (oh yes, it's that time of the year again!), but it bears repeating: There are a lot of exciting things happening at the Journalism School these days, for both students *and* alums.

The school provides a home to such wide-ranging programs as the Felker Magazine Center and the Berkeley China Internet Project. This year, the "Digital TV and the World" class chronicled life in rapidly changing Shanghai for a series that ran on Washingtonpost.com and PBS. This spring, students will travel around the world to cover climate change. They are also undertaking reporting projects for such U.S. news media as the *San Jose Mercury News*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and *Forbes* magazine.

And the J-School continues to be a place where top journalists come to think out loud about the future of the media. Berkeley, along with Harvard, USC, Northwestern, and Columbia, is leading an ambitious five-year effort funded by the Carnegie Corp. and the Knight Foundation to rethink and reshape the way journalism is taught in America.

All of these initiatives have one thing in common: They are paid for with outside grants and donations. This year, only about one-fourth of the J-School's budget came from the state. The school can't continue to prosper without help from a lot of friends: foundations, media companies, private supporters — and its alumni.

But compared to other big-name journalism schools like Columbia and Northwestern, Berkeley alumni remain a relatively untapped source of support. The board of the Alumni Committee is working to change that. Last year, we raised about \$18,000 from our fellow alums, a 50 percent increase over the previous year. This year, we hope to do far better — our goal is to raise \$30,000.

For those who might wonder whether their money really makes a difference, I'd like to tell you about Katya Kumkova. The Barnard graduate is this year's recipient of the two-year-old Alumni Scholarship, paid for entirely from alumni donations. A native of Russia who came to the U.S. with her family in 1991, she has worked for television and radio networks throughout Europe. She wrote in her application that in Russia, "Most often stories were simply denied. Political crises reported elsewhere never happened. One's neighbors did not disappear from one day to the next — they had never been there. In the Soviet Union, stories meant power. And I grew up knowing stories were power." With tuition rising dramatically over the last few years, there is no better way to ensure the future success of the school than by helping talented future journalists like Katya attend.

The money we've raised has also gone toward funding activities important to alums themselves. The board of the J-School's Alumni Committee — a group of 15 volunteers representing a wide range of classes and careers — is working to bring you benefits that the J-School simply cannot afford on its own. We've helped put on Alumni Weekend and organized a continuing-education seminar for the last four years. This year's seminar is titled "Radio Magic: The Art of Storytelling" and will take place on April 8, 2006. In addition to the seminar, Alumni Weekend will also feature a cocktail party, the dean's BBQ, and an evening lecture by Robert Siegel, host of NPR's *All Things Considered*.

The Alumni Committee has also held parties and events around the country; we've brought back alums to the school to share their career experiences; we've helped arrange internships for J-School students at major media institutions; and we've worked with the J-School to keep alums up-to-date through E-News. (If you aren't already on the list for the school's e-mail newsletter, send e-mail to ucbjalum@berkeley.edu.)

These activities are a lot of work, so the alumni board recently earmarked money it raises to support a newly created alumni coordinator position. Lyssa Mudd Rome, MJ 2002, just started this month and is already bringing a great deal of energy to expanding and enriching the growing menu of alumni activities. Please let her know what you'd like to see in the future. Her e-mail address is lyssarome@berkeley.edu. And please go to the school's Web site to search the alumni database and update your contact information online at <http://journalism.berkeley.edu/alumni/db/>.

The breadth of these activities shows why the board has set its fundraising target much higher this year, both in terms of alumni involvement and raising money. Of course, your donations can always be earmarked for specific J-School programs and scholarships, if you prefer. But you can also be sure that every dollar of unrestricted donations that we raise from alums will be spent as alumni themselves decide. And don't delay. This year, changes in the tax treatment of donations are making it even more advantageous to give generously (we direct you to your tax advisor for more details).

If you already give, please consider increasing your support to help the Journalism School continue to operate in today's challenging environment. Checks can be made out to the UC Berkeley Foundation and sent in the enclosed envelope. And if you have more to give than money, please be in touch. We will find a place for your ideas and energy. Contact me at mickey@mickeybutts.com.

I'm convinced that with your help, alums will become a powerful and important partner in the J-School's future.

Best,

Mickey Butts, MJ 1994
President of the Board of the Alumni Committee