

Deepening Alumni-Student Relationships to Create Two-Way Value

Innovative Strategies from the UK, US, and Canada

Study in Brief

This report profiles strategies that institutions across the UK, US, and Canada are undertaking to leverage alumni to improve student skills and graduate outcomes. The strategies cover four broad topic areas, from activities that directly impact student and alumni, to those that better organise and promote alumni-student engagement on campus:

1. Driving Student Employment Through Career Exploration
2. Instilling Employable Skills in Students Through Alumni Expertise
3. Elevating Alumni Relations' Leadership Role for Student Employability Activities
4. Maximising Impact through Marketing, Communication, and Assessment

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Spotlight on Employability

Higher Ed Institutions Increasingly Accountable for Graduate Employability

Perhaps like never before, higher education institutions are under pressure to deliver on a promise of graduate employability. In the UK, new requirements from the Office for Students' regulatory framework, coupled with growing public concern about the return on investment associated with higher education, have reignited expectations about students' post-graduate outcomes. As seen in the data below, underemployment of university graduates in the UK continues to pose difficult questions about value for money.



The unemployment rate for UK graduates is at five per cent, the lowest it's been in almost 40 years. However, problems around graduate outcomes persist in the form of underemployment. In 2017, 22 per cent of graduates were not employed in jobs requiring a higher education degree six months after graduation. The same was still true for 15 per cent of graduates three and a half years after graduation. Moreover, 31 per cent of graduates are overqualified for their jobs. It is no surprise, then, that universities are facing pressure to better assist students in securing the right kind of jobs.

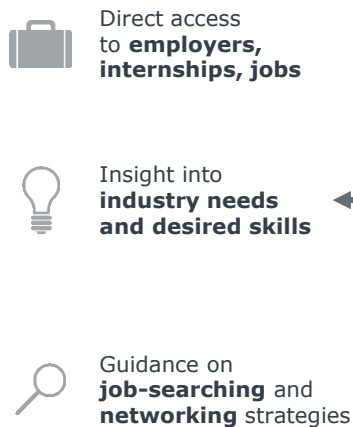
Source: Higher Education Leavers Statistics: UK, 2016/17 – Summary, <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/28-06-2018/sfr250-higher-education-leaver-statistics-activities>; "One in three graduates overeducated for their current role," *Office for National Statistics*, 29 April 2019, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/news/news/oneinthreegraduatesovereducatedfortheircurrentrole>; "Too many students left with debts for 'too little payback'," *BBC News*, 5 November 2018; <https://www.bbc.com/news/education-46073769>; "What do graduates do?" *Prospects*, 2018/19

Universities' Pivotal Role in Career Preparation

Thankfully, institutions have many (albeit under-utilised) resources at their disposal to move the dial on student employability. One such solution is to leverage alumni to enhance student career development in a mutually beneficial relationship. The reasoning is simple: Students require access to employers, insight into various industries, and guidance on how to search for jobs and network. Alumni seek volunteer opportunities for their own professional development, a chance to strengthen their personal networks with academic staff, and venues to give back to students.

Student Career Preparation Ecosystem

Students' Career Preparation Needs



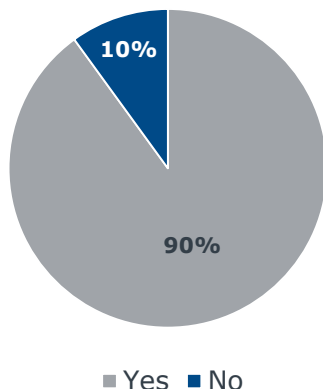
Alumni Resources for Student Career Preparation



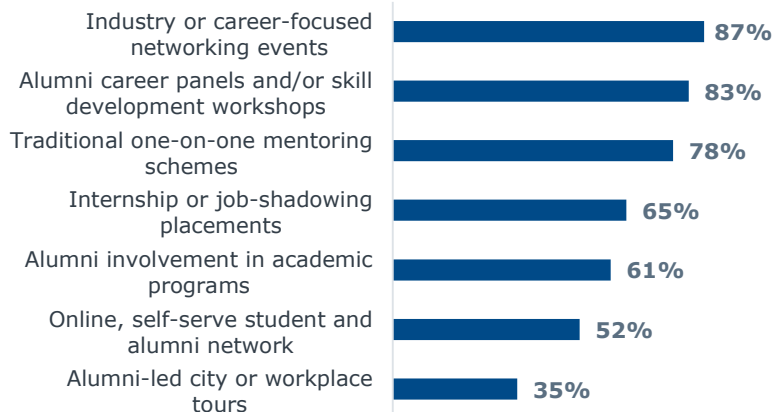
The university sits at the centre of this relationship and is well-primed to serve as the intermediary between students and alumni through programming and events. Facilitating relationships between students and alumni meets two institutional priorities: combatting student employability issues, and engaging alumni.

How are UK and Irish Universities Currently Connecting Alumni and Students?

Do You Have Institutional Programming Connecting Alumni and Students?¹



Percentage of Survey Respondents¹ Offering Different Types of Alumni-Centric Career Programming



Most institutions—around 90% of the UK institutions EAB surveyed as part of this research—have programming that engages alumni in student career development.

As alumni relations offices move towards mergers with careers services (as highlighted on **page 54**), more institutions are looking to connect recent graduates with older alumni for career development needs. However, most programming still focuses on connecting alumni with students and/or the institution itself.

Most commonly, institutions focus on networking events. Least commonly, only 35% of respondents offer alumni-led city or workplace tours.

The frequency of these activities masks an underlying worry among surveyed institutions—namely that programming is not doing enough to meet the pace of student expectations, particularly as workforce needs and employer habits evolve.

Outward Appearances Suggest Success...

90%

HEIs have institutional programming to connect alumni and students¹

76%

HEIs agree that current programming helps increase alumni engagement¹

62%

HEIs agree that current programming helps graduate outcomes¹

...But Deeper Reflection Reveals Anxiety

“

Our programmes are doing okay... but we really **don't know their impact.**”

“

Alumni relations is **not understood** and is definitely **under-resourced.**”

“

You can have the best programmes in the world, but they're useless if **we can't get people to participate.**”

¹) EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey: Views from Heads of Alumni Relations at Leading UK Universities; N=23

Students Don't Know What They Don't Know

Universities Fail to Adequately Foreground Career Options

Without knowing what problems stand in the way of students' career development, university leaders struggle to ascertain the best type of programming to offer students. EAB has uncovered four principal problems that students, alumni, and university staff face in engaging alumni in student employability.



75+%

of recent US grads **don't know what positions are the right fit** for them



46%

of recent US grads **don't know what to do with their course of study**



A Major Obstacle

"About one in three graduates end up being 'mismatched' to the jobs they find after leaving university..."

These mismatched graduates face poorer prospects and lower earnings than their peers who embark on careers that are a better fit for the knowledge and skills they have acquired through three or four years of study. **It suggests that traditional careers advice isn't working."**

*Sarah Steed
The Guardian*

First, students do not always understand the full range of opportunities available to them upon graduation. In the US, for example, three quarters of recent graduates do not know the full range of relevant employment opportunities, and almost half are unaware about what they can do with their degrees.

Lacking knowledge of appropriate career opportunities, students are stuck searching in the wrong places or applying to the wrong jobs. Alumni are the perfect resource to spotlight the variety of career options available to students, based on their own career trajectories.

Real World Exposure Needed for Workplace Readiness

Universities Not Meeting Demands for Work Experience

Today's students know that employers want graduates with basic workplace skills and business etiquette. Students are therefore demanding work experiences from their universities but become frustrated with their institutions failing to meet this demand in a meaningful way. They often struggle to find opportunities to work during their degree programme. In fact, only half of students who say they want access to work experience, placements, or internships, actually undertake one. Again, alumni are a natural resource to help students gain workplace experience through internships or job-shadowing.

Employers Increasingly Demand Graduates Have Workplace Experience...

14 August 2018

Employers favour work experience and apprenticeships over degrees, claims poll

49%

of hiring decision-makers in the UK prefer to see experience from a relevant apprenticeship or previous position on a candidate's CV

...But Universities Are Not Keeping Up with Demands



93%

of students in UK HEIs want access to work experience, placements, or internships



47%

of university students have undertaken work experience, placements, or internships



25%

of students say there are not enough links between university and businesses

Source: National Centre for Universities and Business, Student Employability Index 2014; <http://www.ncub.co.uk/reports/student-employability-index-2014.html>; G Bailey "A-level results: Employers favour work experience and apprenticeships over degrees, claims poll," *The Independent*, 14 August 2018.

A Missed Opportunity

Alumni Relations Well-Primed to Lead the Way, but Remains Underutilised

Complicating these challenges, universities often lack clear leadership and coordination about alumni engagement. Alumni relations teams are excluded from career preparedness conversations despite their natural position as a leader in connecting connect students and alumni. They have access to a robust alumni network and alumni employment data, and they understand the most effective ways to engage alumni to volunteer.

Alumni Relations Has Potential to Enhance Student Employability...



Has access and relationships with a **robust and diverse network of alumni** eager to help students



Maintains **alumni employment data** including location, employers, job titles, etc.



Can share **best practices in engaging alumni** for volunteering opportunities

...But Efforts Flounder Due to Siloed Campus Operations

48%

of surveyed UK alumni leaders don't collaborate with other campus units¹

“

“We’re trying to **encourage campus to work more and more with our office...** [there’s an] urban legend on campus that you can’t ask alumni relations for anything because they’re not going to give you donor information, causing them to create their own shadow databases and work outside of us. But really, we’re here to help!”

Tracy Krah, AVP of Communications and Engagement
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

”

Yet despite all of this potential, siloed campus operations too often get in the way. Almost half of surveyed UK alumni leaders report that they do not collaborate with any other campus units in executing on their strategies, eliminating the possibility of sharing information and best practices across the institution, or collaborating on innovative programming.

Equipping Alumni Relations to lead in these efforts helps to engage campus stakeholders and maximise the benefits of student-alumni relations.

1) EAB Survey of UK Universities; N=23

Source:; DePaul University, Chicago, IL; EAB interviews and analysis.

If You Build It, Will They Come?

Programming Less Effective Due to Insufficient Participation

Even the most innovative student-alumni career programmes are ineffective if neither stakeholder participates. Participants in EAB's survey of UK institutions report, on average, a 50% drop-off rate from students who register for events compared to those who actually attend. This has a multiplying effect on alumni, who become frustrated and disengaged when their time is not respected.

Lack of Student Participation Leads University to End E-Mentoring Scheme



Middleton University¹ in the UK sought to expand traditional mentoring programme into an online e-mentoring platform



Institution successfully generated interest among alumni but **failed to adequately market the programme to students**



Institution **shuts down platform** due to lack of student participation, leading to **dissatisfied alumni**

50%

Typical drop-off rate between student registration and attendance at alumni engagement events

Typical Approach to Alumni Volunteer Recruitment

Generic "help wanted" message sent to all alumni with lowest-common-denominator appeal to duty to institution

Three follow-up reminders continue appeal for interested alumni to sign up on website

Random sampling of alumni who already tend to engage or have little value to contribute volunteer; first-timers leave disappointed at having wasted time

Engaging alumni has a different set of challenges. Universities often deploy a scattershot approach of appealing to a wide swath of professionals to participate in their programmes. If the needs and interests of students and alumni are not carefully aligned, both parties may find themselves disappointed with the outcomes.

1) Pseudonym.

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Driving Student Employment Through Career Exploration

SECTION

- “This Could Be You!” Career Showcases
- Developing Impactful Networking Engagements
- Choosing the Right Mentoring Scheme

1

Driving Student Employment Through Career Exploration

Students need opportunities to explore the variety of career opportunities available to them after completing their degrees. Without knowing what jobs are in the market and how to meet professionals working in those industries, students can remain in the dark about career prospects.

EAB research has surfaced three strategies to combat these challenges:

- Showcasing the range of careers students can consider
- Providing next-level networking opportunities to provide students insight into specific industries
- Choosing a best-fit mentoring scheme based on campus and alumni conditions

Three Main Challenges

1 Students **unaware of the multitude of careers** available to them with their degrees



2 Students **lack opportunities to network** with professionals and gain deeper insight into various industries



3 Alumni relations officers are unsure how to **differentiate and maximise the potential of mentoring schemes**



Potential Solutions



Strategy 1: "This Could Be You!" Career Showcases



Strategy 2: Developing Impactful Networking Engagements



Strategy 3: Choosing the Right Mentoring Scheme

Quick Wins

Low-Cost, Low-Effort Ways to Highlight Alumni Careers

First, consider easy-to-implement strategies to spotlight careers and show students the possibilities for their future by engaging students on the platforms where they already congregate.



Instagram Takeovers

RPI's Instagram page highlights interesting job and career paths of alumni; this content receives **3X more likes** and **10X more comments** than regular content



RPI alum scales a climbing wall at Google



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Workplace Selfies

University of Birmingham's "We Are Brum Alum" campaign encourages alumni to share selfies of themselves in their workplace on Instagram and twitter along with #wearebrumalum



Many institutions are experimenting with 'Instagram takeovers', asking alumni to write short captions about their careers to post alongside photos of their workplace on the institution's Instagram page. At **Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute**, alumni content receives 3x more likes and 10x more comments than regular content, sparking dialogue amongst students about some of the career options available to them.

