A blessing came to Matignon this past winter when four young alumni from the Class of 2012 reached out to the Alumni Office. The contact was simple: “We’d like to get involved, we’d like to help. What can we do?” Karen Weidner, Director of Annual Giving and Alumni Relations, immediately saw something special in these young men and invited them to campus to begin to plan what has become a very important reconnection with the school.

Rob Dunn, John Flaherty, Sean Hannigan, and Alex Patturelli, fresh out of college and only a year into the real world, recognized an opportunity to re-engage with their school. Their goal was to find a way to bring new ideas and new life to the ever expanding Matignon alumni network. In short order the four of them have hosted two alumni networking nights in Boston and offered up their services to help in any other ways needed.

This summer the Advancement Office had the opportunity to talk with the 2012 graduates about their Matignon stories and why they chose to get involved.

What’s your fondest memory of Matignon High School?

Sean: Similar to Alex, my fondest memories are of the people I met during High School. Not only did we have a great time at school and on the field, we were always together on the weekends and after school. An example of how close our class was was when we held a class breakfast in the parking lot the week of graduation. It was not received well by the administration at the time, but it was well worth it!

John: The people. The relationships I made at Matignon are without a doubt the most valuable thing I took away from my time there. Although those relationships began to be cultivated on the field and in the classroom almost a decade ago, they are still very much alive today. A prime example is the fact that I moved into my first apartment with 3 other Matignon grads earlier this month...

Alex: I think my fondest memories include the people I met during my time there. We were a very close class. Every day when I that bell rang and we headed to the lockers to grab our stuff I always felt like I had to bye to everyone in the hallway. It always felt like a family. We spent lots of time together whether that was in the halls, walking to Dunkin, going to practice, or tossing a football around in the parking lot.

Rob: It's almost impossible to choose just one memory from my time at Matignon, but one stands out. After a soccer practice during fall of my senior year, we all stayed around to watch the girls’ team play a night game on the field behind the school. A run to CVS for snacks turned into a few of us buying face paint and green wigs to cheer the girls on. No idea who won, but I'll never forget the school spirit and fun we had. Would've been easier for us all to go home, but we chose to hang out and spend more time together.

What interested you in getting reconnected with the school?

Sean: As I started my career in commercial real estate, I began meeting more Matignon alumni than I expected to. It made me want to investigate the Matignon alumni network further. With the help of Karen Weidner, Rob, Alex, John and I have been able to start to put together young Alumni nights in Boston which have been very successful.

John: To piggyback off of Sean, after graduating college and joining the workforce, it became very evident that your most valuable asset is your network. I knew that there was a great pool of Matignon alumni out there but there was never an opportunity for alumni from different generations to connect. Since teaming
up with the alumni relations department a few months back, I have been introduced to numerous folks who have gone above and beyond to be a resource to us younger alumni.

Alex: Matignon is a huge part of my life. My sister went there after me and I have cousins who currently attend. I couldn’t imagine not being connected with the school still. Some of my greatest mentors and friends were people I met while I was there. I think the biggest reason I wanted to reconnect is my desire to show support to the community who supported me. I truly believe my passion to work with students in my line of work stems from the support I got from administrators and faculty who mentored me at Matignon. Reconnecting to the school is my way to remember where those passions all started.

Rob: I think the four of us had a sense that the Matignon community was an untapped network that offered a lot of potential upside for us and other alumni. We all greatly enjoyed our years in high school, and figured we could contribute to Matignon by trying to get people our age involved in school events. Additionally, it was a great opportunity to get in touch with our peers.

Why is it important for you to stay involved in the life of Matignon?

Sean: It is important for me to give back to the school that I feel has given so much to me. Many of my friends, my college education, even my job I trace back to Matignon. It is both important and fulfilling to be back involved with Matignon High School.

John: It is important for me to stay involved with Matignon because I feel that I owe it to future young alumni to ensure that they have the opportunity to have the same experiences that I did.

Alex: We have been blessed with how we have been welcomed into the Matignon alumni network. The alumni before us have built a foundation that we need to continue to build on. There needs to be a next generation of alumni who volunteer their time and resources to Matignon. I think it starts with us four. We are the bridge that connects the alumni who have built that foundation and the next generation of alumni.

Rob: It’s my goal that the young men and women at Matignon now are able to have the same experiences and opportunities that my friends and I have.

How would you like to see alumni engagement and alumni relations grow and change?

Sean: I would love to see more young people get engaged. I think the young alumni nights in Boston are just the start of different events we can do. As John said, the events have grown exponentially. I think as Matignon Alumni our age start to advance in our careers we can really create a strong Alumni network, one that would be beneficial to both current and former students.

