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An exploratory study of effectiveness in alumni relations at four research universities

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS

IN ALUMNI RELATIONS AT FOUR

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

by

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1996

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ABSTRACT

An Exploratory Study of Effectiveness in Alumni Relations at Four Research Universities

by

Jennifer Lynnette Hurwitz

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Alumni relations programs exist to further the goals of institutions while meeting the interests of alumni (Webb, 1989). In healthy university environments, the relationship between the alumni and the institution is mutually beneficial (Webb, 1989). In an era of accountability, college and university administrators require evidence that programs are satisfying the missions and accomplishing the goals of the institution (Brant, 2002). Alumni relations professionals are challenged to find ways to include as measures of program effectiveness evaluations of the relationship building aspects of alumni programming.

The purpose of this research was to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. This study specifically addressed questions regarding definitions of effectiveness, measurement methods used to determine effectiveness, how senior alumni administrative officers viewed their

responsibilities, and identification of factors contributing to effectiveness in alumni relations. Exploration of these areas through observations, qualitative interviews, and document collection provided the researcher with valuable information that contributed to developing a preliminary analytical framework of effectiveness in alumni relations.

While the interview participants had difficulty providing comprehensive and succinct definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations, they easily identified nine factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations: building relationships with alumni, understanding reasons for alumni participation, knowing alumni constituency, facilitating communication with alumni, offering an array of alumni programs, creating pride/tradition/loyalty, instilling a sense of belonging, offering opportunities to impact the future of the university, and understanding institution specific missions and histories. The study's participants also identified numerous measurement methods for assessing effectiveness in alumni relations, which the researcher used to develop an assessment protocol. Finally, this study elicited conversations regarding the way in which senior alumni administrative officers viewed their responsibilities to both the host institution and alumni. While the alumni associations studied for this project were different in many respects, the participants viewed their responsibilities quite similarly overall.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

At an early point in my educational career, I decided that I wanted to pursue a doctoral degree. I was confident that eventually I would discover the path that would lead me to accomplishing my goal. In the spring of 2002, my husband and I were transferred to Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas, Nevada. Immediately I began researching the University of Nevada, Las Vegas in order to determine if a doctoral program in education was available. I discovered the Department of Educational Leadership and emailed the coordinator of the Higher Education Leadership program, Dr. Robert Ackerman.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Colleges and universities provide students with the opportunity to learn and grow as individuals. As a part of this educational and social growth, students create memories. Leaders of alumni relations programs on university campuses recognize that many students feel a common bond with fellow students, faculty and staff, and the university. To that end, alumni administrators develop programs, services, and benefits designed specifically to maintain the graduates' connection to the university.

In an era of accountability, alumni relations leaders must develop methods to show how alumni programs and services assist in achieving the goals of the institution by maintaining the bonds and relationships to the university that alumni formed during their campus experiences (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 1999; Engelkemeyer, 2004; Heller, 2001; Brant, 2002; Calvert, 2000). University leaders currently find themselves in changing times where higher education institutions, once revered and unquestioned, encounter demands for accountability and efficiency (Buchanan, 2000; Engelkemeyer, 2004; Heller, 2001). Higher education appropriations decreased in 23 states and increased by 1% or less in eight others in fiscal year 2004, from 2003 levels (Palmer, n.d.). With shrinking budgets and increasing demands to prove effectiveness,

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university presidents look to members of the administrative team to assist with accountability measures and to ensure that university resources are used efficiently and effectively (Brant, 2002).

All university administrators, faculty, and staff, including those responsible for institutional advancement, have felt the demand for accountability (Engelkemeyer, 2004; Heller, 2001; Calvert, 2000). Institutional advancement typically encompasses alumni relations, public relations, and development; government relations and enrollment management also are beginning to gain acceptance as areas in institutional advancement (Worth, 2002; Buchanan, 2000; Rowland, 1986). Professionals working in the area of institutional advancement share the common goal of advancing the institution through the development of beneficial relationships with alumni, students, parents, and other friends of the university (Calvert, 2000).

As university budgets shrink, presidents review programs and identify areas where costs can be cut. Coll (1993) suggested that the institutional advancement budget was often a target for cuts because "this division appears to take up a large percentage of the administrative budget, but compared with other such offices, its impact on students and faculty seems negligible" (p. 15). Since institutional advancement is one area where university presidents could potentially reduce expenses, specialists in the advancement arena, particularly those in alumni relations, must develop ways to show how they build relationships with alumni and other constituent groups, including parents and current students, and that these relationships can result in bringing to the

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institution additional funds (Buchanan, 2000). However, relationship building takes both significant time and resources and is difficult to measure in a bottom-line environment (Burnett, 2002). Advancement professionals are familiar with the perception that development officers are responsible for fund raising, whereas alumni relations specialize in friend raising (Arnold, 2003; Worth, 2002). Consequently, leaders in development programs often receive credit for contributing to the bottom-line while alumni relations administrators may fail to produce measurable results since they do not have comprehensive methods for measuring program effectiveness (Arnold, 2003; Worth, 2002).

Alumni relations programs specialize in connecting alumni to the alma mater through reunions, homecomings, board participation, alumni magazines, and similar activities. Connecting alumni to the life of the institution may or may not lead to future giving; however, alumni who convey to others how wonderful their universities are provide a type of support that cannot be accurately measured only by dollars. That concern notwithstanding, during this period of increasing accountability and shrinking budgets, alumni relations leaders must be able to measure effectiveness to ensure that university presidents recognize that program benefits outweigh the costs.

Background of the Study

Taylor and Massy (1996) stated, "Alumni are a unique, select, and continuing source of support that is one of the most valuable resources any institution has. Alumni giving is important for its own sake—as a source of needed gifts—but it

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also serves as a proxy for confidence in an institution's performance" (p. 72). The Council for Aid to Education (CAE), a subsidiary of the RAND corporation serving the purpose of improving higher education through corporate support, surveys higher education institutions about private giving and reports findings in an annual publication, <u>Voluntary Support of Education</u> (VSE) ("About CAE," n.d.). In 2002, the VSE reported that alumni giving accounted for 24.7%, or $5.9 billion, of the voluntary support of higher education (CAE press release, 2003).

Although alumni contributions provide a significant amount of support to higher education institutions, CAE reported that alumni giving declined by 13.6 percent or about $1 billion from the previous year's giving levels (CAE press release, 2003). Reasons for the decline were not discussed, but contributing factors could have been a slow economy due to the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as the United States' involvement in Iraq. The 2002 VSE findings trouble alumni relations professionals because they recognize that not only the easiest way, but also the most commonly used and convenient way, to evaluate program effectiveness is to look at alumni giving rates for the institution (Brant, 2002).

Alumni administrators might not be as troubled by this data if they had methods other than dollars raised to assess program effectiveness. Alumni giving serves as one measure of effectiveness that institutions use, and some alumni administrators may decide to focus their energy on improving the institutions' alumni giving percentage. However, many alumni relations administrators believe that measuring program effectiveness solely by alumni giving percentages

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portrays a picture of development effectiveness, not alumni relations (Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002). While alumni giving is one measure of effectiveness, alumni involvement with the alma mater also relates to program effectiveness. Involvement could be measured by various ways, such as tracking the number of volunteers, the number of alumni attending career networking programs, and/or the number of alumni advocates. University presidents should not overlook the value of having an involved alumni constituency. Consequently, several authors (Calvert, 2000; Brant, 2002; Regan, 2002) suggested a better method would be to develop a more comprehensive evaluation tool for alumni relations programs that emphasized the alumni giving percentage less while emphasizing alumni involvement and participation more.

Much of what alumni relations programs do is based on building relationships by connecting students and alumni to the alma mater; these activities, while very important, can be difficult to quantify (Calvert, 2000; Brant, 2002; Regan, 2002). Alumni professionals recognize that university presidents examine operating budgets closely and consider a program's needs and its benefits to the university before determining the amount of funding a program will receive. This is especially the case when presidents face declining resources and increased demand on those resources (Buchanan, 2000). Alumni relations leaders find it difficult to provide evidence of effectiveness because the majority of what they do involves building relationships with alumni ("For Good Measure," 1996; Brant, 2002; Regan, 2002).

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Brant (2002) provided possible explanations why the development of assessment tools has proven to be difficult for alumni relations professionals, "[There are] fundamental differences in scope and approach among alumni organizations. Unlike fund raising and campus communications, an alumni relations operation is much more particular to its institution. Alumni programs reflect the unique histories, cultures, customs, structures, and environments of their campuses" (p. 24, 26). Consequently, many alumni professionals (Calvert, 2003; Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002) suggested the need for developing measurement methods that alumni relations leaders could adapt to their particular programs.

Problem Statement

Alumni relations programs exist to further the goals of institutions while meeting the interests of alumni (Webb, 1989). In healthy university environments, the relationship between alumni and the institution is mutually beneficial (Webb, 1989). In an era of accountability, college and university administrators require evidence that programs are satisfying the missions and accomplishing the goals of the institution (Brant, 2002). Alumni relations professionals are challenged to find ways to include as measures of program effectiveness evaluations of the relationship building aspects of alumni programming.

Alumni giving provides one measure of effectiveness for alumni relations programs (Brant, 2002; Regan 2002). Using that measure alone fails to assess the full value of these programs. However, the alumni relations profession does

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not have in place consistent and comprehensive definitions and measures of program effectiveness (Calvert, 2000). Because it is important to have such measures in place, the researcher decided to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in their organizations' programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. This study specifically addressed questions regarding definitions of effectiveness, measurement methods used to determine effectiveness, how senior alumni administrative officers viewed their responsibilities, and identification of factors contributing to effectiveness in alumni relations. Exploration of these areas through observations, qualitative interviews, and document collection provided the researcher with valuable information that contributed to developing a preliminary conceptual framework of effectiveness in alumni relations.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

- Research question one (part one): How do senior alumni administrative officers define effectiveness?

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- Research question one (part two): How do senior alumni administrative officers perceive that other senior campus administrators (i.e., the university president and senior institutional advancement administrators) at their institutions define effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question two: What factors contribute to effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question three: How do senior alumni administrative officers currently measure effectiveness?

- Research question four: How do senior alumni administrative officers view their responsibilities to alumni and the host institution?

Significance of the Study

This study to define and measure effectiveness in alumni relations at public research universities involved observing the alumni buildings/offices, collecting documents, and conducting interviews at one pilot site and four case study sites. This research contributed to the literature by providing alumni practitioners with preliminary definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations; by examining factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations; by exploring measurement methods for effectiveness in alumni relations; and by clarifying how alumni administrators viewed their responsibilities to the host institution and alumni. Since minimal research existed linking effectiveness and alumni relations, this study provided an exploratory look at the topic that could motivate further research in this area. Finally, the information gained through this study could

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enable other alumni administrators at public institutions to begin their own process of defining and measuring program effectiveness in comprehensive and systematic ways.

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative case study provided an exploratory view of how alumni administrators at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. The researcher used Yin's (2003) case study methodology to facilitate the design of the study. Since minimal research had been conducted in the area of effectiveness in alumni relations, the researcher determined that qualitative case studies would be most appropriate for the study as this type of design allowed for rich, thick description, in addition to achieving an in depth view of alumni administrators' understanding of effectiveness and methods for measuring it (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003).

The researcher conducted one pilot study and four site visits over a period of two months in the fall of 2004. During the visits, the researcher interviewed senior alumni administrative officers using semi-structured, formal interviewing techniques (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, the researcher collected a number of documents from the site and made general observations of the physical plants and office settings where the alumni offices were located. Observing and collecting information from these multiple sources allowed for triangulation of the data, which enhanced construct validity (Yin, 2003). For the purposes of this

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study, triangulation refers to using multiple sources of evidence to verify findings or common themes within the study (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Following the site visits, the researcher analyzed the data according to Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework. The process suggested by Ritchie and Spencer (2002) involved familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation of the qualitative data collected during the case studies. The methodology and research design are discussed further in chapter three.

Limitations

A limitation of this research included the inability to generalize the findings of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because the researcher conducted case studies with a limited number of senior alumni administrative officers, selected based on specific criteria discussed in the methodology chapter, caution should be taken when applying these findings to other alumni relations programs. Further, findings from this research might not hold across other institutional types. The researcher also chose to limit the case study interviews to include only the viewpoints of the senior alumni administrative officers. In doing so, the researcher asked the participants to discuss their perceptions of other campus administrators regarding effectiveness in alumni relations. The researcher did not interview other campus administrators directly because the sole purpose was to explore the senior alumni administrative officers' perceptions, experiences, and input.

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Assumptions

The researcher assumed universities that were state supported received less funding when the states' budgets were tight and that this caused university presidents to exert more pressure on members of the administrative team for accountability and to demonstrate program effectiveness in order to maintain annual operating allocations for their specific units. Thus, the researcher studied alumni organizations that received twenty-five percent or greater of their annual budget from the host institutions. The researcher also assumed that the participants answered the interview questions candidly and truthfully.

Overview

The chapter that follows includes a review of the literature pertaining to institutional advancement, alumni relations, organizational effectiveness, and program evaluation. The researcher discusses the research methods used in this study in chapter three. Chapters four through seven incorporate descriptions of the individual cases, while chapter eight compares the data collected from each site and discusses common themes. The final chapter includes a summary and discussion of the information and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

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CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this research was to explore how senior alumni administrative

officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness

in alumni relations programs. This chapter provides an overview of institutional

advancement and alumni relations, explains the historical context of alumni

relations, and examines organizational effectiveness theory and program

evaluation. Finally, current literature related to measuring effectiveness in alumni

relations is discussed.

Overview of Institutional Advancement

Tromble (1998) stated, "The role of institutional advancement is primarily the

building of good external relations" (p. 441). To build these relationships,

advancement personnel typically are organized into three broad program areas:

development, public relations, and alumni relations (Tromble, 1998; About

advancement, n.d.; Arnold, 2003; Worth 1993). Generally, institutional

advancement divisions are headed by a chief advancement officer (CAO), who

reports to the university president and who oversees the administrators of the

three program areas. The chief advancement officer and his/her staff identify

potential friends and donors to the university, provide expertise and support in

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expanding revenue sources for the institution, develop legislative and constituency advocacy groups made up of alumni and community members, and determine ways to build relationships with alumni and friends of the university (Calvert, 2000; Tromble, 1998). To do this, advancement professionals use systematic, integrated strategies to manage constituent relationships with the aim of increasing an institution's support (About advancement, n.d.). Next, the three program areas of institutional advancement, development, public relations, and alumni relations, are discussed.

Development

Development programs serve as fund raising units, a role that requires a comprehensive understanding of the institution and its donors (Worth 2002; Tromble, 1998). Fund raising is a necessity for today's colleges and universities, both private and public, due to ever-increasing costs of providing a quality education to students (Worth, 1993; Jones, 2003). In the pursuit of excellence, higher education institutions of all types, from community colleges to research universities, strive to achieve higher rankings and improved reputations (Rhodes, 2001). To accomplish these goals of excellence, colleges and universities require increased funding to improve research programs and acquire prominent faculty members and develop new programs. Due in part to the constant quest for distinction among institutions, higher education costs are increasing at a rapid pace; yet, state governments are decreasing support for higher education (Palmer, n.d.). In addition, higher education administrators must manage resistance to tuition increases that resulted from tuition rising at such a rapid rate

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above and beyond that of inflation (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2002). Therefore, development programs have become important contributors to institutional success (Worth, 1993; Buchanan, 2000).

Worth (1993) cited, "Fund raising is focused on a particular objective or set of goals; development is a generic and long-term commitment to the financial and physical growth of the institution" (p. 7). Development is a continuous process that includes knowing the university's strategic plan and using that plan to identify financial needs and goals for fund raising (Worth, 2002). With this knowledge, development officers gather information about prospective donors to determine whether the university's needs match donors' interests (Worth, 2002; Tromble, 1998). When a development officer matches an interest with a need, work begins to cultivate the donor. Worth (2002) defined cultivation as "more than just social contact and providing information. It requires involving donor prospects in the institution's planning in a sincere, substantive, and intellectually challenging way, helping to build their identity with, and commitment to, the institution's goals" (p. 7). The development officer only solicits or asks for the gift after the donor has received adequate cultivation (Worth, 2002; Tromble, 1998).

Once a donor makes a contribution to the institution, the process of stewardship commences. Stewardship involves using the gift according to the donor's specifications as well as informing the donor about the gift's impact on the institution (Worth, 2002; Tromble, 1998). It is this continuous process of cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship that marks a development program (Worth, 2002).

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Development programs in higher education typically offer a variety of giving opportunities based on levels or types of giving (About Advancement, n.d.; Buchanan, 2000). Most universities have annual giving, planned giving, and major gift programs (Dove, 2001; Ciconte & Jacob, 2001). Annual giving programs provide unrestricted funds to the university, while encouraging donors to establish a habit of giving; whereas, planned giving programs allow donors to contribute various types of assets, such as stocks or real estate, to institutions (Worth, 1993). Major gift programs focus on donors who give large amounts, usually gifts of $10,000 or more depending upon the institution's criteria (Dove, 2001; Ciconte & Jacob, 2001). Many universities also have corporate and foundation giving programs through which companies pledge gifts for specific purposes and foundations are invited to fund proposals (Worth, 1993; About Advancement, n.d.). Depending on the university and its development program, some or all of these giving opportunities could be available to donors.

Public Relations

In addition to development, public relations is another specialized institutional advancement function. Volkmann (1998) stated, "Defining public relations is as complicated as the number of names that are used to describe it...'public affairs,' 'institutional relations,' 'communications,' 'external relations'" (p. 281). The broad mission of public relations programs is to enhance recognition of the university among its constituencies through effective and frequent communication (About advancement, n.d.; Buchanan, 2000). These constituencies include alumni, students, parents, faculty and staff, legislators, donors, as well as other friends of

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the university. Public relations programs strive to maintain contact with constituents by providing information to the news media, developing and distributing university publications, and maintaining the university website (Volkmann, 1998; Worth, 1993).

Each university maintains unique programs under the public relations umbrella; programs that may be part of public relations' organizational structure include community relations, government relations, communications and publications (Buchanan, 2000). Professionals working in the area of public relations share information about the university, usually through the media, in order to educate and inform constituents regarding research projects, cultural programs, and learning opportunities. The university magazine is often the vehicle used to maintain regular contact with select constituents. In the past, many development and alumni relations programs published separate magazines and/or publications, but a more recent trend is for the public relations program to publish a combined magazine that highlights inspiring stories of giving and alumni involvement, as well as the academic achievements of faculty and students and feature stories of interest to the supporting communities. With the public relations programs handling the university's communications, the institution's administration should be able to ensure a more consistent and clear message. Overall, the public relations staff works to present a positive consistent institutional image while anticipating future issues (Volkmann, 1998).

Alumni Relations

By sharing information and highlighting institutional successes, public relations programs position universities to build relationships with many constituent groups. One important constituent group for all universities is alumni. Many (Worth, 2002; Tromble, 1998; Webb, 1989; Taylor & Massy, 1996) argued that alumni are the single greatest resource of the institution. Gill (1998) supported this view by explaining that alumni serve as resources to their alma maters because they give back to the universities in three ways: as active advocates and influential stakeholders, as honest critics, and as financial supporters.

The institutional advancement administrative structure typically includes alumni relations programs in some form. Worth (2002) noted, "The alumni office exists for two primary reasons—to provide diverse and quality programming for alumni, and to provide opportunities for alumni to engage in a lifetime of service to their alma mater" (p. 332). The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE), an international association for advancement professionals, elaborated on the purpose of alumni relations by stating,

Alumni relations programs build and strengthen relationships with students and former students, faculty, and friends. They keep alumni informed about the institution and in contact with each other by providing opportunities such as homecomings, reunions, and alumni club events. They provide educational opportunities to alumni through continuing education programs, weekend seminars, and travel programs. (About advancement, n.d., p. 1)

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Feudo (1999) delineated several other examples of alumni relations programming including alumni legislative networks, student alumni associations, and alumni career services.

The methods that alumni relations programs use to involve former students in the life of the university are as diverse as the institutions themselves (Webb, 1989). Universities present a variety of involvement opportunities for alumni that might include participating in recruitment of prospective students, serving as legislative advocates, participating in the instructional function as guest lecturers or adjuncts, acting as spokesperson and advocate for the institution, and attending special events such as reunions and homecoming (Worth, 2002; Webb, 1989; Tromble, 1998). Alumni programs also offer mailings, publications, and websites that provide alumni with an assortment of ways to connect and stay in contact with the institution and other alumni (Gill, 1998).

Levels of Dependence in Alumni Relations Programs

While the majority of higher education institutions have some form of alumni relations program, the way in which these organizations relate to their host institutions varies according to the institution's history, institutional type, and mission (Webb, 1989; Tromble, 1998; Gill, 1998). Tradition is a highly valued characteristic in alumni relations; therefore, institutional history and the way the alumni organizations were originally established plays an important role in how these organizations relate to their host institutions. Gill (1998) delineated three types of alumni organization to host institution relationships: independent, dependent, and interdependent. Independent alumni programs frequently are

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called alumni associations; they are financially self-supporting, are governed by a board of directors, are 501 (c) (3) or nonprofit corporations, and employ their own staff members (Gill, 1998).Typically, larger universities have independent alumni programs because these institutions have more alumni to serve and need additional structures and regulations due to the number of programs, benefits, and services offered.

A second kind of relationship between the alumni organization and host institution is the dependent type, which is commonly referred to as "alumni relations" or "alumni affairs." It is part of the university structure, receives operating funding either in whole or in part from the institution, and does not have its own governing board (Gill, 1998). Usually, smaller colleges and universities have dependent alumni programs since these institutions have smaller alumni populations and the programs may not generate adequate funds to operate as separate entities.

The last type of relationship, interdependent, is a combination of the dependent and independent relationships. It is usually incorporated through a state agency and may also be a 501 (c) (3) entity, it receives some financial support from the university, and it has a governing board that sets policy (Gill, 1998). Generally, alumni organizations that are interdependent established this relationship with the host institutions to ensure independence in decision making and policy setting while maintaining some financial dependence.