Similarly, the **University of Birmingham** developed a 'selfie campaign', asking alumni to post workplace selfies on their individual social media platforms, using the hashtag #wearebrumalum.

Keeping It Simple

More Low-Cost, Low-Effort Ways to Highlight Alumni Careers

Susquehanna University requests copies of alumni business cards for a formalised display in the student center. The display demonstrates unlikely connections between programmes of study and careers and helps students visualise how arts and sciences graduates can apply their degrees in a variety of settings, including the more unconventional opportunities.



Business Card Display

Susquehanna University asks alumni to share business cards for an admissions display showcasing careers; the average yield is **400 business cards** (including 300 never-before-engaged alumni)

Oh, the Places They’ll Go

“We tell them that the goal of the programme is to show the power of a Susquehanna education by **explaining to students all the places they can go** in their future.”

*Becky L. Deitrick, Susquehanna University
AVP of Alumni, Parent & Donor Engagement*



Alumni Case Profiles

Unlike typical interview-style case profiles, **McMaster University’s** “Life After Mac” profiles are alumni stories written in first-person to provide students with authentic insight into their career journeys

Life After Mac: Real Stories of Alumni Finding Their Way—Connor

McMaster Alumni | Follow
Nov 29, 2018 • 4 min read



In September of 2017 I joined the working world at my first “real” job. Having gained a year’s worth of experience and growth I thought I’d share some lessons learned.

One of the largest challenges has been taking my skills developed in university and transitioning them to a results-focused mindset for a company looking to grow on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis.

To provide an interesting spin on many of the activities universities already employ, **McMaster University** asks alumni to write first-person accounts about their journey from student to graduate to successful alum. This format differs from the typical Q&A approach often used by institutions for their admissions websites or academic department websites. Students better engage with this content, as it provides an authentic look into the lives of alums.

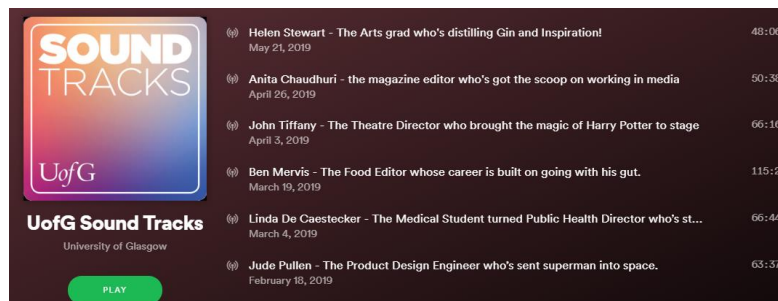
On-the-Go Engagement

University of Glasgow's Podcast Shares Alumni Stories with Busy Students

The **University of Glasgow** took a more time-intensive approach after seeing how successful social media and digital content proved with their students. Glasgow developed digital content in the form of podcasts to go beyond a one-time touchpoint like an alumni Instagram takeover. 'Soundtracks: Sound Advice to Keep Your Career on Track' is hosted by two staff members; one each from alumni relations and career services. The hosts interview well-known alumni and those with interesting career journeys.



Screenshot of 'Soundtracks: Sound Advice to Keep Your Career on Track' Podcast on Spotify



Allows students to engage with alumni "on-the-go"



Relatable and informative content, referring to alumni 'side hustles,' and tips for 'big city living'

Impressive First Year Results

13

Episodes over two series

2,000+

Downloads in under one year

90

Student attendees at a 'live podcast' event

University of Glasgow's podcast has met with great success. Students appreciate engagement that doesn't require physically showing up at a career event; they can listen to a podcast while on the go. The podcast hosts ensure that the content is relatable and catchy, highlighting not just what alumni careers entail, but also how their lives have changed since graduation, from engaging in 'side hustles' to tips on 'big city living.'

Since the podcast was launched, the content has been downloaded over 2,000 times. The organisers even hosted a live podcast event with an alumni who owns a gin company, with an impressive turnout of 90 students and 10 alumni.

Source: "SoundTracks Podcast," University of Glasgow, Glasgow, UK; EAB interviews and analysis

Not Your Average Career Panel

Institutions Innovate on Typical Career Panel Format and Themes

Finally, while most institutions offer some variation on career panels, two institutions have taken unique approaches to this standard playbook. For example, most institutions host career panels sporadically throughout the year. At the **University of Sussex**, this calendar is condensed into an 8-day series, featuring 40 alumni across 8 industries. This allows students to “industry shop,” comparing multiple sectors at once, and ensuring a high turnout due to the focused and dedicated timing of the event.



“Make it Happen Fortnight” Allows for Focused Industry Shopping

- 8-day event featuring **40 alumni across 8 industries**, with each day dedicated to a different industry
- Evening events involve alumni **panel discussions** followed by a Q&A and **networking session**
- Condensed format enables students to **easily shop across industries and job types**
- Annual event typically attracts **600+ students**



“What it Takes” Career Series Focuses on Themes With Gen-Z Appeal

- Topics **go beyond typical industry themes** to appeal to Gen-Z, including:
 - *What It Takes to Be a YouTuber*
 - *What It Takes to Develop Your Own Online Brand and App*
 - *What It Takes to Be a Female Leader*
- **Monthly or bi-monthly career talks** open to students and young alumni (i.e., within three years of graduation)
- **Varied formats** include TED-style talks, panel events, and interactive workshops

The **University of Westminster** also experimented with a unique career panel series. The “What it Takes” series offers monthly talks open to students and young alumni with varied formats, from TED-style talks to interactive workshops. They deviate from the typical industry-themed talks, instead appealing to Gen Z students with catchy and interdisciplinary topics like developing an online brand, becoming a YouTuber, and securing leadership roles as a minority.

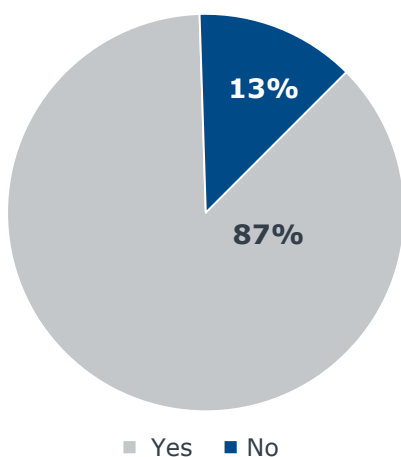
Networking Engagements, by the Numbers

Most UK and Irish Universities Offer Networking Engagements

Meaningful and impactful networking engagements help students connect with alumni face-to-face and gain a deeper understanding of specific industries.

Eighty-seven per cent of respondents to EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey offer industry- or career-focused networking events. Some typical examples include lunches with alumni, workplace tours, and department career panels.

Percentage of Survey¹ Respondents Offering Industry- or Career-Focused Networking Events



Typical Examples of Networking Engagements



Lunch with an Alumni



Workplace Visits



Departmental Career Panels

The following section includes next-level and innovative ways to facilitate networking opportunities between students and alumni, in a variety of formats.

1) EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey: Views from Heads of Alumni Relations at Leading UK Universities; N=23

Dining with Alumni

DePaul's Industry Dinners Connect Successful Alumni with Students

DePaul University created a 'Dinners on DePaul' series, which features dinners with four alumni in a specific career field and up to 25 students interested in learning about those careers. Dinners have focused on accounting, non-profits, entrepreneurship, digital media, and counseling. Through these dinners, students have found mentors in alumni volunteers, and have been able to secure jobs through their relationships with these alumni. One English graduate student met an alumna working in the publishing industry who eventually published her first book.



Elements of "Dinners on DePaul" Programme



Leverages alumni knowledge and career paths to help students **break into specific fields**



3-5 mid-career professionals host **15-25** students



20+ dinners annually across multiple DePaul campuses



Major Gift Officers nominate **prospects or donors** from their portfolios to serve as dinner hosts

Keys to Successful Industry Dinners

1

Collaborate with the career centre and development office to identify most sought-after fields and prospective donors to select valuable alumni hosts

2

Ensure a casual environment (e.g., lax dress code) to attract varied student populations and maintain student comfort

3

Time dinners carefully, considering hiring cycles for students and avoiding busy times in the industry

4

Plan alumni recruitment around touches from Development, as dinners can serve as a useful final touch with a donor, just before soliciting a gift



People were so happy and so excited that they got jobs [through the programme], they would let us know and brag about the programme."

Tracy Krah, AVP of Communications and Engagement

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

The success of the programme is attributed to the careful planning and intentional choices of DePaul leaders. First, the university leverages relationships with career service to organise the dinners around industries in which students have expressed interest. Additionally, DePaul's alumni relations office collaborates with their advancement unit to identify alumni donor-prospects. These dinners are planned around advancement team touchpoints; gift officers view these dinners as excellent cultivation for stewardship opportunities. The one-time volunteer ask has become a popular penultimate touch before asking for a gift.

Additionally, DePaul ensures a casual environment for their dinners to encourage student participation and facilitate organic conversations between students and alumni. They also plan the timing of dinners to coincide with student hiring cycles, and to avoid busy times of the year for alumni hosts.

Career Exploration on Alumni's Home Turf

Ripon's Career Tours Develop Student Networks and Cultivate Prospects

At **Ripon College**, alumni relations staff developed Career Discovery Tours. Staff recruit a minimum of ten alumni to host up to 16 students on a week-long tour of a specific region.

Students meet and network with alumni hosts at their workplaces, over meals, and through alumni-led city walking tours, learning about their careers and lives after graduation. Students develop connections with alumni that can prove valuable when they embark on their own career searches.



Ripon College's Career Discovery Tours in Brief



Students travel to a city to tour alumni workplaces and gain exposure to diverse industries



Alumni relations strategically chooses alumni hosts based on donor capacity



Networking connections may later yield internship and job offers

Alumni Host Checklist

- ☐ Interesting job
- AND**
- ☐ High-capacity donor
- OR**
- ☐ High-capacity, non-engaged prospect
- OR**
- ☐ Highly rated legacy prospect

By the Numbers

9

Tours over six years

11-16

Students per tour

120+

Total alumni participants

7

Fully-scheduled days

To build each tour, Ripon takes a strategic approach to host selection. Alumni relations staff collaborate with advancement staff to find alumni with interesting jobs who can add value to students' career discussions, but who also have high net worth and donor potential. Recruiting high-capacity donors to volunteer is a true collaboration between alumni relations and their advancement counterparts; together, they identify promising candidates, send invitations to alumni, and broker introductions to the gift officers for cultivation.

Lessons Learned from Ripon's Success

Ripon Targets High-Potential Alumni and High-Achieving Students

Ripon College has shared key lessons for recruiting students and alumni they have learned from six years of running these tours.

First, to ensure student interest, Ripon recommends institutions offer tours far from campus to provide the most value to students who may not otherwise have the opportunity to travel. Second, identify programmes across campus that are willing to partner with alumni relations to cover costs for students from different backgrounds or high-achievers. Finally, make the programme competitive through an online application and vetting process to ensure high-caliber students are participating.



Considerations for Recruiting Students

- 1** Consider offering tours **farther from campus** to attract students who don't otherwise have the opportunity to do so.
- 2** **Partner with programmes** from other units that can cover student costs (e.g. leadership programmes)
- 3** Use an **online application process** to recruit high-achieving students, vetting participant list with academic staff

Considerations for Recruiting Alumni and Building Future Donors

- 1** **Partner with the development office** to identify high-value alumni who may wish to host students
- 2** **Recruit alumni hosts to help build itinerary** and coordinate logistics, leveraging their knowledge of the city
- 3** **Introduce hosts to development staff** during the tour to create the foundation for a longer-term relationship

The collaborative nature of Ripon's advancement team ensures alums can serve as key networks for students, while also serving the institution by seeking high-potential donors. Additionally, Ripon staff ask alumni to help plan the tour itinerary to leverage their knowledge of the region and show the importance and value of alumni to the tour.

Targeting Disenfranchised Student Populations

'Insights Programme' Enfranchises Disadvantaged Students

Similar in style to Ripon's Career Discover Programme, **The University of Edinburgh** has an Insights Programme targeting widening participation students. The alumni relations office partners with the widening participation team, international office, and career services to target students and manage the programme. The programme is fully funded by the alumni association, making it free and accessible to less advantaged students.



Targeted at Widening Participation Students

- Provides **career and workplace exploration** for students with less access to networking contacts and workplace experience
- Seeks to equip students with **soft skills** including networking, confidence, time-management, communication, and professionalism
- Encourages participation through **partnership** with Widening Participation team, international office, and career services, ensuring a **cost-free experience**

Provides Insight into Industries and Develops Student Networks

- **Local Insights** involves a two- to five-day insight experience in central Scotland, with small groups of students visiting alumni in key sectors
- **Global Insights** involves a week of insight experiences in key cities across the world, with small groups of students visiting alumni in global business locations
- Experiences typically include **workplace tours, networking events**, and student projects

Impact Highlights

150%

Projected growth in participants by year three

66%

Percentage of alumni who were first-time volunteers

25%

Percentage of alumni who were prospective donors

33%

Increase in student confidence in career skills after programme participation²

Similarly to the Career Discovery Tours, the Insights Programme is designed to provide students with soft skills and life skills like networking, traveling, and socialising. Edinburgh offers two streams for the programme; a five-day 'local' experience touring alumni workplaces in central Scotland, and a week-long 'global insights' programme for students to visit alumni major cities around the globe.

