



Survey Conducted on behalf of:  
Alumni Access®  
A division of Access Development®

## Key Findings of the 2020 VAESE

# The Alumni Relations Benchmarking Study

Voluntary Alumni Engagement in Support of Education

**Webinar May 5, 2020**

## Host & Presenter



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Access Development

# Agenda

Introduction and Data Review  
Q & A From Participants

## SHARING

Use hashtag: #VAESE

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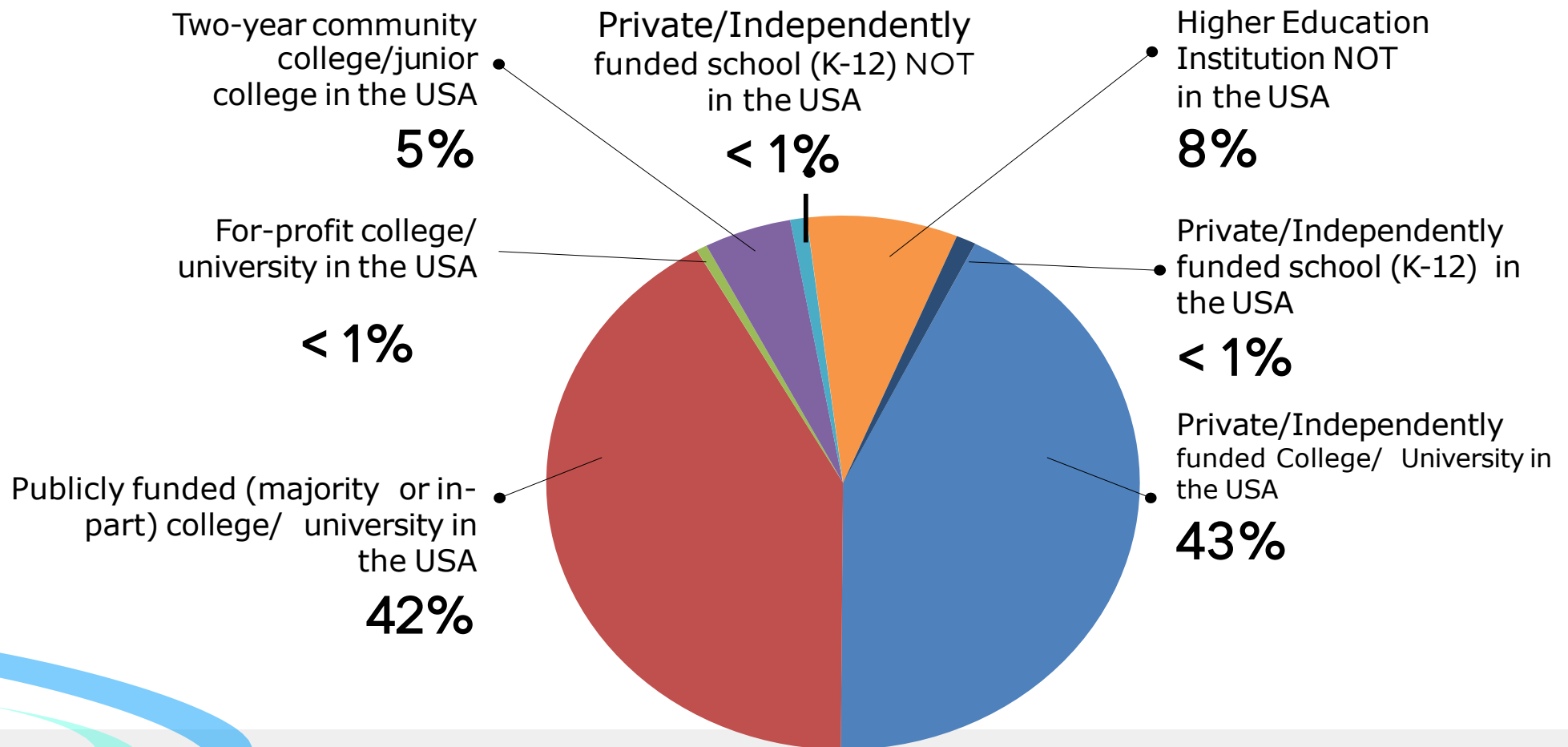
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## What is VAESE?

- Acronym pronounced “vās”
- Funded by Access Development to better support our higher education clients.
- Three years of data demonstrates consistency and validation.
- Fills a gap due to a lack of research focused on day-to-day alumni relations and engagement practices.
- Survey instrument is a collaboration with alumni relations professionals world-wide.
- Not academic research, but a business intelligence tool to help us identify important trends.
- A key objective: “to increase the body of reliable data that alumni relations professionals can use to better do their jobs, and make more informed business decisions.”
- Results shared openly under a relatively unrestrictive Creative Commons license (permits remixing, re-purposing and building upon this work.) This can conflict with research from organizations that charge for their research data and results.
- Responses from all 50 states, 15 countries, 91% are from United States
- Overall margin of error 3.67% +/-

## Type of institutions participating in this survey



## INCLUDED COHORTS:

### 1: Type of Institution: USA Private, USA Public, Non-USA:

This segment identifies the type of institution, whether it be a private or non-government owned/funded institution; a publicly owned/ funded institution; or any other institution of higher education outside the USA. This latter group accounts for roughly 9% of respondent institutions.

Type of Institution		
USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA

## INCLUDED COHORTS:

### 2: Power 5 Conference vs. Non Power 5 Division 1 Conferences

The Power 5 Conference Schools represent 65 institutions that comprise the ACC, Big 10, Big 12, SEC and Pac-12 NCAA conferences.

These organizations are unique because of their size, budgets, reach, and exposure. They are so different in comparison to most other alumni organizations, that data accuracy suggests we separate their data from all other organizations. Their responses are often statistical outliers for the general population of alumni organizations, and can skew overall results in ways that may be deceiving or confusing.