These levels of dependence became a consideration when the institutions were selected for this study as much of the researcher's arguments for

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developing comprehensive and consistent effectiveness measures in alumni relations were based on the organizations receiving financial support from the host institutions and having additional accountability responsibilities to the host institutions due to this support. With an understanding of the different relationship types that affect alumni organizations' dependence on the host institutions, the researcher now explains why and how alumni relations developed.

Historical Context of Alumni Relations

The first attempt at alumni coordination dates back to 1792 when Yale became the first college to have a class secretary (Sailor, 1930; Webb, 1998). Yale's class secretary was responsible for maintaining alumni records so that the college could stay connected to alumni by sending announcements of college news and, eventually, to send solicitations for the alumni fund, which was established in 1892 (Sailor, 1930). Thirty years later and to achieve similar goals, the first alumni association was established at Williams College, and the first full-time alumni secretary was employed by the University of Michigan in 1897 (Sailor, 1930; Webb, 1998).

Alumni secretaries and alumni associations became involved with maintaining alumni records, as well as communicating institutional news to the alumni through newsletters, that would later develop into alumni magazines. During these early years, institutions varied as to how alumni programs functioned depending upon institutional preferences, with some employing alumni secretaries; others hiring individuals to work with the alumni fund; some

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establishing alumni associations; and others selecting a combination of alumni secretaries, alumni fund professionals, and/or alumni associations (Sailor, 1930). Alumni programs began with small staffs, usually only one to three employees, during this period of the early 19th century to the mid 20th century, but shared a common purpose of maintaining contact and building relationships with alumni that could be beneficial because alumni could serve as advocates and loyal supporters of their institutions in times of institutional need (Sailor, 1930; Webb, 1998).

Another way alumni showed support for their alma maters was to contribute financially. Traditionally, annual fund contributions from alumni served as one source of support for colleges and universities (Buchanan, 2000). Yale is regarded as "the principal pioneer in alumni financial support" (Morrill, 1938, p. 236); the Yale Alumni Fund Association was developed in 1892 to raise money for institutional needs (Morrill, 1938; Sailor, 1930). Worth (1993) suggested that the alumni fund also was started to build a habit of giving among alumni, as fund raising professionals came to believe that those alumni who gave on a regular basis were more likely to give larger amounts at some point in the future and, eventually, could contribute assets through bequests and trusts to the institution.

Although there was the common perception that only private institutions needed alumni support, leaders at public universities saw the benefit of developing alumni associations. In the 1800s, students at several state universities banded together to raise funds in support of certain institutional needs (Cash, 2003). One example of student support was exhibited in 1832

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when students at the University of Virginia raised funds so that the institution could hire a chaplain. Students at the University of Georgia also conducted a fund raising campaign in 1831 soliciting alumni to fund the construction of a building on campus to be used for meetings of Phi Kappans; the students raised enough money to finance the project (Cash, 2003).

Stories such as those at the University of Virginia and University of Georgia led public, as well as private university leaders, to recognize how powerful loyal students and alumni could be when they perceived that the institutions had a need that was unfulfilled (Cash, 2003). These students likely became alumni who provided a strong source of support for institutions through the organization of advocacy groups working to inform government officials about the needs of higher education institutions, as volunteers to help with fund raising efforts, and as individuals who assisted in the recruitment of prospective students. As more institutional leaders recognized the potential benefits of building relationships with alumni, more alumni relations programs developed on campuses in the United States (Webb, 1998).

The field of alumni relations developed to a point where professionals involved in alumni work came together to share ideas. Those meetings occurred at The Ohio State University in 1913 (Webb, 1998). While the gathering was informal, it is considered to be the beginning of the Association of Alumni Secretaries (Webb, 1998). A second conference was held later that year at the University of Chicago to further expand upon discussions from the meeting in Ohio; speakers emphasized the importance of alumni relations, as well as the

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need to develop a philosophy to guide practice in the field of alumni relations (Webb, 1998).

Even at these early meetings of alumni secretaries, as they were called at the time, the practitioners argued about whether alumni associations functioned best as independent or dependent entities (Webb, 1998). Some felt that alumni associations should be financially independent, with their own governing boards, because alumni would feel more ownership in this type of association. However, others believed that alumni programs should be dependent on and connected to the institution to ensure that the needs of the alumni, as well as those of the institution, were being met. They also exchanged ideas regarding the components of alumni programming that included "…establishing a plan of continuous development through education…, facilitating a plan through publications…, providing an opportunity for the graduates to return to campus to attend lectures…, creating the opportunity to be appointed to an advisory board of a department" (Webb, 1998, p. 221). These meetings of alumni secretaries constituted the beginnings of a clearer direction and purpose for alumni programs beyond the newsletters and magazine, directory maintenance, and the alumni fund.

At some point in time after the first meeting of the Association of Alumni Secretaries at The Ohio State University in 1913, the editors of alumni magazines formed their own organization, called the Alumni Magazine Associated, in 1918 (Webb, 1998). The literature does not record a reason for this separation of alumni editors from alumni secretaries. Then, in 1919, the

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Association of Alumnae Secretaries was founded to represent alumnae activities for women's colleges; again, no explanation can be found to explain why this occurred. Then, after only two years of operating as its own group, the Association of Alumnae Secretaries agreed to join the Association of Alumni Secretaries (Webb, 1998). Evidently, members of the alumnae secretaries' organization decided that they would benefit more from being able to communicate with a larger group of alumni secretaries. However, the alumni fund professionals separated from the Association of Alumni Secretaries in 1925 to form the Association of Alumni Funds and, again, no specific reason for this separation could be found. The early 1900s proved to be a time of constant fluctuation and change among alumni practitioners and their organizations; it was almost like alumni practitioners did not know where they belonged or perhaps they could not agree on the kind of organization that would best suit their individual and professional needs (Webb, 1998).

The next major shift in the alumni movement came in 1927 when the Alumni Magazine Associated, the Association of Alumni Secretaries, and the Association of Alumni Funds consolidated to become the American Alumni Council (Webb, 1998). The American Alumni Council's name allowed for an all-inclusive group of the alumni secretaries, alumni fund professionals, and the alumni editors. Perhaps alumni professionals realized the benefits of having input from various specialized functional areas; they also may have recognized that the council would be more effective if all three groups were combined into a stronger whole. In the following thirty years, the council diligently addressed issues of importance

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and defined goals for those working in alumni relations, such as developing continuing education programs to keep alumni involved with the institutions as lifelong learners (Webb, 1998).

In 1958 a pivotal event in advancement history occurred when the Ford Foundation awarded a grant to the American College Public Relations Association (ACPRA) and the American Alumni Council (AAC). The purpose of the grant was to determine ways for fund raising and public relations professionals to assist university presidents in advancing higher education institutions. With the grant funding, the two groups met in Greenbrier, Virginia, where attendees discussed current issues in public relations, fund raising, alumni activity and institutional development, and how these program areas could be organized on the individual campuses for improved effectiveness and efficiency (Webb, 1998; Worth, 1993). The institutional advancement professionals agreed that the optimal organizational structure at the campus level would be to have a chief advancement officer to oversee operations within the public relations, fund raising/development, and alumni relations programs (Worth, 1993). Having the institutional advancement programs organized under one administrator would enable the professionals to communicate with one another and coordinate efforts to advance the institution.

In addition to discussing organizational structure, the professionals at the Greenbrier Conference developed a list of five objectives for alumni relations programs: a) to encourage alumni to continue their relationship with the university, b) to obtain alumni support for constructive endeavors involving the

institution, c) to solicit criticisms and opinions from the alumni regarding the institution and its policies, d) to help the institution offer continuing education for alumni and encourage participation, and e) to facilitate the development of a sense of responsibility to the university, as well as to higher education in general, among alumni (Webb, 1998). These objectives continue into the present to guide programming for alumni relations administrators.

Sixteen years after the Greenbrier conference, in 1974, the American College Public Relations Association (ACPRA) and the American Alumni Council (AAC) merged creating the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) (Worth, 2002). Public relations and alumni relations professionals determined that a merger would strengthen the organization and allow for increased communication and more effective collaborations. Now, over thirty years later, CASE continues to be the primary association for professionals working in the institutional advancement area. Worth (1993) acknowledged that a single "all-encompassing" association for institutional advancement does not exist; however, he cited CASE as the "strongest candidate" (p. 371). CASE seeks to stimulate change by providing conferences, training, publications, and networking opportunities to its members (About advancement, n.d.). Additionally, the association recognizes professionals who have created innovative programs on individual campuses and awards grants to those researching topics related to institutional advancement. The primary source of literature related to alumni relations comes from CASE and its members (Worth, 1993).

Organizational Effectiveness Theory

Part of the difficulty with developing comprehensive evaluation tools for effectiveness in alumni relations is that organizations define effectiveness in numerous ways depending upon the mission, values, and goals of the organization. For a manufacturing company, effectiveness could be measured in terms of increased production rates at reduced manufacturing costs. Institutions of higher education that define effectiveness as increased student satisfaction could assess effectiveness through student satisfaction surveys, student persistence rates, or degrees awarded. Each organization must determine which combination of evaluation methods best meets the needs of the particular company or institution in order to provide a clear picture of organizational effectiveness. Regardless of how organizations measure performance, the fact remains that in an era of accountability, all organizations must evaluate their effectiveness in some way. Therefore, organizational effectiveness theories are examined here in order to understand potential models for measuring effectiveness.

Barnard (1938) defined organizational effectiveness as "an organizational action is effective when a desired end is attained" (p. 19). However, defining organizational effectiveness cannot be simplistic due to the complexity of the construct. Some theorists also suggested effectiveness encompasses multiple criteria rather than a single concept or definition (Tsui, 1990; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). These criteria are discussed in the following paragraphs.

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Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) discussed generic organizational effectiveness criteria. They believed that four criteria could "apply equally well to large or small and profit or not-for-profit organizations...Moreover, the four effectiveness criteria can be used in various combinations" (p. 631). The criteria to which they referred were goal accomplishment, resource acquisition, internal processes, and strategic constituencies satisfaction.

- Goal accomplishment is measured by whether the organization meets or exceeds its goals; this is the most widely used measurement for effectiveness.

- A second criterion is resource acquisition, which is simply assessed by the organization's ability to acquire resources for its purposes.

- Internal processes represent another effectiveness measurement looking at how information flows within the organization and factors relating to employee commitment and job satisfaction.

- The satisfaction of strategic constituencies is a criterion for organizational effectiveness, and it is determined by assessing satisfaction of key stakeholders.

Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) emphasized that "well-managed organizations mix and match effectiveness criteria to fit the unique requirements of the situation" (p. 634).

Daft (2001) explained organizational effectiveness by dividing the various approaches into two groups: contingency effectiveness and balanced effectiveness. When organizations focus upon specific parts of the organization

to measure effectiveness, they use contingency effectiveness approaches, which include the goal approach, resource-based approach, and internal process approach (Daft, 2001). All three of these approaches are similar to the effectiveness criteria presented by Kreitner and Kinicki (2001) and discussed above. While contingency effectiveness approaches can be useful to organizations, Daft (2001) stated that the balanced effectiveness approaches "combine several indicators of effectiveness into a single framework" resulting in additional information for administrators (p. 69). In the balanced effectiveness category, Daft (2001) included the stakeholder approach and the competing values approach. The stakeholder approach is akin to Kreitner and Kinicki's (2001) strategic constituencies satisfaction criterion. Daft (2001) incorporated the stakeholder approach in the balanced effectiveness category because organizations must balance the interests of numerous stakeholders. Overall, the stakeholder approach measures effectiveness by first identifying stakeholders for the organization and then determining what aspects are of most importance for these individuals.

The competing values approach to organizational effectiveness that Daft (2001) discussed as one of the balanced effectiveness approaches was developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983), who recognized that many organizational theorists were becoming increasingly disillusioned with the construct of effectiveness. The reason for this disillusionment was that no clear definitions were available and multiple organizational effectiveness criteria existed. Consequently, the research team designed a study for the specific

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purpose of developing a framework for the analysis of organizational effectiveness.

In the initial phase of Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) study, the researchers asked seven organizational experts "to reduce and organize" certain organizational effectiveness criteria (p. 366). Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) used Campbell's (1977) list of thirty indices of organizational effectiveness as the criteria in their study for the following reasons:

> First, it was generated by a major review of the relevant literature with the stated intent of providing a comprehensive compilation of effectiveness criteria. Furthermore, the list of indices was supplemented with generally explicit definitions of each particular term or phrase. Finally, Campbell's paper which contains the list had become a widely cited article in the literature on organizational effectiveness and, therefore, the list was increasingly the focus of attention. (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983, pp. 365-366)

Campbell's (1977) list of thirty indices included organizational effectiveness criteria, such as productivity, efficiency, quality, job satisfaction, morale, planning and goal setting, and participation and shared influence. To reduce and organize the criteria, the seven experts were asked to eliminate organizational effectiveness criteria that were "not at the organizational level of analysis; not a singular index but a composite of several criteria; not a construct but a particular operationalization; or not a criterion of organizational performance" (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983, p. 366). Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) reported that the

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experts eliminated thirteen of the thirty criteria, leaving seventeen criteria to be evaluated in the next phase of the study.

During the second stage of the study, the researchers asked the experts to rate the performance indicators for similarity (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Daft, 2001). The results of the ratings demonstrated that the organizational effectiveness experts viewed effectiveness differently depending upon three dimensions: structure, focus, and means and ends (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Since the initial study involved only seven organizational experts, Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) replicated the study "with a larger, more diverse group of active organizational theorists and researchers. The criterion for selecting such a participant group was their publishing at least one study in *Administrative Science Quarterly* during a two-year period prior to the initiation of the primary study" (p. 368). The researchers identified forty-five organizational experts who were willing to participate in the study. The participants again rated the performance indicators for similarity, and the same three dimensions of structure, focus, and means and ends were identified (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983).

Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) study showed that organizational effectiveness experts viewed effectiveness values/criteria differently according to three dimensions. The first dimension identified by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) was structure. Structure referred to how an organization operated, on a continuum between flexible and controlled. An example of a controlled organizational structure would be the military with its specific order and rank,

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while an advertising firm might have more fluid reporting lines and a flexible structure.

The second dimension was focus, which can be viewed as a continuum between internal and external factors. Focus referred to how organizations viewed the need for attention to internal versus external areas and, as a result, placed its energy in that area. For example, some organizations emphasize internal well-being, such as human resource development and employee satisfaction, while others concentrate on external considerations, such as customer satisfaction. An organization that is young and seeking to establish itself could decide to focus more externally, while an older organization with an established client base might focus internally in order to maintain quality employees.

Finally, the third dimension was means and ends, which referred to whether organizations emphasized processes or outcomes. Examples of processes are strategic planning and goal setting, while outcomes are the organization's productivity rates and efficiency. Again, this dimension can be viewed as a continuum. Universities could be viewed as emphasizing processes such as strategic planning and goal setting, while businesses might stress outcomes such as productivity, profit, and efficiency. Likewise, university and/or business leaders could concentrate their efforts on processes and outcomes equally by developing strategic plans with measurable goals.

Using Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) findings, the effectiveness values of organizations are likely to be different depending on where organizations fit along

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the continuums of the three dimensions of structure, focus, and means and ends. In other words, organizational leaders could define and measure their organization's performance using different effectiveness criteria. Overall, these three dimensions combine to shape four models of effectiveness: human relations, open systems, internal process, and rational goal (see Figure 1) (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Daft, 2001).

Each of the four models embodies specific organizational effectiveness values, as organizational leaders value outcomes differently. For example, one organizational leader could value productivity and efficiency more than human resource development, while another administrator in a similar situation could value these outcomes equally. Effectiveness values refer to what organizational leaders hold as most important to their organizations' performance and success; the importance of effectiveness values lies in the fact that by knowing what leaders value, organizations can develop measures to evaluate those specific values deemed most important.

From their work, Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) were able to generate four models of effectiveness values. The first was the human relations model, which emphasized flexible structure and internal focus. An administrator with these values would be most concerned with human resource development, such as offering training for employees and team-building activities. The second model, called open systems, stressed flexible structure and external focus. Organizations that value open systems see growth and resource acquisition as priorities. The internal process model was the third model with controlled

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structure and internal focus. Administrators who value stability and communication would advocate for this model. The last model was rational goal, which emphasized values of controlled structure and external focus. Profit, productiyty, and efficiency are highly important for administrators in this setting, with strategic planning and identified goals in place (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Daft, 2001).

Figure 1. Four Models of Effectiveness Values (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983)

STRUCTURE

Human Relations Model Goal values: human resource development Subgoals: cohesion, morale, training	Flexibility	Open Systems Model Goal values: growth, resource acquisition Subgoals: flexibility, readiness, external evaluation

FOCUS   Internal   External

Internal Process Model Goal values: stability, equilibrium Subgoals: information management, communication		Rational Goal Model Goal values: productivity, efficiency, profit Subgoals: planning, goal setting

Control

The importance of Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) work for the current research project was that they found organizations to possess a number of effectiveness values that differed depending on three dimensions. Organizations can operate using a combination of the competing values, even though some of the dimensions may seem mutually exclusive or paradoxical, because the dimensions can be viewed as a continuum. In fact, Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983)

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suggested that organizations must combine the approaches in order to gain a clear picture of organizational effectiveness. For example, university administrators might view their organizations as a combination of the internal process model and the rational goal model due to the controlled structure inherent in the university environment and university leaders who focus both internally and externally. In such a case, university leaders would need to measure effectiveness with both internal and external constituents. While administrators do not need to fully understand the differences between Quinn and Rohrbaugh's (1983) models, it is important for organizational leaders to determine the appropriate mix of effectiveness measures and criteria that best fits the individual organization and its values (Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Daft, 2001; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001).

Organizational effectiveness is a complex concept for which no single theory or approach exists, in part because organizations differ greatly. Leaders characterize effectiveness differently depending upon the mission, values, and goals of organizations. Additionally, Quinn (1988) suggested that the leadership skills of organizational leaders and the actions that they take can impact the organization's performance. The values of organizations change as the members change, and some values are emphasized more in certain types of organizations than others. Organizational stakeholders demand accountability; universities experience similar demands (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 1999; Engelkemeyer, 2004; Heller, 2001). Therefore, administrators within the university environment,

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including alumni relations administrators, need to determine how they will measure effectiveness in order to respond to accountability initiatives.

Overall, the process of defining, measuring, and modeling effectiveness is important to undertake so that leaders can account for organizational performance. No evaluation or assessment instrument will fit all types of organizations. Thus, it is necessary to consider different models of effectiveness in order to develop comprehensive evaluation methods.

Program Evaluation

Evaluation is a critical examination of components within a program for the purpose of improving that program (Cronbach, 1980; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991). Assessments occur in well-established programs, as well as in recently implemented programs (Cronbach, 1980; Shadish, Cook, & Leviton, 1991; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Moreover, program evaluations can be conducted internally by staff members or through external evaluators. Evaluations typically focus on one or more of five areas: needs assessment, program theory, program implementation, outcomes, and efficiency assessment (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999).

By examining programs, a needs assessment assists program managers in determining whether a new program is needed. In alumni relations, the staff could use alumni surveys to help evaluate current programs in addition to gaining ideas of new programs that alumni believe would be beneficial. Another type of evaluation is program theory evaluation, which "answers questions about the

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conceptualization and design of a program" (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999, p. 36). Program theory evaluation could be used by alumni program managers to determine the best way to deliver services and to decide on organizational and resource needs for a program. A discussion among staff members regarding the reasons for establishing a program could serve as an informal program theory evaluation.

A third type of evaluation is an assessment of program implementation, which addresses program operations as well as service delivery and, when conducted on an ongoing basis, is referred to as program monitoring. Again, alumni leaders could use surveys to assist with program monitoring by asking alumni if they are satisfied with the services offered. Additionally, alumni leaders can monitor programs by tracking alumni who are involved with the institution in some way and/or those who attend events. A fourth type of program evaluation is an outcomes evaluation, which provides information about the impact of a specific program. Outcomes can be used to identify whether the program objectives were met; this type of evaluation is useful to alumni leaders who have annual plans with specific goals and objectives.

The final type of evaluation is an efficiency assessment, which "answers questions about program costs in comparison to either the monetary value of its benefits or its effectiveness in terms of the changes brought about" by the program (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999, p. 36). An efficiency assessment, also known as cost-benefit analysis, can be used to determine whether resources were used efficiently and if the cost of a program was "reasonable in relation to

the magnitude of the benefits" (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999, p. 88). Alumni administrators and staff need to discuss how they will know whether program costs were reasonable; this conversation is important in order to provide the best array of services to alumni because if resources are wasted in an environment of increasing accountability, those same resources might not be available in the future.

The main objective of program evaluations is to provide an organization with information and data that allows leaders to identify the types of programs that are needed, and to focus on ways to improve programs by comprehensively assessing and modifying programs to improve outcomes (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Moreover, program evaluations assist institutional leaders in their efforts to distinguish "worthwhile programs from ineffective ones and launch new programs or revise existing ones so as to achieve certain desirable results" (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999, p. 4). Currently, alumni administrators tend to make decisions about whether programs are needed by surveying alumni or conducting focus groups (Strange & Hecht, 1999; Pearson, 1999). However, once a program had been implemented, the alumni relations literature did not report on how the program was monitored, on whether the impact of the program was measured, on how the cost-benefit of a program was analyzed, nor was there discussion in the literature about how program goals were influenced by evaluations. This lack of assessment will place alumni organizations at a disadvantage in the competition for institutional resources, particularly in those environments where decision making and resource allocation are data driven.

Program evaluation is an important tool that may have worthwhile applications for alumni relations administrators. A number of evaluation methods, including needs assessment, program implementation assessment, outcomes assessment, and efficiency assessment, might be useful in assessing programs. These four types of evaluations provide valuable information to alumni administrators concerning whether a program is needed, how well a program has been implemented, what kind of impact a program is having, and whether a program's costs are worth the benefits received. Evaluations can be conducted by external evaluators or by using program staff; however, alumni administrators could find that internal evaluations conducted on a regular basis are more beneficial to the alumni relations programs than external evaluations since external evaluations are more costly and completed less frequently (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Regardless of the methods used to conduct program evaluations, these types of assessments can assist in measuring current programs and the need for additional services.

Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

Arnold (2003) stated that much of the published research in the area of institutional advancement focused on development rather than alumni relations. The existing literature on alumni relations mainly discussed alumni as donors and information sources (Arnold, 2003; Pettit & Litten, 1999; Jacobson, 1990). Hence, the literature that investigated the effectiveness of alumni relations programs was limited and the majority was institutionally-specific with an emphasis on alumni

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and/or student satisfaction, as well as motivating factors for alumni participation and giving (Strange & Hecht, 1999; Regan, 2002; van Nostrand, 2003).

Referring back to the organizational effectiveness literature, the research regarding effectiveness in alumni relations focused primarily on what organizational theorists identified as strategic constituencies satisfaction or the stakeholder approach (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Daft, 2001; Strange & Hecht, 1999; Pearson, 1999). Some could argue that alumni relations leaders have a limited view if they only consider alumni to be key stakeholders since the host institution seems to be a key stakeholder as well. Strange and Hecht (1999), as well as Pearson (1999), discussed measuring effectiveness in alumni relations but focused solely on alumni satisfaction and factors that motivated alumni to participate in programs and give back to their institutions. Overall, the researcher was unable to find literature that assessed alumni relations programs' goal accomplishment, resource acquisition, or internal processes, and only three of the publications, discussed later in this section, recognized the need for comprehensive evaluation, looking at several aspects of alumni relations programs (Brant, 2002; Calvert, 2003; van Nostrand, 2003).

In 1998, the Association for Institutional Research (AIR) and CASE collaborated to identify researchers currently investigating topics related to alumni relations and invited those researchers to present findings at the first AIR-CASE Conference on Alumni Research (Pettit & Litten, 1999). CASE later compiled summaries of the AIR-CASE conference papers that included responses from conference participants; the resulting publication was entitled,

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Research in Alumni Relations: Surveying Alumni to Improve Your Programs

(Shoemaker, 1999). The majority of the research presented at the AIR-CASE conference focused on surveying alumni to obtain information regarding institutional quality and satisfaction with the undergraduate experience. Only two papers at the AIR-CASE conference specifically addressed the issue of evaluating alumni relations programs. Strange and Hecht (1999) explained the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) Alumni Association board's process for strategically planning alumni programming. The board wanted to improve programming and involvement opportunities at MIT for alumni and determined that the best method for discovering strengths and weaknesses in alumni programming was to ask the alumni themselves.

The alumni association retained an outside market research firm to conduct telephone surveys with a representational sample of MIT alumni; a total of 252 were interviewed (Strange & Hecht, 1999). The survey included questions pertaining to the association's current services, programs being developed, and suggestions for new involvement opportunities (Strange & Hecht, 1999). Using the survey results, the alumni organization adjusted its programming to better respond to the interests of alumni. Examples of program changes included "a major reallocation of staff and budget resources...staff members were freed up to investigate computer-based service opportunities, to work on career and professional support services, and to develop a more robust lifelong learning program" (Collins, Hecht, & Strange, 1999, p. 30).

The survey enabled MIT's alumni association to gain additional understanding of its alumni constituency. This information assisted the alumni association in developing programs and services that alumni would be more likely to use and could, in turn, encourage alumni to remain connected with the university. For example, one of the services developed following the survey was the World Wide Web Alumni Network Services (ANS) program that provided alumni with a permanent email address and online alumni directory (Collins, Hecht, & Strange, 1999). Additionally, MIT launched a career services program, called the Institute Career Assistance Network, which provided alumni with mentors, as well as opportunities for professional career support via the internet. Finally, the alumni association started "MIT on the Road," a lifelong learning program that offered conferences and seminars in various locations throughout the United States and the world (Collins, Hecht, & Strange, 1999). All of these newly implemented services and programs were designed to better serve alumni by incorporating survey responses and making program changes and additions.

In addition to the MIT Alumni Association's evaluation, a Stanford researcher conducted a study on alumni relationships. Following the conclusion of a comprehensive capital campaign in 1992, leaders of the institutional advancement division were "disappointed at the minimal amount of unrestricted funds at the president's disposal and...dissatisfied that Stanford lacked a strong tradition of annual giving" (Pearson, 1999, p. 5). University fund raisers commonly solicited alumni for annual giving donations in order to establish a habit of giving; however, "only twenty-five percent of undergraduate degree

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holders made a gift to Stanford's annual fund in 1993" (Pearson, 1999, p. 6).

Thus, the research study examined undergraduate alumni giving, specifically

"why most alumni do not make gifts" (Pearson, 1999, p. 7).

The Stanford researcher used focus groups and telephone surveys of alumni

to measure "aspects of alumni awareness, perceptions, and attitudes" and to test

"a wide range of fundraising messages" (Pearson, 1999, p. 7). The study's

results suggested that alumni who had strong relationships with Stanford were

more inclined to make financial contributions to the university. However, the

study also demonstrated that "perceptions of low need and lack of impact [were]

the primary deterrents for all Stanford alumni" as an explanation for why they

chose not to give (Pearson, 1999, p. 10).

While the focus of this research study was to discover measures of

effectiveness for alumni relations using criteria other than alumni giving, the

Stanford study was included here because one of the findings is important for all

areas of institutional advancement, including alumni relations. Pearson (1999)

cited, "The relationship that alumni have with the university begins with their

experience as students and, not surprisingly, satisfaction with the student

experience is the single most essential precondition for giving" (p. 7).

Conceivably the student experience impacts more than just giving; it also affects

alumni's willingness to become involved and maintain a relationship with the

institution. If this is the case, then developing ways to ensure satisfactory student

experiences could prove to be beneficial to the university in the future.

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Another relevant finding from Stanford's study was that "one can be satisfied with one's alma mater and still not make a gift to it. Giving is influenced also by the quality of alumni relations and communications, the perceived need of the institution, and the messages conveyed in solicitations" (Pearson, 1999, p. 8). Understanding that several issues impact giving helps to build the argument for comprehensive evaluation methods of alumni relations programs rather than solely measuring effectiveness according to an institution's alumni giving percentage. Moreover, the Stanford project demonstrated the importance of building relationships with students while they are attending the university and developing fund raising messages that resonate with alumni by showing institutional need and opportunities for greater impact.

Stanford also conducted research regarding online services for alumni, as well as a study that looked at strategic constituency satisfaction. Again, focus groups of alumni were used to "understand the underlying benefits they want" for email and web services (Pearson, 1999, p. 13). The study's results showed that alumni wanted connectedness with other alumni and the university, awareness of current campus happenings, access to institutional resources, career networking, and continuing education. Moreover, alumni did not feel that having a website was enough; instead Stanford's alumni preferred "push techniques" such as using email subscription lists to communicate with and inform alumni (Pearson, 1999, p. 13).

The focus group participants in the Stanford study also commented that the information communicated through email subscription lists should be brief, timely,

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only as frequent as necessary, and should include information on how to unsubscribe. Overall, Stanford researchers discovered that online services were valued by alumni and could be useful in building "a more informed, engaged, and supportive alumni community" (Pearson, 1999, p. 16). This study of online services at Stanford provided another example of methods alumni relations programs could use to improve programming, thereby leading to more effective programs.

Universities, such as Stanford and MIT, chose to gather information from alumni with the explicit purpose of increasing satisfaction with programs, benefits, and services. However, one university conducted a study using an alternative approach in order to explore the student-university experience and how it impacted future relationships with the institution, especially alumni involvement and participation. This study, reported by McAlexander and Koenig (2001), was conducted at a large western university where 481 alumni were surveyed via telephone asking "a series of questions concerning their feelings about the university's tradition and history, interactions with faculty and peers, activities they participated in during their years at West U., and attitudes toward future participation (e.g., alumni groups)" (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001, p. 27). The findings included: alumni's current relationships with the institution were "influenced strongly" by the relationships formed while students and by the experiences they had at the university; their present relationships with the institution strongly influenced their current behavior, such as wearing university labeled clothing and showing pride in the university; and, their present

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relationships strongly influenced their intentions for future involvement and participation with the university (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001, pp. 35-36).

While western university's findings may seem to be common sense, the results demonstrated the importance of creating opportunities for students to develop relationships with the institution by relating to people on campus, such as faculty members, advisors, and professionals working in student affairs. McAlexander and Koenig (2001) suggested some ways to build these student-college and alumni relationships: "consider allocating tight budgetary resources...to investments in 'student life;" make efforts "to develop programs that involve faculty, advisors, and other important members of the institution with students," such as through student mentoring; and "encourage the participation of key relationship partners (e.g., faculty and advisors) at alumni functions" (pp. 38-39). Overall, western university's research further supported the need for positive engagement opportunities for students and institutional representatives, as well as for alumni and university staff, in order to build lasting relationships that result in future alumni participation and involvement.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) recognized the need for a tool to evaluate alumni relations programs and established the Commission on Alumni Relations (COAR) to assess this issue further ("For Good Measure," 1996; Brant, 2002). The commission set out to develop an instrument, called the Alumni Support Index (ASI), later renamed the Alumni Relations Benchmarking Tool (ARBT) ("For Good Measure," 1996; Brant, 2002). Calvert (2000) explained that the ARBT provided "a database of comprehensive and

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comparative information on alumni programs that strengthens the way in which we measure the institutional effects of our programs" (p. 43). The purpose of the ARBT was to "(a) measure an individual institution's alumni program, (b) compare institutions, and (c) assess 'reputation' measurements through minisurveys of alumni" (Calvert, 2003). Additionally, the ARBT measured data from other program areas, such as development, that should improve if the alumni office did its job well (Calvert, 2000).

Brant (2002) reported that the ARBT was an "underused tool" that continued to be reevaluated and improved by CASE (p. 24). Reasons explaining why the ARBT was not used by CASE members were posted on CASE's listserv. The respondents generally agreed that the ARBT was not as useful as it could be because, as one member noted, "CASE has created a Benchmarking database, but my challenge is it is tied more to giving amounts verses true Alumni Programming" (Beets, 2004). Beets did not define what "true Alumni Programming" meant, but one might guess that he was referring to such activities as homecoming, class reunions, career networks, and other relationship building alumni involvement opportunities.

Currently, CASE is working to revise the benchmarking tool so that it will better meet the needs of alumni administrators. Nonetheless, the ARBT provided alumni relations leaders with an attempt at comprehensive evaluation of alumni programs. The ARBT recognized that alumni relations programs needed to be evaluated in additional ways than solely by alumni satisfaction surveys.

Another group working to develop a comprehensive evaluation of alumni programs was the Private College and University Alumni Directors (PCUAD), which was in the process of beta testing a benchmarking instrument for their group of thirty-five member institutions during 2003 (Calvert, 2003). The Private College and University Alumni Directors (PCUAD) have developed a benchmarking tool "that captures and rationalizes the alumni activities of individual campuses and aims to set a 'national standard' for overall alumni programs at medium-sized private universities" (Calvert, 2003, p. 178). The data collected will enable the alumni administrators in PCUAD to gauge where their programs fit compared to others with similar characteristics. Although no studies have been published, the researcher contacted one of the alumni administrators working on the project (personal communication, February 10, 2004). The alumni administrator was willing to discuss the PCUAD group's work and put the researcher in contact with three alumni professionals working on the project.

Only members of PCUAD and authorized guests were allowed access to the online benchmarking tool; however, after a series of email exchanges, the researcher was allowed access to the PCUAD's online benchmarking tool. The PCUAD's benchmarking tool was designed to collect data covering twenty-seven categories from alumni administrators at the thirty-five PCUAD member institutions. Examples of the twenty-seven categories covered were alumni board, regional programs, alumni continuing education, senior administration partnerships, and organizational management. Overall, the benchmarking tool encompassed areas of organizational effectiveness by assisting alumni

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administrators in the measurement of goal accomplishment, resource acquisition, and internal processes (Daft, 2001; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001). Examples of survey items included how many board of directors the alumni association had, how many regional programs the alumni program offered, and what types of senior administration partnerships had been formed between the alumni director and other administrators on campus.

The alumni administrators involved with the PCUAD project hoped to offer their members an effective online tool that showed how alumni programs compared information that could be useful when meeting with institutional presidents to demonstrate how alumni programs measured up to programs at similar campuses. While the PCUAD's benchmarking tool was in the initial stages of implementation, eventually PCUAD intended for directors from different types of institutions to be able to adapt the model for their own purposes. Also, the PCUAD group suggested that the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) might find this model useful as they work to develop an effectiveness measure for all areas of institutional advancement (Calvert, 2003).

A Canadian researcher, van Nostrand, also addressed the need for program evaluation in the area of institutional advancement. Van Nostrand (2003) argued that alumni relations, development, and public relations programs were interconnected and should not be evaluated on a separate basis. He designed a model that quantified the effectiveness of advancement programs at Upper Canada College. From survey data collected in a census of Upper Canada College alumni in 1999-2000, van Nostrand (2003) created five indices that

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evaluated the "effectiveness of the relationship with key off-campus audiences" (p. 169). The indices included the Student Experience Index, the Reputational Index, the Connectivity Index, the Participation Index, and the Donor Index (pp. 169-170). The student experience index measured satisfaction level of overall student experience by asking alumni to rate various aspects of college life, such as social experience, interaction with program faculty, and so forth, while the reputational index "reflect[ed] how positively or negatively alumni feel about their alma mater today" (van Nostrand, 2003, p. 171). The connectivity index evaluated whether the university's constituents felt "informed about and connected to the school" whereas the participation index assessed active involvement of the constituents in the life of the university (van Nostrand, 2003, p. 171). Finally, the donor index "represent[ed] the degree of philanthropic connection that the audience has with the school" (van Nostrand, 2003, p. 173).

Using these indices and data from the census, van Nostrand (2003) believed that the institutional advancement staff was able to objectively and methodically determine the effectiveness of the advancement programs at Upper Canada College. Advancement programs and staff were evaluated by the following measures:

- total receipted annual revenue
- private giving expectations (deferred gifts and pledges)
- donor participation rating for key constituency groups (alumni, parents, employees)

- program satisfaction ratings for each program (publications, events, services, donors)

- percentage of engaged and active alumni (as drawn from the participation index) and parents

- percentage of ambassador alumni (as drawn from the reputational index) and parents

- percentage of connected alumni (as drawn from the connectivity index) and parents

- overall advancement staff satisfaction ratings (van Nostrand, 2003, p. 176)

The census at Upper Canada College was repeated every three years allowing the advancement division to formally measure its performance and determine how well the programs were achieving their missions.

Van Nostrand's (2003) model was the most closely aligned to the competing values approach of analyzing organizational effectiveness that was developed by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) discussed previously. The advancement program managers at Upper Canada College recognized the importance of evaluating several areas of effectiveness, such as external and internal satisfaction, in addition to outcomes. The instrument measured external satisfaction through the student experience index, reputational index, connectivity index, participation index, and donor index. Internal satisfaction was evaluated by the advancement staff satisfaction ratings, while outcomes were assessed through the total receipted annual revenue and private giving expectations. While van Nostrand's (2003) model encompassed advancement programs as a whole, the model

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provided an example that alumni administrators could adjust to fit their own programming.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher discussed institutional advancement and its three primary program areas: development, public relations, and alumni relations. Additionally, the historical context of alumni relations was detailed to explain why alumni relations programs developed in the United States. Moreover, organizational effectiveness theory and program evaluation were addressed to provide a foundation for the researcher's discussion of current literature related to measuring effectiveness in alumni relations.

While some professionals (Calvert, 2003; van Nostrand, 2003) in the alumni relations and institutional advancement communities were developing evaluation and measurement tools for their individual universities and peer groups, others seemed to want direction on how to develop and implement evaluation measures within their programs (Brant, 2002; Regan, 2002). Daft (2001), Kreitner and Kinicki (2001), and Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) suggested that organizational leaders should determine the appropriate mix of effectiveness measures and criteria that best fits the individual organization and its values. Furthermore, administrators could combine the approaches and use a variety of measures, including program evaluation, in order to gain a clear picture of organizational effectiveness.

Following a review of organizational effectiveness and program evaluation literature, the researcher focused on surveying existing literature in the area of measuring organizational effectiveness in alumni relations. The literature that investigated the effectiveness of alumni relations programs was limited and much of that literature was institutionally-specific with an emphasis on alumni and/or student satisfaction, as well as motivating factors for alumni participation and giving (Strange & Hecht, 1999; Regan, 2002; van Nostrand, 2003). However, one study, reported by McAlexander and Koenig (2001), explored the student-university experience and how it impacted future relationships with the institution, especially alumni involvement and participation. This study's findings demonstrated the importance of creating opportunities for students to develop relationships with the institution by relating to people on campus. Additionally, Pearson (1999) noted the importance of building relationships with students during their time on campus. While Pearson's (1999) article mainly discussed building relationships with students in order to increase alumni giving rates, it is plausible that the student experience could impact more than just giving; it also could affect alumni's willingness to become involved and maintain a relationship with the institution. Thus, both studies supported the belief that building lasting relationships with students could prove to be beneficial to the university in the future due to greater alumni participation and involvement.

One of the researcher's arguments for conducting this study, also supported by Brant (2002), Regan (2002), and Calvert (2003), was that alumni administrators were in need of additional methods for measuring effectiveness

besides alumni giving rates and alumni satisfaction. Calvert (2003) and van Nostrand (2003) reported on the measurement tools they had developed. While Calvert (2003) discussed a benchmarking tool that had been developed for a group of thirty-five peer institutions, van Nostrand (2003) detailed a model he developed to measure effectiveness in institutional advancement. Particularly interesting for the present research was the fact that the model addressed the student experience, as well as alumni connectivity. Hence, van Nostrand's (2003) study further supported the researcher's argument for additional measures of effectiveness in alumni relations. Overall, the literature reviewed for this research provided substantive evidence that alumni administrators had few comprehensive and consistent methods in place for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations.

Overview

In this study, the researcher explored how alumni relations administrators at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. This study specifically addressed questions regarding alumni administrators' definitions of effectiveness, measures of effectiveness, and views of responsibilities as well as contributing factors to effectiveness. To discover the answers to these questions, the researcher conducted a comparative case study. The following chapters provide a description of the study, the results, and the implications for future research.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the research methodology used throughout the study.

The researcher used qualitative case study research methods (Yin, 2003;

Merriam, 1998) to conduct comparative case studies at four public research

universities. As part of each case study, the researcher interviewed senior alumni

administrative officers regarding how they defined and measured program

effectiveness, collected various supporting documents, and made general

observations of the alumni offices/buildings.

The researcher guaranteed anonymity for the alumni administrators and the

universities in order to reduce the social risks involved in participating in such a

study. This study also focused on how alumni administrators viewed their

responsibilities, which led to discussions of alumni boards and university

administrations and the challenges associated with being accountable to two

entities; these conversations could place alumni administrators in difficult

positions if anonymity was not assured. Therefore, the investigator used fictional

names throughout the final report. The methodology for this study is described in

detail in the following sections.

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Design of the Study

The purpose of the study was to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. Miles and Huberman (1994) stated that qualitative data "often have been advocated as the best strategy for discovery, exploring a new area, developing hypotheses" (p. 10). Since little research had been conducted on effectiveness in alumni relations, and this study was exploratory in nature, a qualitative approach was deemed most appropriate.

Additionally, case study research is appropriate when the researcher seeks to a) define topics broadly and not narrowly, b) cover contextual conditions and not just the phenomenon of study, and c) rely on multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2003). By conducting interviews with alumni administrators and collecting supporting documents, the researcher was able to gain a broad view of alumni administrators' understanding of effectiveness and evaluation. Moreover, the researcher's observations of the alumni offices/buildings allowed some insight into the institutional value placed on serving the alumni population. Observing and collecting information from these multiple sources allowed for triangulation of the data, which means that the researcher used multiple sources of evidence to verify findings or common themes within the study (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

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Pilot Case Study

The researcher selected a convenient sample university as the site for the pilot case study. The chief alumni administrator at the university was contacted via email and asked to participate in the pilot case study; the administrator agreed and scheduled a site visit. The interview lasted approximately an hour and a half at the pilot site. While the university chosen for the pilot study did not meet the same selection criteria described later in this chapter, the pilot study allowed the researcher to practice interviewing an alumni administrator, receive feedback on the case study protocol, and refine and verify site visit processes (Yin, 2003). The researcher contacted the alumni administrator two weeks before the site visit with a list of the documents to be collected; however, the administrator did not have time to compile the documents before the visit, so the researcher returned three weeks after the site visit to retrieve the documents.

The investigator developed the interview questions based on an analysis of alumni relations and organizational effectiveness literature, the research questions guiding the study, and input received from other professional contacts. This process assisted with establishing content validity of the interview questions. The development of the interview questions will be discussed later in the section on instrumentation. The interview questions were judged to be both appropriate and comprehensive by the alumni administrator at the pilot site; therefore, only minor changes were made to the interview questions. During the subsequent case studies, the researcher asked each interviewee the same questions, adding questions when necessary for clarification (Merriam, 1998).

Overall, the researcher learned that the interviews with the alumni administrators might not be as lengthy as originally expected unless the other participants had more formal measurement methods in place. The researcher also realized that the tape recorder provided better sound quality when placed facing the alumni administrator. During the following site visits, the researcher allotted two and a half hours for the interviews and was cognizant of the recorder's placement.