The programme has grown from 50 participating students to 200 in three years, with over 65% first-time alumni volunteers, representing a strong engagement opportunity. The development team helped identify a quarter of the alumni volunteers who are future potential donors.

Finally, pre- and post-experience surveys of students have shown a 33% increase in students' confidence in their career skills after participation, an important benchmark for minority students.

1) Students were asked to rate their confidence in career skills on a scale of 1-4

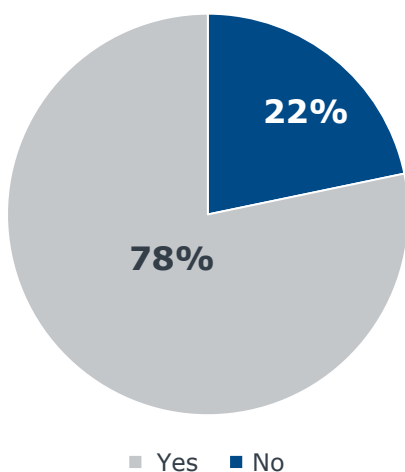
Source: University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK; EAB interviews and analysis.

Mentoring Schemes by the Numbers

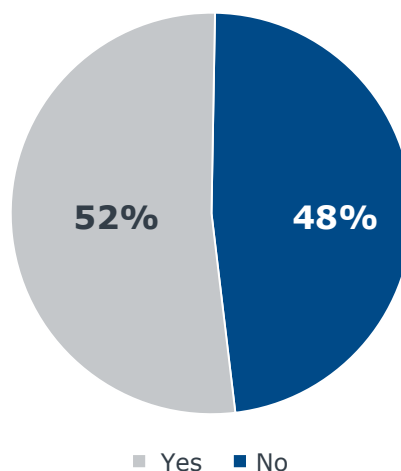
More Institutions Use Traditional Mentoring Schemes Over Online Platforms

The final strategy in this section is devoted to mentoring scheme selection. Again, most institutions offer a variation of a mentoring scheme, with almost 80% of surveyed institutions deploying a traditional one-to-one mentoring scheme. Just over half of surveyed institutions offer e-mentoring schemes, allowing students and alumni to engage on a 'self-service' platform.

**Percentage of Survey¹
Respondents Offering a
Traditional Mentoring Scheme**






**Percentage of Survey¹
Respondents Offering an
Online, Self-Service Platform**



1) EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey: Views from Heads of Alumni Relations at Leading UK Universities; N=23

Three Types of Mentoring Schemes

Institutions use three primary models of mentoring to engage students and alumni. The table below summarises the cost, levels of staff time required, student and alumni reach, and the advantages and disadvantages of each scheme. The remainder of this section is dedicated to an in-depth review of each type of mentoring scheme.

	Model #1: Traditional One-on-one Matching Scheme	Model #2: E-Mentoring Platform	Model #3: Speed Mentoring Events
Description	Institution staff manually match students with alumni; typically a year-long mentoring relationship	Students and alumni interact online through a self-service platform	Alumni provide advice (in-person or virtually) during dedicated time-slots at one-time events
Cost	Medium	High	Low
Staff Time Requirement	High	Medium/High to implement, low to maintain	Medium/Low
Student and Alumni Reach			
Advantages	Students cultivate authentic relationships and receive personalised advice	Ability to engage thousands of students and alumni under flexible arrangement	Low time commitment encourages alumni participation and meets students' desire to ask one-off questions
Disadvantages	Difficult to scale; requires high amount of staff time to serve a small portion of students and alums	Less personalised advice and meaningful relationships; may require significant marketing and monitoring to maximise participation	Difficult for students to receive personalised advice in short timeframe; some students and alumni crave more meaningful relationships
Typical Use	For smaller, targeted populations (e.g., widening participation, non-traditional students) or at institutions with more dedicated staff time	Institutions that want to reach a wider population and/or have less staff time to facilitate match-making	A supplement to traditional or e-mentoring schemes often employed as a way to engage specific alums for a one-time event

Many institutions use all three schemes for different student populations. Generally, institutions start mentoring efforts through traditional one-on-one schemes and then move toward e-platforms. These platforms reach a wider audience, including recent alumni, and allow for alumni-alumni networking and relationships as well. Often, institutions supplement traditional mentoring programmes with one-off speed mentoring events to engage different students.

High-Effort, High-Impact Mentoring

Traditional Mentoring Schemes Best for Smaller, Specific Populations

A traditional mentoring scheme allows for direct one-on-one relationships between students and alumni. Students and alumni submit 'applications,' so staff can manually match the right pairs of mentors and mentees. Typically, these relationships are long-term, from six months to a year, with pairs meeting on a regular basis (e.g. monthly, in-person or on the phone).

Selection of Institutions with Traditional Mentoring Schemes



Benefits

- Students gain **more personalised** and targeted advice
- Mentor relationships **more meaningful**
- Staff better able to **monitor mentoring relationships** and **assess impact**
- Staff can make **direct connections** with alumni and engage with them
- Staff can ensure more **targeted mentee engagement** (e.g. targeting students from disadvantaged backgrounds, young alumni)

Challenges

- **High-level of staff time** required to match mentors with mentees and monitor progress
- Difficult to **convey responsibilities**
- **Longer-term commitment** may deter students and alumni from participating
- **Creates challenges** when alumni volunteers are not selected, or when they outnumber interested students
- Usually requires alumni to sign-up at **specific points during the year**, not necessarily when alumni are free and able to engage

This type of mentoring scheme provides students with the most personalised advice, allowing them to create deep relationships with alumni. It also allows alumni relations staff to directly engage with alumni, as they play a large role in facilitating the mentoring relationships.

However, because of the personalised attention required, traditional mentoring requires a high level of staff time, and tends to reach fewer students as a result. Some students and alumni also shy away from such long-term commitments.

Mentoring on the Web

E-Mentoring Engages the Most Alumni and Students in Flexible Modality

Many schools are moving towards e-platforms for mentoring schemes. These platforms can reach thousands of students and alumni. After initial implementation, the platform requires little staff time, save for technical upkeep. The platforms are self-service, allowing students and alumni to sign up, view each other's profiles, and directly reach out to alumni from a variety of fields with one-off questions. The lack of commitment is attractive to both students and alumni, who are more likely to sign up and engage on their own time and on their own terms.

Selection of Institutions with E-Mentoring Platforms



Benefits

- Casts a wide net and allows for **organic and diverse relationships** to form
- Mentees able to ask **targeted questions** to a variety of diverse alumni
- Platforms typically serve as an **alumni-to-alumni networking** opportunity as well
- **Low time commitments** make it easy for users to sign-up without added pressure
- Allows for engagement at **any point during the year**, which is well-suited toward student and alumni busy schedules

Challenges

- E-platforms are typically **high cost and require long implementation** periods
- **Technical glitches** may frustrate users and prevent them from logging-on in the future
- **Lack of structured guidance** may intimidate mentees
- **Does not proactively engage disadvantaged students**, who are often less likely to proactively sign-up

However, it is difficult for staff to ascertain the quality of the connections that are made on the platform. Many students and alumni can sign up in a first instance but then never log back in or reach out to each other with questions. Additionally, e-platforms are costly, with the most expensive ones costing as much as 15,000 to 20,000 GBP.

Meet the Professionals

Speed Networking Enables Meaningful Discussions in Low-Pressure Setting

Institutions across the US and UK are increasingly experimenting with one-off speed mentoring events. These can serve as a complement to more formal mentoring schemes or stand alone. One-off events allow for easy alumni engagement, as alumni are willing and often excited to return to campus for a short, one-off commitment. Students value the opportunity to meet multiple alumni face-to-face, in a low-stress and fun environment.

Sample “Meet the Professionals” Event



5:30 PM	Registration
5:45 PM	Welcome and Introductions
6:00 PM	Speed Networking
7:00 PM	Student Survey
7:30 PM	Refreshments and Informal Networking



Speed Networking

Small groups of students have informal, rotating 10-minute discussions with 6 or 7 alumni from a specific industry or discipline



Mobile Survey

Directly after networking and before refreshments, students participate in mobile phone survey to assess the event impact on student career discovery and level of confidence in career readiness

“Meet the Professionals” Stats



89%

Of student participants **discovered career paths** they didn't previously know about

~40

Average student attendance at 'Meet the Professionals' event

At the **University of Manchester**, the alumni relations office hosts faculty-specific 'Meet the Professionals' events throughout the year, giving students an opportunity to connect with alumni who studied similar subjects.

Students are organised into small groups and given 10 minutes to put alumni in the 'hot seat' and quiz them, before moving on to the next alum. At the end of the event, students participate in an immediate mobile survey over refreshments. Data from this survey has shown that 89% of participants discovered alternative career paths they previously did not know about.

Capitalising on the Career Fair

Glasgow's 'Mentor Bar' Embeds Alumni Engagement into Career Fairs

The **University of Glasgow** alumni volunteering director makes a conscious effort to embed alumni engagement opportunities into career events wherever possible.

The University sets up a portable 'alumni mentor bar' (comparable to Apple's Genius Bar concept) at annual career fairs hosted by careers services. Alumni 'man' the bar and students can drop in and book 15-minute appointments. Due to the highly-trafficked nature of career fairs, the appointments always have a 100% fill-rate.



Picture of University of Glasgow's Alumni Mentor Bar



Elements of University of Glasgow's 'Alumni Mentor Bar'



Alumni Relations sets up portable "mentor bar" at three annual career fairs



Students book 15-minute appointments with individual alumni



Fulfills students' desire for personalised, one-on-one support



Timeslots consistently hit 100% fill-rate due to popularity of career fairs



Instilling Employable Skills in Students Through Alumni Expertise

SECTION

2

- Equipping Students with Career-Ready Skills
- Leavening the Curriculum with Real-World Experience
- Facilitating Workplace Experience

Instilling Employable Skills in Students Through Alumni Expertise

Beyond struggling with career exploration, recent graduates' employment prospects may be limited by a lack of critical skills, from resume-building and interviewing to hands-on project management experience. EAB research has surfaced three strategies to combat these challenges:

- Equipping students with the right skills to emphasise in the job search
- Leveraging alumni expertise to link curricula with real-world applications and industry insights
- Providing students with workplace and project experience using alumni relationships

Three Main Challenges

- 1** Students **lack skills critical to success** in the workplace, including resume building, networking, interviewing, and business etiquette
- 2** Curricula in industry-focused disciplines often **lack workplace insight**, given academic staff's distance from emerging trends
- 3** Students lack exposure to **hands-on workplace experience**, making it difficult to land first jobs or internships



Potential Solutions



Strategy 4: Equipping Students with Career-Ready Skills



Strategy 5: Leavening the Curriculum with Real-World Experience



Strategy 6: Facilitating Workplace Experience

Online Skill Workshops

Alumni-Led Online Skill Workshops: A Lower Effort Win with High Impact

There are three different ways to equip students with career skills: online; in-person bootcamp on campus; and in-person off-campus.



McMaster University Speed Resume Review Sessions

- Alumni provide live resume feedback and advice in 15-minute increments
- Typically involves 25+ alumni and 100+ students per session
- Programme uses a virtual networking platform costing £2-3K per year
- Sessions scheduled around alumni work schedules, with sessions running during lunch, after work (5:30 PM), and in the evening (7 PM)

Alumni eager to participate due to **low time-commitment** and **ability to engage students virtually**



University of Arizona Alumni Career Lab Webinars

- Alumni lead live, interactive webinars on important career topics
- Open to current students and young alumni
- Topics include:
 - Job Search Strategies
 - Optimising LinkedIn Profiles
 - How to Use Indeed
 - Networking Tips
 - Career Transitions
- Webinars typically run once or twice per month

30+ archived webinars available on-demand

Online skills workshops employed by **McMaster University** and the **University of Arizona** take advantage of virtual alumni engagement opportunities to equip students with employable skills. McMaster offers resume review sessions, strategically scheduled around alumni work hours to ensure high participation.

The University of Arizona goes beyond resumes to focus on a variety of career-based topics, offering an interactive webinar series open to students and young alumni. Webinars are archived on a centralised website, allowing participants to re-watch sessions, and non-participants to engage at later dates.

Big-Bang Approach to Preparing for the Real World

Colgate's "Real World Conference" Equips Students with Post-Grad Skills

Several US universities have introduced bootcamp-style career readiness conferences for final year students. **Colgate University** hosts a two-day "Real World Conference" before the start of students' final semester that is scheduled to coincide with the alumni board meeting to ensure maximum participation from highly engaged alumni.

Conference sessions are planned to target students across the job search spectrum – from those just beginning the job search, to those who are in the interview stages, as well as students already accepted to graduate school programmes.

COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Final-Year Student Needs



Job search essentials



Networking techniques



Industry insights



On-the-job advice



Personal finance advice



Grad school information

Real World Conference

- **Two-day event** held before spring semester begins, coinciding with Alumni Council meeting on campus
- **500 final-year students** registered with **100 alumni participants**
- **20+ panels**, plus industry discussions and networking events

Example Panel Topics

- *Creative Job Searching and Networking Techniques*
- *First-Year Success on the Job*
- *Questions You Are Afraid to Ask*
- *Evaluating Job Offers and Benefits Packages*
- *I Still Don't Know What I Want to Do*
- *Making the Most of Grad School*
- *Personal Finance*

Colgate reports that this long-standing annual event has been successful for alumni and students. For alumni, it is a chance to engage with students and provide practical advice at a time when it can make a difference for individuals. Similarly, students have an opportunity to make connections, get advice, and begin thinking about the transition to life after college.