John: One thing we’ve noticed since we began getting involved with these alumni events is that the retention rate is extremely high. At our first event last winter we had about 15 attendees, at the next event a few months later, we had close to 40 people (including almost every attendee from the first event). I would like to see more alumni try to make the next event! People have very busy lives and it can be tough to take time out of your day to make it to these events but we are seeing that people that are putting in the effort to make it are returning!

Rob: There's been a lot of good steps taken so far, and to build on it we need to bring more people into the fold. There's an untapped passion for Matignon that could provide fundraising opportunities as well as
networking avenues between alumni. There are countless valuable relationships that people are able to build by re-engaging with the Matignon alumni network, and those relationships are what will bring folks back consistently.

What kept the four of you connected as friends over the last 5 years?

Sean: The experiences we had in high school definitely played a factor in us staying in touch. We still get a good laugh talking about what we did at Matignon. All three of them are crushing it in their respective careers and it is great to be able to witness all their accomplishments. Through the ups and downs Rob, Alex, and John are people I knew I could always count on. I am very grateful for Matignon bringing us together, and I am sure Rob, Alex and John are very grateful Matignon brought me into their lives!

Alex: This is a group of guys have become like brothers to me. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Sean, Rob and John. They have always been welcoming and supportive of all things that I throw their way. It is also awesome to see how far we have all come since our days at Matignon. I often use these three as examples of how to work hard and land excellent jobs when I meet with students in the college setting. They bring a heavy hitting list of accomplishments for our age and can be a great role model for any student. Their accomplishments have always pushed me to work hard to keep up and I think the fact we can challenge each other in this way has really driven us closer. In addition to the ways we challenge each other it’s always nice to have these guys as they provide a healthy dose of humor in any situation.

Rob: These three are a lot of fun to be around, and their successes push me to be better at what I do. The types of friendships I built at Matignon carried through my college years and are going strong as I start my career. I grew up with these guys, and am able to overlook their many flaws because of that.

What are you most looking forward to for your 5th Reunion Celebration?

Sean: I am excited to see people I have lost touch with. It will be exciting to see what the rest of the class is up to! I also think the combo reunion with older classes will create a great atmosphere. I am really looking forward to an awesome party!

Alex: I am very excited to see some other 2012 Matignon grads who I lost contact with after we graduated. It is quite the group of personalities. I can only imagine how different or how similar some of our classmates are. I always loved meeting new people at school so I feel like reconnecting after so long will be similar to meeting some folks for the first time. I hope as many people as possible make it from our class because I would love to chat with each person we graduated with to see where they are in their jobs, education and lives in general.

What’s one piece of advice you’d like to give our current students about their time at Matignon?

Sean: Enjoy it! Don’t stress about bad games/grades. One bad test won’t ruin your life. Make sure to enjoy the ride, because you will blink and be at your 5 year reunion in no time. Also don’t take summers for granted, because apparently 3 month summer vacations are hard to come by in the real world.

Alex: Enjoy your time with your friends! I wish I could go back to play another soccer game, basketball game, or throw the shotput again. Everything was so simple then because I was with my best friends doing the things I loved. I never made better friends than the one that I made at Matignon. High school is a time of
growth and change. When you graduate hanging out together will never be as simple as throwing a football around in the parking lot at 2:13.

**Rob:** Engage! Have fun in class, take creative risks! Sean once challenged me to do a theology presentation as an interpretive dance rather than standard PowerPoint. I did, I was embarrassed, but I learned more about myself and increased my comfort being in front of crowds. Run for student council, volunteer with clubs, raise your hand in class. The adult world doesn't have time or patience for people who take a back seat, so start now.

**What’s your biggest hope for the future of Matignon? How do you see yourself as a part of it?**

**Sean:** I hope that Matignon continues to succeed and grow both athletically and academically. I hope that it becomes a premier high school in Massachusetts that develops great, successful young men and women. I think all of us see ourselves giving back as much time to the school as we can, as well as going back and mentoring current students. It is very exciting to be helping out at the board level as well. I think the four of us will bring a new and different perspective to different sub committees.

**Alex:** My hope for Matignon is the continued growth of programs, engagement, and student success. I think it is important for Matignon to add innovative clubs, technology, and classroom experiences. I have seen many of the new teaching styles and clubs via Twitter and I hope that continues. Matignon is a place that can set students up for success and also provide a family-like support system. As more innovations and engagement happen around the school the students will be better prepared to be leaders of the future. We want those leaders to come from Matignon and, later, share those experiences with the future Matignon students. My role? I ready to roll up my sleeves and get to work. I see myself working with students, faculty, staff and other alums to ensure there is growth for Matignon. As a young professional in higher education I hope my experiences will be able to shed light on trends in that field in order to help Matignon students prepare themselves for furthering education through community engagement, technology, and innovation in the classroom.