ALUMNI RELATIONS: UNCOVERING INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION ACROSS STUDENT RECRUITMENT, BRAND MANAGEMENT AND INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT

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Who are Global Alumni?

• Any internationally-located alumni, including:
  • Student who came from abroad to study in a new country
  • Domestic students who relocated after graduation
Australian Global Alumni Strategy 2016-2020

- **Connect** alumni to each other and to Australia

- **Mobilise** engagement with alumni

- **Celebrate** the achievements of alumni and their two way links with Australia
• **Alumni** are a central piece in developing, sustaining and growing pillar two ‘*making transformative partnerships*’.

• **Nations** (institutions and individuals) who successfully engage will have richly established organisational and personal relationships (trust) that drive future business.
Austrade AIE2025 Roadmap

Defines the culture of success to include:

- Anticipation
- Reciprocation
- Innovation
- Collaboration
• Educational and professional experiences are key foreign policy elements identified in the paper.

• **Monitoring and evaluation** of alumni experiences (beyond the individual) can drive and influence application processes for future programs to enhance relational outcomes from government, business and institutions.
Global (Australian) challenges

- Alumni journeys are not linear
- Institutions compete with multiple affiliations
- We keep asking “What is the value proposition of engagement?”
- Integration and complement to the development role
The View from the Institutional Peak

Generalizations which hold for America, Australia, the UK and elsewhere (with very few notable exceptions)

- Distant alumni are largely ‘lost’
- Ownership of alumni is often ‘disputed’
- Little agreement about why alumni matter
- Uncertainty about what alumni need/want
- Questions about what alumni can/will do
- Insecurity regarding making an ask
- Institutional inertia and conflict avoidance
Australian Alumni Context

- Enlightened (sophisticated) data collation
- Research-led and informed engagement
- Transformational programming (means to further ends)
- Whole of institution approach
- Global organic networks outside the institution
Why are Global Alumni Important?

- **Powerful brand ambassadors:**
  - Fundraising
  - Recruitment (Brand awareness)
  - Student and graduate employment opportunities (the network)

- A resource you **already have.**
Our Research

• 1,000 surveyed, 103 respondents overall

• Representing US post-secondary institutions

• All involved in:
  • Development
  • Admissions
  • International affairs
  • Or alumni management

Source: https://info.intead.com/global-alumni-management
Our Research

We asked about:

• Your current practices
• How you rate consistency and effectiveness
• Your headaches
• Does your internal team value your work
Current Practice
How much staff time does your institution currently devote to international alumni management?
Number of cities

- Working in 5+ or more international cities
  33%

- Working in <5 international cities
  19%

- Not managing global alumni at all
  27%
Frequency of contact

• Once or twice a year 23%
• A few times per month 7%
• A few times per week 10%
• Never 11%
• Don’t know/prefer not to answer 19%
Online or in-person?

- Not managing at all: 27%
- Don’t know/prefer not to answer: 9%
- Online only: 22%
- In-person only: 4%
- A combination: 38%
How’s it working?
How true are these descriptions for your institution’s current international alumni management?

- Very true
- Somewhat true
- Not at all true
- I don’t know
- Prefer not to answer
The Headaches

• Data Management Challenges
• Lack of Resources
• Lack of Internal Support
Asked about top 3 impediments to growth in this area...

49% of respondents included either:

- *We don’t track our international alumni* or
- *CRM difficulties (no CRM system in place, poorly managed CRM, etc.)*
“No historic effort has been made to ensure we enter data correctly (according to the address systems of their country), or to keep [student’s] information updated.”
Remember:

• 59% have **no** dedicated staffing for this.

• 38% respondents identified **insufficient money** as one of their top 3 impediments

• 51% said the same of **insufficient time**
“Do you think that you get the internal leadership support that you need to effectively run an international alumni program?”

67% say NO
Fixes?

Top 3: *With an extra $24k, what would you do?*

- International events and staff travel 32%
- More staff 25%
- Enhancements to CRM 8%
So... what do we do?
#1: Pay Attention to Data

Output is only as good as input.

“You don’t know what you don’t know”
Embrace and Leverage a New Definition: 
*Transnational Alumni*
New definition (Dobson, 2015) responds to the need for a more detailed understanding of alumni dynamics in an increasingly complex global mobility landscape.

- Alumni that conduct their personal and professional lives within two or more countries.
- There are several types of individuals who fit the definition of transnational alumni.
  - Those who studied at an institution in their home country but reside abroad.
  - Those who reside in the country where their alma mater is based, but who have had extensive experience abroad, including international diaspora.
- Additionally, institutions may identify and track graduates of offshore, joint or double-degree programs as transnational alumni.
Strategic Move: Identify and Engage “Other” International Alumni and Friends

- International undergraduates on study abroad
- International ESL students
- International Post-Docs (researchers, Fulbright)
- International faculty fellows
- International honorary degree recipients
Prepare for Non-Traditional Affinities (and create records in student/advance databases!)

- More international student exchange programs
- Undergraduate, graduate and executive education sponsored by more 2+ universities
- Int’l fellows/visiting faculty
- Distance learning
- MOOCs
#2: Understand the Big Picture

Create an International Data Management Task Force

- Alumni
- Development
- Advancement Research
- Info Technology
- Careers/Employment
- Registrar/Enrollment Management
- Recruitment
Leaders must Support this Notion
International Alumni Relations is a
Shared Agenda

• Plan Together
• Budget Together
• Manage Expectations Together
• Cross-Training for International Officers
CROSS TRAINING

- Central and school-based alumni relations
- Admissions/Recruitment
  - Meet Counselors and Agents
- Parent/Family programs**
- Development
  - Alumni & Development Hybrid role
Choose **one or two** regions based on an assessment of demographics, academic interests and opportunity to sustain international activity.
The 4 Pillars of Engagement

Admissions
Alumni
Academics
Development

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#4: Invest in Alumni Volunteers

“Our Past is our Future”

**Goal:** Sustainability

**Opportunity:** Alumni
The 5 “I’s” of Outreach and Engagement℠

- Identify
- Invite
- Inform
The 5 “I’s” of Outreach and Engagement
#5: At all Times, Demonstrate Value

- Branding
- Reputation Management
- Recruitment
- Employability
- Public Diplomacy
- Financial Resources to Sustain Internationalization
What does success look like?

• A campus/system wide culture of support for international priorities and advancement efforts.
• Engaged “ecosystem”: a collaborative network of volunteers, ranging from young alumni to top donors.
• Increased/diversified international student enrollment.
• Improved retention and graduation rates.
• Increased industry engagement, employability outcomes
• Multiple major gifts from alumni, parents, corporations, and foundations with a robust pipeline of prospects and annual donors to ensure future major gifts
In Closing...

The Cost of Doing **Nothing** is Greater than Doing **Something**
Thank You!

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