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Alumni Tracking

Maintaining accurate and up to date information for your alumni is the first step in engaging your alumni. This can be a very time consuming and never ending task, but the KU Alumni Association is able to offer your department assistance in maintaining this information. The Alumni Association is constantly updating their information and are willing to share this data with you.

Request a List
In order to request a list from the alumni association, please complete the Request Form for KU Alumni Records Labels or Directories. Please note that the form requires an “Administrator’s approval”. We strongly suggest that you forward the completed form to Jessica Beeson, eliash@ku.edu, the College’s Director of Alumni and Community Engagement for her endorsement. Jessica can assist in expediting the request.

Contact Policies
When utilizing the alumni association’s contact list, please make sure to be in compliance with the KU Alumni Email Policy. When Alumni give us their personal and professional contact
information, they are trusting us to respect and protect this information. Please keep this in mind when choosing what to send to them.

We encourage you to reach out to your alumni and foster relationships with the department, but over communicating with your alumni could have the opposite result. Please be selective about the communications that you send to your alumni and share this with the Alumni Association.

Submit Updates
If you encounter updates that need to be made to the alumni association’s lists, please submit the update in order to keep our lists accurate by emailing kualumni@kualumni.org.

Utilize Opportunities
Departments have the opportunity to interact with their alumni in a variety of ways from reunions and on campus events to alumni groups on LinkedIn. These are great opportunities to collect and share accurate contact information. Make sure to utilize registration lists and other information shared with the department to update tracking documents.
Alumni Profiles on Websites

Profiling alumni and alumni outcomes on your department’s website provides current students with concrete examples of potential career paths and offers alumni a chance to share their story and to maintain a connection with your department.

Alumni profiles can be as simple as a list of alumni names and job titles or employers, to highly visual presentations featuring alumni headshots or action photos and detailed biographical information.

When building a website, departments should first consider the goals of the project. Is the primary goal to inspire current and prospective students? Is it to encourage alumni donations? Is it to highlight student outcomes and job placement over time? Or is it some combination of these?

Departments must also realistically assess the time and resources available to gather and maintain the information. A poorly maintained page is arguably worse than no page at all. Are there one or two people (staff or faculty) who can dedicate time to updating the page at least once a year? How do you currently track alumni? Does your faculty keep in close contact with past advisees in academic careers? What about those who took employment outside of academia? Are your alumni likely to be active on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Researchgate.net, or Academia.edu? Will someone have the time to use these platforms to locate past alumni?
Once the goals and resources are in place, there are several approaches to design a department may choose to take. Below are a few examples from current KU departments. Each of these has features that are worth noting.

**School of the Languages Literatures & Cultures**

Although this site features primarily alumni of undergraduate programs, it provides an excellent example, both in terms of style and design and in breadth of content, for highlighting the successes of a select group of alumni. The site features a slide show of pictures of alumni with a short, two sentence, bio preview under each picture. Clicking on the picture will then take the reader to a dedicated profile page. Each profile includes a picture, information on the alumni’s reason for choosing their degree program, information about their current employment, and a quote how about their experience in the program and how their master’s degree has benefitted them.

**Communication Studies MA, Edwards Campus**

This site features representative profiles. Each profile includes a picture, information on the alumni’s current employment, and responses to a series of questions about their experience in the program and how their master’s degree has benefitted them in their careers.

**Public Affairs and Administration MPA**

This program’s Alumni Spotlights provides an extensive interview with one alumnus. Featured alumni are rotated periodically. They also have a separate Share Your Story link that allows alumni, current students, or others who have a strong connection with the School to share their story about how the School has impacted their life.

**Museum Studies MA**

This site includes a U.S. map showing the employment location of program graduates, a PDF list of the job title, employer, and location of program graduates, and a series of questions about alumni experience in the program with select responses from a number of graduates. There is also a link to a web form where alumni can submit updated information.