Power 5 vs. Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools	
P-5	Division 1 Non P-5

## INCLUDED COHORTS:

### 3: Size of Alumni Programming Budget

In an effort to provide relevant data to alumni organizations of all sizes, we've also included segmented data based on programming budgets for the following cohorts:

- **Under \$50,000**
- **\$50,000 - \$100,000**
- **\$100,000 - \$200,000**
- **\$200,000 - \$500,000**
- **and above \$500,000**

Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)				
<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+



## INCLUDED COHORTS:

### 4: Integrated Alumni/Development Organizations vs. Non-Integrated Organizations:

This segment identifies institutions that have integrated their alumni & development organizations, and those that have not. Integration can sometimes reflect a difference in how alumni are engaged.

Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising	
Fully integrated	Not integrated

## INCLUDED COHORTS:

### 5: Dues-Paying Organizations vs. Non Dues-Paying:

This cohort identifies institutions that offer benefits for alumni paying a membership fee, verses non dues-paying model in which alumni have equal access to alumni benefits/programming. For the purpose of this specific comparison, we've excluded the very small percentage of institutions offering a tiered benefits model for both donors and alumni.

Dues vs. Non-Dues	
Dues	Non-Dues

## Initial Insights

- Alumni organizations continue to struggle with life-long engagement, and many tend to focus on short-term objectives.
- Alumni and advancement officers are struggling to execute many of the basic fundamentals of alumni/advancement.
  - Failing to cultivate alumni before soliciting them.
  - Failing to offer alumni any benefits and incentives that can attract and engage them.
  - Ignoring common marketing best practices like list management, segmentation, or measurement.
  - See this article: [Why Alumni Relations Is Fast Becoming Subordinate to Fundraising](#)

## Key Observations

- The alumni budgets at **72% of institutions** have decreased or remained stagnant **over the last five years**.
- Only **23% of alumni organizations** report an increase in their budget since 2015.
- The number of FTE's dedicated to alumni relations has dropped 18% since 2017.

## Key Observations

- 47% of institutions have not invested in any alumni benefits and services over the past five years.
- Only 11% of alumni organizations report to investing annually in procuring benefits and services for their alumni. (whether dues-paying or not).
- Just 6% of alumni organizations report that their benefits have a strong influence on alumni engagement.
- 82% of alumni professionals estimate their alumni would rate their benefits and services as having little or no value.

## Key Observations

- The impact of Clubs/chapters/reunions is trending downward, dropping 25% from 2015.
- The impact of career services is trending upward, jumping 33% since 2015.
- The impact of closed online alumni communities is trending down, dropping 23% since 2015.
- The impact of a printed institutional magazines has remained mostly flat since 2015, showing a decrease in impact by just 1%.

## Key Observations

Of the communication tools/channels alumni organizations are using, we're seeing the following trends since 2015:

- SMS (text messaging) has increased 233%
- Using a dedicated mobile app has increased 53%
- Usage of Instagram has increased 30%,
- Offering a private online community has dropped by 56%.
- Use of Twitter has dropped 12%
- Direct mail usage as also dropped 9%



# 2020 VAESE Results



## 4. Alumni Staffing as Measured by FTE (Full Time Equivalent)

Q: How many FTEs work in an alumni relations capacity? (Exclude those who work primarily in an institutional fundraising or similar capacity.)

n=550	Average vs. Median		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	Overall Average	Overall Median	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Total FTEs</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>
<b>Clerical FTEs</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>Professional FTEs</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>

### 2017

n=609	Overall Average vs. Median		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	Overall Average	Overall Median	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Total FTEs</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>29.5</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>12.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>
<b>Clerical FTEs</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>6.3</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>Professional FTEs</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>7.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>18.0</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>5.0</b>

### Difference 2020 vs. 2017

<b>Total FTEs</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>-27%</b>	<b>-30%</b>	<b>109%</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>-26%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>-25%</b>	<b>-28%</b>	<b>-32%</b>	<b>-17%</b>
<b>Clerical FTEs</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-18%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>-36%</b>	<b>168%</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>-22%</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>-16%</b>	<b>-7%</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>-29%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>-1%</b>
<b>Professional FTEs</b>	<b>-17%</b>	<b>-19%</b>	<b>-35%</b>	<b>-28%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>-12%</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>-41%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>-1%</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>-33%</b>	<b>-27%</b>	<b>-49%</b>	<b>-23%</b>

When it comes to the number of alumni relations staff, their numbers seem to be diminishing, leaving fewer alumni personnel to accomplish the daunting task of engaging more and more alumni.

- For institutions in the U.S., FTE's **dedicated to alumni relations has dropped 18% since 2017.**
- Institutions outside the USA are experiencing significant growth, more than doubling in size since 2017.
- Since 2015, 72% of alumni organizations report the number of FTEs has decreased or remained stagnant.
- Private schools in the USA have experienced significant contraction, with an overall 27% drop in alumni FTEs, with 35% being professional staff.

## 5. Demographics: Trends in Alumni Staffing Levels / Budgets

Q: Within the past three years, has the total number of employees dedicated to alumni relations & engagement increased, decreased or remained the same?

n=541	Overall			Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)				Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	2020	2017	% Difference	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Increased</b>	25%	35%	-27%	20%	26%	52%	41%	35%	18%	22%	23%	43%	23%	34%	25%	24%
<b>Decreased</b>	24%	26%	-6%	28%	22%	15%	18%	26%	24%	28%	33%	26%	19%	29%	29%	22%
<b>Remained the same</b>	48%	38%	25%	49%	49%	33%	36%	37%	53%	50%	40%	30%	56%	36%	44%	52%
<b>Don't know</b>	2%	1%	26%	1%	3%	0%	5%	1%	5%	0%	3%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%

Q: Within the past three years, has your budget for alumni programs and activities increased, decreased or remained the same?

