

NETWORKING

More Than a Game; Making Human Connections Still Matters



Wynnie Zuchowski, WALSAA Board Member

Whenever I hear the word networking, I picture exchanging business cards, making small talk, or searching for the next career opportunity. It can often feel impersonal and often uncomfortable. And in today's digital world, we're more connected than ever—yet many of us have never felt more disconnected. We exchange emails, participate in video calls, connect on social media, and text throughout the day. But there is still something irreplaceable about face-to-face conversations and the relationships they create. **Human connections matter.**

In fact, many of life's biggest opportunities don't begin with a formal introduction, interview, or proposal. They begin with a conversation. Ask yourself, when was the last time you took the opportunity to attend an event and connect (or re-connect) with people? As a CALS alum, those connections can carry an even deeper meaning when gathering with other alumni. **Networking is also about giving back.**

As alumni, we each have something valuable to offer. Sometimes it's expertise. Sometimes it's mentorship. Sometimes it's simply taking a few minutes to reconnect with an old friend or introduce yourself to someone you've never met. Those conversations often become the foundation for relationships that last years. There is something special about reconnecting with people who shared your time on campus—the classmates who sat beside you in lectures, the friends you met through student organizations or social gatherings, the professors who challenged you, and the experiences that helped shape your future. Years may have passed, careers may

have taken different paths, but those shared memories create an instant connection that is difficult to find anywhere else. That's why alumni gatherings remain so important. They provide the opportunity to reconnect with familiar faces, celebrate shared traditions, and build new relationships with people who already share a common bond. **That's exactly what makes the WALSAA Football Fire-Up so special.**

While we gather to celebrate Wisconsin traditions and Badger spirit, the event is about bringing people together. It's a chance to reconnect with classmates, meet alumni from across generations and professions, strengthen your network, and invest in a community that continues to support one another. Proceeds from the event support WALSAA programs and activities that strengthen alumni connections while helping prepare the next generation of leaders in agriculture and life sciences. By participating, you're creating opportunities for students and young alumni to build the same lifelong network that has benefited so many to this point. Join fellow alumni, strengthen your network, and help ensure the next generation has the same opportunities to build relationships that last a lifetime.

Life happens and similar to many, I lost connection with WALSAA for many years. Thanks to someone simply reaching out, I was able to get involved again and truly find those connections (with the old and new) to bring me new energy. I, for one, am looking forward to networking and connecting with my fellow CALS alumni and fellow WALSAA members at the Football Fire-Up. I hope to see you there!