**Molecular Biosciences PhD**

This program’s alumni section provides the most comprehensive example of how a department can use their website as a tool for alumni development and graduate career tracking. It features a landing page with requests for alumni support, alumni news, and brief alumni profiles; two separate alumni profile pages, one of a recent graduate and another of an alumnus more advanced in his or her career; a list of past graduates with detailed information about job history and publications; and a form where alumni can submit updated contact information and items for the alumni news.
Alumni Newsletters

One way to maintain alumni engagement with your program is by developing a department or alumni newsletter. These can be a great opportunity to highlight departmental changes, student or alumni successes, issue a letter from the chair, and publicize alumni events.

Sample Publications

- Classics
- Clinical Child Psychology
- Economics
- Environmental Studies
- Latin American & Caribbean Studies
- Museum Studies
- Physics and Astronomy
- School of Public Affairs and Administration

Frequency

Departments distribute their newsletters different frequencies ranging from monthly publications, to a more in-depth annual newsletter. The frequency should be determined by the individual department and be based on factors such as time and resources, newsletter content, and alumni needs.

Method of Distribution

See the section in this document on Prospect for detailed information on email marketing campaigns, which may include newsletter distribution.

Content Ideas

- Letter from Chair/Director
- Special Events/Travel
- Faculty News
- Awards & Recognitions
- Spotlight faculty research/publication
- Recent Admissions
- Internships/Graduations
- Alumni/Alumnae Spotlights (be sure to include contact information for alumni to provide updates)
Share on Website

Once you’ve shared your newsletter with your audience, consider highlighting and archiving it on your website. This is an excellent way to increase newsletter visibility, including with prospective graduate students.

Solicit Alumni Assistance

This could also be any opportunity to solicit alumni as volunteers for an event. It is important to take into consideration your alumni body and the ways they prefer to support the department. Many young alumni are unable to contribute financially, but it is important to engage them through participation in volunteer opportunities.

Examples of Alumni Volunteer Opportunities:

- Prospective student interviews
- Recruitment efforts
- Assistance with job placement
- Alumni Boards (See Alumni Boards section of this document for more information)
- Reunion Events
- Speaker/Panelist
Financial Giving
For those alumni who are able to give financially, newsletters can also be great fundraising tools. For example, the Center for Latin American & Caribbean Studies dedicates the last page of the Latin Americanist to giving. They detail how donations can be used and give a short description of their three funds. Additionally, they include a short testimonial from a student who was able to use donated funds to study abroad (See Latin American & Caribbean Studies, page 16).

If you are in a department that receives a great number of donations, it is a good idea to devote space to thanking your donors. The Clinical Child Psychology department dedicates a page in their newsletter to thanking their many donors for supporting their two department funds (See Clinical and Child Psychology, page 5).

Other examples can be found:
Classics, page 11
Physics & Astronomy, page 2
School of Public Affairs and Administration (link in newsletter to the “Giving” page on their website) http://kupa.ku.edu/giving
Prospect as an Email Marketing Tool

Organizing and tracking the effectiveness of outreach to alumni, particularly email outreach, can be a challenge for any unit. Email marketing software or services such as Constant Contact are highly effective tools, but can be cost prohibitive for many departments. Social media options, like Facebook and LinkedIn, offer benefits for maintaining contact with select alumni, but are not generally designed to provide group owners with data and feedback (e.g. data on which emails were read, what links were clicked most in your newsletter, etc.) the way that marketing programs can.

To meet this need, Office of Graduate Studies offers graduate programs the support of the online program Prospect to serve as a tracking tool for alumni records, efficiently correspond with alumni, as well as track the effectiveness of their email campaigns. Prospect is part of the online system ADMIT, the system used to manage graduate admissions. It has traditionally been used by departments to engage in outreach to prospective applicants, but its design also lends itself to a variety of other marketing endeavors.