Comparative Case Study

Selection of Case Study Participants

The researcher conducted comparative case studies with senior alumni administrative officers regarding the alumni organizations at four public research institutions following Yin's (2003) case study methods, which will be discussed in detail in a later section. Yin (2003) suggested that once the unit of analysis had been established, the next step was to define criteria pertaining to the selection of case study participants. Since the minimal research that existed regarding effectiveness in alumni relations involved private institutions, the researcher decided to study public universities as a way of contributing to the literature (Pearson, 1999; Strange & Hecht, 1999). The universities used in this study were purposefully selected based on the following criteria:

- alumni relations program or alumni association that receives 25% or greater of operating budget from host institution
- full-time student enrollment greater than 15,000

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- senior alumni administrative officer has worked in the field of alumni relations and at the institution where currently employed for more than two years during his/her career
- Carnegie classification of research extensive or research intensive
- willingness of senior alumni administrative officer to participate

Gaining Access

In order to gain access to these institutions, the researcher contacted a senior alumni administrative officer who was a member of the Council of Alumni Affairs Executives (CAAE). One of the researcher's coworkers suggested this administrator, an acquaintance of the coworker, because CAAE's membership included a number of senior alumni administrators from public research universities. This administrator helped the researcher gain access to alumni administrators at four public research universities by sending an introductory email to prospective participants identified by the researcher explaining the researcher's project and requesting their cooperation. The researcher waited four days before sending an email to each of the possible participants, providing information about herself and the reason she chose this topic of study. She also discussed the purpose of the study, time required of participants, and that anonymity would be maintained.

Each of the alumni administrators who received the researcher's email responded in a timely fashion, within a week to ten days. All four asked additional questions, mostly regarding the researcher's plan to collect documents. Originally, the researcher requested two hours for the interviews and a half day

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to gather and review documents in the alumni office either before or after the interviews. The investigator also asked the senior alumni administrative officers to have a person available to answer any questions about the documents. However, this process worked differently at each site visit with interviews ranging from an hour and fifteen minutes to almost two hours and document collection varying from the documents being available upon arrival to the researcher working with an administrative assistant to gather the documents on the day of the site visit. These processes will be explained in detail in the case study descriptions.

The alumni administrators also provided verification information via email regarding the selection criteria for the cases. Two of the administrators requested a telephone call to clarify the purpose of the study before they agreed to participate. The other two alumni administrators verified miscellaneous information and scheduling details via email. Approximately a month and a half from the time the alumni administrators had received the initial email, the researcher had confirmed participation of all four case sites and arranged site visit appointments.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a case study protocol (Yin, 2003) that included a complete list of interview questions and documents to be collected, as well as procedures for the case studies, such as items to bring and informed consent paperwork (see Appendix I). The researcher developed the interview questions

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based on alumni relations and organizational effectiveness literature, the research questions guiding the study, and input received from other professional contacts (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In order to develop a profile of the participants, the initial part of the interviews was devoted to gaining insight into the senior alumni administrative officers' backgrounds and leadership styles. The interview began with questions about the alumni administrators' educational and work histories (interview questions 1, 2). The researcher also wanted to explore how the alumni administrators viewed themselves as leaders (interview question 3). Quinn (1988) suggested that effective leaders demonstrated a variety of leadership skills that contributed to the overall performance of organizations. The actions of leaders impacted the organization's performance; therefore, researchers recommended considering administrators' leadership skills when measuring for effectiveness (Quinn, 1988; Smart, 2003).

The second portion of the interview focused on alumni administrators' definitions of effectiveness and their perceptions of how other campus administrators would define the concept (interview questions 4, 6, and 7). The researcher also asked the participants to identify the common factors that lead to effectiveness (interview question 5). As discussed previously, the alumni relations literature failed to clearly define effectiveness in alumni relations (Calvert, 2000; Brant, 2002). To address that concern, research questions were developed that explored how alumni administrators defined effectiveness and how they perceived other campus administrators defined effectiveness in alumni

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relations, as well as what they believed were the common factors that lead to effectiveness in alumni relations.

The third section of the interview explored measuring effectiveness and evaluating alumni relations (interview questions 8-13). The minimal existing literature that addressed measuring effectiveness of alumni relations programs focused on alumni satisfaction surveys, as well as institution-specific benchmarking tools (Strange & Hecht, 1999; Calvert, 2003; Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). One of the research questions guiding this study addressed how alumni administrators measured program effectiveness. For that reason, alumni administrators were asked how they measured effectiveness. In addition, they were requested to list three methods for measuring effectiveness (interview questions 8-10).

Additionally, the researcher wanted to determine if the alumni organization was evaluated on a regular basis by the university administration and/or alumni board, and if so, whether the organization received any incentives for improved effectiveness (interview questions 11, 12). This question was included because of the assumption that organizations evaluated on an annual basis would have administrators who were more motivated to measure and improve program effectiveness than those who were not evaluated. The third section of the interview ended with the researcher asking whether the alumni administrators discussed measuring or defining effectiveness with their alumni boards and/or university leadership. The researcher hoped to discover how much pressure was

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placed on alumni administrators to develop consistent measures of effectiveness (interview question 13).

The fourth section examined how alumni administrators viewed their responsibilities to alumni and the host institutions (interview questions 14-16). Brant (2002) discussed the differences among alumni relations programs, as each organization was particular to its institution. For example, some alumni leaders were very involved in the day to day operation of the institution because of involvements such as participating in university committees and meetings with senior campus administrators, whereas others considered themselves to be more outside entities dealing only with alumni issues. The level of involvement could be partially influenced by the alumni associations' status as dependent, interdependent, or independent, as well as the historical ties between the institutions and the associations, which could impact the roles the alumni administrators played at the universities. Therefore, the researcher wanted to explore how alumni administrators viewed their responsibilities (interview questions 14-16).

The final section of the interview explored factors that could contribute to effectiveness in alumni relations (interview questions 17-21). As discussed in chapter two, the literature addressed the organizational structure of alumni relations operations and the institutional advancement team; several of these sources stated that the typical institutional advancement model, that is, a chief advancement officer supervising the directors of public relations, development, alumni relations, was considered to be the most effective type of organizational

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structure because it allowed for increased collaboration and coordination (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The researcher wanted to explore how alumni administrators viewed the organizational structures of institutional advancement within their universities and what opportunities they had for collaboration with other campus administrators in order to help determine whether these factors contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations (interview questions 17, 18). To further the discussion of collaboration, the researcher inquired about the process used to track alumni following graduation (interview question 19). Alumni leaders typically collaborated with other university staff members in order to obtain student/graduate records. Moreover, alumni administrators coordinated with respective campus entities to facilitate alumni involvement in activities, such as student recruiting and legislative advocacy efforts (Worth, 2002; Webb, 1989; Tromble, 1998). Overall, the researcher wanted to explore how alumni administrators collaborated with other university departments and/or units.

Additionally, the researcher asked the alumni administrators to discuss the institutional culture at their respective universities and questioned whether they perceived that institutional culture impacted the alumni relations programs' effectiveness (interview questions 20, 21). Much of the literature in the area of alumni relations, as discussed in the previous chapter, spoke to the importance of the student experience as it enabled the university to begin building relationships with students that hopefully would continue after students graduated and became alumni (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

When students formed connections and developed a sense of loyalty to the

university during their time on campus, they were more likely to continue some

level of involvement with the institution, which was one way alumni relations

programs could measure effectiveness (McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

Therefore, the researcher wanted to explore the alumni administrators'

perceptions of institutional culture at their respective universities and discover

what impact they felt it had on their programs' effectiveness.

Data Sources and Collection

At the four public institutions that participated in the case studies, the

researcher conducted semi-structured formal interviews, asking the same

questions of each participant and adding questions for clarification as needed,

meeting with the senior alumni administrators in their campus offices (Merriam,

1998). The purpose of the interviews was to explore the following areas:

definitions of program effectiveness, factors that contributed to effectiveness in

alumni relations programs, measurement tools the programs used, and how

alumni administrators viewed their responsibilities to the host institutions and

alumni. The interviews averaged about one and a half hours each, and they were

tape recorded to aid validity and reliability of case study data.

At Central Research University, the President and CEO of the alumni

association arranged for additional meetings with the Vice President of

Membership and the Director of Business Information Systems. The information

gathered during these sessions mainly consisted of documents, which are

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discussed later in the findings section of this paper. In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected the following documents from each of the senior alumni administrators:

- Organizational charts for the alumni relations program and institutional advancement department

- Mission statement for the alumni relations program

- Annual plan and/or end of the year report for alumni relations

- Measurement and/or evaluation tools used in alumni relations

- Evaluation instruments for alumni programs created by university president or alumni board

- Agendas/minutes from alumni board meetings for the past year

- List of alumni board members

- Institutional definition of alumni

- Institutional data regarding number of alumni

- Contract defining relationship between the institution and the alumni organization (if applicable)

Each document served a specific purpose and provided supplementary evidence to the information collected during the interviews. The organizational charts provided evidence of the organizational structure and reporting lines for alumni administrators, which supplemented interview question 17. The mission statement enabled the researcher to gain insight into how the alumni administrators viewed the purpose of their organizations, as well as how the alumni organizations supported the institutions, which supplemented interview

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questions 14 and 15. The annual plan and/or end of the year report, measurement and/or evaluation tools, evaluation instrument for the program, and the agendas and minutes from alumni board meetings provided the researcher with insight regarding how alumni administrators evaluated their program areas and whether they discussed effectiveness or evaluation results with university administration or the alumni board, which supplemented interview questions 8 through 13.

Additionally, several miscellaneous documents were collected: lists of alumni board members in order to determine the size of alumni boards at the participating institutions; the definition of alumni for each institution and the institutional data on alumni in order to establish whether the programs differed in their terminology and how they kept track of their alumni; and finally, any contracts that the alumni relations program had with the institution in order to discover specific contractual terms and obligations that were unique to each case study site. The senior alumni administrators were provided with a list of requested documents prior to the site visits. All complied and provided the researcher with the majority of the documents. Two sites did not provide the following documents: Southern Research University did not provide an annual plan because although the director had worked at the institution for many years previously, he was new to the position of executive alumni director and a plan was not completed, and Central Research University provided an alumni association organizational chart instead of the institutional advancement organizational chart since the association was considered an independent entity.

All sites provided additional documents, such as alumni magazines and brochures.

Before conducting the site visits, alumni program websites for the four campuses were reviewed to gather background information. By doing this, the researcher began to achieve some understanding of the uniqueness of each campus. After the interviews, the researcher reviewed the alumni programs' websites again to make notes of information not collected during the interview or not contained within the documents provided. For example, the researcher noted the types of activities offered by each alumni program and other miscellaneous events, such as reunions and back to campus activities.

The researcher also noted observations in a research journal throughout the site visits (Yin, 2003). The notes included descriptions of the alumni office and building as well as impressions regarding the maintenance of the facilities. The researcher also made notes about initial themes that came to mind following the interviews. Overall, the researcher observed the general area of the alumni office and building for approximately one hour during each site visit. The purpose of the observations and fieldnotes was to provide supplementary material to the interviews, as well as an additional source of evidence, consistent with Yin's (2003) recommendation for collecting multiple sources of evidence, to triangulate for validity and reliability.

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Data Analysis

Yin (2003) recommended prior to collecting data that researchers determine

an analytic strategy, as well as analytic techniques, to be used throughout the

study. The researcher elected to use the analytic strategy of developing a case

description. "A descriptive framework for organizing the case study" was

developed because this approach fit with the explorative nature of the study (Yin,

2003, p. 114). The descriptive framework was based on the research questions

guiding the study, as well as the categories of the interview questions that were

developed. These categories were a profile of the interview participant, defining

effectiveness in alumni relations, measuring effectiveness and evaluating alumni

relations, alumni administrators' views of responsibilities, and contributing factors

of effectiveness.

With a general analytic strategy and methodology for structuring the study,

the next step was to determine the analytic techniques to be used. The

researcher opted to use Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework to begin the

data analysis process because it provided a structured approach to qualitative

data analysis. Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework initially was developed for

applied policy research; however, "the general principles of the approach have

proved to be versatile across a wide range of studies" (p. 306). Moreover, Ritchie

and Spencer (2002) explained that "qualitative data analysis is essentially about

detection, and the tasks of defining, categorizing, theorizing, explaining, exploring

and mapping are fundamental to the analyst's role" (p. 309). Consequently, the

framework was designed to assist researchers with qualitative data analysis by

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providing a structured process that systematically analyzes the data through a process of distinct, yet interconnected, stages (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). The five stages of data analysis that comprised the framework included "familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 312).

Familiarization

Familiarization was the first stage of the data analysis process where the researcher became immersed in the data for the purpose of becoming well acquainted with the information gathered (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). To begin the familiarization process, the researcher listened to the interview tapes within two to three weeks after the interviews. The sites were visited over a period of two months and transcription of all the interviews was completed by the end of the following month. Within a week of the site visits, the researcher also reviewed the collected documents in order to gain additional familiarity with each of the sites.

The researcher continued the familiarization stage by reviewing the typewritten interview transcripts to ensure that nothing was missed during the auditory review. The researcher also reviewed fieldnotes from the observations and compiled lists of the materials collected so that these documents could be referenced later in the data analysis process. Once a visual scan of the interview transcripts, the fieldnotes, and all of the documents had been completed, the researcher returned to examine each item and began to make marginal notes (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). During this process of familiarization, the researcher noted important issues and themes in

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the margins of the notes, transcripts, and documents, in addition to identifying and underlining key phrases. On each of the notes, transcripts and documents, the researcher noted main ideas, common themes, and important issues mentioned within the text (Yin, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Ritchie & Spencer, 2002).

Identifying a Thematic Framework

The second stage in the framework approach to data analysis was developing a thematic framework. The researcher returned to the data and began "to identify the key issues, concepts, and themes according to which the data [could] be examined and referenced" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 313). The process continued with the researcher setting up a thematic framework or index of key topics, issues, and themes that could be used to sift through and sort the data (see Appendix II). The researcher organized the thematic framework using the research questions as guides.

Ritchie and Spencer (2002) stated that initially the thematic framework or index was "often largely descriptive" and that "devising and refining a thematic framework is not an automatic or mechanical process, but involves both logical and intuitive thinking. It involves making judgments about meaning, about the relevance and importance of issues and about implicit connections between ideas" (p. 314). By applying the index to the notes, transcripts, and documents, the researcher refined the categories so that the index was useful for the subsequent data analysis stages (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002).

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Indexing

Indexing, which "refers to the process whereby the thematic framework or index is systematically applied to the data in their textual form," was the third stage of the framework approach (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 316). During this stage, each interview transcript was reviewed and descriptive index headings, taken from the thematic framework (see Appendix II), were recorded in the margins of the transcripts. Consistent with the suggestion of Ritchie and Spencer (2002), the observational fieldnotes and documents were not indexed.

The indexed interview transcripts allowed the researcher to identify patterns of themes or key issues (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Additionally, indexing assisted the researcher in building a picture of the data as a whole during the next step in the process. Overall, the main value of indexing was that it assisted in determining how themes and issues were "connected and interwoven...to see patterns and the contexts in which they arise" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 316).

Charting

The fourth stage in the framework approach to data analysis was charting, which enabled the researcher "to build up a picture of the data as a whole...data are 'lifted' from their original context and rearranged according to the appropriate thematic reference" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, pp. 317-318). The first step in the charting process was to determine the types of charts needed for data analysis and whether the charts would be analyzed thematically or by each case. The researcher decided to develop charts that addressed the research questions guiding the study because the charts would assist with answering the questions

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in a more structured way; therefore, the thematic approach to data analysis was used. Ritchie and Spencer (2002) suggested keeping the cases in the same order in each chart as well as referencing the name of the document or page of the transcript within the charts' entries. By referencing the original text, "the source can be traced and the process of abstraction can be examined and replicated" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 319). For that reason, the researcher extracted data from the interview transcripts and entered the information, using a page referencing system, into the appropriate charts designed around the research questions.

Charting also enabled the researcher to compare and contrast the four cases as each site was addressed according to the research questions. In the charts, the researcher referred to the respondents as AA1 through AA4. Alumni administrator one (AA1) represented the informant from Metropolitan Research University; AA2 was the administrator from Southern Research University; AA3 was the administrator from Central Research University; and, AA4 was the administrator from Northern Research University.

The researcher constructed three charts to assist in analyzing the data and answering the research questions. The first chart examined senior alumni administrators' definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations and what they viewed as contributing factors to their effectiveness, as well as their perceptions of other university administrators' definitions (see Appendix III). The second chart identified methods used to measure effectiveness in alumni relations and whether the program was evaluated by either the alumni board or the university

administration (see Appendix IV). The final chart addressed the alumni administrators' views of responsibilities to the university and the alumni (see Appendix V).

Mapping and Interpretation

Mapping and interpretation was the fifth and final stage of the framework approach. Following the charting process, the researcher further analyzed the data within the charts to identify key themes and issues in addition to finding similarities and differences among the case study sites. Ritchie and Spencer (2002) referred to this process as mapping and interpretation.

During this stage the researcher "returns to the key objectives and features of qualitative analysis...defining concepts, mapping range and nature of phenomena, creating typologies, finding associations, providing explanations, and developing strategies" (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002, p. 321). The researcher focused on answering the study's research questions by defining contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations and developing strategies for measuring effectiveness because, as Ritchie and Spencer (2002) suggested, the data analysis should be guided by the research questions addressed during the study, in addition to the themes constructed from the data. The purpose of this study was to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations. The researcher wanted to provide alumni administrators with a preliminary conceptual framework of effectiveness that could assist in the development of

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comprehensive and consistent evaluations of alumni relations programs. This work is presented in chapter eight.

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher detailed the research methods used to conduct this study. The researcher used Yin's (2003) case study methodology because qualitative case studies allow for rich, thick description (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). During the four site visits, the researcher interviewed the participants using semi-structured formal interviewing techniques (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, the researcher collected a number of documents from the sites and made general observations of the buildings where the alumni offices were located. Following the site visits, the researcher analyzed the data according to Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework, which involved familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation of the qualitative data collected during the case studies.

Overview

In the following chapters, the researcher presents the findings of the study and discusses the data retrieved during the case studies. Then, the researcher compares and analyzes the four cases. Finally, the researcher summarizes the research and presents her conclusions and recommendations in the last chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Metropolitan Research University

As mentioned in chapter three, the researcher guaranteed the senior alumni administrative officers' anonymity. Therefore, fictional names were given to the participating institutions and specific locations were not provided. The alumni administrators' educational and work histories also were limited so that the participants could not be identified.

The Metropolitan Research University campus was located in the downtown area of a large metropolitan city. The institution, founded in the early 1900s, had a mission of excellence in teaching, research and service with an enrollment of more than 27,000 undergraduate and graduate students in six colleges. The university website reported that the institution was the second largest university in the state in terms of student enrollment, with students coming from every state and from over 145 countries. While the university attracted many part-time and nontraditional students due to its urban location, administrators had seen an increase in traditional student enrollment in the past decade.

The alumni association at Metropolitan Research University was founded in the 1920s, and today has a "constituency of over 125,000 graduates worldwide" (Alumni association website, n.d.). The mission of the alumni association was to

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serve and support alumni; to ensure alumni and students develop a life-long affinity with the university; to engage alumni in the life and vitality of the university; and, to promote and advance the interests of the university. Metropolitan Research University's alumni association was chartered as a 501 (c) (3) or nonprofit corporation and employed ten staff members and four student assistants/interns. The executive director of the alumni association also served as the director of alumni relations and reported to the vice president for external affairs, who was responsible for the following areas: university relations, welcome center, business operation and alumni services, state relations, and university stewardship and events. The alumni association's governing board consisted of twenty-three board of directors, who were elected for three year terms by alumni members. Graduates of Metropolitan Research University could become members of the alumni association by paying a thirty-five dollar annual membership fee. However, graduating seniors received a complimentary one year membership to introduce new alumni to the benefits of membership in the alumni association.

Observations

The researcher began her observations in the alumni building, which also housed the welcome center, the president's and vice presidents' offices, career services, the childcare center, and the office of grants and contracts. Even though the building served many purposes, it was named Alumni Hall. The researcher assumed that the institution purposefully named the building so as to provide alumni with an identifiable home on campus. While a parking garage was

adjacent to the alumni building, the researcher did not observe parking spaces specifically designated for alumni or other campus visitors. In fact, the executive director of the alumni association made specific arrangements for the researcher to park in the garage during the site visit. The researcher's impression was that finding available parking would be difficult for alumni and visitors if prior arrangements were not made.

The researcher entered the alumni building on the lower level, where several alumni-related displays were located. These displays included such items as a letter jacket, a Greek paddle, many pictures with descriptions of the events taking place, and historical information about the campus. The researcher assumed that these items were displayed to evoke memories and feelings of tradition and loyalty when alumni visited the alumni building. While the building that housed the alumni office was not new, the facilities were well maintained and clean. A wide circular staircase connected the lower and main levels of the building, and there were large, floor to ceiling windows on the main level that provided additional lighting and views of campus. Overall, the alumni building was spacious and had many sitting and meeting areas for alumni and other visitors to use while visiting the campus.

The researcher also briefly observed the student center, which was located directly across the street from the alumni building. The student center housed a food court and many sitting areas. Students were having coffee, reading books, listening to music, studying, and meeting with fellow students. Adjacent to the student center was the bookstore, which was typical of those found on most

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campuses, selling clothing and miscellaneous items with the university logo, as well as books and materials for classes.

The researcher observed that due to the downtown location of the university students had few open spaces available to them, whereas on most campuses students can congregate on greenbelts. Another observation that the researcher noted was that the majority of students walked in pairs or in groups around campus, and campus police officers frequently patrolled the university grounds on bikes. Again, the downtown location might be the reason for heightened security. Overall, the researcher's impression was that students did not have many choices for places to gather; instead, students seemed to be going to and from classes or waiting in the student center for their next class. However, the researcher visited the campus on a rainy day, which likely contributed to students remaining inside campus buildings.

After returning to the alumni building, the researcher entered the alumni office. The general alumni office area was medium in size when compared to the other sites. Alumni magazines and brochures were available on top of a bookshelf, and a small sitting area was adjacent to the receptionist's desk. A receptionist at the front desk greeted the researcher and ushered her immediately into the executive director's office. Upon entering the executive director's office, the researcher observed bookshelves displaying framed pictures of the executive director and alumni and/or alumni staff at events. Since the executive director was also an alumnus of the university, the photographs may have included some of her friends who also attended the university. In the

following sections of this chapter, the researcher discusses the participant interview and supporting documents collected. The executive director provided the documents requested at the beginning of the interview so that she could briefly discuss the contents of each.