n=547	Overall			Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)				Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	2020	2017	% Difference	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Increased</b>	23%	28%	-17%	14%	28%	48%	32%	19%	26%	17%	24%	35%	21%	30%	24%	26%
<b>Decreased</b>	28%	32%	-12%	33%	25%	19%	23%	31%	30%	42%	34%	22%	29%	26%	33%	27%
<b>Remained the same</b>	44%	35%	24%	47%	44%	26%	45%	46%	41%	39%	41%	43%	48%	40%	42%	46%
<b>Don't know</b>	3%	3%	11%	3%	3%	7%	0%	4%	2%	3%	0%	0%	3%	3%	2%	1%

## 6. Alumni Database Dashboard

Alumni database and related metrics

n=489	Average vs. Median		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	Overall Average	Overall Median	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Average Alumni of Record</b>	<b>94,233</b>	<b>41,815</b>	<b>37,431</b>	<b>157,290</b>	<b>77,012</b>	<b>311,474</b>	<b>122,813</b>	<b>42,645</b>	<b>62,443</b>	<b>81,638</b>	<b>186,09</b>	<b>216,304</b>	<b>69,536</b>	<b>31,750</b>	<b>138,273</b>	<b>69,609</b>
<b>Approximately how many living alumni/ae are addressable? (with a deliverable physical address)</b>	<b>64,745</b>	<b>34,451</b>	<b>26,040</b>	<b>109,971</b>	<b>49,800</b>	<b>238,424</b>	<b>96,087</b>	<b>24,050</b>	<b>39,709</b>	<b>58,483</b>	<b>147,770</b>	<b>181,932</b>	<b>53,963</b>	<b>95,903</b>	<b>107,222</b>	<b>50,668</b>
<b>% of all living alumni that are addressable</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>72%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>73%</b>
<b>Approximately how many of your alumni/ae have a deliverable email address?</b>	<b>45,902</b>	<b>17,551</b>	<b>20,596</b>	<b>71,906</b>	<b>34,287</b>	<b>183,071</b>	<b>69,728</b>	<b>16,592</b>	<b>33,693</b>	<b>46,655</b>	<b>103,581</b>	<b>122,857</b>	<b>37,106</b>	<b>68,421</b>	<b>72,500</b>	<b>40,215</b>
<b>% of all living alumni with deliverable email</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>54%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>58%</b>
<b>Number Total FTEs</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>26.6</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>22.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>12.0</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>5.9</b>
<b>Number Clerical FTEs</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>0.9</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>Number Professional Staff FTEs</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>20.5</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>0.7</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>4.2</b>	<b>3.9</b>
<b>Ratio of staff to alumni (overall) 1:X</b>	<b>10,940</b>	<b>13,445</b>	<b>6,101</b>	<b>15,906</b>	<b>6,109</b>	<b>11,694</b>	<b>13,494</b>	<b>27,063</b>	<b>19,689</b>	<b>18,840</b>	<b>22,449</b>	<b>9,605</b>	<b>10,880</b>	<b>10,969</b>	<b>15,753</b>	<b>11,754</b>

This dashboard is designed to provide alumni organizations with benchmark data pertaining to 1) alumni of record, 2) addressable alumni; 3) deliverable email addresses on record. You'll also see calculations for the typical number of FTEs per organization, broken down further by number of professional and clerical staff. The last section calculates the ratio of total alumni per staff member.

As an example, suppose your alumni organization has an annual programming budget (excluding salaries) of \$150,000. The average number of alumni of record is 81,638. The number of addressable alumni is 58,483 or 72% of the total number of alumni. The average number of alumni with a deliverable email address is 46,655, or 57% of all alumni. The average number of FTE's is 4.3, with 1.7 clerical/administrative staff, and 2.7 professional staff. The ratio of staff members to alumni is 1 staff member for every 18,840 alumni.

## 7. General Budgets Dashboard

Alumni budget and related metrics

Alumni budget and related metrics	Average vs. Median		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	n=412	Overall Average	Overall Median	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues
<b>General budget including salaries</b>	\$719,700	\$220,852	\$411,214	\$1,017,010	\$196,242	\$2,193,280	\$775,406	\$100,130	\$279,203	\$426,150	1,202,503	\$2,940,580	478,003	\$1,322,791	\$977,167	\$488,333
<b>Programming-only budget (excluding salaries)</b>	\$250,093	\$74,982	\$196,264	\$500,327	\$57,778	949,206	\$240,310	\$32,510	\$75,886	\$153,331	\$319,737	\$1,258,696	\$159,840	\$423,991	325,817	\$265,333
<b>% of overall budget that goes to programming</b>	35%	34%	48%	49%	29%	43%	31%	32%	27%	36%	27%	43%	33%	32%	33%	54%
<b>% of overall budget dedicated to salaries</b>	65%	66%	52%	51%	71%	57%	69%	68%	73%	64%	73%	57%	67%	68%	67%	46%
<b>Dollars spent Per Alumni (DPA overall budget)</b>	\$7.64	\$5.28	\$10.99	\$6.47	\$2.55	\$7.04	\$6.31	\$2.35	\$4.47	\$5.22	\$6.46	\$13.59	\$6.87	\$10.04	\$7.07	\$7.02

This dashboard is designed to provide benchmark data pertaining to 1) General budgets, including salaries, 2) Programming budgets, excluding salaries; 3) Percentage of overall budget for programming, 4) Percentage of budget dedicated to salaries; 5) DPA, a metric indicating “Dollars spent per Alumni,” calculated by using the organization’s total budget.

As an example, suppose your alumni organization has an annual programming budget (excluding salaries) of \$250,000. The average general budget is shown to be \$1,202,503. The average programming budget is \$319,737. The percentage of the overall budget dedicated to programming is 27%, leaving 73% dedicated to salaries. The calculated DPA (Dollars spent per alumni) is \$6.46.

