



# Key Findings of the 2016 VAESE Alumni Relations Benchmarking Survey

Web Clinic  
March 15, 2016

## Agenda

Overview and Data review

Q & A From Participants

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## What is VAESE?

- **Voluntary Alumni Engagement** in Support of Education survey
- Filling a gap due to a lack of research focused on alumni relations and engagement practices. (most research relates to fundraising)
- Survey instrument was a collaboration from alumni relations professionals world-wide.
- Key objective: “to increase the body of reliable data that alumni relations professionals can use to better do their jobs.”
- Results shared openly under a relatively unrestrictive Creative Commons license (permits remixing, re-purposing and building upon this work.)
- Responses from all 50 states, 5 countries.
- 97% are from United States, 3% Canada, Europe.
- 49% participation from the 351 NCAA Division 1 institutions
- Margin of error 4 % +/-

## Key Observations

- Alumni organizations appear to struggle with life-long alumni engagement
- A widening gap appears between the “haves” and “have-nots.”
- Progress: email communication, digital/social media, membership marketing, database management.
- Growth needed: engaging GOLDs & new grads, embracing technologies like mobile, delivering meaningful & engaging benefits.

## 4 Key Takeaways

1. The integration of alumni relations with fundraising/ development/advancement operations is becoming the norm.
2. When alumni relations and fundraising operations integrate, lifelong alumni engagement efforts may suffer.
3. Dues-paying alumni organizations appear to be on the decline.
4. The “alumni professional’s anxiety index” offers new insights into pressing issues among professionals.

## The Integration of Alumni Relations with Fundraising/ Development/Advancement Operations is Becoming the Norm.

- 67% of alumni organizations report being fully integrated or are working toward or discussing integration with fundraising/development
- 5% of alumni organizations oppose integration
- 11% of senior alumni relations executives report directly to the President/ Chancellor.
- Private institutions have a much higher rate of integration than public institutions (76% vs. 54%).
- Smaller schools with under 100K alumni are also more integrated (70%) than are schools with more than 100K alumni (56%)

## When Alumni Relations and Fundraising Operations Integrate, Lifelong Alumni Engagement Efforts May Suffer.

- 62% of alumni organizations are “not focused on offering alumni any significant benefits,” or instead “appeal to the philanthropic generosity or loyalty of alumni/ae to (get them to) engage, join, or give.”
- 82% of institutions send at least one gift solicitation to new grads within the first year of graduation.
- Nearly one-third of schools (30%) send three or more gift solicitations to new graduates during their first year.
- 7% of institutions send five or more solicitations to new graduates during their first year.

## When Alumni Relations and Fundraising Operations Integrate, Lifelong Alumni Engagement Efforts May Suffer.

- One in four institutions have seen at least 10% of their alumni opt out of all contact with their alma mater.
- 6% have suffered opt-out rates as high as 39%
- Opt-out rates have not improved, or are getting worse at 41% of U.S. institutions.
- 33% of institutions admit they don't track alumni opt-out rates.



## Dues-Paying Alumni Organizations Appear To Be On The Decline.

- 22% of respondent institutions have a dues-paying alumni membership program;
- 74% of institutions with a non-dues structure.
- Dues paying organizations at D-1 institutions with an annual budget over \$1 million see on average 9% of their alumni database paying dues.
- Dues paying organizations at smaller institutions with an annual budget under \$1 million see just 3.7% of alumni paying dues to their alumni association.

## Dues-Paying Alumni Organizations Appear To Be On The Decline.

- Of all institutions who have studied the pros and cons of implementing a dues-paying model over the past five years,
  - **66% have rejected dues-paying programs.**
  - **8% have approved or implemented a dues-paying model**
- Dues-paying organizations impact on opt-out rates:
  - **12.4% of alumni opt-out of contact at dues-paying organizations**
  - **9.2% of alumni opt-out of contact at non dues-paying organizations.**
- Dues-paying organizations are 63% more likely to have alumni opt-out rates above 30%.