The Real World Conference has been so successful that Colgate is developing a similar event targeted at younger student populations. The goal of the new conference will be to help these students explore career opportunities earlier, covering topics such as internships, graduate school applications, and the recruiting process.

Putting Employable Skills to Use

'City Connections' Enables Students to Practice Networking Skills with Alums

Similarly to the **University of Edinburgh's** Insights Programme, the **University of Sheffield** offers widening participation students a City Connections programme that includes tours of alumni businesses. However, City Connections also offers students a skill development component, illustrated in the timeline below.

Before embarking on the alumni tours, students attend a skills workshop and practice these new skills in a low-pressure environment with alumni. The programme also includes a post-event skills workshop to encourage and train students on best practices for following up with new networking contacts they met during the tour.



City Connections Programme Details

- Collaborative project between Development, Alumni Relations, Events and the Faculties of Social Science and Arts and Humanities, now in its 5th year.
- Aimed at 40 students from widening participation background (majority in second year of study)
- HEAR¹ accredited
- Alumni Relations completes comprehensive programme evaluation and compiles an annual report to assess institutional impact

In 2018, 96% of participants answered "I feel more confident about my careers prospects" in the post-evaluation survey, a 76% increase from the pre-event survey. There was also a 21% increase in students who answered, "I understand what skills and knowledge are required to pursue my career interests."

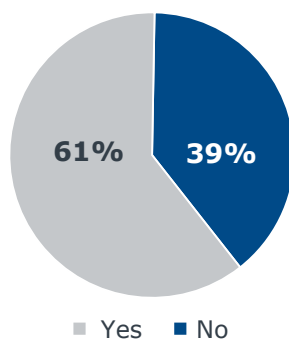
1) Higher Education Achievement Report.

Embedding Alumni Expertise in the Curriculum

Sixty-one per cent of EAB survey respondents report that they seek alumni involvement in academics. However, alumni have the strongest ties to academic staff, making it easier for them to engage alumni in volunteer opportunities.

Additionally, alumni can provide insight into industry trends, which is particularly useful for market-driven industries like business and engineering. Finally, alumni engagement in the classroom can help boost student participation.

**Percentage of Survey¹
Respondents Who Seek Alumni
Involvement in Academics**



Benefits of Engaging Alumni in the Academy

- ✓ Alumni often maintain **strong relationships** with academic staff, making it easier to engage them
- ✓ In programmes where industry standards are important (e.g. business, engineering, computer science), alumni offer **insight into emerging trends and issues**
- ✓ **Facilitates student participation**, as they engage with alumni during class rather than extracurricular activities

Practices for Leavening the Curriculum with Real-World Experience



In this section, EAB outlines three practices for leavening the curriculum with real-world experience, ranging in the degree of difficulty to implement the programme.

1) EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey: Views from Heads of Alumni Relations at Leading UK Universities; N=23

Source: EAB's UK Alumni Career Engagement Survey; EAB interviews and analysis

“Professor For a Day” Initiative

CSU-Fullerton Brings Real-World Insights into the Classroom

Alumni guest lectures are easy ways to bring alumni on campus for a short-term commitment that uses their skills to educate students. **CSU Fullerton’s** ‘Professor for a Day’ initiative puts a twist on the traditional alumni guest lecture. On an annual basis, the College of Engineering and Computer Science brings up to 30 alumni to campus for a one-day event filled with guest-lecture courses in their field. After spending the morning in the classroom, the alumni are invited to a lunch in honor of the college’s Dean’s List¹ students, who seated amongst the alumni.



“Professor for a Day” Schedule

Dean of College of Engineering and Computer Science invites 30 top prospective or current donors to one-time volunteer event



Guest Lecture

Each participating alumnus teaches 1-2 class sessions in his field



Dean’s List Luncheon

Alumni join 100+ high-performing current students for lunch



State of the College Speech

Dean’s speech recognises donor volunteers’ contributions
One alumnus invited to give keynote address



Inspiring Testimonials

“When I first joined the College, I took a look at what I had to show potential donors to explain why they should invest in the college...What stood out were our inspiring first-generation student engineers who were driving their own educations.”

*Hart Roussel
Director of Development*



Good News: Recruitment is Easy

50%

Yield of invitees to attendees

Through this programme, alumni provide industry snapshots and give students real-world examples of topics in the classroom while also providing high-achieving students with a networking opportunity over lunch. Some students have reported success with internship and job offers that emerged through this initiative.

1) Students performing well academically

Putting Entrepreneurial Skills to Work

University of Calgary Embeds Alumni Volunteers into the Classroom

The **University of Calgary** goes even further in incorporating alumni into the curriculum by recruiting alumni to participate in a semester-long class. Their upper-level entrepreneurship class is powered by 165 volunteers, of whom at least half are mid-career professionals aged 40 and above. The volunteers work with student teams to develop their business plans, refine their concepts, and provide just-in-time feedback as students encounter roadblocks. Administrators estimate it would take upwards of 12 instructors or teaching assistants (TAs) to provide the same value of this volunteer force. Half of the alumni participants have never engaged as volunteers before.

University of Calgary “Entrepreneurial Thinking” Class



Class Logistics

- Taught by one instructor and two graduate assistants
- Required course for second year business students
- 450 students divided into 90 teams to create business plans for new corporate or social ventures
- Student teams pitch concepts for over \$100,000 in cash and in-kind prizes



A Host of Roles for Volunteers

- 90 business advisors that serve as:
 - Industry consultants that help students refine their ideas
 - Judges who evaluate student pitch presentations
- Additional opportunities for guest lecturers, mentors, and networking

Skills-Based Roles Attract Different Segments¹

70%

Participants never engaged before as volunteers

80%

Volunteers have titles suggesting major gift capacity²

38%

Participants are alumni; remainder are from the local community

1) Initial estimates based on preliminary review
2) Does not include current active prospects or donors

Staying Current with Industry Practice

Course Advisory Panels Leverage Alumni to Validate Academic Curriculum

At **Bournemouth University**, course advisory panels help improve, validate, and review course curriculum. This is a difficult programme to implement, as it can be tricky to win faculty buy-in. However, this strategy is especially useful for courses that are market-driven and dependent on current industry practices.



Internal Value

Course Advisory Panels

External Impacts



Validating the Curriculum

- **Networking:** Alumni of Business Studies and MBA programme join virtual network of “friends of the programme” upon graduation
- **Subject matter expertise:** Alumni present key industry trends bi-annually, keeping academic staff current on industry news
- **Workplace Practice:** Students pitch their work to alumni as industry experts in project-based-learning classes
- **Managed internships:** Alumni provide students with real-life issues and solicit student help with projects



Benefits on Many Fronts

- AACSB¹ accreditation body considered the programme **a key strength of the school**
- **Provides bi-annual validation process for curricula** in courses heavily dependent on industry practices
- **Offers students hands-on experience** to add to their resumes
- **Easy to recruit alumni** due to strong relationships with academic staff

Twenty alumni serve on course advisory panels for both the undergraduate business degree and the MBA programmes. They advise faculty members twice a year on industry trends and issues, providing feedback and validating course curricula.

During the business school’s recent accreditation process, the AACSB¹ noted the programme as a key strength of the school. Contacts at Bournemouth emphasised the importance of having faculty manage the relationship with alumni, because of their pre-existing relationships. The alumni relations unit supports the programme by adding a formal structure and setting expectations for both parties.

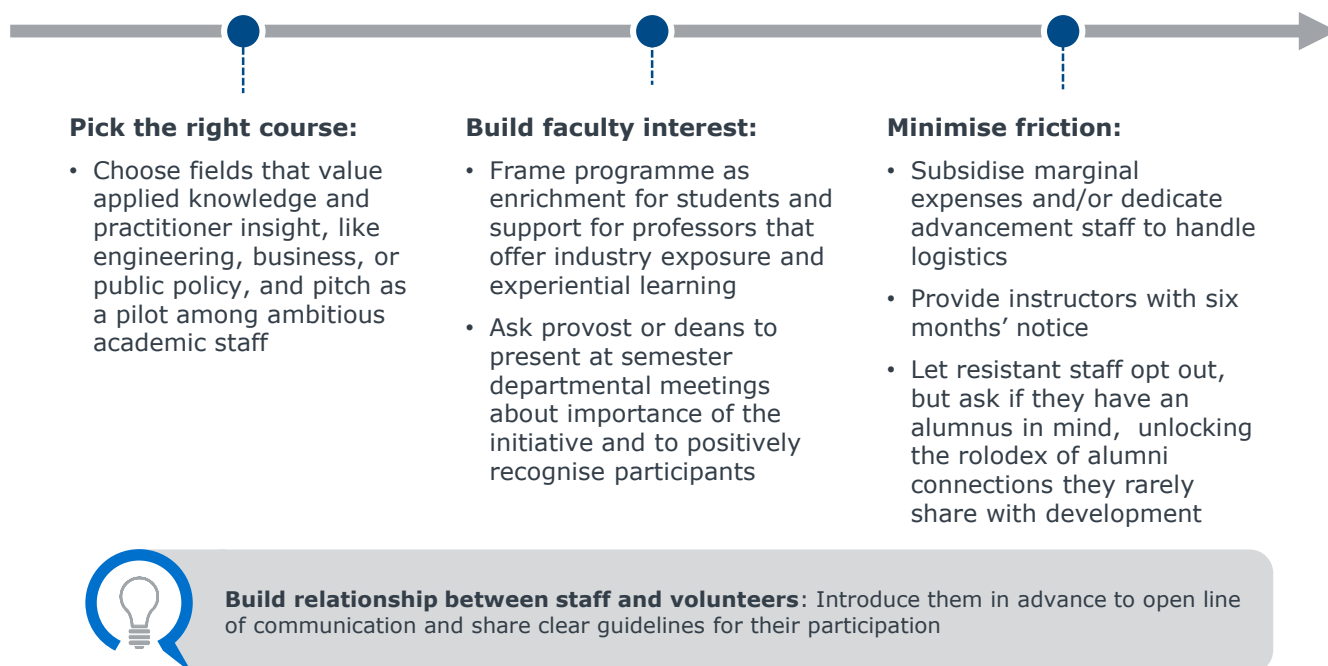
1) Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

Source: Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK; EAB interviews and analysis.

Skills-Based Academic Volunteer Roles

Below, review key lessons for embedding alumni into curricular activities.

Lessons from Early-Adopter Institutions



First, institutions must be strategic about course selection. Courses that benefit from applied knowledge and insight (e.g. engineering, business, public policy) are the best candidates for this type of programme.

Next, institutions need to win academic staff support. Successful institutions have framed the initiatives as enriching the student academic experience through experiential learning. Many alumni relations contacts also recommend asking the provost or deans to present the importance of alumni engagement initiatives and to highlight success stories to academic staff. Advancement or alumni relations staff can also help minimise friction by managing logistics and subsidising expenses.

Finally, it is important to build the relationship between professors and volunteers, ideally upon students' graduation. Introducing them in advance can allow for a more organic relationship and open lines of communication.

Exploring the Working World

Leverage Alumni for Consultancies, Job Shadowing, and Internships

Institutions can leverage alumni to facilitate three different types of student workplace experiences.



First, and easiest to implement, are short-term student consultancy projects. **Queen Mary University of London** (QMUL) has a successful scheme called 'Q-Consult'. Students work in teams on five-week-long mini-consultancy projects for a business or charity client. All projects include research, analysis, and recommendation phases. Many of the clients are sourced through QMUL alums, and student receive pre-project training around consultancy, project management, professional, and presentation skills.

The University of Chicago gives students the opportunity to shadow alumni at their place of work during winter, spring, and summer breaks through a Career Advancement and Alumni Board partnership.

Finally, while many UK universities offer placements or internships, but most do not leverage alumni relationships to source these opportunities. The **University of Birmingham** formalised a relationship with a law firm through an alumni contact. The firm hosts 3-month long internships for second- and final-year law students.

A Structured Programme for Workplace Training

Carleton College's Externship Programme Leverages Alumni Networks

Carleton College offers students externship programmes that blend student consultancy projects with job shadowing opportunities. Students 'extern' with alumni, choosing either a week-long job shadowing opportunity, or a two- to three-week long externship that includes the completion of a hands-on project.

Alumni relations works with alumni employers to create job descriptions for each externship and requires students to apply to specific opportunities with resumes and other requested documents. Alumni relations then matches students to opportunities based on a rigorous employer-ranking process.



Externship Overview

- Students spend one to three weeks 'externing' with alumni over winter break
- Students choose from two options:
 - Week-long **job-shadowing**
 - Two to three week-long **consultancy projects**
- Students apply to specific positions created by alumni; externships awarded through **competitive process**
- Students meet with career services prior to externship to develop **learning plans**



Externship Benefits

- Students explore opportunities in **geographically diverse areas**
- Students **practice resume and job application skills** in low-pressure environment
- Students are provided opportunity to **learn basic workplace norms**:
 - Prompt arrival and departure from the workplace
 - How to respectfully interact with coworkers and executives

Carleton's Externships Prove Popular Year After Year

Over the past five years, Carleton's externship programme has delivered against expectations. In 2019, Carleton offered 300 externships, with over 1,000 student applicants. Additionally, the programme allows for strong relationship-building between Carleton and alumni employers; one research lab in Utah hosted multiple externs, and eventually added a Carleton-exclusive internship programme.

