Alumni Engagement: Why and Where to Start for Faculty and Departments

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Alumni Engagement

Weerts and Ronca (2007) explored multiple ways alumni can be supportive after they graduate.

Alumni Engagement: Cons

- Costs:
  - Time
    - Suggestion: Collaborate and delegate, UH Foundations Alumni Relations
  - Funding
    - Suggestions: UH Foundation account, department/college support
Alumni Engagement: Pros

- Engaging in educational activities has positive influences on cognitive and affective outcome (Gayles & Hu, 2009)
- Engagement → Retention
- Fosters a community of faculty, staff, alumni, and current and future students
  - Improve students’ experiences
  - Forms relationships
  - Students like to hear from alumni

Alumni Engagement: Why?

Department of Biology goals/motivation

- ~1300 undergraduate students
- +2000 email-able accounts
- +4400 alumni
- Departmental community
- Improve students’ experiences

Biology’s cycle

- Solicit feedback
- Program events
- Collaborate
- Connect with alumni
- Contact students
- Connect with students
Biology’s current students
- Students wanted to hear from alumni
- Graduation survey results
  - 51% of students are unsure of their plans after graduating
  - Program events
  - Co-sponsor with other offices
  - Tie in alumni

Biology Alumni Successes
- Connecting with alumni
  - Email is preferred
  - Alumni involvement with department activities
  - Inviting alumni back to campus
  - Tour renovations
  - Facebook
- Alumni giving back
  - Financially
    - UH Foundation accounts
    - Biology
    - Biology Scholarship
  - Time
    - Event
    - Blog

Student Survey
- Temporary solution
- Graduation survey
  - Do students want to be contacted in the future
    - Results: 48% of students would like to receive emails after they graduate
  - Collect data
  - Encourage joining UHAA Biology Chapter

Graduation survey results

Results: 48% of students would like to receive emails after they graduate
Misconceived Challenges

- Costs
  - Requires high costs and time

- Communication
  - Time Consuming

Where to start

- How to contact alumni?
- How to create a UHAA Chapter (if applicable)?
- How to program alumni events?
- Connect alumni to unit and students

UH Foundation

- Timothy Ing, Associate Director of Alumni Relations Marketing & Communications

- Forms
  - Email Broadcast Request Form
  - Giving sample of email to UH Foundation
  - Email sent from UH Foundation
- Data Request Form
UHAA Chapter

- Roxanne Kam, Interim Director of Alumni Relations
- Starting a chapter
  - Identify willing individuals
  - Officers (Board of Directors) of the chapter
  - 25 UHAA paid members
- Formulation of bylaws
  - http://uhalumni.org/new-chapter

UHAA Chapters

- School of Architecture Alumni Association
  - http://uhalumni.org/uhsaaa
- UH Manoa Nursing Alumni Association
  - http://uhalumni.org/naa

Alumni Programming

- Workshops/Panelists
- Connecting with Alumni Series
- Alumni blog
Workshops/Panels

- Co-sponsored with Mundo Career Center
- Could not find many alumni
- UHF can help; Alumni, employers, and Faculty can serve on the panel
- Students were engaged to ask questions

Lessons Learned:
- Students enjoyed hearing from different people
- Encourage panelists about not responding to all questions
- Be flexible

Connecting with Alumni Series

- Each semester bringing three alumni
- Informal round-table discussion
- Provided some sample questions to alumnus
- Free parking from personnel officer
- Room reservations
- QLC, Campus Center or Hemenway Hall

Connecting with Alumni Series

- 17 students attended Sept. and Oct. event

Breakdown of students:
- 12% Freshmen
- 6% Sophomores
- 76% Seniors
- 6% Graduated

Attendees who would attend again:
- 6% Yes
- 94% Maybe
Connecting with Alumni Series

- Lessons learned
  - Ways to engage students
  - More ice breakers
  - Email students – collect questions & provide sample questions
  - Be flexible with alumni
  - Co-sponsor with UH Foundation
  - Invite Tim as a photographer

Programming

- Planned from 5:30 pm to 6:30 pm
- Food and refreshments
- Funds
  - Awarded funds

Alumni Blog

- Venue to share experiences
- Benefits department and alumni
- Posting one entry per month
- Each alumnus/alumna have a unique story

Lessons learned:
- Contact multiple alumni
- Some may forget
- Some may say they will participate, but no response
Facebook Page & Group

- Department of Biology Facebook page
  - Public site
  - Only administrators can input information on news feed
- Facebook group
  - Private site
  - Everything showed on news feed

Future Planning

- Finalize Department chapter through UH Foundation
- Another event to bring back alumni
- Invite alumni to future events

Activity

- 20 minutes
  - 10 minutes discussion with your neighbor
  - 10 minutes group responses
  - Refer to handout
Activity – Responses

- What is your timeline to connect with alumni?
- What alumni programming events you have or would like to have?
- Potential or future challenges?

Questions?

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