## The “Alumni Professional’s Anxiety Index”

- 74% of professionals report that being under-staffed is either “very” or “somewhat concerning.”
- 68% report that a “general lack of engagement among their alumni.”
- Job satisfaction appears to be of least concern for alumni professionals. Only 12% report concern.
- Only 18% are “very” or “somewhat concerned” about the work ethic of their fellow employees.

# Benchmarks & Key Statistics

1. Organizational Benchmarks
2. Staffing Benchmarks
3. Technology
4. Marketing & Communication
5. Membership
6. Programming

## Organizational Benchmarks

- 89% of alumni organizations are dependent or interdependent on their institution for financial support. (leaving 11% that are self-funded and/or autonomous.)
- 80% of respondent organizations report an annual programming budget (excluding salaries) of \$250,000 or less.
- 75% of respondent organizations report a total annual budget (including salaries) of \$500,000 or less.
- 63% of alumni organizations have the same or larger budget than five years ago.
- 33% of alumni organizations in North America have at least half of their alumni living in a different state/province.

## Staffing Benchmarks

- 75% of alumni organizations report their biggest concern is a “lack of sufficient staff to complete necessary tasks.”
- 72% of alumni offices have six or fewer full-time employees.
- 69% of alumni organizations have one FTE or less dedicated to administrative or clerical functions.
- 64% of alumni organizations have not seen an increase in their office staff in the past 5 years, and 26% have seen a decrease in their staff.

## Technology

- 77% of alumni organizations believe they need to update the technology solutions they offer alumni.
- 65% of senior alumni executives report they are “mostly” or “somewhat” proficient with technology, versus 85% of staff members that rate themselves the same way.
- 21% of D-1 alumni organizations have a dedicated mobile app to engage their alumni.
- 13.1% of non dues-paying organizations have a dedicated mobile app.

## Marketing & Communications

- 85% of alumni organizations use response rates (opens/ clicks/visits, etc) as a primary tool to measure the effectiveness of their communication and engagement efforts.
- 60% of organizations have seen alumni opt-out rates increase or not improve. Only 10% have seen a decrease in opt-out rates.
- 47% of alumni organizations report to having a mailable address for four out of five of their alumni constituents. (corresponds with the national alumni participation rates also on the decline)
- 13% of alumni organizations report that the benefits they offer “have the ability to motivate alumni to give, join or engage.”



## Alumni Programming

- 87% of respondent organizations report they “do a poor job,” or “need to do more” to attract and engage young alumni.
- 80% of alumni organizations report that “blogs, social media and e-newsletters” have the most impact on alumni engagement. 71% say “clubs, chapters and reunions” are the most impactful.
- 31% of alumni organizations don’t know the percentage of GOLDS or young alumni in their database.
- 14% of alumni organizations rate their benefits as having a “strong influence on motivating alumni to engage/join/give.”

# Downloading the Final Results

# Comparing Data

## Private vs. Public

What is your alumni organization's annual budget?



	OVERALL n=348	Private vs. Public		Athletic Conference (D-1 vs. Non D-1)		# of Alumni (100K+ vs. <100K)		Dues vs. Non Dues	
		Private	Public	D-1	Non D-1	100K+	<100K	Dues	Non Dues
Up to \$50,000	15.7%	17.6%	13.4%	4.0%	28.6%	0.0%	20.2%	10.8%	16.2%
\$50,000 - \$149,999	17.5%	18.9%	17.1%	11.9%	20.6%	3.7%	22.7%	13.8%	20.9%
\$150,000 - \$249,999	13.8%	13.8%	13.4%	11.9%	15.9%	14.6%	14.8%	13.8%	14.1%
\$250,000 - \$499,999	15.4%	18.2%	12.2%	12.7%	17.5%	8.5%	20.7%	15.4%	19.4%
\$500,000 - \$999,999	8.6%	5.0%	12.2%	15.1%	0.0%	19.5%	4.4%	7.7%	8.9%
\$1 million - \$2.49 million	7.1%	5.7%	8.5%	13.5%	0.0%	20.7%	2.5%	12.3%	6.8%
\$2.5 million - \$4.99 million	4.3%	1.9%	6.7%	11.1%	0.0%	15.9%	0.0%	9.2%	1.6%
\$5 million - \$10 million	0.3%	0.0%	0.6%	0.8%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	1.5%	0.0%
More than \$10 million	0.9%	0.0%	1.8%	2.4%	0.0%	2.4%	0.5%	4.6%	0.0%
Choose not to answer	16.3%	18.9%	14.0%	16.7%	17.1%	13.4%	14.3%	10.8%	12.0%

