Cultivating the Alumni Base: Friend-raising to fundraising

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University of Notre Dame

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The Big Challenge
The Big Challenge
With whom do you affiliate? (Alumni Association Survey)
The foundational question:

Do our graduate students define themselves as alumni of our institutions?
We hope they do....

Untapped Resources:

• Mentoring
• Intern/Externship experiences
• Financial Support
We hope they do....

Their degree of affiliation can be taken as a reflection of their sense of belonging in your community

Connection = Barometer of inclusion
Sense of belonging over time

Grad Life Survey

Sense of Belonging

2013
- Discipline: 3.74
- Program: 3.62
- Student Community: 2.91
- Notre Dame: 3.08
- Local Community: 2.40

2016
- Discipline: 4.09
- Program: 3.93
- Student Community: 3.18
- Notre Dame: 3.27
- Local Community: 2.67

University of Notre Dame
In this session we will:

• Identify and discuss hurdles for building a grad alumni base
• Identify whether tactics successful at the undergrad level can be applied to grad alum
• Learn about initiatives that worked and those that didn’t
Exercise #1:

Identify the hurdles that make cultivating a graduate alumni base difficult

10 minute discussion at your table
Report out: Top 2 hurdles
Exercise #1:

My list of hurdles:
1. Grad alum don’t care/affiliate with grad school
2. Development is not a helpful partner
3. No contact information
4. Some alumni associations doesn’t think of grad students as alums
5. Grad alums may think you only want money
6. People are busy and don’t want to be bothered
7. They may ask ”why now” – is this the first outreach to them since they left?
How to approach your grad alums: Know your structure

Many units can lay claim to contact information for graduate alumni

Alumni Association
Development
Career Services
Graduate School

University Relations

Ideally – a central repository of contact information single and up-to-date and full access
What is standing in the way?

Each unit has its own responsibilities and leadership

Each unit has its own reason for outreach:
  Alumni Association (engagement)
  Graduate Careers (outcomes)
  Development (fundraising)

Graduate School (all of these reasons and more...)
  This means that no one may want to partner with us.....

So, how do you navigate this?

You need to cultivate these relationships
History of the Partnership:

2009: Non-existent

2019: They helped me write this talk
A staff of 37
Grad alum efforts fall under Director of Professional and Alumni Education Programs
Alumni Association:
What is starting to work

Alumni Association

Living Alumni: Grad: 41,787; Undergrad: 102,743

Engagement:

Irish Compass – networking platform
post jobs; set up mentor/mentee matches

Total enrolled: 17209
– 11,455 alumni (% 15 grad alum)
– 5232 current undergrad; 522 current grads

ND Clubs – 223 domestic and 50 abroad

No current tracking of undergrad vs. grad
Alumni Association: What hasn’t worked

Reunion

– No stand alone, university level programming
– Perhaps local program level reunions?

Still a lot of work to do here........

Challenge: Move from enabling access to grad alum for initiatives designed for undergrads to customized initiatives tailored around grad alum wants and needs
Exercise #2:

Can we use successful undergrad alum materials for grad alum?

Checklist on how to connect

Discuss whether any of these will work at the graduate level. Why or why not?

Can they be tweaked?

Are there other ways to connect?
Alum Assoc Survey, 2017 (N ranges from 1200-2000 by question)

Most interested in career and professional development and value online learning offerings relevant to their professional areas and expertise.

They are more interested in connecting with alumni, parents, and friends who work in their profession and who they consider to be professional peers.

They are less interested in connecting with those who share their life stage or attended Notre Dame around the same time they did.

They are less likely than other groups to want to participate in ND-related activities with their friends—but more interested in meeting new alumni and friends.

Less likely to report following ND athletics or attending an athletic event.
What we have learned so far

• You may need to educate your alumni association on the unique needs/wants/stages of life for grad alum
• You may need to convince them that grad alums are alums too.
• This will all take time.

SO -- Your strategy for building your alumni network cannot be restricted to this

There are other partners who can help
History of the Partnership:

2009: Undergrad focused
Ad hoc consultation for grads who found them

2019: They helped me write this talk
Now -- a dedicated team – Grad Career Services
(Director and 4 consultants)
Grad Career Services: What has worked

Participation in CGS Pathways Project

Impetus for us to focus on alumni, collect contact information, and begin coordinating databases across campus.