Tangible Outcomes for Students



Building-block to **future internship opportunities** that require some workplace experience



Research lab in Utah that hosted multiple externs over the years recently added **internship options specifically for Carleton students**

Carleton's Success by the Numbers



250+

Student participants
(increase from 40 students five years ago)

300

Unique externship opportunities offered in Winter 2018/19

1,000+

Student applicants

Corporate Alumni Chapters Reinvent Engagement

Engaging with Alumni at Their Workplace Provides a Way In for Students

By developing relationships with alumni employers, institutions can provide pipelines for student jobs and internships. Across the last several years, several US institutions have started to engage alumni in the workplace through corporate chapters. These are similar to regional or affinity chapters, but members have employers in common and work at the same office location.

Corporate Chapters in Brief

- ▶ Reimagining the concept of traditional affinity and regional chapters, corporate chapters consist of alumni who work for the same company at the same work site
- ▶ These chapters then act as 'ready-made' communities for students to pursue internships, jobs, and mentorship with alumni and their employers

Getting in Alumni Line of Site

"We're always saying to our alumni: 'come to this happy hour,' 'come to campus and see us,' 'come to us and do all these things.' **For once, we thought, we should go to them.** It should be about them and about what the university can do for these companies and alumni in their own professional lives."

*Mollie Repetto
Executive Director, Industry Partners Programme
Temple University*

Tapping into Alumni Employers

Alumni Corporate Chapters Can Lead to Student Jobs and Internships

Temple University, which has organised one such chapter, has seen increases in alumni engagement, job placements/internships, and overall giving.

According to **Seattle University**, these chapters are part of a 'long game' that helps to improve engagement. To this end, the chapters have been effective in engaging alumni 11-25 years after graduation.



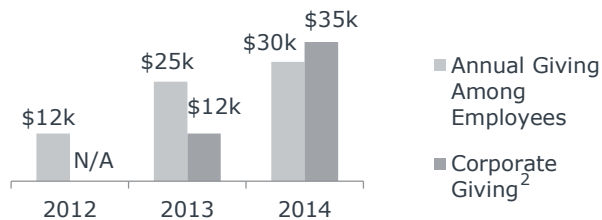
A Look at One Chapter's¹ Results After Two Years

Student Career Placements

39 Jobs and internships in FY 2014

45+ Jobs and internships projected for FY 2015

Philanthropic Gains



Laying a Strong Foundation

"We're playing the long game:

- We've set up multiple recruitment and internship partnerships with Microsoft.
- Boeing sponsors many business school events, and sends hundreds of mid-career people and executives to them.
- We've created many deep relationships with alumni who have become go-to class speakers and mentors in our science and engineering college."

Susan Vosper, Assistant Vice President for Alumni Engagement

1) Philadelphia branch of national professional services and accounting firm
2) Financial literacy curriculum design project with education school

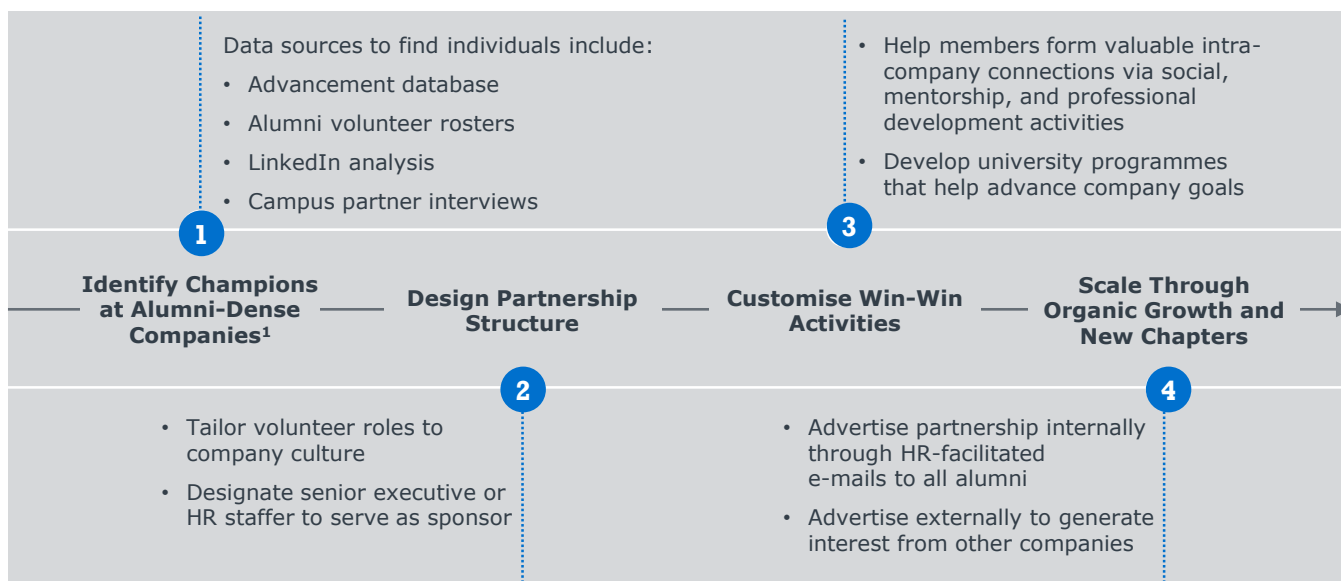
Source: Seattle University, Seattle, WA; Temple University, Philadelphia, PA; EAB interviews and analysis.

Developing Corporate Chapters for Yourself

Tips from Early Adopters' Success

Below, we have outlined the key steps taken by Temple University and Seattle University to create corporate chapters. Just as each university has its own distinct culture, so do companies. Consequently, the corporate chapters require some flexibility in terms of organisational structure and leadership. Temple found that at some companies, having a C-suite executive as the group's sponsor was very important, whereas at other companies it was more beneficial to have co-leaders drawn from middle management.

Steps to Develop Corporate Chapters



Similarly, Seattle University found that it was important to develop 'win-win' activities that benefitted company alumni and the institution. At Microsoft, for example, the chapter launched 'student treks' that bring students to the company for a day to visit with the corporate chapter, hear key leaders talk about the organisation, and become acquainted with alumni. Microsoft envisions these types of partners as part of their talent acquisition strategy.

1) To meet this threshold, Temple seeks minimum of 75 employees while Seattle seeks minimum of 250 employees.



Elevating Alumni Relations' Role in Student Employability Activities

SECTION

3

- Raising the Profile of Alumni Relations
- Supporting Academic Staff Engagement Activities
- Developing Cross-Campus Partnerships

Elevating Alumni Relations' Leadership Role for Student Employability Activities

To maximise the efficiency, success, and impact of student-alumni programming, campuses must break down historical silos. Alumni relations is well-primed to serve as a campus champion for bringing alumni into the conversation about student career outcomes but must overcome several hurdles. Campus stakeholders often misunderstand the role of alumni relations, trying to avoid 'interference' by alumni relations, or fearing that alumni will be hounded for money. Excluding alumni relations from this conversation leads to less impactful engagement efforts and is a missed opportunity for alumni relations to provide academic leaders with best practice advice and support.

This section covers:

- Raising the profile of alumni relations
- Leveraging alumni relations' expertise in engaging academic staff in support activities
- Developing collaborative partnerships to maximise the impact of alumni-student connections

Three Main Challenges

- 1

No campus champion for bringing alumni into student career outcomes initiatives
- 2

Universities unable to take full advantage of alumni impact
- 3

Organisational silos increase the difficulty of collaborating between alumni relations, career services, and other campus players who engage alumni



Potential Solutions



Strategy 7: Raising the Profile of Alumni Relations



Strategy 8: Engaging Academic Staff in Support Activities



Strategy 9: Developing Cross-Campus Partnerships

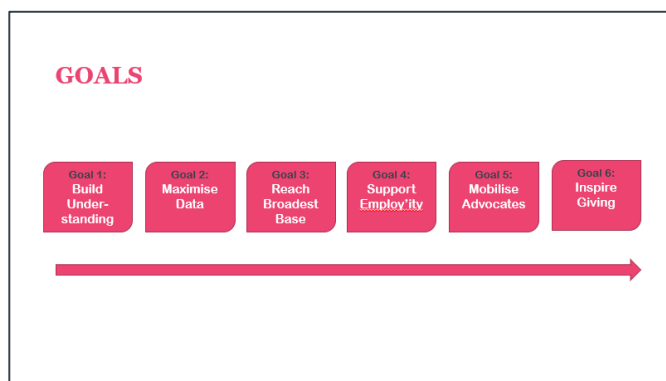
Seizing the Initiative

Goldsmiths 'Alumni Relations 101' Roadshows Form Connections

Goldsmiths University of London developed an alumni engagement strategy with six strategic goals, including garnering alumni support for student employability. Current programming is ad-hoc and lacks unified efforts between alumni relations and other offices. The Director of Alumni Relations realised that it was necessary to increase the profile of alumni relations and gain support from faculties and other offices to implement more strategic programmes. Consequently, Alumni Relations has embarked on a 'campus roadshow' about alumni relations basics: who they are, what they do, and the importance of engaging alumni.



Screenshot of Goldsmiths, University of London's Introduction to Alumni Relations Presentation¹



Topics Covered in Presentation

- High-level definitions of alumni relations and engagement
- Primer on *why* the university must engage alumni (e.g., to benefit from their time, talent, advocacy, and funding)
- Benefits of engagement to alumni (e.g., benefits and services)
- Types of engagement (e.g., communications, volunteering, philanthropy)
- A snapshot of Goldsmiths alumni and state of alumni database (e.g., only 20% of alumni job details are known)
- Existing alumni programming
- Visioning and goals for the future state of alumni relations

1) Minor edits made by EAB for demonstrative purposes

Full-Time Focus

Concordia University Establishes Staff Liaison Role

As mentioned earlier, alumni often have the strongest ties with academic staff, who have a critical role to play in alumni engagement efforts. However, at many institutions, activities take place at the department-level without the knowledge of the central alumni relations team. In order to better facilitate information sharing and collaboration, departments and alumni relations must have clear lines of communication.

At **Concordia University**, the alumni relations office developed a 'faculty-liaison' role to create a bridge between the central alumni relations team and other campus units. They help develop and implement faculty-based programming and maintain communication with alumni who volunteer with individual faculties.



Concordia University Faculty Liaison Job Duties

- Liaise between the Central Alumni Relations unit and all other units (development staff, student associations, deans).
- Develop academic department-based community programming and liaise with centrally based alumni colleagues to implement these programmes and events.
- Maintain regular communication with alumni volunteers in the units and develop meaningful volunteer opportunities.
- Make significant connections with organisations and feed the student leader (and future volunteer) pipeline.
- Connect with academic staff volunteers and work with central Alumni Relations colleagues to develop volunteer careers.
- Manage academic staff network budgets.
- Work with fundraising colleagues to identify, connect and engage prospects in key regions around the world and qualify these graduates in order to feed the pipeline.
- Recruit, train and lead volunteers and casual staff in support of alumni initiatives.

At Concordia, this is a full-time staff position. However, other Canadian universities are seeing success in dedicating half of a current staff member's role to this work

For a full version of Concordia's Faculty Liaison job description, please see the [online resource centre](#).

Trading Information for Recognition

Scaling Stewardship for Decentralised Units and “Ghost” Volunteers

Not all institutions are able to dedicate a full staff-line to improve communication and collaboration with academic units. The **University of San Diego’s** Alumni Association developed a campus engagement form to gather data on faculty engagement activities taking place across campus.

Below is a snapshot of the information collected through the form.



University of San Diego’s Campus Alumni Engagement Form

Key Components

- ☒ Send e-mail three times a year after university events that engage many alumni volunteers
- ☒ Thank staff for engaging alumni
- ☒ Highlight how Alumni Association can support their efforts:
 - Arrange parking for alumni visitors
 - Provide appreciation gift for speakers/presenters
 - Send a year-end thank you note from the university to all alumni volunteers
- ☒ Ask units to complete Campus Alumni Engagement Form to access these benefits

Sample of Questions on Engagement Form

- ☐ Alumni name, contact information, class year if known
- ☐ Date, time, and location of events
- ☐ Other academic or professional staff participants in programme
- ☐ Description of capacity or role alumni volunteer is fulfilling
- ☐ Specific requests, questions, or notes

350

Number of alumni volunteers discovered through form in first three years, representing **32%** of annual volunteers

94

Unique submissions from campus units, over half from academic staff

Three times a year, the Alumni Association sends the form to the entire university community at strategic times (e.g., just after homecoming¹ when events and volunteers are still fresh in people’s minds). Mindful of the potential tension or protectiveness of alumni, USD thanks staff for their engagement efforts and highlights how the university alumni association can support their efforts in the future (e.g., arranging parking, sending thank you notes, providing gifts). By highlighting these incentives, units are more likely to fill out the form to ensure their volunteers are recognised. In this way, filling out the form is viewed as a benefit rather than a power grab.