## Comparing Data

**Athletic Conference**



**What is your alumni organization's annual budget?**

	OVERALL n=348	Private vs. Public		Athletic Conference (D-1 vs. Non D-1)		# of Alumni (100K+ vs. <100K)		Dues vs. Non Dues	
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## Comparing Data

### Total Alumni



What is your alumni organization's annual budget?

	OVERALL n=348	Private vs. Public		Athletic Conference (D-1 vs. Non D-1)		# of Alumni (100K+ vs. <100K)		Dues vs. Non Dues	
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## Comparing Data

### Dues-Paying vs. Non Dues-Paying



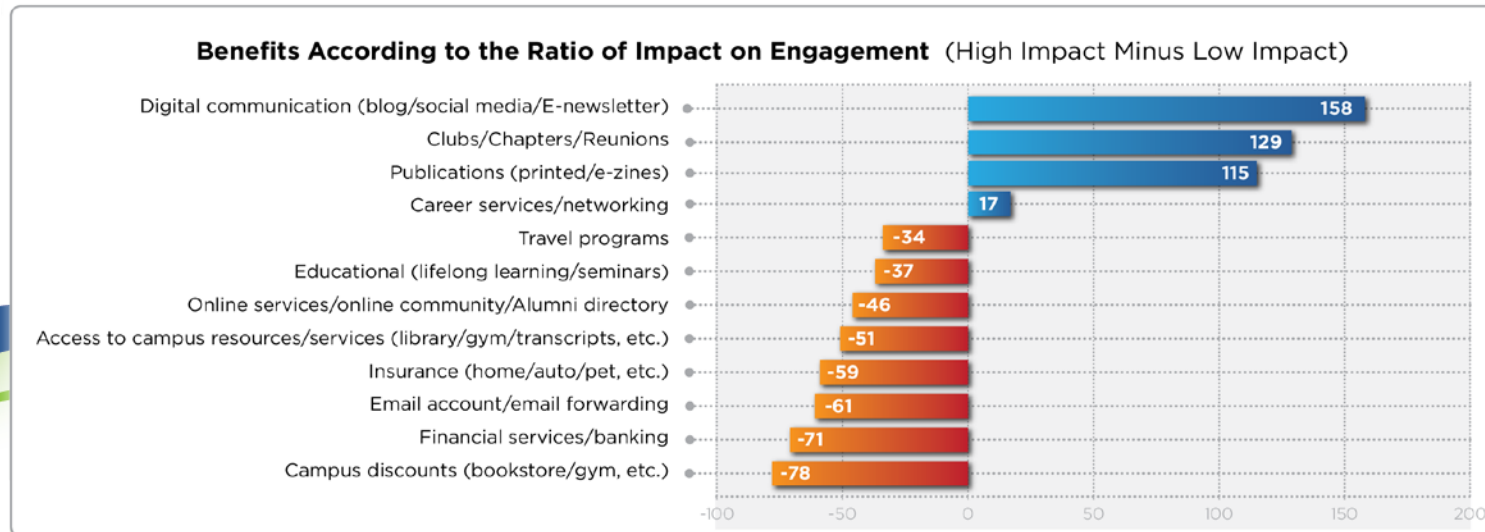
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**Based on its capacity to attract and engage alumni/ae, please rate the impact of each benefit you offer:**

