Building Young Alumni Relations

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History and Organization

Purdue Ag Alumni Association is the oldest constituent alumni organization at Purdue.

• Founded in 1895
• Separately incorporated non-profit
• Represents approximately 10% of Purdue alumni
• Rich history, with signature events
• Governed by volunteer board
• Staff hired and administered by Dean of Agriculture
• Outside funds that help support programs
Challenges

• Founded in 1895
• Entrenched traditions of signature events
• Volunteer board that was inward looking
• Limited staff (one professional, one support)
Purdue University is an equal access/equal opportunity institution.
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Process

- Reorganize Board
- Redirect Board Efforts
- Engage Students
- Survey Young Alumni
- Reposition/Rebrand Ag Alumni Office
Reorganize Board

- Vacancies unfilled
- Expanded nominating committee
- Solicited departments for nominees
- Met and vetted nominees

Developed slate that was balanced by:
- Department
- Geography
- Vocation
- Gender
Redirect Board Efforts

- Change agenda/format of meetings
  - Eliminate college reports, focus on discussion of priorities/work
- Create working groups
- Designate a young alumni rep
  - Chair of new Student Relations Committee
Engage Students

- Undergraduate Representative on Board
  - Add reporting element
  - Co-chair of a signature event

- Student Relations Committee
  - Created student organizations grant program
  - Engaged with university events

- Student Participation in Alumni Events
  - Ag Fish Fry (Alumni Annual Meeting)
  - Homecoming Signature Event
Survey Young Alumni

Research Project Goals

- Increase participation of alumni from past 15 years
- Learn how to build relationships with young alumni
Survey Young Alumni

➤ Research Project Methods
  ➤ Focus Groups
    (nearby and distant alumni, all in-state)
  ➤ Informal interviews
    (Purdue alumni and alumni of other institutions)
  ➤ Survey
    (all alumni from past 15 years with an email address)
Focus Group Findings

- Knowing someone on a planning board was a big reason why participants come back to alumni events.
- Participants felt using peer hosts was a good idea.
- Very interested in an ag alumni weekend with several activities from which to choose.
- Tailor Purdue sports-related events in years when teams are doing well.
Survey Young Alumni

Focus Group Findings

- Travel grants can encourage young alumni attendance
- Target out-of-state alumni and let them help promote alumni activities
- Younger alumni without children wanted events that were just for young alumni
Informal Interview Findings

- Reinforced the focus group findings about knowing someone who is involved and the attraction of multiple activities over a weekend.
- Young alumni consider their free time to be between 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m.
- Special events for young alumni not necessary, but marketing current events to young alumni is essential.
Survey Young Alumni

- Informal Interview Findings
  - Incentives such as discounts, travel grants and free events have been successful for the Purdue Alumni Association to boost young alumni participation
  - Urban events tend to have more young alumni involvement
  - Targeting current seniors is a good idea
Survey Young Alumni

Survey Findings
(560 responses from 4,000 sent)

- Majority who have attended events lived between one and four hours from campus
- 87 percent prefer receiving electronic communication
- 88 percent have been back to campus since graduating
- Only 16 percent have attended an ag alumni event
Survey Young Alumni

- Survey Findings
  - 64 percent are interested in a Purdue Ag Weekend with several activities
  - 87 percent are interested in, or could be interested in, events closer to their home
  - Spring Fest (our major College of Ag educational open house event) may be a good time to see a lot of young alumni
  - There is interest in career-related activities such as networking events, career services and continuing education
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

➢ Commencement Reception
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Senior Send-Off
- Final Finals Prize Give-Away
- Job Search Follow-Up
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Student Intern Program Managers
  - Alumni Mentoring Program
  - Smartphone App Development
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Partnerships with Students
  - Funding of student organizations’ projects
  - Ag Council’s signature event
  - Grants for organizations (board-led)
    - Participation in their events
    - Name and face recognition
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Partnerships with Students
  - Funding of student experiences through Ag Alumni Trust Fund
  - Study abroad scholarships
  - Travel for judging teams
  - National conferences
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Partnerships with Students
- Co-production of College’s Homecoming Event
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

➢ Partnerships with Students
➢ Student engagement at Purdue Ag Fish Fry
➢ Volunteer servers
Reposition/Rebrand
Ag Alumni Office

- Partnerships with Students
  - Student engagement at Purdue Ag Fish Fry
  - Student organization exhibits
Continued Development

- Board of Directors strategic planning exercise – ongoing 2015
- Student intern dedicated to board planning initiatives – fall 2015
- Chicago-area family event – July 2015
- Purdue Homecoming 2015 to have added young ag alumni activities (alumni weekend)
Continued Development

- Graduate Student representative added to Ag Alumni Assoc. board – Nov. 2014
- Funding allocated to support graduate student engagement in 2015
  - Grad student / industry networking
- MANRRS alumni recruitment project this summer (MANRRS intern-led)
- Social media intern – Fall 2015
  - Develop LinkedIn content
Continued Development

- Winter event associated with Purdue basketball planned for 2015-16 season
- New survey of young alumni – student intern project, fall 2015