1) An annual tradition in the US, when colleges welcome alumni back to campus

We're Here to Help

University College London Introduces Alumni Request Form

At the **University College London**, faculties and campus units solicited support from alumni relation, though the requests were ad-hoc and at the last-minute (e.g., requesting an alumni volunteer the day before an event). UCL therefore developed a campus request form to formalise the requests and help academic leaders think more strategically about engagement.

The form asks for details on the activity and includes information on how the central alumni relations office can provide support. It also includes a section encouraging units to use 'best practices' for recruiting, managing, and thanking volunteers, including providing volunteers with relevant information and training prior to the activity.

The request form serves as both a tracking mechanism for volunteer activities as well as a tool for encouraging best practices in engaging alumni.

Screenshot of UCL's Alumni Request Form



UCL alumni one-off volunteer request form
Thank you for requesting an alumni volunteer! UCL alumni volunteers make an incredible contribution to UCL through a wide range of activities, knowledge and expertise. We value this contribution hugely, as reflected in the goal to reach **250,000 volunteer hours** in the **It's All Academic** Campaign.

OVPA's role - How OVPA will support you with alumni volunteers
Our volunteers are **passionate** and we would love your support in ensuring that they have a meaningful and positive experience. In order to help **alumni volunteers** support your activity, we will:

- Support you to find an appropriate volunteer(s) for your role
- Draft a volunteer role description to describe your volunteer activity which will be signed off by both us and you
- Support with suggested briefings for your volunteer, if applicable
- Include your volunteer as part of our wider alumni volunteer thank you messaging

Department's role - How to support your alumni volunteers
We encourage our Department volunteer contacts to use best practice when recruiting, managing and thanking alumni volunteers. We encourage Departments to ensure all volunteers receive:

- Name and contact details of a UCL Department volunteer contact before and during the activity.
- Provide a full briefing (prior to the activity (e.g. dates, times, location).
- Provide any relevant training and safety briefings for the activity.
- A thank you during and/or after the event (e.g. small gift, thank you email after the event).

Your alumni volunteer
Please use the form below to request alumni to be part of your activity, event or project.
Please return the completed form to OVPA at alumni@ucl.ac.uk.

Your contact details	
Department:	
Activity Manager name:	
Activity Manager role title:	
Activity Manager email:	
Activity Manager phone:	<i>Must be out-of-hours if event is outside business hours</i>
Your activity / event / project	
Name:	
Date:	
Time:	
Location:	
Your volunteering opportunity (bullet point lists for each is sufficient)	
Volunteer role title / description or suggested role title:	<i>E.g. Alumni Career-event Speaker, Alumni networker, Alumni case study volunteer</i>
Number of roles available:	
Volunteer responsibilities / duties:	<i>E.g. Speaking at event, networking with students, strategic advice</i>
Which alumni would suit this activity:	<i>Please include (if applicable): degree type, year of graduation, job industry</i>
Skills desirable in the volunteer:	<i>E.g. enthusiasm, comfortable speaking in front of groups etc.</i>

Benefits to Academic Units

- Details support that central alumni relations can provide for events involving alumni volunteers
- Describes best practices for recruiting, managing, and thanking volunteers
- Space to provide activity details, volunteer roles, and desired skills

Benefits to Alumni Relations

- Ensures alumni volunteers receive sufficient information and support
- Helps Central Alumni Relations track engagement activities and volunteers
- Encourage faculties to think strategically about the type of volunteers they desire

Gathering Intelligence on What Works, What Doesn't

Bournemouth Audits Faculty Engagement Activities to Identify Best Practices

Bournemouth University has taken a more intensive approach to identifying and supporting faculty engagement. After leaders from the Faculty of Media and Communications approached alumni relations with questions around how they could better engage alumni around student career development, alumni relations launched a faculty-wide audit of engagement activities. By gathering information on all current engagement initiatives, Bournemouth sought to ensure the consistency of experiences for both students and alumni and identify best practices to share with other academic units. Alumni relations leaders spent four months conducting one-on-one interviews with programme heads, recording activities, areas for development, and challenges.



Audit Goals

- 1 Advance **employability agenda** and student experience
- 2 Understand **how and where** alumni are engaged and **uncover best practices**
- 3 Ensure **consistency of experience** for students and alumni
- 4 Define **"successful"** alumni engagement tools and activities
- 5 **Inform a plan** for alumni engagement at the course level to improve student experience

Audit Timeline



Mapping Out Engagement by Course

Bournemouth Outlines Faculty Engagement Activities with Key Information

Based on the audit, Bournemouth's alumni relations team created an Alumni Engagement Grid to capture detailed alumni engagement information for each course. The grid tracks alumni engagement activities and allows for easy comparison of engagement activities across the faculty.

Snapshot of Bournemouth University's Alumni Engagement Grid for Faculty of Media and Communications¹



Course	Level of Alumni & Employer Activity	Methods and Frequency of Contact	Reasons for Engagement	Feedback Data	Typical Alumni Destinations	Areas for Future Development and Support from Alumni Relations
BA Honors Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two masterclass sessions delivered by alumni (live streamed to widen access) Annual event 'Meet the Professionals': 'speed-networking' and industry talk Annual placement and careers events take place at Level 4 and Level 6 to help students find placements and employment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni engagement happens consistently across programme Contact is via the course Facebook page and LinkedIn group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To deliver guest lectures/attend faculty events To provide access to employment and placement opportunities within their place of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal data collated If event is organised by Careers & Employability Team, student feedback forms are completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PR Officer Marketing Officer Fundraising Assistant Tourism Local Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested in formal mentoring programme Interested in alumni recognition award Interested in forming an advisory panel of alumni to shape course content Would value guidelines for linking with alumni

Includes details on alumni engagement activities within each faculty programme

Details the mode, frequency, and motivation for engaging alumni

Captures methods for gathering feedback data on activities

Concludes with future engagement plans and desired support from alumni relations

1) Recreated by EAB.

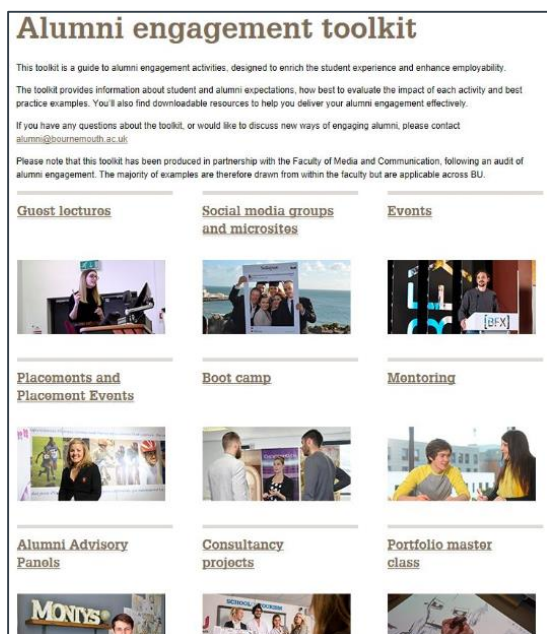
Source: Bournemouth University, Bournemouth, UK; EAB interviews and analysis.

Explaining How to Best Engage Alumni







Bournemouth's Alumni Engagement Toolkit

Bournemouth's audit also led to a best practice alumni engagement toolkit, shared across the institution. By analysing and assessing programmes within the Faculty of Media and Communications, alumni relations provided a 'menu of options' for alumni engagement practices that other units could embed into their operations. The toolkit also includes guidance on setting expectations for alumni and students, recruiting appropriate alumni, and evaluating the impact of activities. The toolkit includes a range of downloadable resources for academic units to use, as well as case studies from the Faculty of Media and Communications. Contacts at Bournemouth affirm that this time-intensive process will save time and effort in the future and improve the overall quality of alumni and student interactions.

Screenshot of Bournemouth University's Alumni Engagement Toolkit



Toolkit Elements

-  Comprehensive list of wide-range of engagement events and programmes
-  Student and alumni expectations and benefits for each activity
-  Guidance on contacting relevant alumni for each activity
-  Methods to evaluate impact of each activity
-  Best practice examples of each programme
-  Downloadable resources to enable effective alumni engagement activities

Building an Alumni Engagement Community

Duke Brings Together Disparate Campus Stakeholders in 'Community of Practice'

To best develop and deliver programming and engage alumni in student career development, alumni relations must work collaboratively with other campus stakeholders.

In 2016, **Duke University** conducted a university-wide survey of student and alumni engagement. Leaders identified over 80 staff across campus all working to connect alumni with students, but there was no collaboration between them. Upon identifying the new stakeholders, the Director of Campus Engagement developed a 'community of practice' to bring everyone together and share ideas.

The group aims to improve the effectiveness of programmes and create common Duke-wide standards and best practices for engaging alumni with students. Nine individuals representing a cross-section of campus were identified from within the community of practice to manage the programming and communications for the practice.

Identify existing campus players



80+

Previously unknown staff members identified as engaging alumni in some way

- Surveyed campus about work in alumni engagement
- Identified 80+ people across student affairs, alumni affairs, careers services, academic programmes, all working in siloes to engage and connect alumni with students
- Conducted interviews for better contextual understanding and identifying best-fit participants

Appoint committee leadership



9

Leaders identified from the group to form a core sub-committee

- 12-15 leaders chosen based on survey responses, interviews, and level of engagement and interest in the community
- Leaders represent stakeholders from various campus units and departments
- Sub-committee manages programming and communications for the larger community of practice

Promote knowledge sharing and collaboration



3+

Events proposed throughout the year to build community and engage new members

- Goals of the community of practice include:
 - Continuous community growth
 - Curation of existing resources
 - Development, management, and communication of knowledge through exchange
 - Gathering, assessing, and reporting data on alumni engagement

The community of practice convenes at networking events throughout the year, with themes and keynote speakers. Prior to these events, the leaders send out a survey to better understand what the larger group is most curious to learn about. They also created a listserv and release a monthly newsletter to highlight individuals who have had success connecting alumni with students.

Formalising an (Informal) Strategic Relationship

Edinburgh Forms Alumni Relations and Career Service Strategy Group

For programming that engages alumni in student career development, forging a relationship between career services and alumni relations is crucial. Many UK alumni relations offices are starting to build stronger ties with their career services teams, typically because they are starting to work on joint projects. Nonetheless, these relationships are frequently informal and ad hoc.

At the **University of Edinburgh**, alumni relations and career services worked together for nearly two years to launch an online networking platform, and eventually decided to formalise their relationship with a dedicated strategy group.



As noted above, the group consists of three staff members from each office who meet regularly to review the status of current programmes, decide on additional or corrective action, address emerging issues, and identify new areas for collaboration. The group helps to standardise the work shared between the two offices.

A Strategic Merger

University of Richmond Combines Alumni Relations and Career Service Offices

Over the past decade, many institutions have combined alumni relations and career services offices. At the **University of Richmond**, this merger has led to increases in alumni participation in career programming, as well as the creation of new, innovative programmes.



University of Richmond's Office of Alumni Relations and Career Services

- In 2010, Richmond **combined the offices of career services and alumni services** to provide additional resources for students and more deeply engage alumni
- New unit reports to Advancement and houses **career advising, employer relations, and alumni relations**
- Since merger, notable **increases in alumni participating in career services programming**
- Launched **several innovative programmes** featuring alumni, including an alumni job-shadowing programme
- Created a community of students, alumni, and employers that facilitates meaningful connections, fosters relationships, and **provides comprehensive career development**



An Emerging US Trend

"The merging of alumni relations and career services is a trend in higher education that acknowledges the **strategic importance of network building and the role key stakeholders can play in preparing students for the work world.** From an organisational standpoint, combining alumni relations with career services is a potential first step to adding more strategic importance and message focus to the work of stakeholder engagement."

*Ryan Catherwood
Assistant VP for Alumni and Career Services
Longwood University*

In addition to a full reorganisation, other institutions embedded alumni relations staff in the career services office. For example, the **University of Glasgow** moved a full-time alumni relations role into the career services office.

Source: "The golden age is coming: fusing alumni relations and career services," *Higher Ed Live*, <http://higheredlive.com/the-golden-age-is-coming-fusing-alumni-relations-and-career-services/> Source: "Integrating Career Services and Alumni Relations," *NACE*, 9-1-2018, <https://www.nacweb.org/career-development/organizational-structure/integrating-career-services-and-alumni-relations/>



Maximising Impact Through Targeted Recruitment and Assessment

SECTION

- Boosting Student Participation
- Recruiting Best-Fit Alumni to the Right Programmes
- Evaluating and Communicating Impact

4

Maximising Impact Through Marketing, Communication, and Assessment

Three major organisational impediments challenge the success of institutions' alumni-student employability programming. First, students may not attend events, often a product of being either unaware or uninterested. Second, while alumni tend to be eager to volunteer, institutions struggle to engaging the right types of alumni in its programmes, resulting in recruiting alumni with the wrong skill set or background for particular initiatives. Finally, institutions struggle to assess programme success, making it difficult to prioritise and communicate what works.