As it relates to the 2017 study, we find:

- Overall general alumni budgets (to include both salaries and programming) **decreased nationally 10% since 2017**.
- Overall programming budgets also dropped 9% overall since our previous study in 2017.
- The biggest drop in alumni budgets are seen among alumni offices that are fully integrated with development, where we see **alumni budgets fell 23%**.
- Institutions outside the U.S. are in a growth period, as 42% of institutions report an increase in their overall budget.

## 8. Channels used to communicate with alumni

Q: Which of the following channels are used by your organization to communicate and engage your alumni/ae?

n=423	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues		
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues	
Email	99%	99%	100%	95%	100%	100%	99%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Website	96%	98%	97%	84%	100%	100%	98%	94%	100%	100%	100%	95%	100%	98%	98%	
Facebook	96%	98%	96%	89%	96%	98%	97%	100%	96%	100%	95%	97%	96%	98%	97%	
LinkedIn	83%	78%	88%	79%	96%	91%	80%	75%	86%	89%	100%	85%	85%	91%	83%	
Direct mail /postcard	78%	90%	77%	32%	76%	87%	70%	88%	86%	86%	91%	89%	71%	80%	79%	
Printed magazine/newsletter	77%	82%	79%	42%	84%	93%	63%	84%	96%	86%	91%	80%	82%	76%	80%	
Instagram	75%	74%	77%	68%	88%	89%	67%	66%	86%	95%	77%	77%	71%	71%	80%	
Twitter	72%	70%	76%	53%	96%	84%	63%	63%	71%	95%	86%	71%	73%	69%	73%	
Digital/Electronic magazine	48%	43%	53%	37%	60%	71%	41%	38%	54%	62%	59%	51%	47%	58%	46%	
Student Call Center/Phonathon	47%	61%	41%	11%	36%	56%	45%	41%	46%	62%	41%	58%	27%	40%	52%	
YouTube	43%	45%	42%	37%	72%	33%	42%	41%	39%	59%	32%	47%	36%	47%	44%	
Dedicated mobile app	23%	17%	29%	16%	72%	27%	13%	16%	32%	32%	50%	18%	31%	40%	17%	
Exclusive Online community	20%	23%	18%	16%	28%	29%	9%	19%	18%	32%	23%	20%	18%	16%	22%	
SMS (text) messages	19%	25%	13%	26%	20%	18%	17%	13%	11%	30%	32%	22%	16%	18%	22%	
Blog	12%	10%	11%	26%	28%	9%	9%	19%	7%	14%	18%	11%	16%	11%	13%	
Snapchat	8%	7%	10%	11%	24%	11%	3%	6%	4%	19%	18%	10%	9%	7%	10%	
Broadcast advertising	8%	8%	9%	0%	24%	4%	5%	3%	18%	8%	18%	7%	13%	9%	7%	
Other social media app	4%	1%	7%	5%	12%	7%	2%	0%	4%	11%	9%	3%	7%	4%	4%	
Web chat	3%	3%	3%	5%	12%	2%	0%	0%	0%	5%	14%	2%	7%	4%	4%	

## 9. Email Dashboard

Email metrics		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division I Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
n=541	Overall	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Avg. Number of emails sent per month to all alumni</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>6.1</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>2.8</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>8.4</b>	<b>8.3</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>8.5</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>6.4</b>
<b>What is your typical email OPEN rate?</b>	<b>25.8</b>	<b>30.0</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>29.3</b>	<b>23.7</b>	<b>23.2</b>	<b>27.1</b>	<b>25.9</b>	<b>24.0</b>	<b>26.9</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>26.73</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>24.5</b>	<b>27.3</b>
<b>What is your typical email CLICK rate?</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>13.4</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>13.1</b>	<b>10.6</b>	<b>9.0</b>	<b>14.9</b>	<b>12.4</b>	<b>12.2</b>	<b>12.3</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>12.6</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>13.2</b>	<b>12.453</b>
<b>What is your typical email UNSUBSCRIBE rate?</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>
<b>% of all large group emails that are customized? (For example, using the recipient's name, degree, address or some other personalized element in your message)</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>27%</b>

A common request among alumni professionals was having comparative email metrics. This is the first time these questions have appeared in the VAESE study. **Email is the most effective and cost efficient means of engaging your alumni.**

The first question relates to the number of emails sent each month. According to [this study by Marketing General](#), the typical relationship-based organization sends four emails per week, or 16 emails per month. Higher education alumni organizations report sending roughly half that many, at 7.4 emails monthly. Many smaller organizations send less than one per week. Alumni engagement requires frequent communication, and email is the most cost effective tool in your communication quiver.

When looking at email metrics for all industries, according to [Mailchimp published statistics](#), alumni organizations are faring well. Across all industries, the average open rate is 21.3%, which compares to the average rate for respondent alumni organizations of 25.8%. The average click rate nationally is 2.6%, while the average for alumni organizations is 12.7%. When it comes to the unsubscribe rate, the typical alumni organization's rate is 0.5%, which is 150% higher than the average industry wide, of 0.2%. Still, it appears that alumni are eager to receive relevant, entertaining and helpful emails from their alma mater.

## 10. Obstacles preventing your organization from sending more emails

Q: What obstacles prevent your organization from sending more frequent and relevant emails to your alumni/ae?

n=456	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1/Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Our staff has other, more pressing priorities</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>We lack creative capacity (writers/designers etc.)</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>38%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>35%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>36%</b>
<b>We lack technical capacity (people/other resources to execute the technical aspects of sending an email)</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>27%</b>
<b>We suffer from a high unsubscribe rate</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>8%</b>
<b>We lack administrative buy-in for sending more emails</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>We have no obstacles preventing us from sending more emails</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>33%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>55%</b>	<b>34%</b>	<b>39%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>12%</b>

This is the first time we asked this question in the VAESE study, so we have no historical comparative data. We asked this questions **because sending frequent, engaging emails is critical to being able to attract alumni and getting them to pay attention.** However, the issue of sending more emails is often tied directly to budgets, as smaller alumni organizations with fewer staff are clearly overwhelmed by the number of tasks they must accomplish each day. The most frequent reason cited for not sending more emails to their alumni, is having other, more pressing priorities.

