

Top 5 Things Alumni Advisors & Boards Should Be Engaged In

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The key to any successful alumni board is program consistency

Wherever there is a strong undergraduate chapter, there is generally a strong alumni board

1. Recruiting & Retaining New Board Members

- Remember that all board members and advisors are volunteers and should be treated accordingly
- Make it easy for alumni to be involved on a board
- Have regular meeting times set months in advance and stick to them
- Have meetings last no more than 2 hours
- Lengths of board members and officers terms should be established so that they know when their term ends (can opt for another term, but this leaves them an out)
- Recruiting new board members
 - strategic selection of new board members (not just who shows up)
 - spread out board members so that all eras are covered
 - not all board members need to reside in the immediate area if meetings are well planned
 - does the board need a facilities person, a lawyer, and a p.r. person?
- Nominating committees
 - nominating committees recruit new members so that no one runs for office
- Establish officer duties and roles
 - officers should have a limit on their term so that they know when their commitment expires
 - may opt for another term but this gives them a way out
- Try not operating as a committee of the whole
 - establish duties for areas such as alumni relations, Homecoming, facilities, chapter advisor, etc.
 - each area then reports at the meeting on progress rather than making all the decisions
- Someone, preferably a secretary, should be taking meeting minutes
 - send out on a listserve and keep for archives (may need if problems arise)
- Try to conduct most meetings at house if possible
 - summer meetings may take place where most alumni reside
- Include undergraduates whenever possible and try to avoid conflicts with their meetings
- You can't thank board members and advisors enough (plaques, resolutions, gifts, etc.)

2. Alumni Communications

- Think of a good alumni communications plan from a broad perspective
- Communication needs to be alumni focused
- Can contain undergraduate news but the focus needs to be on alumni
- Examples of alumni communications include:
 - newsletters
 - post cards
 - web sites
 - listserves
- Use communication to *educate alumni* on the changing nature of fraternities and sororities
- Good communication keeps alumni in touch with their classmates
- Quality publications bring back disinterested alumni
- Keep alumni informed of changes with the university and national organization
- Include national material and a national focus
- Set up a listserve for the alumni board separate from an overall alumni listserve
- The key is consistency: must be on a set time schedule

3. Alumni Programs

- What is a successful alumni event?
 - brings back alumni
 - allows for great interaction
 - is alumni focused (not undergraduate)
 - is held in convenient locations for alumni (go to alumni rather than ask them to come to you)
- Typical alumni events include the following:
 - big annual events
 - small regional events
 - reunions
 - special events (bowl games, etc.)
 - take advantage of special events and one-time happenings
 - 25th, 50th, 100th anniversaries

4. Working with Undergraduates

- Need to educate alumni on the needs of undergraduates today (changing demographics)
- Need to educate alumni on the issue of substance free housing
- Need to educate alumni on the new 4-year education programs (no more pledges)
- Need to include undergrads whenever possible on the board and in making plans
- Need to educate undergrads on what is a successful alumni event
- To build trust, suggest the alumni board and the undergrads swap copies of budgets
- Be sure to contact the university & national to receive their updates

5. Fundraising

- Funding for alumni programs needs to come from alumni, not undergraduates
- Alumni Directories (good to do every 5 years but don't charge too much)
- Annual campaigns
 - give alumni something to give to
 - must be on a regular basis
 - should pay for most alumni programs
- Capital campaigns for a specific program or facility
 - need to do a feasibility study to determine support
 - need to be specific on what the project will entail
 - takes 18 – 24 months for a good campaign

Overall Housing Issues (for those groups with houses)

- Be good stewards of the property
- Rent dollars should be competitive with university rates or any private dorms
- Charge a fixed amount for the house, not on the # of residents (most costs are fixed)
- Get \$ up front from undergrads, September and January (same as university housing)
- 5% of value of the house should be spent annual on maintenance
 - for a \$1 million facility this means \$50,000 on maintenance
- Need a 5-10 year plan of renovations with costs (roofs, boilers, plumbing, electrical, etc.)
- Must keep competitive with university housing since they have raised the bar considerably
 - internet connections are becoming a must (wired and wireless)
 - multiple phone lines are also needed
 - need for more wiring given what students bring to campus today
- Sprinklers (Pennsylvania is likely to require this statewide)
 - \$50,000 for a simple system, \$100,000 for top-shelf system
 - saves lives (there is no better system)
 - saves annual insurance premiums (but not enough to pay for the system)
 - some national fraternities and sororities provide loans and grants
- May need to undergo a capital campaign every 10-20 years for major renovations or additions
 - need to cultivate alumni prior to any campaign
 - need to make a good case that facilities will be maintained after renovations

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