Our alum network expanded in 2 ways:

1. Outcome data: from 0, 5 → 0, 3, 5, 8, 15
2. Also have data on satisfaction, experience, etc
Grad Career Services: What has worked

We learned: Our grad alums are open to interaction:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CGS Pathways</th>
<th>Completion Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>3 Years Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>55%</td>
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</table>
Grad Career Services: What has worked

We learned: They want to give feedback about their experiences and they want to help

67% were willing to have their response data attributed to them individually and linked to their administrative records, confined to the project team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2017 Alumni Survey</th>
<th>2018 Alumni Survey</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Years Since</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Graduation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Survey</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>268</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

|                    | **Years Since**    | **Total** |
|                    | **Graduation**     | **Survey** |
|                    |                    | **Responses** |
|                    |                    | **Willing** |
|                    |                    | **To Share** |
| 3                  | 121                | 72          | 60%           |
| 8                  | 78                 | 55          | 71%           |
| 15                 | 57                 | 45          | 79%           |
| **TOTAL**          | **256**            | **172**     | **67%**       |
Grad Career Services: What hasn’t worked

Career Fair
- At ND, the event is LARGE and students are not often able to discuss their specific talents as they may differ from UG talent
- Many employers who attend are specifically UG-recruiters

Instead: “Coffee & Careers”
- Event open on the morning of large-scale Career Fair, geared towards Ph.D. & masters hiring only
- Companies send separate representatives or equip current recruiters to answer advanced degree hiring questions
- MANY Graduate School alums will represent their organization
- Shorter event, more conducive to graduate student schedule
Grad Career Services: Maybe it will work?

Get to know grad students before they become alum

**STUDENT TOUCHPOINTS**

- **Email**
- **In-Person**
- **Event**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Email</th>
<th>In-Person</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016-2017</td>
<td>1,056</td>
<td>708</td>
<td>1,001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018-2019</td>
<td>756</td>
<td>1,126</td>
<td>1,708</td>
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</table>
What grad students want

Fall Student Engagement Survey

- Fall Student Engagement Survey (2018)
- Sent to grad students (~2,500); response rate 32%

Types of roles they want to pursue (ranked):
  Academic, Industry, Not-for-Profit, Entrepreneurial

Location(s) where they want to work/live:
  Interactive Heat Map
Please select up to five cities, states, or regions in the U.S.A. where you would find interest in starting a career. (First Choice ONLY)
Grad Career Services: Maybe it will work?

- Career Treks
  - Pilot four (4) Career Treks for 62 grad students
  - “Day in the Life”
    - Silicon Valley (8 organizations)
    - Indianapolis (Eli Lilly)
    - Crane (NavSea)
    - Chicago (McKinsey & Argonne)

- East-Coast Relocation
  - Director Rob Coloney relocated full-time to the East Coast to begin to build a pipeline for graduate student-specific hiring for Ph.D. & masters students between D.C. & Boston

- Grad Career now offers consultations with Grad Alumni
Development

History of the Partnership

2009: Advisory Council, shared with ND Research
Interactions all undergrad focused

2019: They did not helped me write this talk
Liaison to Grad School (shared)
Development: What has started to work

Fundraising for financial aid includes grad
Include grad students in profiles & pitches

Advisory Council
Alums (undergrad and grad) who give:
Time, talent and treasure
Share with ND Research
Development: What has started to work

Salesforce (just this fall)
CRM cloud-based database of alumni records
Equally Accessible by Grad Career Services and Development
80% of engagement survey respondents signed up
Also used to track employer relations
Used by Alumni Association also

This took new leadership and cooperation
Feel free to contact me to strategize about how to apply these ideas to your campus environment:

lcarlson@nd.edu
Build Campus Infrastructure & Partnerships

- Clarify functions and needs
- Build trust
Build your alum network before they are alums

- Focus on Community, Inclusion, Support
- Provide resources that add value
- Track sense of belonging
Be patient and opportunistic

- 10 years in so far........ just really starting

Patience is a form of action
Closing Exercise

At your tables, discuss difficulties that you anticipate in implementing some/any of the strategies you heard about:

– Which ones seem possible?
– Which ones seem impossible?