Lacking the staff to create and send emails is also a significant problem industry wide, as 34% report they lack writers/designers, and 26% report they lack the technical capacity to send more emails.

Email relevance is key to any successful email campaign. If each email is relevant, adds value, or otherwise is compelling, alumni will welcome those emails without unsubscribing. But when emails become inwardly focused (such as solicitation emails) and they don't offer significant value, then unsubscribe rates will likely rise.

# 11. Tools used to measure alumni engagement

Q: When it comes to measuring the effectiveness of your communication and engagement efforts, within the last 24 months, which of these tools are used by your organization?

n=308	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
Digital response rates (opens/clicks/ views/visits/likes etc.)	72%	69%	77%	63%	82%	88%	63%	71%	89%	79%	95%	78%	70%	80%	74%
Social media amplification (shares/reposts, etc.)	59%	52%	66%	53%	86%	72%	43%	48%	63%	79%	74%	61%	58%	67%	59%
Alumni survey	48%	51%	51%	26%	55%	56%	43%	42%	41%	76%	53%	50%	48%	51%	49%
Return on investment (amount spent vs. revenue)	31%	27%	37%	11%	50%	47%	18%	29%	44%	44%	47%	32%	36%	38%	30%
Data matching back to alumni database	29%	30%	30%	16%	55%	30%	17%	26%	37%	44%	53%	31%	24%	27%	31%
A/B testing or split marketing test	21%	20%	23%	11%	50%	26%	8%	13%	19%	38%	53%	22%	20%	24%	21%
Net Promoter Scoresurveys	19%	15%	22%	16%	45%	21%	8%	3%	15%	26%	58%	17%	22%	22%	19%
Predictive analysis	7%	5%	10%	0%	18%	14%	2%	0%	0%	29%	16%	9%	6%	7%	7%
Analyzing Lifetime Value	4%	5%	4%	0%	14%	2%	0%	0%	7%	6%	16%	4%	6%	5%	4%
None of the above	12%	12%	12%	5%	0%	2%	18%	16%	7%	3%	0%	10%	12%	7%	10%

Measuring the success of your marketing efforts is vital to your success, as these metrics provide insights into what is and isn't resonating with your alumni. But measuring the right metrics is likewise important to increasing alumni engagement. Digital response rates and amplification rates measure the success of your social media efforts, and these numbers are usually the most readily available. But often these metrics only prove to be "vanity metrics," providing the popularity of a post, and not its true value to your alumni.

Alumni surveys can often provide unflattering data, but it's the type of information that is actionable, and can help you improve your program. Institutions that raise a significant amount of money from their alumni, may want to consider investing some of those resources into an alumni survey. Such a study will not only enhance your engagement efforts, but also provide valuable data that can be leveraged for fundraising purposes.

With 12% of all alumni organizations reporting they don't measure the effectiveness of their communication and engagement efforts, it is likely, however, that this number is significantly under-reported.



## 12. Top goal for next year

Q: What is your alumni organization’s top goal for next year?

n=423	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
Increasing the number of alumni who engage	62%	58%	66%	60%	61%	59%	60%	71%	59%	59%	68%	58%	65%	46%	68%
Increasing donor revenue (i.e. non-dues related donations)	13%	14%	6%	15%	4%	4%	14%	9%	7%	8%	0%	18%	4%	12%	10%
Increasing dues-paying revenue, membership acquisition/retention	9%	2%	14%	10%	17%	17%	12%	6%	7%	3%	23%	5%	18%	29%	1%
Integrating with fundraising /development/ advancement	7%	10%	5%	5%	13%	4%	9%	0%	14%	5%	9%	7%	5%	8%	7%
Integrating with or expanding career services programs	4%	8%	1%	5%	0%	2%	5%	6%	0%	8%	0%	6%	2%	0%	7%
Increasing the degree/frequency of alumni who are already engaged	2%	3%	1%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	8%	0%	1%	4%	0%	3%
Increasing diversity of alumni who engage	1%	1%	3%	0%	4%	2%	0%	3%	7%	0%	0%	2%	2%	4%	1%
Increasing our staff/organizationsize	1%	1%	2%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%	3%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
Increasing overall volunteer participation	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%

Most alumni organizations struggle with alumni engagement, as is evidence by the 62% of participating institutions who report their top goal for next year is to “increase the number of alumni who engage.” However, the number of institutions who report this as their highest priority is down 10% from 2017.

It’s worth pointing out that although alumni professionals report their goal is to increase engagement, the most effective tool to boost engagement is through email. As noted on page 16, the study shows 35% of alumni professionals say they have other, more pressing priorities than to send more emails.

Why is there a disconnect between alumni professionals who want more engaged alumni, and their ability to invest the time and resources necessary to accomplish that goal? The answer may lie in the second most popular answer. Since our study in 2017, the number of institutions indicating they top goal is to raise donor revenue jumped 183%.

As stated previously, we’re seeing a dramatic increase in the number of alumni organizations integrating with development/fundraising, with 73% of responding organizations reporting their alumni and development operations are fully integrated or in the process of integrating. We’re seeing evidence that alumni/development integration is having an impact on engagement priorities, as fundraising goals supersede engagement goals.

### 13. What would be the primary role of a new employee?

Q: If your organization was unexpectedly authorized to hire a new full-time employee, what would be the primary role of that new employee? (select one)

n=428	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully integrated	Not integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>25%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Online/ mobile/ social media engagement</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Database (management or analysis)</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>Volunteer Management</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Event management</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Career Services programming</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Administrative or clerical</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Chapter Development</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Student/ campus engagement</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>
<b>Alumni/Student mentoring</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Technical (web, data, digital)</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Membership acquisition/retention</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Benefit acquisition</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>Manage/assist with the alumni building/ home/center</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>0%</b>

Our study reveals that if given the funding, 18% of institutions would hire a fundraiser over any other role. This number has jumped a whopping 481% since our first study in 2015.