Profile of the Participant

To begin the interview, the researcher asked the executive director to provide information about her education and work history. It should be noted that the director was not feeling well on the day of the interview, which may have impacted her answers to the interview questions. However, the researcher and the executive director agreed to conduct the interview as scheduled. The director graduated from Metropolitan Research University, with an undergraduate degree in marketing and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA). Prior to her employment at the university, she worked for an advertising and marketing firm in the metropolitan area. A friend told her about a position in the alumni office at Metropolitan Research University, and she applied. She served as an associate director for three and a half years before assuming the executive director position of the alumni association in June 2004.

When asked to discuss her leadership style, the executive director said that she was very laid back and she did not micromanage. She added that she checked in with her staff on occasion to ensure that they did not have questions about the projects they were managing. While the director did not comment specifically on the recent transition from associate director to executive director,

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she mentioned that the friend who originally referred her for the position of associate director now works for her since she became the executive director.

Defining Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

The researcher and executive director of the alumni association then discussed how she defined effectiveness in alumni relations. She responded,

As far as the alumni association, we don't determine our effectiveness at all as far as the university enrollment or money raised or anything like that....Basically, the way we define our effectiveness is more qualitative than quantitative. Quantitative is membership numbers and numbers of complaints, but mainly we do it through participation. (personal communication, November 22, 2004)

The executive director's response related to the central issue of this study: alumni directors do not have clear, comprehensive definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations. In fact, when asked for a definition, the director provided an answer that was better suited to describe how alumni leaders could measure effectiveness. It is important to note that one of the documents that the researcher collected, the alumni association's strategic plan, provided clearer and more comprehensive definitions of effectiveness; this document will be discussed later.

Next, the researcher asked the executive director to discuss her perception of how the university president and other institutional advancement administrators defined effectiveness in alumni relations. She responded,

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Our university president is by trade an urban planner, so his focus is...all development, revitalizing, building every year. As far as alumni are concerned, I think he thinks we are successful if we don't get complaints...He has mentioned to me that he would like more of a national program. We have had a very hard time of that in the past. Part of the reason might be that we don't have football and a lot of the clubs at other schools, that is what keeps them together, is getting together to watch the football game. (personal communication, November 22, 2004)

Overall, the executive director felt that the university president was not very concerned with effectiveness in alumni relations as long as alumni were not complaining.

While the executive director of the alumni association felt that the university president defined effectiveness in alumni relations as a minimal number of complaints, she said that the vice president for development would probably cite knowing the alumni and building good relationships with alumni as the most important factors for an effective alumni program. The executive director also thought that the assistant vice president for external affairs would feel the alumni staff's ability to build and maintain good relationships with alumni would be most important so that he would feel comfortable calling alumni and getting them involved in activities such as lobbying on behalf of the university.

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Documentary Evidence of Defining Effectiveness

Strategic Plan (2005-2008).

In the alumni association's strategic plan, effectiveness was more clearly defined in terms of what the association needed to implement in order to become more effective. The strategic planning process was guided by a professional consultant; the team that developed the strategic plan included four alumni board members, three at-large alumni members, and seven alumni association staff members. After identifying the alumni association's strengths and weaknesses, the team members identified goals and action plans.

The team members viewed the alumni association's lack of identity and visibility as a barrier to effectiveness. Since many students and alumni were not aware of the programs, benefits, and services that the alumni association offered to its members, such as career networking and mentoring, student loan consolidation, and the online alumni directory, membership in the alumni association was not growing at the rate that the alumni director and staff would like. The executive director believed one way to solve this problem was to develop an aggressive marketing strategy that would increase student and alumni awareness of the alumni association. The plan was to become more visible by developing a communication strategy, by collaborating with departments on campus to create traditions, and by launching student competitions, such as writing the fight song for Metropolitan Research University.

The team also identified communication as a key factor that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations. By developing communication strategies that

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engage and inform alumni, the alumni association could attract new members or at the least retain current members. Changes that the executive director planned to make were a redesign of the alumni association website, as well as the e-newsletter sent to alumni subscribers.

Another obstacle to effectiveness identified in the strategic plan was the lack of alumni participation in programs and activities. To improve alumni participation rates, the alumni staff planned to develop surveys and a poll for the alumni association website that would identify interests of alumni. Additionally, the staff would collaborate with university groups, such as student services, to generate ideas for new and innovative alumni programming. The executive director believed that forming connections between alumni and students, as well as increasing the diversity of alumni participants, were central to increasing participation.

A method for building alumni involvement was to create a sense of belonging and affinity for the university so that students and alumni had the desire to participate. The executive director planned to develop a mentoring program that would allow students to be mentored by graduates of Metropolitan Research University. The intent of the program was that students would develop relationships with alumni that could facilitate a continuation of the students' and alumni's connections to the university.

The executive director also believed that active students would become active alumni. Consequently, she planned to create a student alumni association. The purpose of this student organization would be to increase student involvement in

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university and athletic programs and events and to generate pride in Metropolitan Research University. The executive director believed that the majority of students who were active in student alumni associations would become active members of the alumni association upon graduation.

The last barrier to effectiveness for Metropolitan Research University's alumni association identified in the strategic plan was the lack of a strong alumni clubs program. The executive director planned to redesign the alumni club structure in order to improve club visibility and participation. The purpose of alumni club programs was to engage alumni according to geographic, academic, and special interest groups. Examples of alumni clubs that currently exist include a regional club in Washington, D.C., the Finance Alumni Club, and the Former Student Leaders Alumni Group. Students and alumni often develop an affinity for a specific organization on campus, such as a department or a student group they were involved with during the college years. While alumni may not be interested in joining the alumni association, they may want to become members of an alumni club. The executive director hoped to build stronger alumni clubs that have close relationships with the alumni association so that club members would be more likely to join the alumni association as well.

Contributing Factors of Effectiveness

The researcher and the executive director continued their conversation by discussing factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations. She said,

The main thing is knowing your constituency because there's so many things that all alumni associations can do the same, but then there's some that are

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different...have totally different alumni...you have to find whatever your common ground is, what commonalties people have, what makes them stay connected and be tied to your university. (personal communication, November 22, 2004)

For example, the executive director discussed a recent alumni event held at a local museum. About one hundred twenty alumni and friends attended the event, which the director felt was a success due to the number of alumni in attendance. She noted the two main areas that received the most participation were social events and career services programs. Additionally, she commented that there were several methods she used to discover alumni's interests, including verbal feedback, surveys, and focus groups. By understanding what alumni wanted, the executive director felt that she would be able to develop and offer programs and events that alumni would attend, thereby increasing the organization's effectiveness.

Organizational Structure

The literature reviewed for this study discussed organizational structure as a contributing factor of effectiveness in institutional advancement (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The researcher inquired whether the executive director thought that the organizational structure of institutional advancement contributed or detracted from effectiveness in alumni relations. She felt that it contributed because the structure allowed for a sharing of resources. She said, "I don't know how the public relations structure is set up anywhere else, but the alumni association pays a portion of the magazine costs...the

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alumni association does not create it...university relations does, so at least in that aspect it's a benefit that we're all in the same structure" (personal communication, November 22, 2004).

Documentary Evidence of Organizational Structure

Organizational Chart (August 2004).

At Metropolitan Research University, the executive director of the alumni association also served as the director of alumni relations. The alumni director reported to the vice president for external affairs, who was responsible for the following areas: university relations, welcome center, business operation and alumni services, state relations, and university stewardship and events. The researcher noted that the foundation was not included in this organizational chart. After reviewing the university's website following the site visit, the researcher found a vice president for development, which was a position at the same level as a vice president for external affairs, a vice president for finance and administration, a vice president for research, and a vice president for student services. All of the vice presidents reported to the president of the university. Therefore, the university did not have the organizational structure of institutional advancement that the literature cited as being the most effective: having an institutional advancement administrator who was responsible for development, alumni relations, and public relations.

Collaboration

Another area associated with effectiveness in alumni relations was collaboration (Arnold, 2003). The researcher wanted to know how the executive

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director and staff collaborated with other departments and programs on campus. Since university relations and alumni relations were both part of external affairs at Metropolitan Research University, those units had an opportunity to work together frequently. For example, the university relations department handled university magazine publications, as well as public relations pieces for the alumni association. As for the foundation, even though it operated under a different vice president, the executive director of the alumni association felt that the two programs had many opportunities to collaborate. She commented, "The foundation uses a lot of our events to invite people to, to cultivate for gifts...we always include them and we are all invited to the foundation board meetings and vice versa. So, they'll know what's going on, and also, when we do some of our national travel, we do that together to save time and money" (personal communication, November 22, 2004).

Additionally, the executive director said that they "work with the director of admissions for student recruiting and also for freshman send-offs, where alumni host an event in cities where prospective students live...we involve faculty and staff in events...the other night at the museum event...an art history professor lectured beforehand...there are many examples" (personal communication, November 22, 2004). Another opportunity for collaboration was the process of transferring student records to alumni records upon graduation. The admissions staff verified the graduating students before allowing the transfer to occur; therefore, the process happened somewhat slower than the alumni association would prefer. When explaining why timeliness was important, the director said,

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"When we work with our corporate sponsors and they want to do mailings to the grads as soon as they graduate...they want to do it very timely so they get it right when they graduate" (personal communication, November 22, 2004). Consequently, the executive director and staff were meeting with the admissions staff to determine if there were methods for accelerating the transfer of the data.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture was also identified in the literature as a contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). In this study, institutional culture referred to the student experience and the traditions formed during students' time on campus. As discussed in the previous chapters, the literature recognized the importance of building relationships with students that would grow as they became alumni.

The researcher asked the executive director of the alumni association about the institutional culture at Metropolitan Research University. She responded that the university was not athletically-oriented and academics were most important. She added that evidence of this was that the business school was always ranked highly in the national rankings. She believed that the institutional culture impacted the alumni association's effectiveness because "many alumni associations are successful based on their football programs, and ours aren't interested in that" (personal communication, November 22, 2004).

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Documentary Evidence of Institutional Culture

Strategic Plan (2005-2008).

The strategic plan also listed reasons that the institutional culture at Metropolitan Research University precluded effectiveness in alumni relations. Among the reasons cited were that the university lacked the typical residence hall and campus life environment. It was located downtown, and the university had a high number of part-time and international students. Additionally, students were not aware of the alumni association and the benefits it offered.

While the executive director believed that the lack of a football program, campus life, and traditional students hindered the alumni association's effectiveness, she also realized that there were many nontraditional opportunities for building relationships with students and alumni. In the strategic plan, alumni staff members discussed ways to generate pride in the university and create traditions. One strategy developed by the staff was to have a fight song competition. The executive director also planned to encourage student and alumni attendance at homecoming, which was during basketball season, as well as at other basketball games. Another method for connecting students and alumni identified in the strategic plan was a mentoring program, where students would be linked with alumni from their degree area. Finally, the executive director planned to create a student alumni association to assist in building relationships with students during their time on campus. The researcher thought it was noteworthy that a nontraditional campus was making a concerted effort to build traditional student alumni programs as a way to engage students who will

become alumni. One reason for this effort could be that the traditional student enrollment had increased in the past decade, as noted at the beginning of this chapter.

Young Alumni Guide (2004).

One way that Metropolitan Research University's alumni association built relationships with students and alumni was by offering a free one-year membership to graduating students. The Young Alumni Guide, a glossy brochure designed by alumni staff and given to graduating students, outlined the programs, services, and benefits presented to alumni association members. During the free membership period, alumni had access to career services, the online directory, as well as many other programs and events. The executive director hoped that the free trial would allow time for building relationships with young alumni so that they would continue their memberships past the one-year period.

Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

Next, the researcher asked the executive director of the alumni association to discuss the ways she measured effectiveness in alumni relations. She explained that membership numbers could be used; however, at Metropolitan Research University the alumni association was not evaluating effectiveness solely based on paid memberships at this time because the association was continuing to try to grow its membership. The executive director also stated, "Mostly program attendance is the biggest thing because we've really been trying to tailor our programs to what people want...and also the number of volunteers" (personal

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communication, November 22, 2004). When the researcher asked the executive director to list three of the best methods for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, she replied, "Attendance, membership, and volunteers" (personal communication, November 22, 2004). The executive director included membership because she expected that eventually the staff would focus more on increasing memberships than they currently did, and this could be used in the future as one measure of effectiveness.

Documentary Evidence of Measuring Effectiveness

Program Evaluation (2004-2005).

The executive director of the alumni association provided the researcher with a form that alumni staff used to evaluate programs within their areas of responsibility. The form included the following items:

- List the name, date, time and venue of the program.

- Give a brief description of the program noting the target audience, primary and secondary codes and partner, if applicable.

- What was successful about this program?

- What was unsuccessful about this program?

- What marketing methods were used to promote the program?

- What was the budget for this program?

- To what extent do the program's benefits justify the resources expended?

- What are your recommendations for the future of this program?

- List all statistics including RSVP vs. attendance, new vs. repeat attendees, paid vs. free.

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- Attach a summary of the survey card and include all participant and speaker feedback.

By collecting this information, the executive director was able to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses and justify continuation or discontinuation of a specific program. This type of program evaluation also assisted the director in her efforts to be more accountable in terms of the resources used for programs and events.

Alumni Focus Groups.

The executive director at Metropolitan Research University used focus groups, which she called "alumni roundtables," to assist in evaluation of the alumni association's delivery of services to specific groups of alumni. During the March 3, 2004, alumni board meeting, the chair of the alumni cultivation and participation committee discussed the alumni roundtables that were held in November 2003 and February 2004 involving international students and alumni. The alumni staff wanted to find ways to help international students and alumni feel at home at Metropolitan Research University and to increase participation in alumni programs. The following strategies were developed by the alumni cultivation and participation committee and alumni staff from the roundtable discussions: compile a "Top Ten Tips for International Students" to distribute during orientation, implement an international student graduation ceremony in addition to the regular ceremony, produce an international version of the e-newsletter, prepare a guide for employers on hiring international students, and conduct exit surveys with international graduates regarding their future relationship with the university and alumni association.

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On June 17, 2004, the alumni board discussed the results of the second group of alumni roundtables, which involved alumni who graduated before 1985. Based on the discussions of the roundtable participants, the alumni staff planned to review the communication process for older alumni. Additionally, alumni staff would discuss programming opportunities for older alumni and include events of interest to this group in the alumni association's strategic plan.

During the September 23, 2004, alumni board meeting, the chair of the alumni cultivation and participation committee reported that they planned to hold a roundtable in the future that would focus on university employees and alumni from various departments on campus. The alumni staff specifically wanted to hear suggestions from deans and directors on campus regarding methods for improving alumni programs and services. This roundtable could be particularly useful in determining strategies for connecting alumni to their respective departments and building on those relationships.

Evaluation of Alumni Relations

At Metropolitan Research University, the executive director of the alumni association also served as the director of alumni relations. In terms of evaluation of the alumni relations program, the executive director responded that she was formally evaluated by the vice president for external affairs on an annual basis, as were all university employees. However, the alumni association, as a whole, received no formal evaluation, only verbal feedback from the alumni board. If the alumni association staff had a record year of attracting new members or alumni

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participation, the association would not receive any type of reward or extra compensation.

The executive director of the alumni association also commented that the alumni board and university president did not discuss defining and measuring effectiveness per se. "I don't think we've actually talked about it as 'effectiveness,' but when we're doing our strategic plan...we talk about critical factors to success, which is basically the same thing..." (personal communication, November 22, 2004). As discussed in the literature review, effectiveness is a difficult concept to define, which may be the reason why the alumni board and university president talked about effectiveness in terms of critical factors to success for the strategic plan.

Documentary Evidence of Evaluation

    Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan (2004).

In May 2004, the executive director completed an Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan for university administration. This plan provided an outline of effectiveness measures that the alumni association staff would use to evaluate the success of their programs. The executive director identified three areas to be measured: membership, participation, and awareness and satisfaction.

Membership would be evaluated according to three categories: new, renewed, and free one-year new graduate memberships. The alumni staff set a goal of increasing memberships by five percent or more. Membership numbers would be tracked by the alumni staff using a database program. If a five percent increase in memberships was not achieved, the director would analyze the

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reasons why and determine appropriate interventions. The researcher found it particularly interesting that the executive director included membership as an assessment area in the plan because previously she stated that the alumni association was in the process of trying to increase memberships, and at this time membership numbers were not really used to measure effectiveness.

Participation would be measured by the number of alumni who attended alumni sponsored events. Again, the alumni staff wanted to increase participation by five percent or more. The alumni staff planned to maintain attendance data for each event so that attendance numbers could be compared to previous years, as well as to other events. By tracking attendance, the alumni staff would know which programs had the most attendees and those that had the least. This information would assist the executive director in making decisions about which programs and events to continue in the future.

Awareness and satisfaction would be assessed in a variety of ways including satisfaction with the type, location, and frequency of events, as well as the registration process and service from the alumni staff. The executive director planned to measure alumni satisfaction via surveys distributed at events and inserted into membership packets. Alumni staff would deem events as successful or effective when ninety percent of the surveys provided favorable feedback. Below eighty percent satisfaction rating would signify the need for immediate intervention. Additionally, the executive director would view a decrease in complaints as an increase in alumni satisfaction. Surveying alumni would

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educate the director regarding the types of events and locations that were most popular.

Annual Report (July 1, 2003 to June 30, 2004).

As mentioned in a previous section, a team of alumni staff members, alumni board members, and alumni at-large developed a strategic plan for every three year period. The executive director of the alumni association reported progress regarding the goals in the strategic plan through an annual report. The researcher received a full version of the annual report and also viewed an abbreviated version in the Fall 2004 edition of the university magazine. In a review of the annual report, it was noted that the report was descriptive in nature, talking about the various programs and services offered by the alumni association and the number of alumni participating. However, the researcher also recognized that the annual report only stated broad goals from the strategic plan, such as "develop mutually beneficial relationships" and "optimize outreach through campus collaboration" without any measurable objectives. The annual report included some references to increased alumni participation in specific events, but the researcher could not decipher from the report whether the goals and objectives from the strategic plan were met. Overall, the annual report read more like a summary of alumni association programs, benefits, and services, which led the researcher to question how the staff knows if they were more successful this year than last year.

Alumni Administrator's View of Responsibilities

The way in which an alumni administrator views his/her responsibilities to the university and alumni impacts the programs, services, and benefits that the alumni association offers. Consequently, the researcher wanted to understand how the executive director viewed her role. When asked about the appropriate balance between serving alumni and serving the institution, she responded,

> Most of what we do is for the alumni. Even when we partner with other areas of campus, the end benefit is for the alumni. We also have, for the past two years, implemented a lot more student programs...our philosophy is that we need to get in touch with students while they are here and connect them to the alumni. (personal communication, November 22, 2004)

While the executive director viewed her role as mainly providing services to alumni, she also recognized that by serving alumni, one was also able to serve the institution. She believed that alumni and students who were connected and involved with the university could offer advice, time, influence, as well as monetary support.

In terms of reporting and being held accountable, the executive director said that her responsibilities mainly lied with the university, especially the vice president for external affairs because he served as her direct supervisor and was the person who evaluated her performance. However, on a daily basis the executive director felt like she interacted more with the alumni board, so she also felt that she had a responsibility to the alumni board. She added that the alumni

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board was made up of volunteers so they did not have the time to be as concerned about reporting and accountability.

The researcher asked the executive director of the alumni association to discuss the level of importance placed on alumni giving at her institution and how it affected the services that the alumni association offered. She reported, "The level of giving doesn't affect us at all. The only way it would affect us is if unrestricted giving got to a certain level, and then we would get additional income and that would help us out, but the most we've ever received was $5,000...nothing significant" (personal communication, November 22, 2004). The executive director added that they tailored their programs and services to what alumni wanted, not to what would bring in the biggest donors. The researcher found it interesting that the director did not mention the monetary bonus that could be received for increased unrestricted giving when she discussed the possibility of rewards or incentives for improving effectiveness. Her omission could have been due to the fact that she felt it was an insignificant amount or that she felt alumni giving was not the responsibility of the alumni association. Overall, the executive director portrayed that her responsibility, and that of the alumni association, was mainly to complement fund raising by having events that allowed for interaction between alumni, university staff, and foundation staff.

Summary

The observations of the alumni building and alumni office provided the researcher with some insight into the value the institution placed on its alumni.

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The researcher thought it was interesting that the building was called Alumni Hall even though it also housed the welcome center, the president's and vice presidents' offices, career services, the childcare center, and the office of grants and contracts. The researcher assumed that the university wanted one building on campus to be considered home for alumni and that was the reason for the building's name. The alumni building offered many sitting areas for alumni gatherings and/or events, as well as displays of historical information and university events that would be of interest to alumni and other visitors. The institution obviously wanted to maintain alumni connections and hoped to do so by providing alumni with a home on campus.

The executive director of the alumni association at Metropolitan Research University had developed definitions and measures of effectiveness for alumni programs. She defined effectiveness as knowing the constituency and understanding what engaged alumni to connect and participate. This understanding was especially important as the needs of each institution were unique, and programs that worked for one alumni association might not be successful on a different campus. From her perspective, alumni interests could be discovered through verbal feedback, surveys, and alumni focus groups.

Organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture were discussed in the literature as possible contributing factors of effectiveness to alumni relations (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003; Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). Although the organizational structure at Metropolitan Research University was not the recommended

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institutional advancement model, the executive director of the alumni association felt that it did not detract from the association's effectiveness. She collaborated frequently with development, university relations, and other university departments and programs to ensure that scheduling conflicts did not arise, as well as to communicate important information. She also believed that institutional culture negatively impacted the alumni association's effectiveness because the university had many part-time and nontraditional students making it more difficult to inspire loyalty, tradition, and pride. The alumni association's strategic planning document identified barriers to effectiveness and corresponding plans of action to increase the association's visibility, to facilitate communication with alumni, to increase alumni participation, to establish a student alumni association, and to enhance the alumni clubs program.

When measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, the executive director used alumni membership, participation, and awareness and satisfaction, as described in the institutional effectiveness assessment plan document. If the alumni association was attracting new members, as well as retaining current members, then the director was meeting her goal. Additionally, alumni participation could be used to measure effectiveness in terms of attendance at events and the number of volunteers for programs such as mentoring, student recruitment, and lobbying. Finally, alumni awareness and satisfaction surveys served as a third measure of effectiveness, which assisted the executive director in making adjustments to alumni programming.

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The executive director also assessed the effectiveness of programs using other methods. One example was the utilization of program evaluations, which allowed for comparison of costs, attendance, and feedback from participants. In addition, the alumni board provided informal feedback through verbal comments at meetings where programs were discussed. Moreover, the use of alumni focus groups, as discussed in the alumni board meeting minutes, assisted alumni staff in creating and delivering alumni services in a more effective way. All of these methods helped the executive director of the alumni association determine what programs to develop, revamp, or discontinue.

In terms of the executive director's view of her responsibilities, she believed that the alumni association's purpose was to serve the alumni. However, by serving alumni, the association was also serving the institution since alumni provided advice, volunteered time, and gave monetary support. Even though she considered her role to be a service provider for alumni, she viewed herself as being held accountable to university administration instead of the alumni board because the board was made up of volunteers and they were not as concerned about accountability. Finally, she believed that the purpose of the alumni association was to complement fund raising by assisting with building relationships with alumni and students and by hosting events that were of interest to alumni.

Overall, the executive director of the alumni association at Metropolitan Research University had made a deliberate effort to evaluate the effectiveness of the alumni association and its programs. University administration had

implemented an institutional effectiveness assessment plan in which programs and departments must determine appropriate goals and describe how they would know whether the goals had been achieved. Additionally, the executive director asked each program manager to complete a program evaluation that looked at strengths, weaknesses, costs, and participation within a program or event. All in all, the alumni association had measures in place that assisted in reporting and being held accountable to the university.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Southern Research University

Southern Research University was located in a smaller city than Metropolitan Research University, but Southern's campus and student enrollment were much larger, with a 2,000 acre campus and more than 48,000 students. The institution was the oldest and largest university in the state, becoming a university in the early 1900s. The university's website stated that the institution's mission was "to offer broad-based exclusive public education, leading-edge research and service to the citizens of [state name] and the nation." The university's athletic program received national recognition as it was consistently ranked in the top ten in all-sports rankings. The community surrounding Southern Research University displayed its pride prominently by recognizing the university and its mascot on what seemed like every sign, billboard, and shop window in the city. Overall, the researcher's impression was that the university had the support of the community and the community enjoyed the benefits of having a large, nationally-recognized public research university in its midst.

The mission of Southern Research University's alumni association was to foster and enhance the relationship between the university, its alumni, students and friends and to support the university's mission of teaching, research and

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service (Bylaws, 2000). Of the approximately 226,000 alumni on record with the university, 150,000 resided and worked in the state where the university was located. The alumni association had worked with alumni to form regional and local clubs throughout the nation, as well as in five foreign countries. Membership in the alumni association included membership in these regional and local clubs. Alumni who chose to become members of the alumni association paid dues at a cost of forty dollars annually for individuals or alumni could become life members for a one time payment of eight hundred dollars. To encourage graduating seniors to become members of the alumni association, graduates received a free one-year membership.

Southern Research University's alumni association was chartered as a 501 (c) (3) or nonprofit corporation and employed fourteen staff members. The executive director of the alumni association reported to the vice president for development and alumni affairs, who was responsible for overseeing the following areas: public relations related to development and alumni affairs, corporate and foundation relations, health science center development, central development, alumni affairs, and administration of development and alumni affairs. The vice president for development and alumni affairs acted as the senior institutional advancement administrator.

The alumni association's governing body consisted of thirty-six board of directors, with eleven ex-officio members, two presidential appointment members, and twenty-three board elected members. The ex-officio members served terms of varying lengths and included the university president;

chairperson of the Board of Regents; the immediate past president of the alumni association, current president of the alumni association, president-elect of the alumni association, executive vice president of the alumni association, executive director of the alumni association, and treasurer of the alumni association; a faculty representative; the president of the student alumni association; and, the student body president. The presidential appointment members were two past presidents of the alumni association that the president of the alumni association appointed for one year terms. Finally, the twenty-three board elected members, who served two year terms and were current members of the alumni association, were nominated by the association's nominating committee and then elected by the association's board of directors.

Observations

The researcher began her observations in an outside common area located between the alumni building and the university's development and alumni affairs office, where she noticed nicely landscaped areas with brick pavers, flowers, small trees, and many benches. A small parking garage was connected to the university's development and alumni affairs office and adjacent to the alumni building. The parking was mainly reserved for university employees; however, two spaces were reserved for alumni and/or campus visitors. Additionally, the university's football stadium was located across the street and had ample parking.

The three story alumni building was fairly new, as the floors, walls, and windows all seemed to sparkle; later, the researcher learned that the alumni

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building was completed in August 2001. A dramatic staircase that connected the main and second floors was located in the main lobby area. Additionally, a receptionist in the lobby welcomed alumni and other visitors as they entered the building. Several public gathering areas, as well as several meeting rooms, a banquet area, and a ballroom, were also available for alumni use. Moreover, the building housed a gift shop where numerous items with the university's mascot and colors were sold. The entire alumni building was dedicated to providing alumni with a home and gathering place on campus.

The executive director of the alumni association's office was located on the third floor of the alumni building. The executive director's administrative assistant greeted the researcher as she exited the elevator and asked if she would wait in an adjacent sitting area until the executive director was ready to begin the interview. Alumni brochures and an alumni magazine were displayed on the coffee table in the sitting area. Only minutes later, the executive director introduced himself to the researcher and escorted her into his office. The office was quite spacious with a table and four chairs, a large desk, a sofa, two upholstered chairs, a coffee table, and several filing cabinets. The researcher's impression was that the office provided the executive director with a welcoming environment to meet with alumni. Overall, the main feature of the executive director's office was the spectacular view of the university's stadium and campus from the office windows.

The researcher also briefly observed the student union. On the walk from the alumni building to the union, the researcher passed the university's stadium and

several academic buildings. The university's colors and a life-sized statue of the university's mascot were prominently displayed in the area located in front of the football stadium. Students were walking and biking to and from class, and many were wearing clothing with the university's colors and/or mascot, much more so than students at the other three sites that participated in this study. The researcher also noticed that the majority of the students observed during the walk were traditionally-aged college students.

Upon arriving at the student union, the researcher immediately noted the size of the building. The union had six floors and numerous places for students to meet, study, and socialize. The ground floor and first floor of the union were observed because the students were mainly in these two areas. Students used the union as a place to meet with others and spend time between classes. Some students were studying or eating alone, while others were meeting friends and/or classmates at the union. The noise level in the union was moderate, but students did not seem to be disturbed by the noise and constant activity. Again, the researcher noted that the majority of students were of traditional college age and many wore clothing with the university's mascot or the name of the mascot on it. Overall, the union had a constant flow of students entering and exiting the facility, and students seemed comfortable and familiar with the environment.

In the following sections of this chapter, the researcher discusses the participant interview and supporting documents collected. The executive director did not compile the requested documents prior to the researcher's visit. Consequently, the researcher and the executive director's administrative

assistant worked together for approximately thirty minutes to gather the documents following the interview.

Profile of the Participant

The researcher began the interview with the same question as the previous interview: "Tell me about your educational and work history." The executive director said that he graduated from Southern Research University in 1971. He had played football at the university, and after graduation, he became a member of the coaching staff. Then, he transferred over to the office of undergraduate admissions to work with the National Merit Scholars program. After working in the admissions office for several years, he worked in various positions within the development and alumni affairs office. He ran the annual fund, gift processing, and records department; he served as a development officer in the College of Business; and, he was the assistant dean for alumni affairs in the College of Law.

He decided that he needed a change and accepted the Vice President for Constituent Development position at another research university in the south. Then, he moved again to take the position of Vice President of University Advancement at a research university in the western portion of the United States. Finally, he applied for his current position after a friend at Southern Research University notified him that the position was available. He was hired by Southern Research University in June 2004 as the Executive Director of the Alumni Association. Overall, he had spent over twenty years in various positions within Southern Research University.

At the September 13, 2003, alumni board meeting, a board member asked the vice president for development and alumni affairs whether emphasis would be placed on searching for a Southern Research University alumnus when hiring a new executive director for the alumni association. The vice president responded that if the search committee found two equal candidates, then the preference for hiring would be toward the alumnus. The reason for this preference could be that individuals who were familiar with the campus and its alumni might be perceived as better candidates because alumni share certain experiences and traditions. The researcher found this interesting because of the four alumni executive officers interviewed for this study; three were alumni of their employing institutions.

When asked to address his leadership style, the executive director said that he leads by example. He also encouraged his employees to communicate openly and honestly. He emphasized that employees were all different and as a leader, he must be sensitive to individual needs and feelings. Moreover, employees had to be allowed to make mistakes so that they could learn from them and grow. Overall, he felt it was most important to have fun, enjoy your job, and be able to laugh at yourself (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

Defining Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

The researcher asked the executive director to define effectiveness in alumni relations. He responded, "Effectiveness is communication...trying to evaluate effectiveness is probably a misnomer. I think what you have to do is be able to communicate messages to all the various constituencies" (personal

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communication, November 30, 2004). Similar to the executive director of the alumni association at Metropolitan Research University, the executive director of Southern mentioned evaluating effectiveness in his definition. However, he identified communication as an important factor of effectiveness. The executive director further explained that alumni directors and alumni staffs have three groups with which they must communicate effectively and regularly: students; alumni, parents, and friends of the university; and, faculty, staff, and administrators of university departments.

Next, the researcher asked the executive director to discuss his perception of how the university president and other institutional advancement administrators defined effectiveness in alumni relations. He responded that the university president most likely defined effectiveness of alumni relations according to what he could see: crowds at activities and events and the number of people who participated as volunteers locally and in the regional clubs. He added that the president might also be interested in the percentage of alumni who were members of the alumni association.

As for other institutional advancement administrators, the executive director only commented on his perception of the vice president for development and alumni affair's definition of effectiveness in alumni relations, since he reported to the vice president. He stated that the vice president viewed effectiveness in alumni relations as helping the other areas of institutional advancement to do its job by building relationships with alumni. Overall, the executive director believed that others judged effectiveness in alumni relations as the ability to generate

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confidence in the institution and communicate important messages to alumni and other friends of the university.

<p align="center">*Contributing Factors of Effectiveness*</p>

When asked to comment on the common factors that lead to effectiveness, the executive director replied that effectiveness in alumni relations was really about strong communications and evoking feelings of loyalty and a sense of belonging among alumni. He added that it was important to make alumni feel that they were a part of something good. The executive director commented, "There are common threads either as graduates or friends [of the university]...whether it's athletics or academics or research at the medical school...it provides a commonality for people to band together...a cause that's of value to society" (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

Organizational Structure

As mentioned in chapter two, the literature reviewed for this study discussed organizational structure as a contributing factor of effectiveness in institutional advancement (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The researcher inquired whether the executive director thought that the organizational structure of institutional advancement contributed or detracted from effectiveness in alumni relations. He replied that the organizational structure contributed because the alumni association complemented the fund raising efforts of the development staff so he felt that it was appropriate for the two areas to be under the supervision of the same administrator.

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Documentary Evidence of Organizational Structure

Organizational Chart (September 2004).

At Southern Research University, the executive director of the alumni association reported to the vice president for development and alumni affairs. The vice president for development and alumni affairs was responsible for overseeing the following areas: public relations related to development and alumni affairs, corporate and foundation relations, health science center development, central development, alumni affairs, and administration of development and alumni affairs. The university's organizational structure of institutional advancement was similar to the structure that the literature cited as being the most effective (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003), except that there was a separate vice president for university relations who managed university publications and communications, as well as working with government officials to advocate for the university. The vice president for university relations and the vice president for development and alumni affairs both reported to the university president, and the vice president for development and alumni affairs acted as the senior institutional advancement administrator.

Collaboration

Arnold (2003) cited collaboration as another area associated with effectiveness in alumni relations. Consequently, the researcher inquired about collaboration opportunities the alumni association had with other departments and programs on campus, and the executive director highlighted several such opportunities. He met with the deans of the academic colleges on a quarterly

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basis to discuss needs and possible program enhancements. As a part of the alumni travel program, faculty with expertise in certain areas were asked to join the tours and the alumni association paid for the faculty member's travel. The alumni association also asked the colleges to promote the brick paver program in their college magazines and publications; the brick pavers, which will eventually surround the alumni building, offer alumni the opportunity to commemorate their connection to the university. Colleges that promoted the brick paver program would receive a portion of the revenues. Additionally, the alumni association collaborated with the college deans and those units that had their own alumni programs to encourage promotion of alumni association membership (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

The alumni association staff also collaborated with university relations and the office of undergraduate admissions. The office of university relations was responsible for working with government officials to advocate for the university, and the alumni association assisted with identification of influential alumni who could help with advocacy efforts. Alumni association staff also identified alumni volunteers to meet with prospective students as a part of the office of admissions' recruitment process. Due to the number of regional clubs, the alumni association was able to provide volunteers to help with recruitment throughout the United States (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture was also identified in the literature as a contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig,

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2001). For this study, institutional culture referred to the student experience and the traditions formed during students' time on campus. As discussed in chapter two, the literature recognized the importance of building relationships with students that would grow as they became alumni.

The researcher asked the executive director of the alumni association about the institutional culture at Southern Research University. He responded that Southern Research University was the oldest educational institution in the state and those alumni and students were very proud and passionate. He added, "They're not unlike graduates of other institutions, but there is a real sense of success here that is a standard and people expect it, so there is an expectation...there's a sense of pride that is attached or connected to success" (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

To further establish pride and tradition during the student experience, the alumni association sponsored a student alumni association. Students who became involved with the student alumni association had the opportunity to participate in various alumni events, as well as to generate pride and increased involvement among the student population in university activities. Evidently, students were interested in joining the organization; the president of the student alumni association reported at the March 2004 alumni board meeting that four hundred students attended the fall forum, which was held to inform students about the student alumni association (Alumni Board minutes, 2004).

The alumni association also hosted a Grad Bash every fall and spring for new graduates of the university. The Grad Bash featured free food and entertainment

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and giveaways. By hosting this event, the alumni association staff was able to discuss the benefits of joining the alumni association in addition to forming connections with students and encouraging future membership in the alumni association, which was free for a one-year period for new graduates.

Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

Next, the researcher asked the executive director to discuss the ways he measured effectiveness in alumni relations. He explained that since he was new to the position, he was only beginning to have conversations about this topic with his staff. Since he had experience in the area of development and was familiar with the methods fund raisers used to ensure accountability, such as using software to track contacts with donors, he believed that similar measurements could be used in alumni relations with some adaptation. He planned to implement various measurement methods in the near future using technology, including keeping track of the number of calls made to alumni, the number of new memberships, the number of functions and attendance, and the number of communication pieces. He also wanted to ensure that the staff filled out contact reports whenever they spoke to Southern Research University alumni.

The executive director believed that the three best methods for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations included communication, revenue, and participation rates. He added that it was important to account for how many alumni, friends, and parents you were touching and how. One way to measure communication was by the number of good addresses that the alumni association had for alumni and friends. Southern Research University currently

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has approximately 230,000 good addresses, which allowed the executive director and staff to communicate messages and inform alumni about upcoming activities and events.

In addition to communication, the executive director also said that revenue could be used for measuring effectiveness. The alumni association generated revenue mainly through alumni membership dues and through some events. The executive director commented that the larger and more mature regional clubs "make money in everything they do and all the money goes into the scholarship fund...the alumni association is in a position now where money is not an issue...we have matured to that point where the revenue is steady, consistent, and high enough" (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

The third method that the executive director used to evaluate effectiveness in alumni relations was participation of the alumni. Certain alumni may choose to participate only by renewing their memberships every year, while others might attend events and volunteer to help with student recruiting and lobbying efforts. With a nationally recognized athletics program, many alumni also remained connected to the university by attending sporting events throughout the year. Regardless of the type of involvement, the executive director thought that the key to effectiveness was keeping alumni connected and informed about the university.

Documentary Evidence of Measuring Effectiveness

Back to College 2004 Evaluation Form.

The researcher was given a blank copy of a Back to College 2004 Evaluation Form to assist her understanding of how alumni programs were evaluated at Southern Research University. Back to College 2004 was a weekend event sponsored by the alumni association, where alumni were invited back to campus to learn more about university by listening to guest speakers. The evaluation form was three pages in length and listed an address of an alumni staff member so that alumni at the event could take the evaluation form home and send it back. The researcher was unable to obtain a completed evaluation form or a summary report of the findings.

The first question on the Back to College 2004 evaluation form asked respondents to rate the following areas on a scale of one to five: quality of instructors, quality of classroom setting, welcome reception, Friday breakfast, Friday lunch, Friday reception and dinner, Saturday breakfast, Saturday lunch, Saturday dinner, and hotel. Space was included on the form for alumni to write comments about these areas. Next, alumni were asked to discuss what they liked most and least about the program, as well as suggestions for improving the program. Additionally, the alumni staff wanted to know other subject areas and buildings on campus that alumni would have liked to learn about so that these could be included in future programs. Finally, alumni were asked how they learned about Back to College, whether they would attend the program again,

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whether they would recommend the program to others, and for comments and suggestions.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Evaluation of the Alumni Association*</p>

In terms of evaluation of the alumni association, neither the university president nor the alumni board conducted a formal evaluation of the executive director or the alumni association as a whole. The executive director responded that university presidents were involved in other things and they were just not interested. The researcher thinks that the executive director's response might have been partially due to the fact that the alumni association contributed revenues to the university and was not a "drain" on university funds. As for the alumni board, the executive director felt that some changes needed to be made so that there would be new energy and the board would be held more accountable. Overall, he stated that his goal was for the alumni board to "make decisions about what pressure to exert or what they want to bring to the administration to make alumni operations better...effectiveness will be measured by their ability to initiate requests and needs of the alumni association so they're on the hot seat...not me" (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

The executive director also foresaw that alumni staff would be rewarded in the future for improved effectiveness in alumni relations. He commented that in order to maintain quality employees in alumni relations they would need to be rewarded monetarily because their counterparts in development typically had larger salaries. The lure of bonuses could convince some alumni staff members

<p style="text-align:center;">119</p>

to seriously consider moving to development if they felt that they were not being rewarded for their job performance in the area of alumni relations.

When asked if he discussed effectiveness with the alumni board or the university president, the executive director responded that the subject was not a part of their conversations. He stated, "I don't really have that much contact with the president. Our relationship is a good one, but he mainly works with development. Since I was in development before, he's finding out that I would be an effective person to get re-engaged with certain people because of past relationships" (personal communication, November 30, 2004). As for the alumni board, the executive director acknowledged that effectiveness would be discussed in the future as the alumni association staff worked to energize the board and make them more accountable.

Documentary Evidence of Evaluation

Bylaws of the Alumni Association.

The researcher also received a copy of the alumni association's bylaws. Article 11 of the bylaws discussed the alumni association's audits, budgets, and expenditure plans. The bylaws stated that the alumni association's financial records and accounts were to be audited on an annual basis in conjunction with the foundation's audit. The foundation's annual report would include any comments or recommendations from the auditors concerning the alumni association's procedures and controls, since the alumni association did not have its own annual report.

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As for the alumni association's budgets and expenditure plans, the bylaws provided that both were to be approved by the alumni association's board of directors, as well as the president of the university. Furthermore, the operating budgets and expenditure plans for the alumni association could be consolidated with the foundation's, and the financial records of the alumni association were to be maintained by the foundation. The researcher found this degree of coordination between the foundation and the alumni association to be unique. The organizational structure most likely was the reason for the degree of coordination between the alumni association and the foundation.

Alumni Administrator's View of Responsibilities

The executive director believed that the alumni association served alumni when it served the institution. He commented that the connection of an alumnus to the university was the important part, as well as identifying ways to engage alumni in order to build relationships. For example, the executive director explained, "There are three things that will get me back to the campus as an alum: reunion for the football team, fraternity reunion, and a reunion of the 70's riots" (personal communication, November 30, 2004). By understanding the various affinity groups and the ways in which alumni identified with the university, the alumni staff could plan programs and events that would be of interest and that would encourage alumni participation and their support for the university.

When asked to whom the executive director felt responsible, he replied that he was mainly responsible to the alumni board. He further clarified that he was trying to move in that direction because the alumni board served as the alumni

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association's voice to the university. The influence of alumni board members played an important role in the effectiveness of the alumni association at Southern Research University because the executive director believed that the university administration listened more intently when alumni board members voiced concerns and offered recommendations.

Alumni giving was considered by the university, as well as the alumni association, to be extremely important. The executive director explained that while the emphasis for development at Southern Research University was on major gift fund raising, "you have to initiate some sort of annual contact with your donor base and your alumni pool" in order to verify the accuracy of the records database (personal communication, November 30, 2004). In the past, this annual contact, in the form of solicitation, usually generated over a million dollars. However, institutional advancement administrators were not satisfied because they believed that relationships with donors and alumni had matured to a point where more could be raised. As a result, a decision was made to implement annual dues for the alumni association. The executive director commented that this was a good decision because the alumni association generated "about $1.8 million in dues and we have not seen any drop off in gifts to the institution" (personal communication, November 30, 2004).

At the March 27, 2004, alumni board meeting, the vice president for development and alumni affairs was reporting on the endowment for Southern Research University and how it compared to peer institutions. While the university's endowment was around eight hundred million dollars, the university

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was still about one billion to one and a half billion dollars behind its nearest competitors. One of the alumni board members commented that a possible reason for this difference was that these other institutions established their endowments much earlier because the universities were older. Another board member suggested that Southern Research University did not do a great job in terms of establishing a culture of giving to the university. The board member added that at Yale it was expected that alumni would give back. The vice president agreed that these reasons both contributed to Southern's endowment shortage and stated that the foundation had formed a committee to look into establishing a culture of giving among students and alumni.

