

ALAN TOPE: LEAVING A LEGACY

“PAYING IT FORWARD TO
THE NEXT GENERATION.”

Alan Tope’s history with Schoolcraft goes back to the very beginning. A member of our first graduating class in 1966, he was also our very first valedictorian.

Tope appreciated Schoolcraft’s rigorous curriculum and high expectations for students from the start. “What impressed me was the Schoolcraft founders’ vision,” says Alan. “They set high standards for their students, and we were expected to perform accordingly. The most dramatic example was first semester calculus—forty students began the class but only four of us continued to the second semester.”

Alan had just graduated when he was contacted by Schoolcraft about another new opportunity—the chance to participate in a co-op program with U-M Dearborn. Through the program, Alan worked at Ford as a computer programmer while he completed a bachelor’s degree in math. Once again, Schoolcraft profoundly impacted his life, and shaped his career.

Alan completed the program, and went on to obtain an MBA in Finance. He later enjoyed a successful career in business and computer technology, ultimately founding his own company, Aktion Associates. Alan credits Schoolcraft for developing the courage and initiative to achieve his success. “The instructors and counselors at Schoolcraft saw potential in me, and gave me the skills and support I needed to excel.”

Over the years, Alan never forgot Schoolcraft but largely lost touch with us. He recently reconnected with our Alumni program during our 50th anniversary outreach. He saw our request for alumni stories and submitted a piece on how Schoolcraft transformed his life (which you can read at: scf.schoolcraft.edu/file/Alan_Tope.pdf). In this article, he shared his story about how much Schoolcraft’s encouragement and teachings meant to him, and how he always tried to pay it forward.

Not long after, Alan came back to visit campus. “I was excited to see the changes and innovations taking place, particularly in the area of STEM,” he notes. STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) are key skills needed in today’s world. “While my own career was largely in business, the STEM-focused education I gained at Schoolcraft gave me invaluable analytical and problem-solving skills.”

After his visits and learning more about Schoolcraft’s program, Alan felt he wanted to give back and help new generations of Schoolcraft students. Alan and his wife, Nancy, have created the First Valedictorian’s STEM Scholarship and Achievement Award, to provide financial support to students focused on STEM degrees. The Award will be funded through a bequest from Alan’s estate.

By including the College in his estate plan, Alan hopes he will encourage a new generation of leaders, thinkers and doers. “I hope my gift to the College will someday help other students get access to the remarkable education and experiences I received. With Schoolcraft’s support, I know they can achieve goals they didn’t think possible.”