In 2015, 21% of organization reported they would like to hire a career services professional if given the funding. That answer has since dropped 72% since 2015, where now just 6% of alumni organizations would hire a career services professional.

Is there a correlation between the increased focus on fundraising, and the increased number of alumni organizations that have integrated with development/fundraising? Or is this result an indication of tighter alumni budgets and a pressing need for alumni organizations to raise their own operational funds?

## 14. Percentage of your alumni listed as “Do Not Solicit” or “Do Not Contact?”

Q: Approximately what percentage of your alumni/ae and/or friends have asked to be listed as “Do Not Call,” “Do Not Contact,” “Do Not Solicit” or similar restriction (Opting out)

n=533	Type of Institution				Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	Overall	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Average Percent</b>	<b>9.7</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>9.2</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>10.5</b>	<b>9.1</b>

Q: Within the past five years, has the number of alumni/ae who have asked to be listed as “Do Not Call,” “Do Not Contact,” “Do Not Solicit” etc., increased, decreased, or remained the same?

<b>Increased</b>	<b>36%</b>	31%	39%	40%	46%	40%	35%	39%	32%	47%	49%	40%	35%	40%	34%
<b>Decreased</b>	<b>5%</b>	3%	5%	15%	2%	7%	6%	3%	0%	3%	0%	4%	7%	10%	3%
<b>Remained the same</b>	<b>32%</b>	37%	27%	35%	14%	36%	37%	31%	52%	22%	15%	28%	39%	29%	35%
<b>Do not know/ Do Not Track</b>	<b>27%</b>	28%	30%	10%	38%	17%	22%	28%	16%	28%	36%	28%	19%	21%	28%

We see a trend toward a greater number of alumni “opting out” of contact with their alma mater:

- Since 2015, alumni organizations have experienced a 15% increase in the number of alumni who have asked to be put on the “do-not-contact” or “do-not-solicit” list (referred to as “opting out” of contact with their alma mater.)
- 46% of alumni organizations have at least ten percent of their alumni who have permanently opted-out.
- The number of institutions with at least a ten percent opt-out rate has increased 79% since 2015.

# 15. Most underutilized services, events or benefits

Q: What is the most valuable, yet underutilized service, event or benefit your organization offers?

n=445	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
Career services	44%	38%	47%	53%	48%	38%	55%	37%	50%	47%	29%	50%	35%	53%	44%
Networking events	39%	26%	42%	74%	13%	56%	39%	33%	39%	50%	29%	37%	35%	45%	37%
Reunions	22%	27%	21%	11%	4%	20%	26%	33%	21%	17%	14%	26%	11%	24%	23%
Access to Campus Resources / Services (library/gym/transcripts, etc.)	21%	19%	22%	32%	13%	16%	27%	23%	18%	22%	5%	19%	22%	16%	23%
Clubs / Chapters	19%	20%	20%	11%	39%	29%	10%	20%	21%	17%	38%	15%	27%	31%	16%
Educational (lifelong learning/seminars)	14%	14%	14%	16%	9%	18%	15%	20%	14%	8%	14%	13%	15%	13%	15%
Digital Communication (blog/social media/e-newsletter)	13%	11%	14%	16%	4%	9%	19%	17%	11%	14%	0%	13%	13%	13%	14%
Electronic publications (e-zines, e-newsletters)	12%	11%	13%	16%	13%	7%	11%	20%	18%	8%	10%	12%	13%	15%	13%
Alumni Directory	10%	17%	6%	5%	4%	7%	3%	13%	14%	14%	10%	13%	5%	9%	11%
Online community	7%	12%	2%	11%	4%	7%	8%	3%	11%	3%	10%	7%	7%	0%	9%
Printed publications (Magazine, newsletters)	7%	6%	7%	11%	0%	7%	3%	17%	14%	6%	0%	7%	7%	11%	6%
Discounts - Campus (bookstore/gym etc.)	6%	1%	9%	11%	9%	4%	5%	13%	0%	3%	5%	2%	5%	11%	4%
Insurance (home /auto/pet etc.)	5%	4%	6%	11%	0%	7%	2%	10%	4%	6%	5%	3%	7%	5%	6%
Travel programs using an outside vendor	5%	5%	7%	0%	4%	7%	2%	7%	4%	11%	0%	6%	4%	7%	4%
Travel programs that feature campus connection	3%	5%	3%	0%	4%	7%	3%	3%	0%	6%	10%	3%	5%	5%	1%
Other (please specify)	3%	1%	5%	5%	0%	0%	3%	3%	4%	3%	0%	3%	4%	2%	2%
Financial Services / Banking	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%

## 16. Rating benefits for their capacity to attract and engage alumni

Q: Please rate the following benefits/services for their capacity to attract and/or engage alumni/ae at your institution:

n=428	Weighted score	Significant impact on engagement	Some impact on engagement	Minimal impact on engagement	No Impact on engagement	We don't offer this benefit
Digital Communication (blog/social media/e-newsletter)	418	27.41%	50.76%	18.27%	2.54%	1.02%
Printed publications (Magazine, newsletters)	381	23.47%	41.84%	16.33%	1.53%	16.84%
Networking events / mixers	351	17.44%	52.31%	21.03%	3.59%	5.64%
Reunions	346	22.96%	36.73%	22.96%	6.12%	11.22%
Social media group	320	18.18%	44.39%	25.67%	2.14%	9.63%
Electronic publications (e-zines, e-newsletters)	320	16.49%	44.33%	22.16%	6.70%	10.31%
Clubs / chapters	317	12.89%	38.66%	11.34%	2.58%	34.54%
Career services	256	10.61%	38.89%	35.35%	6.06%	9.09%
Travel programs that feature a campus connection	208	6.88%	11.64%	15.87%	6.35%	59.26%
Travel programs using an outside vendor	200	6.35%	15.34%	16.40%	12.17%	49.74%
Educational (lifelong learning/seminars)	190	5.61%	18.37%	29.59%	8.67%	37.76%
Exclusive online community & services	169	2.11%	12.11%	17.89%	11.58%	56.32%
Access to Campus Resources / Services (library/gym/transcripts, etc.)	166	4.66%	28.50%	40.41%	16.06%	10.36%
Alumni Directory	145	1.55%	12.44%	29.53%	12.44%	44.04%
Discounts - Campus (bookstore/gym etc.)	129	1.03%	17.95%	40.51%	14.36%	26.15%
Insurance (home /auto/pet etc.)	129	0.52%	8.90%	26.70%	16.23%	47.64%

## 17. Level of investment in alumni benefits and services

Q: When it comes to attracting and motivating alumni to engage, join or give, what approach best describes your institution?

n=308	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>We invest a significant amount annually to procure benefits and services that will motivate our alumni to engage/join/give.</b>	<b>12%</b>	10%	13%	11%	18%	19%	5%	13%	18%	22%	23%	12%	15%	15%	11%
<b>We invest a limited amount annually to procure benefits and services that will motivate our alumni to engage/join/give.</b>	<b>41%</b>	35%	47%	37%	36%	53%	40%	42%	36%	47%	41%	38%	50%	55%	38%
<b>We invest nothing to procure benefits for alumni/ae, but only on select general programs to motivate our alumni to engage/join/give.</b>	<b>31%</b>	38%	23%	37%	23%	21%	38%	29%	29%	28%	26%	34%	21%	16%	38%
<b>We rely solely on alumni/ae loyalty, nostalgia, and philanthropic generosity to motivate them to engage/join/give</b>	<b>16%</b>	15%	17%	16%	23%	7%	17%	16%	18%	3%	11%	16%	13%	15%	13%

In a competitive membership environment where business like Amazon are over-delivering on the value of their membership, it's imperative for alumni organizations to at least try to offer some type of incentive to entice alumni to engage. The data from this survey is disconcerting:

- 88% of all alumni organizations invest little to nothing in alumni benefits
- Only 12% of alumni organizations report to investing annually in procuring benefits and services for their alumni. (Whether dues-paying or not).

These stats are truly baffling as the number of institutions who refuse to offer their alumni any benefits has remained static for the last five years. In fact, we recently [conducted research](#) of all types of relationship based organizations, from membership groups, trade organizations, unions, etc. to identify the differences in how they engage their constituents, as compared to higher education alumni organizations.

The vast majority these organizations have much in common with higher education alumni organizations, and not just alumni groups that have a dues-paying structure. These non-alumni groups are struggling with engagement, acquisition and retention. However, of all comparable types of organizations, higher education alumni organizations were the least likely to offer benefits to their constituents, as the large percentage relied on “alumni loyalty and philanthropy” as their primary means of engagement. **Here's a link to the study: [Bridging the Leadership/Membership Gap](#). Somehow the importance of offering incentivizing benefits isn't resonating with alumni/advancement leaders.**

## 18. How would alumni rate your benefits and services?

Q: On a scale of 1-5 (5 being very high value) how would the majority of your alumni/ae rate the value of the overall benefits and services they receive from your alumni organization?

n=308	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>5 - Very high value</b>	<b>1%</b>	0%	1%	5%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	2%	2%	1%
<b>4 - Moderately high value</b>	<b>15%</b>	16%	13%	21%	27%	17%	8%	16%	29%	6%	42%	16%	17%	22%	13%
<b>3 - Neither high nor low value</b>	<b>47%</b>	44%	52%	32%	50%	57%	39%	55%	54%	58%	37%	44%	54%	49%	47%
<b>2 - Low value</b>	<b>18%</b>	21%	15%	21%	14%	14%	26%	16%	4%	22%	11%	18%	15%	13%	21%
<b>1 - Very low value</b>	<b>19%</b>	20%	19%	21%	9%	10%	26%	13%	14%	13%	11%	21%	12%	15%	18%

Given the number of alumni organizations that prefer to solicit their alumni instead of offering any type of benefit to incentivize them to engage, this study reveals:

- 84% of alumni professionals estimate their alumni would rate their benefits and services as having little or no value.
- 42% of organizations with budgets more than \$500,000, were most likely to rate their benefits as either “moderately high” or “very high value.”

# 19. Roadblocks to increasing alumni engagement

Q: What is the biggest roadblock to increasing the number alumni/ae who engage with your institution?

n=484	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division I Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division I Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
Too much competition for the attention of your alumni	20%	18%	22%	16%	36%	21%	16%	23%	21%	23%	15%	17%	28%	18%	22%
Lack of alumni staff	18%	27%	18%	11%	5%	19%	23%	19%	14%	27%	15%	26%	13%	15%	23%
Lack compelling, relevant value for alumni	14%	14%	14%	16%	18%	12%	16%	16%	14%	11%	20%	13%	15%	13%	14%
Difficulty communicating the value of being engaged	13%	10%	13%	26%	14%	14%	11%	10%	11%	9%	25%	16%	11%	18%	12%
Lack of organizational budget resources	8%	8%	8%	5%	9%	9%	10%	6%	11%	6%	5%	5%	11%	9%	7%
Getting GOLDS/Young Alumni to join	7%	7%	8%	5%	5%	12%	5%	10%	11%	9%	5%	9%	4%	11%	6%
Lack of a marketing plan or strategy	4%	2%	4%	16%	0%	0%	5%	10%	0%	0%	5%	3%	2%	2%	4%
Economic hardship of your alumni (i.e. student loan debt)	3%	6%	1%	0%	0%	2%	5%	0%	4%	3%	0%	2%	2%	2%	4%
Diversity of our alumni / can't meet needs of each segment	2%	4%	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%	0%	4%	6%	0%	3%	2%	0%	4%
Too many gift solicitations/fear of being asked to give	1%	0%	3%	0%	5%	2%	0%	3%	0%	3%	0%	2%	2%	4%	1%
Conflict with chapters/regional	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	4%	2%	1%
Conflict with athletics	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

