

Institutional Effectiveness Report

Assessment Summary

Administrative Unit: Alumni Relations

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Assessment Cycle (academic or calendar year): 2008 Calendar Year

Mission (related to VSU mission): Alumni Relations is responsible for engaging Alumni and establishing a culture of giving. This aids the University's mission relating to community relations and its commitment to provide outstanding educational opportunities that meet the needs of the region.

Assessment History (discuss here how and when the unit developed its current assessment program, what it used prior to starting that program to assess its effectiveness, etc.): Historically, there have been no quantitative metrics to assess the effectiveness of Alumni Relations. The working assessment has always been based on attendance. This method is not effective as new programs replace old programs. Further, changing the characteristics of a program (i.e. season, time of event, weather etc.) without having a benchmark, does not provide for a realistic comparison.

Going forward we will base community/chapter events effectiveness by cost per head, and amount of donations received toward the scholarship fund established by that chapter. For events that are not geared to outcomes, but are geared toward awareness and participation such as homecoming. We will gauge success by number of participants, and the amount of feedback received about the event.

Our communication efforts (magazine and email updates) do not have an assessment model either. It is difficult to track readership of a magazine that is not subscription based, and that is always sent to anyone in our database with a US address that appears to be valid.

One true measure of assessment we have is our Bi Annual financial audit. This audit assesses our financial accounting methods. The audit also reports the sustainability of our finances.

Goals for Unit:

Our 2008 Goals were to:

1. Engage Alumni in strategic locales in an effort to later build chapters and cultivate fundraising opportunities in those areas.
2. Publish 2 tabloid style publications and 1 glossy, magazine style publication.
3. Continue to develop new partnerships that will provide the Alumni association with a consistent revenue stream from sources other than the University Foundation or the State of Georgia.
4. Provide financial assistance and scholarships to support the University mission

Assessments (include when and to whom these are administered, and align goals with specific assessments):

2008

1. Engage Alumni in strategic locales in an effort to later build chapters and cultivate fundraising opportunities in those areas.

Valdosta St. Patrick's Day Party- This event had a low turnout of about 80 people. This event was held last year and attracted about 150 people. Virtually nothing changed about this event year over year. An informal verbal survey of those who did not attend suggests that this event conflicted with other things they were doing. Responses also included needing a change of venue, and making it more family friendly. In 2009, the Alumni Board will review this and make the appropriate changes including replacing the event with another date. This years event was advertised by post card, newspaper advertisement, email and radio.

Jacksonville Alumni Reception- This event also had a low turnout year over year. There were 20 people this year vs. 60 last year. The location of the event was the same, however it was moved from a January event to a May date. Those that came seem to like the time of year, however, several people who had come previously said they had too many conflicts this time of year (i.e. graduations, vacations etc.). This event will likely change dates again, and will likely change locations as well. The Alumni Board now has a member from Jacksonville, which should help get the word out. We will also attempt to get information published in the newspaper. This event was advertised by email, postcard and phone call.

Atlanta- This year the Alumni Association did the Atlanta area event at an Atlanta Braves game. There was no Atlanta event in 2007 and in 2006, the event was not well attended. We sold all 50 of the tickets in our block. 35 of those tickets were from Atlanta based Alumni, the rest went to folks from Valdosta and other areas. While we were able to sell all of the tickets, the event should have done better for the amount of Alumni that live in Atlanta. Our secondary offering (geared towards Alumni with small kids who may not enjoy a Braves Game) was an outing to Six Flags. There was no response to it and it was canceled. This event was advertised by email, postcard mailing and Facebook posting.

Columbus- 2008 was the first time in recent history that an event had been done in Columbus. This event was hosted by a local Alumnus who booked the venue, ordered the food and the party favors. The Alumni Association covered the costs, as well as sent out postcard invitations and electronic invitations as well. The event was a BBQ in a local park and drew about 40 people. Many of those people were relatives or close friends, so while the event was well attended for it being the first one, the lack of diversity in age, class year or field of study shows that there is room for improvement. It is unlikely we will be back in Columbus in 2009.

Affinity Group Events- In 2008 The Alumni Association sponsored events for groups that were brought together because of their participation in a particular discipline. These groups include Athletic Alumni (Anyone who participated in an intercollegiate sport while in school), Athletic Training Alumni (Those graduates from the VSU Sports Medicine Program) and Theater (Those students who participated in the Theater and Dance Program). All of these programs were successful according to the departments who coordinated the events. These groups also assisted the Alumni Association by updating their contact information so that they would receive future communications and solicitations.

Homecoming- Homecoming 2008 was very successful. The Alumni tailgate party drew about 350 people. That was an increase over last year but by how many is undeterminable. The venue change, and the date change were big factors in the increase. Both the date and the venue are fluid. The date is determined by the football schedule and the venue is determined by the estimated climate based on the date. We will continue to hope for a mid-October date, and hope the weather cooperates again next year.

2. Publish 2 tabloid style publications and 1 glossy, magazine style publication.

In 2008 only 2 publications were printed. 1 was a tabloid style *Alumni News* that went out in April. The second publication was a glossy style magazine *Alumni Voice* that went out in late October. Putting our 3 quality publications a year is not feasible with the staff that is currently in place. The amount of time it takes to write, layout and design an appropriate periodical is extraordinary. In 2009 we have decided to outsource the layout and design of the magazine. In order to cover the additional costs and to reduce the overall expense of the publications, we will allow the publisher to sell advertisements. The cost savings will be put towards the monthly e-newsletter that will be sent out. The addition of the e-newsletter will also increase the amount of our communication with Alumni and offer them additional giving opportunities.

3. Continue to develop new partnerships that will provide the Alumni association with a consistent revenue stream from sources other than the University Foundation or the State of Georgia.

The Alumni Association has benefitted financially from establishing marketing partnerships with such companies as Bank of America. In exchange for marketing rights, Bank of America guarantees the Alumni Association a percentage of purchases made on consumer credit cards and consumer lines of credit. In 2008, the Alumni Association established a similar relationship with Liberty Mutual and Harris Connect. Other partnerships give us the ability to offer exclusive discounts to our Alumni at no charge to the Association. These relationships are important too, because they add value to the Alumni Membership. This year, we were able to offer discount cards to Brooks Brothers and Jos Banks.

4. Provide financial assistance and scholarships to support the University mission

In 2008 The Alumni Association awarded 2 full 1 year scholarships to two graduate students. In the past 2 years, we have had the scholarship recipients either take less than a full load of classes, or drop out all together. Based on this history, I will recommend to the Alumni Board, that the scholarships be given to an undergraduate. The Alumni Association also supports the Senior Student Leader of the Year Award with a cash gift to the Student. The Alumni Association also supports the Arts, Academic Teams and Athletics with financial contributions.

The Alumni Association is audited bi- annually. This year, an independent audit upheld our accounting practices and found our organization to be financially sustainable.

Unit Director	Date	President/VP for Unit	Date
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Adapted from: University of Alabama SACS site (<http://sacs.ua.edu/degreeInfo2.cfm?college=2&dept=50>);

University of Western Kentucky SACS Accreditation Review Process (<http://www.wku.edu/sacs/assessmentmanual.htm>) ; and

Mrs. Marila D. Palmer, VP-Executive Affairs & Planning, LeTourneau University, Presentation to 2008 SACS-COC Institute