EAB research has surfaced three strategies to combat these challenges:

- Boosting student participation
- Targeting the best-fit alumni for the right volunteer activities
- Evaluating and communicating the impact of programmes

Three Main Challenges

1 **Students don't show up,** as they are unaware of or uninterested in the programming available to improve their employability



2 **Alumni don't show up,** a product of scattershot asks and unclear volunteer opportunities that lead to the wrong types of alumni volunteers



3 **Programmes remain unevaluated,** undercutting efforts to advocate for more resources for highly engaging activities



Potential Solutions



Strategy 10: Boosting Student Participation



Strategy 11: Recruiting Best-Fit Alumni to the Right Programmes



Strategy 12: Evaluating and Communicating Impact

The Power of Persuasion

Menu of Tactics Deployed to Encourage Student Participation

The table below profiles six ideas for boosting student participation. Often, institutions see success by combining a few of these ideas. For example, advertising free food at events that are also located in highly-trafficked locations helps capture the attention of additional students previously unaware of the event.

Recruitment Idea	Description and Examples
Offer Prizes and Incentives	Advertise prizes, food, and giveaways for programmes and events. Brunel University London has deployed a sign-up campaign for their online network with prizes including an Apple Watch and iPad.
Recruit Academic Staff as Pitchmen	Ask academic staff members to make attendance at employability events mandatory for students or for extra credit, or ask them to endorse events during class time.
Leverage Highly Trafficked Events and Locations	Include information about programmes at well-attended student events or highly-trafficked locations, such as career fairs, libraries, and graduation. The University of Sussex has a booth at Winter graduation dedicated to encouraging sign-ups to their online networking platform.
Target Specific Student Populations	Identify and reach out to specific student populations in most need of career development. The mentoring scheme at Courtauld Institute of the Arts specifically targets students least likely to proactively seek help, and most likely to need it (e.g., low-income, minority-status, etc.)
Utilise Social Media Takeovers	Leverage alumni social media spotlights, which typically have higher student activity, to advertise other employability programmes. University of Glasgow saw a spike in their e-mentoring platform after alumni Instagram takeovers.
Leverage High-Profile Alumni	Invite famous alumni to campus to attract many students and serve as advocate for career development. Wesleyan University's Executive in Residence programme gives students an opportunity to meet high-profile alumni who provide career advice.

Borrowing an Alumni “Human Book”

Glasgow Attracts Students with Quirky Theme and Prime Campus Location

At the **University of Glasgow**, the ‘Human Book’ project brought eight alumni experts or ‘human books’ to the campus library, waiting to be ‘checked out’ by students. Students booked 15-minute conversations with human books to pick their brains about careers.

Due to the highly-trafficked location and innovative theme, 290 students participated in this one-day event, a remarkable increase over the average 50-student turnout at previous events. An additional 12% of the total student population engaged in the event via live social media coverage of the event.



University of Glasgow’s ‘Human Book’ Project

- Eight alumni experts available during one-day event in university library
- Students booked 15-minute one-on-one conversations with ‘human books’
- Alumni come from creative, hard-to-penetrate industries (e.g., curation, journalism)
- Students asked to assess event by writing a ‘book review’ following conversation



Impressive Student Turnout

- 290** Student participants
- 480%** more student participants than average alumni event
- 12%** of total student population reached via live social media coverage
- 100%** positive response rate from student attendees

Typical Barriers to Participation

- × Events located in remote campus locations
- × Students perceive events as ‘boring’
- × Students required to pre-register for events
- × Student intimidated to approach alumni



University of Glasgow’s Solutions

- ✓ Event located in highly-trafficked, popular student spot
- ✓ Unique and interesting theme generated student interest
- ✓ First-come, first-serve format encouraged walk-ins
- ✓ Low-pressure environment mitigated student hesitation

Going Where the Students Are

University of Glasgow Promotes Mentoring Platform via Snapchat Takeover

While institutions may use social media takeovers to showcase alumni careers, the **University of Glasgow** deployed a similar tactic to promote alumni relations programming. Two staff members facilitated Snapchat takeovers by interviewing alums from different industries around London. During the takeover, they encouraged students to sign up for their online mentoring system. Immediately afterward, the university saw a 54% increase in mentoring activity on the platform, and 120% growth in new sign-ups. In the two weeks following the event, three times more messages were sent between alumni and students on the platform.

This event also had a positive impact on alumni engagement: 70% of participants had never volunteered before. Five of the participants went on to become mentors, and one became a major donor.



Alumni Takeover UofG's Snapchat Account



- Two staff members interviewed alumni from variety of and sectors in London (e.g., Beatson Cancer Charity, Pinterest, Victoria and Albert Museum)
- Takeovers tailored to each alumnus' personal journey to create authentic and relatable content

Major Spikes in Online Mentoring System

54%
increase in mentoring activity on platform

120%
growth in sign-ups to mentoring platform

3x
more messages sent in two week period after takeovers

153,503
total snapchat views recorded

Greater Alumni Engagement

16.5
Total alumni volunteer hours

70%
Alumni not involved in prior volunteering activities

5
Alumni participants became mentors

1
Alumni participant became major donor

A Menu of Options

Exeter's Website Triage Alumni Volunteer Opportunities

Many alumni relations websites do not list discrete volunteer opportunities for alumni. More often, they include a generic message asking alumni to contact the office if they are interested in volunteering. This creates more work on the back-end for alumni relations staff when alumni express interest in volunteering but aren't sure how to help. In other cases, alumni do not engage at all, because they assume they do not have the time or necessary skill-set.

The screenshot shows the University of Exeter's volunteer page at www.exeter.ac.uk/exceptional/volunteer/. The page features a navigation bar with links: Home, About the campaign, Themes, Donate, Volunteer, News, Your Impact, and Contact us. The main content area is titled "Volunteer" and includes a brief introduction, a section on how to support the university, and a list of volunteer opportunities. A callout box on the right highlights a circular graphic showing "Hours volunteered 122%" with "73,016 hours" below it. Another callout box points to a "Register your interest in volunteering" button. A third callout box points to a section titled "How you can support us:" which lists various ways to get involved, including career mentoring, expert talks, mock interviews, and work shadowing. A fourth callout box points to a section titled "Requirements:" which states that volunteers need a passion for their chosen field and the ability to communicate this to a group of students and field questions. A fifth callout box points to a section titled "Time commitment:" which states that volunteers need to give a talk and answer questions, either in Exeter or Cornwall.

University of Exeter

Concise introduction clearly explains impact of volunteering

Highlights volunteer achievements to generate excitement

Volunteer options easy to identify and click through

Direct link for alumni to immediately express interest

Clearly states time commitment and requirements for alumni to find best-fit volunteer opportunities

Volunteer

Every year, hundreds of alumni volunteers support the staff, students and alumni of the University of Exeter.

Our volunteers help us to enhance the student experience and improve career prospects, bring their industry expertise and insights to the curriculum, support the alumni community, and provide valuable strategic advice and guidance to University staff.

How you can support us:

You can help across a wide variety of projects and we are happy to work with you to find a way to get involved which suits your skills and circumstances. We have opportunities for you to volunteer from home, at work, or on campus. All opportunities are available to international alumni – those marked * could take place by Skype.

[Career Mentoring](#) [Expert](#) [Careers Talk *](#) [Mock interview *](#) [Careers profile](#) [Country contact](#) [Provide a venue](#) [Work Shadowing](#)

Every term, we welcome alumni back to speak and **share their career experiences with students**. Your careers insights can make all the difference to students struggling to identify the right career for them or to those applying to work in your field.

Requirements: Just a passion for your chosen field and the ability to communicate this to a group (sometimes large) of students and field questions. We try to feature talks across a wide variety of professional backgrounds.

Time commitment: 1 – 2 hours to give a talk and answer questions, either in Exeter or Cornwall.

[Register your interest in volunteering](#)

Hours volunteered 122%
73,016 hours

The alumni relations website at the **University of Exeter** includes clear and detailed volunteer opportunities. This is a simple but meaningful way to increase alumni participation and ensure that volunteers sign up for the right type of activity.

Choose the Right Mix for Your Campus

Offer Alumni a Variety of Volunteer Options to Fit their Needs and Skills

To help institutions determine the right mix of volunteer opportunities and highlight important aspects for alumni to choose the right opportunity for themselves, use the “Alumni Opportunity Matrix” below. The matrix provides alumni with all the information they want to know before committing to a volunteer opportunity (e.g., modality, time commitment, skills required) and should be included on alumni webpages.

EAB’s Alumni Opportunity Matrix¹

Volunteering Opportunities	Mentoring	Job-shadowing	Podcast
Descriptions	Participate in a one-on-one mentoring scheme, and share advice and information about your career path	Bring a current student to your workplace, to learn the ins and outs of what you do and help with small tasks	Discuss what you’ve been doing since you graduated, sharing advice, highs & lows
Modality	In-person, on or around campus	In-person, at your place of work	Virtual phone-calls
Group or Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual, Pairs
Length of commitment	Four one-hour engagements over the course of four months	One week	A few hours
Peak Times	Spring	Summer	Year-round
Requirements	Passion for your field	Approval from your workplace, ability to discuss tasks and day-to-day activities	Familiarity with Skype, conversational and casual demeanor

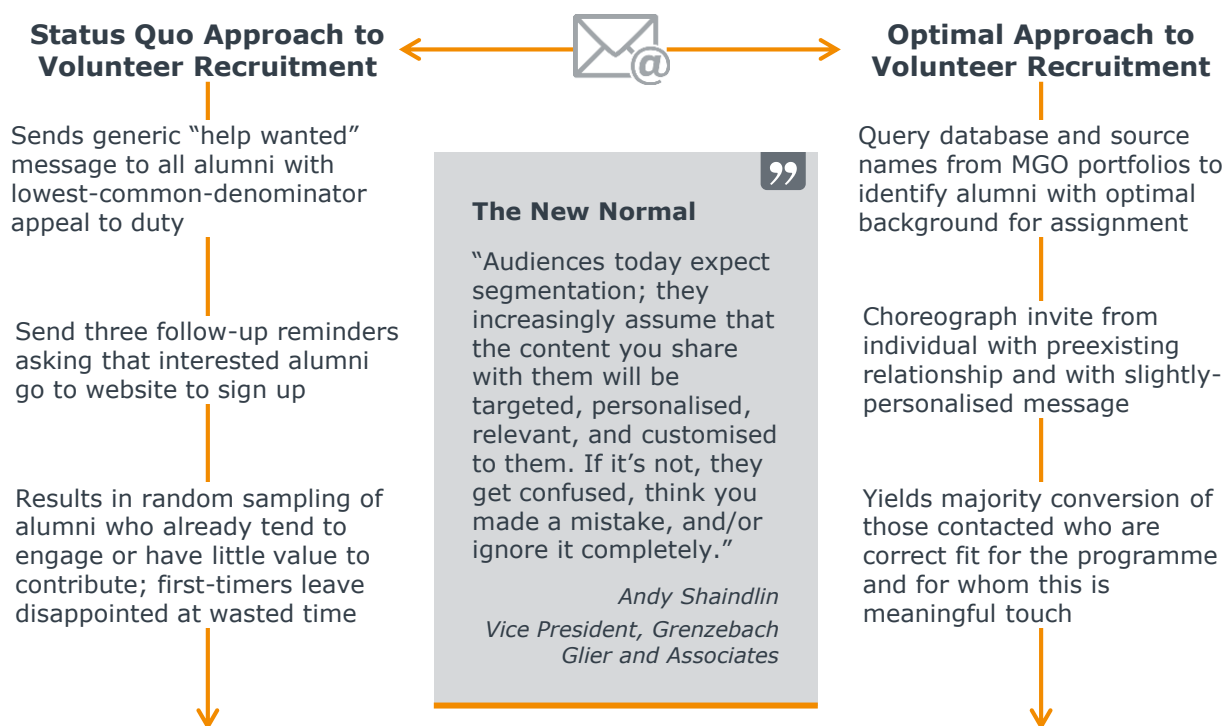
For a template of EAB’s Alumni Opportunity Matrix, please see the [online resource centre](#).

1) An enhanced version of Carleton College’s matrix, developed in 2012

Taking a Cue from Successful Digital Marketers

Proactive Asks for Recruiting the Right Alumni Volunteers

Institutions often recruit alumni using a passive approach, sending generic “we need help” messages to the entire alumni base, followed by a few reminder emails. Most of the time, these emails go unread. The alumni who do volunteer are already engaged, or may not have the right skill-set for the specific volunteer opportunity.



Instead, institutions need to move toward a more strategic recruitment process that leverages both the alumni database as well as advancement portfolios to identify best-fit alumni. Once the right alumni are identified, staff should engage them with personalised, unique messages that increase the likelihood of a response.

Be Disciplined About Regular Messaging

Lehigh's Recognition Schedule Communicates Impact to Entire Alumni Base

Maintaining consistent communication in varied formats (e.g., newsletters, emails) with alumni is critical for maximising the likelihood that alumni will respond to volunteering asks. To this end, **Lehigh University** developed a 'recognition schedule' that communicates the impact of volunteers to the entire alumni base, as well as the broader university community. During National Volunteer Week, they release a thank you video to the entire alumni base to celebrate volunteers. They include information on current volunteer opportunities and typically recruit 75 to 100 new volunteers annually.

Lehigh's Recognition Schedule¹



1) Recognition activities change annually; only select activities shown

Source: "Thank You to Lehigh Volunteers." Lehigh University. YouTube. 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I11C98yPD5w> ; EAB interviews and analysis.