Summary

The observations of the alumni building and alumni office provided the researcher with some insight into the value the institution placed on its alumni. The alumni building was fairly new, completed in 2001; it was used solely for the purpose of serving alumni and building relationships with alumni, students, and other friends of the university; and, it was conveniently located across the street from the university's football stadium and adjacent to the university's development and alumni affairs office. The alumni building offered many areas suitable for alumni gatherings and/or events. Alumni were obviously highly valued at Southern, as the institution provided alumni with an opulent home on campus.

The executive director of the alumni association at Southern Research University was relatively new to the position, although he worked at the university for over twenty years previously in positions related to higher education development. Due to the limited time he had been the executive director, definitions and measures of effectiveness for alumni programs were still being discussed and implemented with alumni association staff members and board members. However, the executive director believed that effectiveness in alumni relations involved communications, developing a sense of pride and belonging, and building relationships with alumni.

The literature cited organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture as possible contributing factors of effectiveness to alumni relations (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003; Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). Although the organizational structure at Southern Research University was similar to the typical institutional advancement model, the structure did not include an institutional advancement administrator responsible for overseeing development, alumni relations, and public relations. Instead the vice president for development and alumni affairs served as the senior institutional advancement administrator, and the vice president for university relations was responsible for managing a separate unit. Both vice presidents reported to the university president. However, the executive director felt that the organizational structure contributed to the alumni association's effectiveness as it allowed the alumni association to work closely with the university's foundation. He also added that he had the opportunity to collaborate

frequently with his development counterparts, as well as other university department and programs.

The executive director also believed that institutional culture at Southern Research University contributed to the alumni association's effectiveness because the university had a long history of excellence in academics, as well as athletics. Many students developed feelings of loyalty, tradition, and pride during their time on campus. These feelings were evidenced by student involvement and interest in the student alumni association, as well as the researcher's observations of students wearing clothing with the university's mascot and colors.

Even though tools for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations were not yet in place, the executive director foresaw the implementation of technology to track contacts and calls to alumni, memberships, event attendance, and communication pieces. While the executive director did not discuss program evaluations, one of the documents that the researcher collected was an evaluation form for an alumni program. This form asked alumni to rate the program areas and to discuss possible areas for improvement.

As for the executive director's view of his responsibilities, he believed that the alumni association served alumni when it served the institution. By connecting with alumni and building relationships, the alumni association created support for the university. This support from alumni may occur through assistance with student recruitment, advocacy at the state government level, or monetary support. Regardless of the type of support, the institution was well served by having involved alumni.

While the executive director considered serving the institution and serving alumni to be a mutually beneficial relationship, he saw himself as being responsible to the alumni board because the board provided the association's voice to the university. He also believed that the alumni association should complement fund raising by assisting with maintaining accurate alumni records and building relationships with alumni and students through frequent communication of university news and important messages.

Overall, the executive director of the alumni association at Southern Research University had preliminary ideas about how he planned to evaluate the effectiveness of the alumni association and its programs in the future. At the time of the interview, he had been in his current position as executive director of the alumni association for only five months. University administration had not placed an emphasis on measuring the alumni association's effectiveness; instead the administration seemed satisfied with looking at alumni participation in activities and events and alumni memberships as a guide to the association's effectiveness. In summary, the executive director planned to implement measures of effectiveness for the alumni association and its programs but had few in place at this time.

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Central Research University

The Central Research University system was the state's largest provider of higher education with three distinct campuses. The university system president oversaw the three campuses, each led by a chancellor. The university system had a mission of excellence in teaching, research, public service, and economic development. All three campuses shared the same name and were identified by the name of the city in which each was located.

The north campus, with an enrollment of more than 25,000 students, was located in an urban area. Almost forty percent of the students were pursuing graduate or professional degrees, and the university was ranked in the top seventy of research universities in the United States. The north campus joined the Central Research University system in the 1980s. The east campus was located about 175 miles south of the north campus and was the original campus, established in the mid 1800s. Approximately 40,000 students were enrolled at the east campus, which was consistently ranked as one of the top ten public research universities in the nation. The west campus, the last to join the system in the mid 1990s, was located in the state's capital and had a growing enrollment

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of about 5,000 students. The west campus mainly offered a liberal arts education. Approximately 70,000 students were enrolled at the three campuses.

Central Research University's alumni association was the most unique of the four sites visited for this study because the organization provided services to alumni from three different campuses, all of which were part of the university system. The university system's website reported that there were approximately 545,000 living alumni. The alumni association had about 120,000 members. The alumni association employed approximately seventy-five staff members to meet the needs of alumni at the three campus locations, as well as those alumni who used the Alumni Career Center located near the north campus. While each campus had a branch office, the staff members reported to the president of the alumni association and his direct reports at the east campus office.

Central's alumni association was also distinctive due to its independent status. While both Metropolitan's and Southern's alumni associations were 501 (c) (3) corporations as was Central's, the alumni associations at Metropolitan and Southern were interdependent. In chapter two, the researcher discussed the differences among independent, interdependent, and dependent alumni relations programs. Two identifying factors of independent programs were that the organizations were financially self-supportive and employed their own staff members. The president of Central Research University's alumni association clarified that even though the organization received twenty-five percent of its annual budget from the host institution and some staff members were paid through university funds, the association was independent because these funds

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were provided based on a contractual agreement (personal communication, December 10, 2004). Annually, the alumni association and university reviewed and renewed a contract specifying the responsibilities of each entity; this contract will be addressed in the section discussing organizational structure. It is important to note that Central Research University's alumni association met the selection criteria for this study as it received at least twenty-five percent of its annual budget from the host institution.

At Central Research University, the president of the alumni association reported to the alumni association's board of directors. The alumni association was not part of the university system's organizational chart. One reason for the association's exclusion could be that the university administration wanted to create the illusion of distance due to the association's independent 501 (c) (3) status and for legal purposes.

Central Research University's alumni association's board of directors included three officers, the chair, vice chair, and secretary, who were elected annually by alumni members for one year terms. Additionally, the immediate past chair of the alumni board and the chair of the foundation board served on the board of directors for the alumni association for the length of their terms of office. Twenty-five directors, nominated and elected by alumni members, served two year terms on the board in addition to three student representatives, one from each campus. Finally, the board of directors included eight ex officio members who served during their terms of office: the president of the alumni association, the chair of the university's board of trustees, the president of the university, the director of

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university public affairs, the university counsel, the university's vice president for business and finance, the chair of the division of intercollegiate athletic board at the east campus, and the chair of the senate committee on athletics at the north campus. Overall, the board of directors was responsible for setting policy and governing the association (Alumni association's bylaws, 2001).

The mission of Central Research University's alumni association was "to enhance and advance the relationship between the [university name] and all of its alumni" (Alumni website, n.d.). The association staff inspired "lifelong loyalty and pride among alumni and friends by strengthening their continued relationship with the university in every way" (Alumni website, n.d.). The alumni association served many purposes: official keeper of alumni records; reconnecting or connecting point for alumni and friends through membership in the association; keeper of the traditions of the university; voice of alumni; provider of quality and relevant programs, services, and benefits for alumni and friends; official communicator to alumni; provider of lifelong career services to alumni members; and, identifier of alumni volunteers for the university (Alumni website, n.d.).

The alumni association offered a variety of memberships. All seniors, graduate, and professional students automatically received a free membership as collegiate members, and other students also could request a free membership. The purpose of the Collegiate Membership program was to introduce students to alumni association programs, services, and benefits in addition to offering programs that were designed to assist students in the transition from college to the job market. The free membership period expired

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three months after students graduated, and at that time, they were invited to become paid members of the alumni association.

Additionally, alumni who were recent graduates, those who graduated within the past three years, as well as senior alumni, those who were sixty-five or older and graduated forty or more years ago, could join the alumni association for thirty dollars per year. All other alumni could become members for an annual fee of forty-five dollars. The final type of membership was life membership, which alumni could purchase for a one time payment of $750, and senior alumni for $375.

Observations

The researcher began her observations in the alumni office, which was located in the student union. The alumni office was traditional in style with curved ceilings and several bookcases with information about the alumni association and the services it offered. On the office walls were pictures of the east campus and an award gallery that recognized the accomplishments of alumni. The alumni office, although not new, was clean and decorated nicely. The office had a main entrance area with two receptionists and a sitting area with four wingback upholstered chairs. Three hallways led off the main entrance area and the hallways opened up to cubicle offices for alumni association employees. Overall, the researcher observed a feeling of warmth and hominess in the office, which may have been due to the welcoming nature of the receptionist and the smell of freshly brewed coffee.

The assistant to the president of the alumni association greeted the researcher and informed her that she had a folder ready with the documents requested for the site visit. She also told the researcher about the day's agenda, which would begin with the president's interview, followed by an informal meeting with the vice president of membership, and would end with lunch and an informal meeting with the director of business information. Approximately ten minutes later, the assistant escorted the researcher into the president's office. The office was quite spacious and traditional in style with bookcases lining two of the walls. The president's desk was located on one end of the room while a sitting area was at the opposite end. Again, the researcher noted a feeling of hominess, as the office was appointed with furniture and items much like those found in a home office, such as pictures of friends/family/possibly alumni, books, upholstered chairs, and elegant lamps. The researcher's impression was that visiting alumni who met with the president would also feel immediately at home in the president's office.

The researcher also briefly observed the student union building at Central Research University during her site visit since the alumni association office was located in the student union. In contrast to the freezing overcast day outside, the student union provided a feeling of warmth and coziness with its beautiful Georgian revival architecture. The building had soft overhead lighting and chandeliers hanging from the ceiling. The student union had numerous areas for gathering with fellow students and friends. The building housed ballrooms, study

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areas, lounge areas, food court, bowling alley, and many other student-centered services.

The students seemed very much at home in the union with some sleeping on couches, others meeting with friends, and many studying for final exams, as the site visit occurred during the last week of the fall semester. The researcher did not observe students wearing clothing with the university's mascot; many students were wearing winter coats making it difficult to see what they were wearing underneath. However, the researcher's general impression was that the majority of students, mostly traditionally aged, were genuinely pleased to be attending the university. Perhaps it was the fact that students were smiling and seemed relaxed during a period which typically would be stressful for college students. The union just felt like it offered a home away from home for students.

Parking was limited around the student union. However, the alumni association did have one spot designated for alumni visitors in a parking lot adjacent to the student union. Also, it should be noted that the alumni association was in the process of constructing a new alumni building because the alumni association had outgrown its current office space in the student union and the president of the alumni association felt it was important to have an identifiable campus home for alumni (personal communication, December 10, 2004). In the following sections of this chapter, the researcher discusses the participant interview and supporting documents collected. As mentioned previously, the assistant to the president of the alumni association provided the researcher with the requested documents prior to the president's interview.

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Profile of the Participant

To begin the interview, the researcher asked the president of the alumni association to provide information about his education and work history. He replied that he received an undergraduate degree in journalism and a master's degree in organization communication from the University of Kansas. The president had a total of twenty years experience in alumni relations beginning at the University of Kansas. He had served as the executive director of the alumni association at a research university on the east coast, as well as a research university in the south, before becoming president of the alumni association at Central Research University in 1998. He was the only alumni administrator interviewed for this study who was not an alumnus of the institution where employed.

Next, the researcher and president of the alumni association discussed his leadership style. He said,

> I want people that have a passion for alumni relations and higher education. I make the assumption that people who work in this organization have that passion and don't need me to get them jump-started. It's the classic, 'Hire good people and let them do their jobs.' I also believe in delegating responsibility to the lowest level possible to enable people to make decisions at every level of the organization and feel some pride and ownership in the organization and their responsibilities. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

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The president of the alumni association added that he recently held a staff retreat and asked the question: "Who has the most important job at the alumni association?" Several staff members raised their hands, which made the president very happy because he wanted all of his employees to believe in the importance of their jobs. He believed that it takes every single staff member to accomplish the alumni association's goals.

Defining Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

When the president of the alumni association was asked how he defined effectiveness in alumni relations, he commented,

> That is a question that has been asked for 130 years among alumni relations people. We do it in a number of ways...in terms of membership in our organization...if we can provide services that reach out to every kind of alumnus...every age, every socioeconomic level...then we think we're effective. So it's really how broad our program is rather than counting heads at events, for example, and that has been a tried measure of effectiveness in the past, but there's some people that just don't want to come to events...that doesn't mean that we're any less effective, it just means some are not interested in that. So, there's a quantifiable measure and a subjective measure...that's kind of how the two have to go together in this profession. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

Consistent with the comments of the other alumni executives interviewed for this study, the president of the alumni association mentioned measurement methods in his definition of effectiveness. However, he also spoke about the importance of

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reaching out to every kind of alumnus with broad programming options, which could be considered one definition of effectiveness in alumni relations.

When the researcher asked the president of the alumni association to discuss his understanding of how the university president defined effectiveness, he replied,

> Happily, the president of the university sees things consistently with the way the alumni association sees them in terms of it being an effective organization. To underscore that, I worked at another institution where the alumni association was not independent, there was an alumni affairs department and then also an alumni association and the board of alumni directors. The university had a far different vision for what the alumni association should be than what the alumni association had and that made for a dysfunctional operation. So, fortunately the president of this university is in lock step with the alumni association and thinks we're effective when we do the kinds of things I talked about earlier. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

It was the president of the alumni association's view that the university president believed effectiveness in alumni relations was having broad programs that interested all generations of alumni, as well as maintaining successful traditions while implementing new technology that would assist in efficient alumni operations and reaching out to all alumni.

Next, the researcher asked the president of the alumni association how he perceived other administrators on the institutional advancement team to define effectiveness in alumni relations. He paused and then commented,

Now that you're asking me about more and more of the administrators, I hesitate to speak for them, but I would hope that they would say that they have great faith in this organization to determine what makes for an effective alumni association organization and would support our efforts very much like if you asked me what makes an effective foundation...I would say, 'We have the very best foundation president in the country here and I'm going to support the direction that he takes that organization.' I would hope other administrators would say the same things about me and this organization. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

The researcher found it particularly interesting that the president of the alumni association viewed effectiveness of organizations as directly linked to leadership, which was also suggested by the literature reviewed in chapter two. Additionally, the president of the alumni association obviously felt that being part of a supportive environment, where leaders were encouraged to make decisions and guide their organizations, was another factor of effectiveness.

Contributing Factors of Effectiveness

The president believed that the common factors that lead to effectiveness in alumni relations involved balancing tradition with technology. He further explained that due to the three campuses that the alumni association served, as well as the different generations of alumni and differing interests, the alumni

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association staff must understand the traditions that were successful at each campus and for alumni groups. Additionally, the staff must make an effort to communicate and reach out to all alumni based on these traditions. The advances in technology, with e-mail and e-newsletters, could assist in communication with alumni; however, the president of the alumni association felt it was important to recognize that some generations of alumni continued to prefer other methods of communication.

Organizational Structure

As mentioned in chapter two, the literature reviewed for this study discussed organizational structure as a contributing factor of effectiveness in institutional advancement (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The researcher inquired whether the president of the alumni association thought that the organizational structure of institutional advancement at Central Research University contributed or detracted from effectiveness in alumni relations. He replied that the organizational structure at the university was appropriate and that while it may not work everywhere, it was effective at his institution. The president of the alumni association firmly believed in the importance of independent alumni organizations. He commented,

> I think the independent voice of alumni is paramount in making the alumni feel
> a part of the institution…giving them ownership in the institution…I believe it's
> also important that the alumni association be separated from the foundation
> or development effort because we perform different functions…the line has
> been made gray at an awful lot of universities. I used to talk about the mission

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of the alumni association as being there to solicit, receive, and manage gifts

on behalf of the university which, in fact, is what the mission of the foundation

is, but the difference I would say is that the alumni associations' gifts that it

seeks are volunteerism, leadership, student recruitment, and goodwill...those

are gifts as much as writing a check to the university. (personal

communication, December 10, 2004)

At Central Research University, the president of the alumni association

reported to the alumni association's board of directors. The alumni association

was considered an independent entity, although it did receive at least twenty-five

percent of its annual funding through the university, meaning it fit the criteria for

this study. The relationship between the alumni association and Central

Research University was delineated in a contract that was reviewed and renewed

annually. The researcher obtained a copy of the contract for July 1, 2003 to June

30, 2004.

The contract specified that the association would provide management

and supervisory services for the maintenance of alumni records on the

Foundation Alumni Constituent Tracking System (FACTS). While alumni

association staff was responsible for alumni records maintenance, the university

provided the computer equipment, software, and salaries of the employees who

maintained the records. The contract also stated that the university and the

alumni association had joint ownership of the alumni records. Additionally, the

alumni association staff managed alumni publications and the alumni career

center. Due to the services that the alumni association administered, the

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university provided monetary compensation. While the contract that the researcher reviewed did not have an amount specified, the president of the alumni association stated that the university supplied at least twenty-five percent of the association's annual budget.

Documentary Evidence of Organizational Structure

Organizational Chart (July 2004).

The researcher received a copy of the alumni association's organizational chart for the corporate staff. The alumni association was not part of the university system's organizational chart. One reason for the association's exclusion could have been that the university administration wanted to create the illusion of distance due to the association's independent 501 (c) (3) status and for legal purposes so that the university could not be held responsible for altercations involving the alumni association.

The alumni association's organizational chart illustrated that the president of the alumni association had an assistant and was responsible for overseeing the chief financial officer, the chief operating officer, the vice president of corporate communications, and the vice president of membership. These four individuals supervised their own departments. The chief financial officer managed accounting, personnel, and office operations. The chief operating officer supervised the director of business information (alumni records and information systems), the vice president of the alumni career center, the vice presidents of alumni relations at the three separate campuses, and the senior director of the travel program. The vice president of corporate communications oversaw the

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internet services director, the web assistant, and corporate communications staff. Finally, the vice president of membership handled the alumni service center.

The organizational structure of Central Research University's alumni association was not aligned with what the literature described as the most effective organizational structure (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). Since the alumni association was an independent entity and was not considered to be a department within the university, there was no institutional advancement administrator who was responsible for managing the directors of development, alumni relations, and public relations. Instead, both the university foundation and the alumni association were independent corporations and public relations was handled by a separate university department.

Collaboration

Collaboration was another area cited in the literature as contributing to effectiveness in alumni relations (Arnold, 2003). The researcher wanted to know how the president of the alumni association and his staff collaborated with other departments and programs on campus. The president highlighted several opportunities for collaboration with other university administrators and staff. As mentioned previously, he served on the University Advancement Policy Committee, which was made up of the president of the university, the three chancellors from their respective campuses, the president of the foundation, and the president of the alumni association. The committee met on an as needed basis to discuss policies relating to institutional advancement.

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Additionally, the president of the alumni association responded that he felt "unfettered to communicate with any dean or administrator that I want or need to" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). He added that he was recently asked to serve on a strategic planning committee for the university. The vice president for academic affairs was forming the committee at the request of the university president. The president of the alumni association and his counterpart at the foundation would be involved in the strategic planning process in order to define the way in which their organizations would interact with the university in the future. Noteworthy was the fact that the president of the alumni association mainly viewed collaboration as serving on committees for the university, which could have been due to the independence and size of the alumni association.

Documentary Evidence of Collaboration

Minutes from Alumni Board Meetings.

The researcher found several other examples of collaborative opportunities in the alumni board of directors' meeting minutes. During the alumni board of directors' meeting on February 20, 2004, the university president commented that the alumni association and foundation, both of which were independent organizations, were working together more closely than ever. The president acknowledged that the increasing collaboration efforts were the result of the alumni association's president and the foundation's president willingness to work together and with the university. He further stated, "The alumni association, foundation, and university have become a three-body organization like one 'family.'"

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During the May 15, 2004, alumni board of directors' meeting, the vice president for alumni relations at the north campus discussed international outreach and engagement of alumni. The vice president cited the alumni travel program as one method for bringing together international alumni, alumni travelers, faculty, and students who participated in the program. Collaborative meetings between faculty and alumni relations' staff would be needed to discuss possible ways to increase international alumni's engagement and involvement in the travel program.

Another example of collaboration was noted during the May 15, 2004, alumni board of directors' meeting. The membership development committee chairman discussed the tax deductibility of alumni association dues. In member surveys, alumni indicated that tax deductibility of dues was important to them. Consequently, the chairman suggested that alumni association staff coordinate with the foundation, deans, and college development staff to review tax deductibility of alumni association dues and to inform alumni members of the tax advantage.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture was also identified in the literature as a contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). In this study, institutional culture referred to the student experience and the traditions formed during students' time on campus. As discussed in the previous chapters, the literature recognized the importance of building relationships with students that would grow as they became alumni.

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The researcher asked the president of the alumni association about the institutional culture at Central Research University. He said that the students and alumni valued integrity, academic excellence, and modesty. He explained, "The modesty part of it is this university is not recognized nearly as well at home as it is throughout the rest of the country…it really is a world class university and we don't beat our chests about it" (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

The president of the alumni association said that the institutional culture at Central Research University contributed to the alumni association's effectiveness. He noted, "I have been impressed with the students and alumni of this university…how they take pride in it, irrespective of how the football team is doing…and that's not been the case at a lot of other universities where I've worked. People are proud of this university for the right reasons" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). During the conversation, the president of the alumni association discussed how alumni were extremely proud of the academic accomplishments that occurred every year at the institution. For example, last year the university had two Nobel prize winners, and he mentioned that alumni were as likely to note the accomplishments of university faculty and students as they were to discuss the successes of the various athletic programs. Overall, students and alumni at Central Research University had pride in the university and the degree that they would receive or had received, regardless of the success of the athletics program.

Documentary Evidence of Institutional Culture

Alumni Board Meeting Minutes.