Prospect Features and Tools

Whether you are interested in corresponding with 20 alumni or 2,000, the Prospect can meet your needs. Some of the program features or tools include:

- Email blasts, either to all contacts or a subgroup of contacts
- View data on email effectiveness – e.g. Track which emails are being opened and by whom, track which links within emails are being clicked on the most
- View and update contact logs with individual contacts
- Assistance with event coordination – Utilize the RSVP feature within email campaigns to develop subgroups for particular events

Getting started

Once you have identified your alumni and obtained their contact information, contact Abby Ehling, aehling@ku.edu, who may provide assistance with initial set up, including uploading your existing lists, and providing examples of campaigns that have been successful in other units. While Graduate Studies is available for initial set-up, additional training will be then needed to maintain the list and communications.
LinkedIn has 107 million users in the US alone, many of which do not have other forms of social media.

Creating an Alumni LinkedIn page allows alumni to stay connected with the department. It also provides benefits to the alumni, allowing them to share their news and professional biography with the department.

In addition, when alumni connect with the LinkedIn group, it demonstrates a level of engagement and interest in the department as a whole. This allows the department to identify alumni that may have otherwise not be known to the department. These alumni could be a value resource to the department on alumni speaker panels, as adjunct professors, or as advisory board members. By having access to their updated resume, it also allows the department to determine alumni that could be utilized in alumni spotlights or one which you would want to connect students with for informational interviews.

LinkedIn groups are also an easy way to communicate updates in the department, career opportunities, or class notes in a professional way that reaches a large portion of the alumni body.

**Why create a LinkedIn Group?**

With all of the tasks that are expected of graduate support staff, it is understandable to feel that creating and managing a LinkedIn group might not be worthwhile. Here are a few articles that demonstrate the value of LinkedIn and how it can actually help make aspects of your job easier.

- Top 10 Reasons to Start a LinkedIn Group
- Facebook vs LinkedIn - What’s the Difference?
- Demographic Data and Social Media
- 15 Useful tips for squeezing value from LinkedIn

**How to create a LinkedIn page?**

Creating a LinkedIn page is easy and user friendly. The LinkedIn Help Center guides will help step you through how to create and utilize your group.

- How to create group?- LinkedIn Help Center
- Group Owner and Admin Roles
- Getting Started
- Adding an Image or Logo to Your Group
- Inviting People to Join
- Merging Groups
- 5 Tips for Creating, Promoting and Managing a LinkedIn Group
- LinkedIn Professional Community Guidelines
Adding Alumni to Your Group

As students enter the program as well as when they transition to becoming alumni are key times when they will request to join the program’s Alumni LinkedIn page. It is important to capitalize on these opportunities, but attention also needs to be given to adding current alumni of the program. You can encourage alumni to connect on LinkedIn through current methods of communication, such as newsletters, alumni events, and your program website. Another way to find alumni in LinkedIn is by utilizing the Alumni Search Feature.

To utilize this feature, hover your mouse over “My Network” and then select “Find Alumni”.

Next, search for alumni of your program by utilizing keyword searches and customizing if they attended KU and in what years. This will allow you to narrow the search and help identify alumni that you might be searching for.
Group Maintenance

Depending on how active you plan to be on LinkedIn, you can decide how frequently you would like to perform group maintenance. LinkedIn groups do not require significant maintenance, but by having your group closed to the public and open only to alumni does require some additional attention. It is important to verify and accept members in a timely fashion and allow them to become part of the group. The links below include resources for managing a group effectively as well as best practices.

- Group Management Best Practices
- Managing a Group
- Editing Group Information and Group Settings
- Manage group moderation queues
- Monitor and delete group conversations and comments
- Assigning or Removing a Group Moderator
- Closing a Group
- Approving Group Members

LinkedIn Communications

To gain the most benefit from the connections you have made, it is important to communicate regularly with your alumni. Consider sharing information that you would include in a newsletter, or announce exciting developments within the department. This will help alumni remain connected to the department while keeping them informed. When communicating with alumni, please keep in mind that you do not want to overwhelm your group members with communications because this could cause them to leave the group.