Rewarding Participation

University of Glasgow Focuses Alumni Recognition on Career Improvement

Even after alumni read emails and consider volunteering, they may still lack an incentive to donate their time. Offering high-impact incentives can help ease the decision to volunteer.

The **University of Glasgow** researched the types of incentives that would encourage more alumni to participate. Alumni engagement leaders learned that the primary motivation for young alumni to volunteer was to improve their own careers. In response, the university created an alumni-recognition hub, including career-focused incentives. They provide guidance on how to add volunteer activities to alumni LinkedIn profiles and send thank-you notes to volunteers' managers to thank them for allowing volunteers to take time off work.



Desire to Promote Alumni Recognition...



Recognised that **alumni volunteers were much younger** than traditional donor base



Held a focus group to determine what **young alumni wanted to get out of volunteering** time with students



Young alumni emphasised desire to leverage volunteerism to **improve their careers**

...Leads to Career-Focused Alumni Recognition Options



Guidance on adding alumni volunteering to LinkedIn profiles



Thank you notes sent to managers for allowing alumni to take time off work



Mailed copy of "Certificate of Appreciation" for alumni to hang up in their workplaces



Formal recognition list of alumni volunteers on website

Alumni Engagement in Career Development Helps the Bottom Line

Alumni Engaged Through Volunteering More Likely to Give

Thinking carefully about alumni recruitment for volunteering opportunities has an added benefit: engaged alumni are more likely to give financially to their alma mater. Over the past decade, many North American advancement units have made this connection and are creating more volunteering opportunities to focus on donor engagement. They see volunteering is the start of a relationship with a potential donor. At **Cornell University**, for example, 57% of volunteers also donate to the institution, compared to 36% of non-volunteers.

Unpacking the Connection

What Does Volunteering Do?



Enfranchises donor as stakeholder



Exposes donor to cause, personalising and sparking emotional connection



Fosters sense of distinctive package of contributions



Situates donor in positively reinforcing relationships and welcomes them to “inner circle”



Allows monitoring for impact and accountability

A Snapshot of One University

Cornell University, FY 2011-2012

57%

Giving rate amongst volunteers – compared to **36%** from event attendees and **3%** from alumni who are neither

10x

Average differential in median gift size between alumni donors¹ who volunteer versus those who do not²

83%

Of top 320 donors who give >\$1M are volunteers

Upgrades that Endure



The annual giving of average leadership volunteer: **\$916** in decade before term, **\$3,517** during term, **\$2,250** in four years after term ends, and **\$1,148** in decade after.

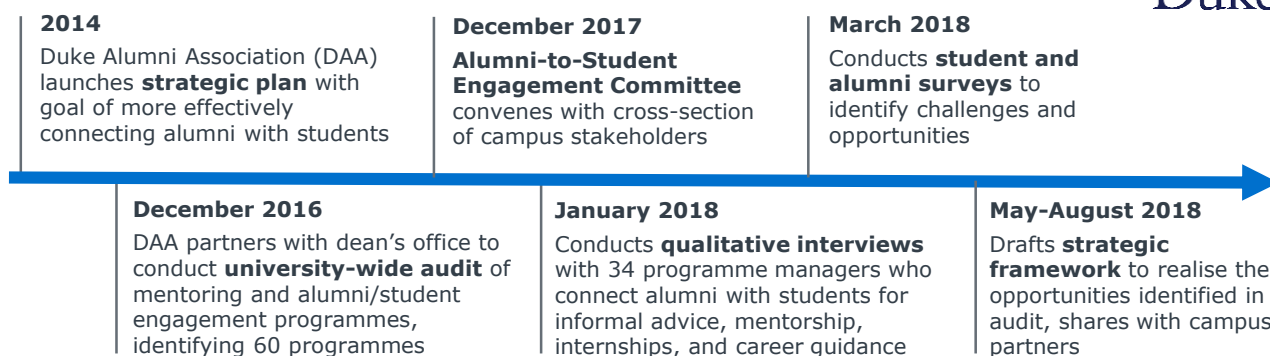
Source: Cornell University: Office of Volunteer programmes, "Trustee Task Force on Volunteer Leadership." Last modified May 2013. <http://www.alumni.cornell.edu/volunteerold/documents/TrusteeTaskForceonVolunteerLeadershipReport.pdf> ; EAB interviews and analysis.

How Are We Doing?

Duke University Audits Alumni-Student Engagement Landscape

Even the most progressive institutions struggle with defining success for their programmes. However, a few universities are starting to make headway. Over the past five years, **Duke University** has prioritised connecting alumni with students for career development. As part of this new focus, in 2016 Duke conducted a major university-wide audit of student and alumni engagement to understand the current state of affairs.

Duke



Strategic Framework Focused on Three Priority Areas

- 1 Campus Engagement**
 Systems to view, track, and share when alumni are on campus
- 2 Advising**
 Programmes and platforms to connect students to alumni
- 3 Career**
 Processes and systems for alumni to easily post jobs and internships

For a copy of Duke's Alumni-Student Engagement Framework, please see the [online resource centre](#).

Duke also developed a committee to conduct qualitative interviews with 34 programme managers who connect alumni with students for career development (surfaced through the survey). They also conducted student and alumni surveys to hear their perceptions of current engagement activities.

The audit allowed Duke to identify gaps in their current practice, as well as areas of opportunity. Ultimately, they created a strategic framework with three priority areas. This strategic framework led directly to the development of the 'community of practice' on page 52.

Duke's Insight: These Are the Metrics that Matter

Duke Develops Metrics to Evaluate Efforts of Strategic Framework

Notably, Duke also defined key metrics to measure the success of their efforts across three buckets:

- Scale of alumni engagement: Quantitative measures like the growth of their community of practice, the number of alumni volunteers
- Quality of alumni engagement: Qualitative measures from alumni and student surveys
- Depth of engagement over time: Quantitative measure over time

Duke's strategy helped university leaders understand the current state of affairs of alumni-student engagement on campus, develop a strategy for improving the current state, and establish measures of success.

Duke

Metric Category	Metrics
Scale of Alumni Engagement with Student Career Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth in the Community of Practice • Growth in programmes utilising centralised resources (e.g., volunteer portal, staff/faculty logins on alumni network) • Number of alumni speakers in classrooms and student club events • Number of alumni-student connections on the alumni network and other digital platforms • Number of alumni mentors and advisors
Quality of Alumni Engagement Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student surveys • Alumni surveys • Faculty/staff/stakeholders interviews
Depth of Alumni Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes in engagement pathways over time (e.g., engaging with students leading other engagement with Duke) • Retention of mentors/advisers • Recent graduate engagement (e.g., students who benefited from alumni mentors giving back after graduation)

Assessing Individual Programmes

Four Ways to Measure Programme Impact and Areas for Improvement

To measure success at the programme level, **Carleton College** uses four strategies to measure the impact of their externships. These ideas can be applied to nearly any type of programme or event.



1

Participant surveys

- Different surveys target both student and alumni participants
- Includes questions allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis

2

Longitudinal tracking

- Holds focus groups with students and/or alumni a few years after the experience
- Records ways that perceptions of the experience have changed over time (e.g., do students think the experience was more or less valuable now than initial perceptions?)

3

Post-experience reflections

- Students required to write reflection essays after the experience
- Reflection essays include information on:
 - Take-aways
 - Skills gained
 - Next steps

4

Annual alumni tracking

- Tracks 'repeat-volunteers' who continue to participate in a particular programme on an annual basis
- Track alumni who participate in other opportunities that they were not previously engaged with

Longitudinal tracking is particularly important and helpful. It is an effective way to assess the long-term impact of employability initiatives.

Immediately after an event, students may note that the activity was 'helpful.' However, the event itself may not lead to a direct action on the student's part (e.g. applying for an internship, or attending other career events).

The benefit of longitudinal tracking, through surveys or focus groups for example, is to help assess whether programmes have a long-term impact on students' career readiness and employability.

Pinpointing “Areas of Impact”

Pre- and Post-Event Evaluations Assess Student Development

Many institutions use pre- and post-event surveys to assess the impact of engagement activities on students. The **University of Sheffield** takes a particularly comprehensive approach to student surveys, using an online questionnaire to assess the impact of their City Connections programme.

Before and after the programme, students rank their level of agreement with 13 total statements using a Likert-scale. Unlike surveys with open-ended questions, this format allows Sheffield to calculate the mean change in response to each statement and assess the overall impact. They also look at changes in individual participant responses to track their development. In addition, Sheffield conducts focus groups and asks students to submit reflection diaries to gather qualitative information.



University of Sheffield’s ‘City Connections’ Online Questionnaire



Students **complete online questionnaire before and after programme** to provide index of individual participant development



Students rank level of agreement with **13 total statements** on five-point Likert scale (i.e., strongly agree to strongly disagree)



Average difference in responses calculated by **comparing the mean change** in response to each statement



Also gathers qualitative feedback through **focus groups and student reflection diaries**



Alumni feedback gathered via online **post-event survey**

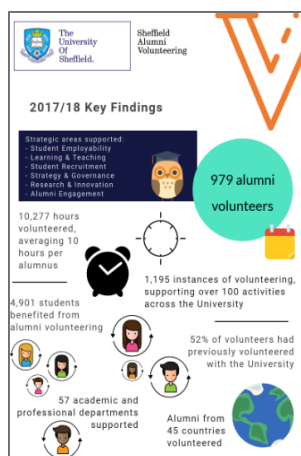
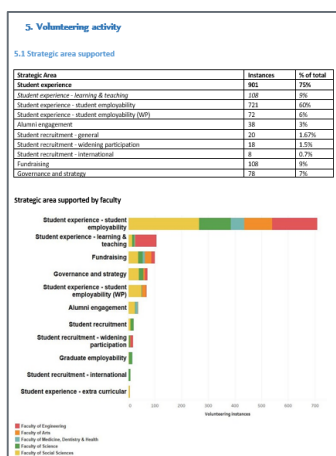
1. I am aware of the University of Sheffield alumni community and how graduates can stay involved with the University
2. I feel positive about my career prospects following graduation
3. I feel confident talking about my abilities, aspirations and interests with employers/professionals
4. I would be able to talk about the competitors, suppliers, customers and key trends of the career sector I am interested in an application/interview
5. I have a network of people I can ask for careers advice and guidance
6. I am motivated to do well academically
7. I feel confident applying for, and taking up, internships and work in London
8. I feel confident asking for careers advice from professionals/employers

Sharing the Story of Alumni Impact Across Campus

University of Sheffield Shares Annual Volunteer Report with Campus

Programme evaluation provides accountability for ensuring engagement activities inflect employability and better engage alumni. These successes should also be shared with senior leaders and the broader campus community. Showing the impact of programming on broader institutional goals can help break down misconceptions about alumni relations.

Screenshots of Sheffield's 2017/18 Alumni Volunteers Report and Infographic



Report Components

- Volunteer engagement and donor statistics
- Top volunteers roles and activities
- Volunteer statistics by faculty
- Volunteer impact (e.g., alumni and student feedback, survey results)
- Goals and targets for forthcoming year



Report and Infographic Audience

- University Executive Board
- Academic department heads
- Professional services heads
- Staff who lead projects supported by alumni volunteers



Prepare the Ground Before You Show Off Your Impact

"Inviting senior leaders to attend alumni engagement events can be very powerful. Even if they can only come for half an hour, they get to witness the impact these events have on students and alumni."

Miles Stevenson, Director of Advancement

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD



For a copy of Sheffield's Alumni Volunteers Report, please see the [online resource centre](#).

The **University of Sheffield** invites senior leaders to attend alumni engagement activities to see first-hand the impact of these events on students and alumni.

In addition, Sheffield creates an annual alumni volunteers report and infographic, including data on volunteer and donor engagement, volunteer roles and activities, feedback from students and alumni, and goals for the following year. These are shared with the University Executive Board, academic department heads, professional services heads, and all staff who lead projects supported by alumni volunteers.

New Rules of Engagement

Lessons on Engaging Alumni Volunteers

To better engage alumni volunteers, consider EAB's five new 'rules of engagement'. Below, these rules are mapped to short descriptions and examples of these rules in action as outlined in this report.

Rule	Description	Examples
1 Make It Easy to Say Yes	Offer limited-duration, tightly-scoped opportunities with clearly-communicated purpose, parameters, and endpoint	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speed networking• Career panels• Alumni career profiles
2 Meet Them Where They Are	Create convenient and accessible volunteer roles that allow alumni to participate in their workplaces or online	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corporate chapters• Instagram takeovers• Online resume reviews
3 Broker Smarter Matches	Develop skills-based roles, identify best-fit alumni to participate, and make proactive asks of alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic volunteer roles• Website with clear volunteer opportunities
4 Embrace the "Me" Factor	Emphasise the two-way value proposition for volunteers, including professional development, recognition, and communication of their impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alumni recognition• Volunteer impact reports
5 Cultivate Campus Allies	Establish and deepen relationships with other campus stakeholders to underscore importance of alumni engagement with student career development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Campus engagement form• Alumni request form• Community of practice



Advisors to Our Work

SECTION

5

Advisors to Our Work

EAB's Advancement Forum is grateful to the individuals and organisations that shared their insights, analysis, and time with us. We would especially like to recognise the following individuals for being particularly generous with their time and expertise.

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