Giving Back to the Community

As a little girl growing up in Hyde Park and attending the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools, Judy Maley, '84, knew that there was disparity among her fellow Chicagoans regarding their income, family support, and opportunities. Maley feels that awareness is part of what led her, along with Gayle Haller, '87, to found Booth Alumni Nonprofit Consultants (BANC). Through BANC, Chicago Booth alumni provide volunteer consulting on projects to help Chicago’s nonprofits fulfill their goals.

It all began when Maley and Haller were paired in early 2014 to present at the first On Board Conference in Chicago. On Board is a program offered by the Rustandy Center for Social Sector Innovation that ensures nonprofit leaders and their boards are equipped with the knowledge and connections to do their best work. Due to their personal experience with nonprofit boards, Maley and Haller were asked to put together an interactive presentation, “Finding and Joining the ‘Right’ Board.”

At that time, Maley was reentering the workforce and Haller had been working for 15 years with a nonprofit management consulting organization. After the session, the women were approached by both alumni and nonprofits for more information.

“I was aware that the Harvard Business School Club of NYC offered its alumni an opportunity to use their business and leadership skills to help nonprofits solve their pressing issues,” Haller said. “I wondered why Booth could not also help in the Chicago area where no other MBA alumni associations were addressing the opportunity.”

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Eventually, the idea for BANC was launched as a way to match the desire among Booth alumni to give back to their communities and the need for external help expressed by nonprofit organizations.

BANC offers Chicago nonprofits the opportunity to tap into Booth alumni skills by providing pro bono consulting in a number of areas: growth strategies, process development and operations evaluations, performance reporting and dashboards, strategic planning, marketing planning, community engagement, and program evaluations. BANC also offers Chicago-area Booth alumni pro bono opportunities to help nonprofits deepen their knowledge of the nonprofit sector and connect with fellow Booth graduates.
Since its launch, BANC has grown tremendously. The pilot program started with two projects in 2016, and now has two cycles per year, helping at least five organizations per cycle. Among its accomplishments:

- Completion of a strategic growth plan for an economic development organization
- Promotion and pricing strategy for a growing social services organization that serves the most at-risk population in Illinois.
- Developing a marketing plan to help a Chicago theater with two proposed strategic partnerships to increase audience attendance
- Recommended financial systems and process flow improvements and created high level requirements for a new financial software package for a social service organization that helps low-income individuals find and retain employment.

Emilia DiMenco, president and CEO of the Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC), was thrilled with the help she received.

“The caliber of support and generosity of spirit towards a nonprofit, non-paying client was unexpected and surprisingly uplifting.”

—Emilia DiMenco, President and CEO of The Women’s Business Development Center (WBDC)

While all projects and participants are currently in Chicago, the group hopes to eventually branch out to other areas of the country.

“I’m so proud when nonprofits tell me how much BANC helps them and about the dramatic impact that our work has had,” Maley said. “I’m also very impressed with the Booth alums. They are busy, accomplished people, and yet find time to commit to two to four hours a week for six months. I see strong relationships formed as alums come together for a shared purpose. The participants are so happy to meaningfully help the community.”

Applications for Chicago area alumni interested in participating in the next cycle of pro bono consulting projects should submit applications by August 23 at: chicagoboost.edu/banc.