- Communicating with LinkedIn Members
- Sending Announcements to Group Members

Resources for Students or Alumni

In order to provide additional value to your students and alumni, please feel free to share these resources to improve their LinkedIn experience. By providing materials about LinkedIn in to your Students and Alumni, they will be more likely to seek out your LinkedIn page and request to connect with you.

- Managing Account Settings
- Job Searching on LinkedIn
- Build Your Brand
- Communicating on LinkedIn
- Networking on LinkedIn
- Tailoring Your Profile
Alumni Advisory Boards

There are many ways that alumni may contribute positively to your graduate programs outside of monetary donations. Many units, and particularly, other schools on campus, have realized the benefits of alumni advisory boards and alumni participation in on department or graduate committees. Alumni involvement in graduate committees or on a separate advisory board can:

- Provide an organized, consistent means for interaction between the department and the greater academic and professional communities.
- Offer advice on issues important to the Department.
- Support and promote the department through personal, institutional, and other means.
- Cultivate excellence in the program at all levels.

Furthermore, Alumni involvement in this way can lead to deeper relationships with the department, faculty, or students that may later extend to other areas, such as mentorship relationships, avenues to employment opportunities, or later monetary donations.

Making the most out of alumni participation

Getting Started

- Start by building a solid contact database and establishing contact with alumni to begin cultivating relationships. This is having a single representative, either administrative or faculty, dedicated to reaching out to alumni may be essential.
- Hold local reunions.
- For advisory boards made up solely of alumni, in the first years, hold off on charging with the group with new goals or initiatives. Instead, focus on 1) gaining general alumni feedback, and 2) supporting the alumni in development of a mission statement and, if applicable, bylaws.

Selecting alumni

Once you do transition to a traditional advisory board model, invite alumni based on diverse backgrounds, current job placement, advancement in their career, as well as engagement. Ask some graduate students as they are graduating as well, in order to build a relationship early on and include alumni whose experience with the department is fresh.

After alumni have been chosen, consider including terms limits in the bylaws. Many advisory board coordinators reported that asking an alumnus/alumnae to step down, either because they are not as engaged as expected, or because they are not contributing positively, was a difficult and uncomfortable task. Another option would be to designate an emeritus status.
once a term limit has ended, allowing alumni to continue to participate, but as non-voting members.

Once an advisory board is up and running, consider developing a membership subcommittee charged with increasing involvement in the board, and possibly selecting new members.

**Timing and Frequency**

Schedule advisory board or committee meetings around the same time as other events such as talks, conferences in the area, or (depending on your departmental culture) larger KU events, such as homecoming, in order to allow alumni who may be traveling to attend multiple events in one trip. Additionally, consider scheduling the meeting around recruitment events, and invite the alumni to those as well!

The majority of the departments we interviewed agreed that meeting twice annually was ideal.

**Charges**

Provide boards and/or subcommittees with a limited number of focused charges or topics. 2-3 topics or charges per meeting are plenty. Topics or areas for charges may include:

- Program or curricular changes
- Recruitment
- Diversity initiatives
- Community or industry outreach
- Fundraising
- Newsletters
- Development of online programs
- Exit surveys or interviews of graduating students

Don’t forget to say “THANK YOU!”

Cultivating a relationship of appreciation is critical to continued alumni engagement and to the development of relationships that may extend beyond advisory involvement. If at all possible, provide a meal, have your current graduate students write thank you cards, offer to write a letter of appreciation to the alumni’s chair, dean, or employer. Make an effort to demonstrate how their input and time is valuable to your programs!

**Resources and Additional Information**

- Physics & Astronomy Alumni Advisory Board
- MBA Advisory Board Bylaws
- Chemical & Petroleum Engineering Advisory Board
- Aerospace Engineering