It wasn't long ago when higher education institutions could rely solely on alumni loyalty and nostalgia to get alumni to join, engage or give. This unique bond between alumni and their alma mater was all that was needed to keep alumni engaged. But now commercial membership-based subscriptions (such as Amazon Prime) are vying for the attention of your alumni, delivering on their promise to offer great value in return for loyalty. The average U.S. household has enrolled in more than 18 customer loyalty programs and is active in 8.4 of these programs. ([Colloquy](#)), you can no longer rely solely on "alumni loyalty, nostalgia, and philanthropic generosity to motivate alumni to engage/join/give." (See page 23)

Alumni organizations must respond to the competitive pressures by focusing on delivering value-added benefits, or risk growing increasingly irrelevant with your alumni.



## 21. Rating programs for young alumni

Q: As it relates to programs designed to attract and engage young alumni, which sentence best describes your organization?

n=444	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
I believe we are doing well at attracting and engaging young alumni.	9%	9%	7%	21%	4%	16%	8%	10%	14%	17%	5%	9%	13%	9%	9%
I believe we need to do more to attract and engage young alumni.	72%	72%	75%	53%	78%	81%	62%	68%	79%	78%	80%	76%	70%	76%	73%
I believe we do a poor job of attracting and engaging young alumni.	18%	17%	17%	26%	17%	2%	29%	23%	7%	6%	15%	16%	15%	15%	18%

Engaging young alumni is a challenge facing most alumni organizations. With only 9% of institutions reporting they are “doing well,” at connecting with their young alumni, it behooves alumni organizations to find ways to be constantly adding value to this vital segment of your alumni. However, soliciting alumni is not adding value. See this article here: [A Cockeyed Idea: Soliciting Alumni as a form of Cultivation.](#)

## 22. Soliciting New Graduates

Q: Within the first 12 months of graduation, how many gift solicitations does your institution typically send to a new graduate?

n=408	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Number of Solicitations Annually</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>4.09</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>4.35</b>	<b>2.5</b>

- Since 2017 the average number of gift solicitations sent to first-year graduates has increased **3.7 to 3.9** solicitations per institution per year.
- The number of schools that send **five or more** gift solicitations to new graduates during their first year is up **55%** from 2015.
- **46%** of participating institutions report to soliciting first year graduates ten or more times during that first year of graduation.
- **15%** of these institutions send twenty or more solicitations to new grads during the first year.

## 23. Rating your organization’s technology solutions

Q: True or False: I believe our organization needs to update the technology solutions/benefits we offer our alumni/ae

n=484	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>True</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>76%</b>
<b>False</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>9%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>No opinion</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>10%</b>

## 24. Dues-paying or non-dues-paying membership model

Q: With regard to a dues-paying or non-dues-paying membership model, what model best describes your organization?

n=388	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>A dues-paying alumni association that offers benefits for a paid membership.</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>45%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>A non-dues-paying organization where alumni have equal access to alumni benefits/programming</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>41%</b>	<b>56%</b>	<b>77%</b>	<b>68%</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>A tiered benefits model where alumni and non-alumni donors receive benefits according to their contribution level.</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>n/a</b>	<b>n/a</b>

Since our first study, the percentage of dues-paying programs has remained flat, as the number dues paying schools has dropped 5% since 2015. Our study from 2017 revealed how unlikely it is for schools to succeed with a dues-paying alumni program, unless you’re at a large, Power 5 conference school. See the article here: [Run Away From Your Dues-Paying Alumni Program](#)

## 25. Growth in membership

Q: Within the past year, when it comes to your membership, would you say your membership has increased, decreased or remained the same?

n=104	Overall	Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not Integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Increased</b>	<b>32%</b>	0%	33%	60%	30%	38%	29%	33%	14%	40%	60%	50%	27%	n/a	n/a
<b>Decreased</b>	<b>25%</b>	52%	26%	0%	40%	19%	21%	22%	14%	20%	40%	17%	27%	n/a	n/a
<b>Remained the same</b>	<b>43%</b>	48%	42%	40%	30%	44%	50%	44%	71%	40%	0%	33%	45%	n/a	n/a

Since 2017, the number of organizations seeing an increase in their membership has remained roughly the same. The number of organizations reporting their membership has remained stagnant has gone from 34% in 2017, to 43% in this study.

## 26. Number of active, dues- paying members

Q: As of July 1, 2019, how many active, dues- paying members were on your records?

n=104	Average vs. Median		Type of Institution			Power 5 vs Non Power 5 Division 1 Conference Schools		Size of Alumni Programming Budget (Excluding Salaries)					Alumni Integrated vs. Not Integrated with Fundraising		Dues vs. Non Dues	
	Overall Average	Overall Median	USA Private	USA Public	Non-USA	P-5	Division 1 Non P-5	<\$50K	\$50K-\$100K	\$100K-\$200K	\$200K-\$500K	\$500K+	Fully Integrated	Not integrated	Dues	Non-Dues
<b>Average # of dues paying members</b>	<b>37,308</b>	<b>5,300</b>	506	41,498	1,720	163,542	6,671	1,195	8,319	9,132	46,697	95,016	8,907	56,706	n/a	n/a



## About Alumni Access:

Alumni Access is a turn-key alumni discount program, capable of engaging alumni wherever they live throughout North America and worldwide.

To learn how discount programs are successfully leveraged to attract and engage alumni, see this [discount program buyers guide](#) for more information.

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