Answer Options	Positive	Negative	Difference +/-	We don't offer this benefit
Digital communication (blog/social media/e-newsletter)	207	49	158	5
Clubs/Chapter/Reunions	188	59	129	16
Publications (printed/e-zines)	181	66	115	15
Career service/networking	126	109	17	28
Access to campus resource/services (library/gym/transcripts, etc.)	96	147	-51	20
Campus discounts (bookstore/gym etc.)	68	146	-78	47
Online services/online community/Alumni directory	76	122	-46	63
Insurance (home auto/pet etc.)	60	119	-59	81
Email account /email forwarding	58	119	-61	83
Educational (lifelong learning/seminars)	56	93	-37	109
Travel programs	59	93	-34	110
Financial services/banking	14	85	-71	160

**Most effective alumni engagement benefits:**





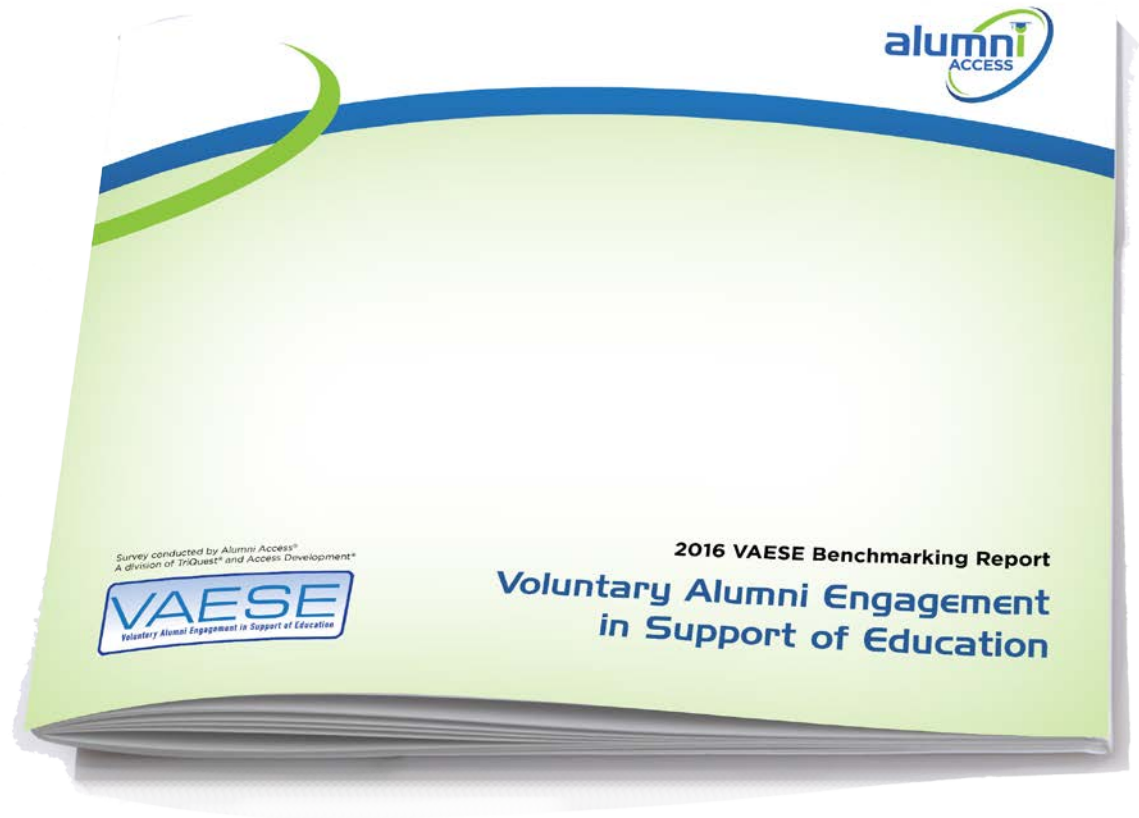


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- Introduction
- The State of Alumni Relations in Higher Education
- Analysis: Key Takeaways from the VAESE Survey
- Executive Summary of Key Statistics
- Comparative Survey Data

Download the final results at

**[blog.AlumniAccess.com](http://blog.AlumniAccess.com)**







## About Alumni Access

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