At each alumni board of directors' meeting, a student representative from the hosting campus reported on activities of the alumni association's student organization at that campus. The board of directors made an effort to rotate meeting sites among the three campuses so that each campus' branch office had the opportunity to share information regarding its alumni programs and activities. During the September 19, 2003, meeting at the west campus, the student representative discussed the Collegiate Membership program and associated events. The Collegiate Membership program was available to students attending all three campuses. Membership was free and the program provided students with an opportunity to learn more about the alumni association and the programs, benefits, and services it offered.

In the fall semester of 2003, student members at the west campus participated in a Kaplan Test Drive program, which allowed students to practice taking the GRE and MCAT in preparation for graduate school admissions. Additionally, students learned about appropriate etiquette, how to dress for success, and time management at Collegiate Membership events. Finally, during homecoming, the student association partnered with the student government association, as well as the student life office, to host a Homecoming Leadership Luncheon. Students in attendance had the opportunity to meet alumni and discuss leadership, networking, and other methods for achieving success.

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Alumni Association website.

Another way that students could become involved with the alumni association was to become members of the student organization at their campus. The alumni association website for the east campus reported that in the fall of 2004 the student ambassadors and the student alumni association combined to become the Student Alumni Ambassadors. Members of this student organization were selected based upon their applications and an interview process. If chosen, students at the east campus were expected to attend meetings twice a month, participate on an event or service committee, and/or serve as hosts at university and alumni association functions. Student Alumni Ambassadors were also responsible for providing campus tours to campus guests, and they were expected to actively participate in Student Alumni Ambassador events at the east campus.

Students at the north campus could join the Student Alumni League. The Student Alumni League served to promote relationships between students, alumni, and the university community. The student group assisted with university events, such as spirit week and the Fall Ball. Overall, the Student Alumni League offered members at the north campus the opportunity to become student leaders while planning activities that benefited the university by building tradition, loyalty, and pride among the student population.

The researcher did not find information on the west campus' website about a student organization. However, as mentioned previously, a student representative spoke about the Collegiate Membership activities at the west

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campus during an alumni board of directors meeting in the fall of 2003. Since the west campus was still growing and relatively new, when compared to the north and east campuses, one might assume that the alumni association would establish a student organization in the future.

Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

The president of the alumni association measured effectiveness in alumni relations in several ways. First, the association staff tracked alumni memberships. The president noted that Central Research University had the second largest dues paying membership of any alumni association in the country. He said, "Our belief is that when an alumnus pays dues to be a member or our organization, it is the most basic commitment to the institution of loyalty and support" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). The president added that the association also used more subjective measures, such as comparing their alumni programs to other alumni associations around the country. The president was a member of several different organizations, including the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the Council of Alumni Affairs Executives (CAAE), where information was shared and alumni administrators exchanged notes about what programs were working and those that were not. Overall, the president of the alumni association believed it was important to be "cutting edge in what we offer...yet willing to drop the programs that are not succeeding" (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

When the researcher asked the president of the alumni association what he thought were the three best measures of effectiveness in alumni relations, he replied,

> You're probably looking for something more quantifiable than I am going to give you...strength of the organization is one measure and my view of that is the scope of the program that you offer. It's also the place that you have or don't have at the university's table, which is something typically earned not given. Second, it's also the recognition given to the university and the alumni association by the quality of board members that serve the organization...if I have a board of directors that is experienced and well-placed in their communities...influential and have the eyes and ears of the university president, board of trustees, state legislators when we need it, then that tells me that we're an effective organization. I think a third measure would be the commitment of the staff. I have worked in alumni associations where people think it's a glamorous job...people get to travel...get to do a lot of parties and receptions...but frankly, that is really grueling and wears on you. But people who believe in the mission of an alumni association and higher education in general are exhilarated by that kind of lifestyle rather than exhausted by it. So, I try to build a staff that is exhilarated by that kind of thing and those are people who are committed to what we do and what the university is all about. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

The president of the alumni association viewed effectiveness in alumni relations through a wide lens where strength of the organization, quality of the board

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members, and commitment of the staff were considered equal in importance, or possibly even more important than measuring effectiveness in terms of alumni membership numbers, benchmarking against similar programs, and attendance at events.

Documentary Evidence of Measuring Effectiveness

    Web Surveys (July 2003; March 2004).

Following the interview with the president of the alumni association, the researcher met with the vice president of membership for the alumni association. The president arranged the meeting because he thought that the vice president could expand upon the various methods the alumni association staff used to gauge alumni interest in the alumni association. The vice president of membership gave the researcher copies of the web survey executive summaries, from July 2003 and March 2004.

Alumni association staff sent e-mails to all west campus alumni in July 2003 and all north and east campus alumni with current e-mail addresses in March 2004. Alumni were invited to log onto a website, called surveymonkey.com, and answer survey questions about membership in the alumni association. Separate survey questions were used for life members, annual members, collegiate members, former members, and never members. The questionnaires ranged from eleven to fourteen items depending on the type of membership. Alumni association staff members were cognizant of the fact that since respondents self-selected to participate in the web survey, they did not have a random sample.

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Thus, the survey results could not be projected to the entire alumni population at Central Research University.

Overall response rates varied from an average of 5.5 percent of collegiate members to 23.6 percent of annual members at all three campuses. Life members were the next most likely to respond after annual members, and never and former members were slightly more likely to respond than collegiate members. While survey questions differed depending upon the type of member, several questions were similar. For example, alumni were asked what they considered to be the primary benefit of membership in the alumni association, how they would rate the alumni association's magazine and web site, and how they would describe their view of the role of the alumni association.

Based on the survey results, alumni association staff made the following recommendations. First, the staff needed to develop better methods for communicating the benefits of collegiate membership. One suggestion was to utilize student ambassadors and the student alumni associations to assist the staff with this recommendation. Second, the staff decided to pursue the tax deductibility of alumni association dues. Survey responses showed that this was important to former paid members and never members. Finally, the staff determined that a low cost membership category, such as electronic memberships or magazine subscription-only memberships, needed to be taken into consideration for future implementation. Some former paid members and never members indicated that they would like to remain informed, but they were

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not interested in actively participating in university life or alumni association programs.

Evaluation of Alumni Association

As for evaluation of the alumni association, the president responded that neither the university president nor the alumni board formally evaluated the organization. However, the president of the alumni association did receive informal feedback on the organization's operations by serving on the University Advancement Policy Committee. The president of the university, the three chancellors from respective campuses, the president of the foundation, and the president of the alumni association met on an as needed basis to discuss policies relating to institutional advancement. At these meetings, the president of the alumni association received informal feedback from the other administrators, as well as provided feedback to them. Additionally, the university president and a member of the university's governing board of trustees served as ex officio members on the alumni association's board. Finally, the president of the alumni association submitted an annual report to the board of trustees regarding alumni association activities and operations. Therefore, the president felt that although there was no formal evaluation of the alumni association, plenty of opportunities existed to share information and receive feedback.

The president of the alumni association also believed that the organization was rewarded for improved effectiveness. He identified financial support from the university as one reward. While funding might be the most tangible reward, he also viewed recognition, endorsement, and participation of university

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administration and the board of trustees in alumni association programs as other rewards. Overall, the president of the alumni association felt the support of the university administration and trustees was the greatest reward and provided immeasurable benefits for the alumni association and its members.

When asked whether he discussed measuring and defining effectiveness in alumni relations with the university president or the alumni board of directors, he replied that he has had conversations about this issue with both entities. However, the president of the alumni association clarified that while "the university president is involved and has an opinion; he recognizes that this organization does not report to him and is not controlled by him. So, he has his opinion that he expresses, but clearly it is our board that sets the agenda and tone for the organization" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). The independence of Central Research University's alumni association explained the reason for the alumni board of directors' prominence in effectiveness discussions. As an independent organization, the board must be concerned with the effectiveness of the alumni association's operations.

In order to address accountability and performance concerns that could arise in the future, the president of the alumni association added that he had developed an evaluation instrument for his own performance, called the Incentive Compensation Performance Measure, but it would also be based on the organization's performance as a whole. He continued,

> It's been an attempt not to create a measurement device as much as to help
> us operate more like the private sector because we do have a significant

operation with seventy-five employees and fifteen million in assets. We need to be attentive to the kinds of things that we do. So this instrument is designed to help me succeed in the eyes of my executive committee and board and in turn my staff is expected to help support those initiatives established by the board and executive committee. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

Documentary Evidence of Evaluation

Incentive Compensation Performance Measures.

The president of the alumni association provided the researcher with a copy of the 2004-2005 Incentive Compensation Performance Measures, dated September 10, 2004. The evaluation instrument addressed six areas: life membership fund contribution, annual membership dues revenue, annual non-dues revenue, alumni center contributions, development and implementation of a performance incentive and performance review program for all direct report managers, and overall CEO and alumni association performance. The six performance measures had separate thresholds, targets, and maximums defined by specific objectives. Additionally, the six measures added up to a total of one hundred percent, with five of the six weighted fifteen percent and the sixth weighted twenty-five percent.

The first four performance measures evaluated contributions and revenues generated from the life membership fund, annual membership dues, annual non-dues revenue, and the alumni center fund. All four of these areas received equal weightings of fifteen percent in the overall assessment of the alumni association.

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The life membership fund consisted of contributions received from alumni through the purchase of lifetime memberships. Annual membership dues were the revenues collected by the alumni association from alumni who joined on an annual basis. Examples of annual non-dues revenues were affinity partnerships with other businesses, such as credit card companies and mortgage companies. Finally, the alumni center fund included brick paver sales and soliciting gifts and pledges for the construction of the new facility.

The fifth performance measure addressed the development and implementation of a performance incentive and performance review program for all direct report managers. To achieve the threshold, the president of the alumni association needed to design and recommend a performance review program for submission to the executive committee for approval by September 10, 2004, which he did according to the document that the researcher received. The target was to implement and communicate the performance incentive program to the direct report managers by October 15, 2004. The president of the alumni association confirmed that this objective was also achieved. The maximum objective encompassed completion of performance evaluations with direct report managers in July and August 2005, which were to include discussions of bonuses for exemplary performance.

The final performance measure evaluated overall performance of the president of the alumni association and the alumni association as a whole. This measure was weighted twenty-five percent. The compensation committee, which consisted of alumni board members, would be responsible for evaluating the

performance of the president of the alumni association and the alumni association itself. The executive committee would have final approval regarding the compensation committee's recommendations. Overall, the performance of the president and the alumni association would be judged as satisfactory, excellent, or exceptional.

The incentive compensation performance measures developed by the president of the alumni association were a first attempt at rewarding alumni association staff for improved effectiveness. While the four areas that involved contributions and revenues had concrete objectives for measuring success, the final performance measure, overall performance, was more subjective. The instrument did not provide information regarding how the compensation committee would judge the performance of the president and the alumni association.

Annual Report (2003-2004).

The researcher also obtained a copy of the alumni association's annual report for 2003-2004, which was included in the November/December 2004 edition of the alumni magazine. The annual report highlighted the programs, services, and benefits that being a member of the alumni association offered, in addition to keeping alumni current regarding new programs at the three campuses. One fact featured in the annual report was that Central Research University's alumni association was one of the largest in the country with a total worldwide membership of 120,305 members. The president of the alumni association believed that the size of the organization's membership was beneficial to its

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members because alumni could build a professional and social network that could be useful when making career decisions (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

Other items discussed in the annual report included alumni association office locations at each campus, the location of the Alumni Career Center near the north campus, and the new alumni center near the east campus that was under construction. The president of the alumni association wanted alumni to feel welcome to visit their alma mater and have a common place to gather. The location of the Alumni Career Center was highlighted so that alumni members were aware of the free career assistance they had access to following graduation. The report also listed numerous alumni association awards, but for a full description of the awards, alumni were directed to visit the alumni association's website. Finally, the annual report included a list of the alumni board of directors for 2004-2005, as well as the financial statements for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2004.

Since the alumni association at Central Research University was an independent organization, alumni members were the primary stakeholders. Therefore, it seemed fitting that the alumni association's annual report was written with alumni members in mind. The staff obviously focused the content of the report on items that would be of interest to alumni, such as the programs, services, and benefits available to alumni members. Overall, the annual report read more like an informative brochure than an evaluation of the alumni association's programs.

Alumni Association Audit.

Another example of an accountability measure for the alumni association was discussed during the February, 20, 2004, alumni board of directors meeting (Alumni board minutes, 2004). The chairman for the alumni association's audit committee commented on the alumni association's audit. The chairman stated that every two years a compliance audit was completed to review controls of the procedures. Since fiscal year 2004 was a compliance audit year, the university auditors reviewed the alumni association's financials and procedures. The auditors concluded that there were no issues. While an audit does not measure effectiveness of the alumni association, it does provide one way for maintaining accountability to alumni members, as well as the university administration.

Alumni Administrator's View of Responsibilities

In terms of the appropriate balance between serving the institution and serving the alumni, the president of the alumni association responded,

> This organization was formed by alumni for alumni. It was not established to be a department of the university...that happened 130 years ago and I'm very passionate about maintaining that tradition. That's not to say that we are not here to serve the institution; we absolutely are, but we also believe that alumni are the only permanent trustees of the university...faculty come and go, football coaches come and go, presidents come and go...but alumni are always there and have a vested interest in the well being of their institution. So, I believe we are serving the university when we serve alumni, which takes me back to an earlier comment that the alumni we serve first and foremost

are those that have made the most basic commitment to the institution by paying dues to be informed and kept involved in the lifeline of the university. So, our first priority is to be of service to our members, but we also attempt to communicate with nonmembers, and we are here to generate goodwill on behalf of the university. (personal communication, December 10, 2004)

The president of the alumni association viewed his role and that of his staff as serving the needs of alumni, specifically those alumni who were dues paying members of the alumni association. He believed these alumni would continue their involvement with the university because they had made a basic commitment to the university through the payment of annual dues to the alumni association. Therefore, the university would also be served by the alumni association due to the relationships the staff built with alumni members.

The president of the alumni association felt he was most responsible to the alumni board of directors. He said, "I serve at their pleasure" (personal communication, December 10, 2004). Again, the independence of the alumni association greatly impacted how the president of the organization viewed his responsibilities. While the president of the alumni association did not assert that he was also responsible to the university administration, it is important to note that the alumni association received greater than twenty-five percent of the organization's annual budget from the university. Additionally, the alumni association and the university reviewed and signed a contract annually that outlined specific responsibilities for each party. This contract was discussed earlier in this chapter. Even though the president of the alumni association felt

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most responsible to the alumni board of directors, he and his staff received

funding from the university and were bound by a contract, so there was also a

commitment to the institution.

Next, the researcher and the president of the alumni association discussed

the level of importance placed on alumni giving at Central Research University

and how it affected the services that the alumni association offered. He

responded that the university was currently in the quiet phase of a capital

campaign, and the university administration planned to publicly announce the

campaign in the fall of 2006. The president of the alumni association added that

the alumni association itself, including staff members and volunteers, "will be

more involved in supporting the goals of that campaign than it ever has been

before...that's primarily because of the relationship that my counterpart in the

foundation and I have established" (personal communication, December 10,

2004). He also emphasized that many alumni professionals seemed to be

intimidated by fund raising, but that he did not feel that way. In fact, he stated, "I

feel that fund raising is an absolutely critical element to help any institution

succeed and it is critical that the alumni association be involved in conveying that

importance" (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

Since the alumni association staff would be involved with the capital

campaign, the researcher asked if any alumni programs would be added to assist

with the campaign. The president of the alumni association replied that he and

his staff had many conversations about possible new programs, but that these

were still being discussed. He added, "I don't know that we will ratchet up the

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amount of programming that we are involved in, but we will probably change some of the messages that we communicate at events. We will also work more closely with the foundation in coordinating events" (personal communication, December 10, 2004).

Additional Informants at Central Research University

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the president of the alumni association arranged for the researcher to meet separately with the vice president of membership and the director of business information. The conversation with the vice president of membership mainly centered on the positive impact alumni association membership had on the institution and the use of web surveys to inform staff of alumni attitudes and preferences. The web surveys were discussed previously in this chapter in the section on measuring effectiveness.

The vice president of membership gave the researcher a copy of a paper that was developed in October 2004, which provided information about the positive impact of alumni association membership. The paper outlined the historical purpose of the alumni association in addition to stating that membership was a strong indicator of future alumni support and involvement in the life of the institution. Moreover, the paper highlighted the impact of alumni association membership on development, with alumni association members being 5.3 times as likely to be donors as nonmembers. Finally, the paper ended with a conclusion that the university would be served best by alumni relations and development professionals coordinating and working together. Overall, the

purpose of the paper was to bring attention to the fact that alumni who were members of the association were more likely to be supportive and involved because they had pledged their support and commitment to the university by paying dues to the alumni association.

The informal meeting with the vice president of membership lasted about forty-five minutes. Near the end of the meeting, he mentioned that the alumni association and foundation had been working very closely, especially in the past few years. He believed that the level of coordination was mainly due to the strong relationship that the president of the alumni association had with the president of the foundation. As the university prepared for a major campaign, the vice president was certain that the alumni association, as well as its members, would play a critical role in building support.

The researcher also met with the director of business information to discuss data management, the alumni association's online directory, and the alumni census. Since the researcher finished meeting with the vice president of membership around noon, the director suggested meeting informally over lunch. The director of business information gave the researcher a copy of the Alumni Census 2002 survey form and summary reports from the 2002 and 2000 Alumni Census. The purpose of the alumni census was "to gather current demographic and attitudinal preference data on alumni, regardless of membership status in the alumni association" (Alumni Census 2002 summary report). Additional purposes included: update biographical and demographic records; add new fields of information, such as e-mail addresses; enhance records with attitudes and

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preferences; identify opportunities for alumni connections; identify trends and patterns for strategic planning purposes in terms of programming, membership, leadership development, club and constituent activities, and information management; and, provide a mechanism for gauging the effectiveness of those connections. Overall, the alumni census provided alumni association staff with important information that assisted in predicting alumni interest in membership, philanthropy, volunteerism, and level of involvement.

Following lunch, the director demonstrated the various functions of the alumni association's online directory so that the researcher understood the capabilities of it. The online directory was available to alumni, alumni association members, and university faculty and staff. However, alumni who were not members of the association could access only alumni and friends information, which provided the individual's name, campus attended, degree attained, class year, department, and city, state, and country of residence. More detailed information, such as addresses, telephone numbers, and business information might also be included in some listings.

Complete access to the alumni association's online directory was available to alumni association members and university faculty and staff. These individuals could search for assistance from fellow alumni. The online directory enabled alumni association members to find alumni who were willing to mentor, provide internships, and provide career advice and other information. The director of business information believed that the online directory provided its members with a powerful tool that could be used to network and connect with fellow alumni.

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Summary

The observations of the alumni office provided the researcher with some insight into the value the institution placed on its alumni. The alumni office was located in the student union building. The alumni office did not provide alumni with space to meet, other than in small groups, but the student union had ballrooms and other gathering areas that could be used for alumni events. The alumni association office displayed pictures of campus on its walls, as well as an award gallery that recognized alumni accomplishments. Overall, the alumni office offered a welcoming environment to alumni and visitors that evoked a sense of belonging and pride in the institution.

The president of the alumni association at Central Research University had been employed by the alumni association for the past six years. During his time as president, he had implemented several measures of effectiveness for the alumni association and staff. The president of the alumni association believed that effectiveness in alumni relations involved reaching out to every kind of alum by offering a broad array of programming and by balancing tradition with technology.

The literature discussed organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture as possible contributing factors of effectiveness to alumni relations (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003; Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). The organizational structure at Central Research University was not the typical institutional advancement model. The alumni association and the foundation were both independent corporations.

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Therefore, an institutional advancement administrator that oversaw development, alumni relations, and public relations did not exist. However, the president of the alumni association believed that the organizational structure was appropriate and effective for the institution. The alumni association, although independent, maintained a complementary and collaborative working relationship with the university's foundation, as well as the university administration.

The president of the alumni association also believed that the institutional culture at Central Research University contributed to the alumni association's effectiveness. He stated that alumni and students were proud of the university for the right reasons, meaning excellence in academics instead of success in athletics. The alumni association also helped to form a culture of pride and loyalty among students through its support of student alumni organizations, such as the Student Alumni League and the Student Alumni Ambassadors, as well as the Collegiate Membership program. All of these programs offered students with an opportunity to learn more about the alumni association and the services and benefits it provided to members. Additionally, students in these organizations had the opportunity to plan and organize programs and events that built loyalty, tradition, and pride within the student population.

To evaluate effectiveness in alumni relations, the president of the alumni association had implemented several measures. The staff tracked alumni memberships and attendance at events in addition to informally benchmarking their programs against those of similar alumni organizations. Other methods used by alumni association staff included web surveys and the alumni census,

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which provided feedback from alumni. A measurement tool, the Incentive Compensation Performance Measure, was developed recently by the president of the alumni association to assist in evaluating effectiveness in a way that was more akin to the private sector. Finally, the president of the alumni association also believed that effectiveness could be measured in terms of the place the association had at the university table, the quality and influence of alumni board members, and the commitment of the alumni staff members.

Due to the independent nature of Central Research University's alumni association, the president believed that the organization was first responsible to its dues paying members. Alumni who became members of the alumni association had made a basic commitment to the institution. The university, in turn, benefited from the relationships that the alumni association built with its members. The president of the alumni association also stated that he saw himself as being responsible to the alumni board because he served at their pleasure. Finally, he viewed the alumni association as playing an active role in fund raising by collaborating with the foundation, maintaining accurate alumni records, and building relationships with alumni and students.

Overall, the president of the alumni association at Central Research University had implemented several methods for measuring effectiveness of the alumni association. Since the alumni association was an independent entity, the university administration had not required effectiveness measures. However, the alumni association and the university entered into an annual contract, which delineated the responsibilities of each. In summary, the alumni association's

effectiveness was largely due to the president's leadership of the organization

and his commitment to work in concert with the foundation and university

administration to build and maintain relationships with students, alumni, and

friends of the university.

CHAPTER 7

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Northern Research University

Northern Research University was the first public university in the state, founded in the mid 1800s. The university was located in a community in the central part of a mid-western state. The university faculty and staff worked together to create a small college environment while providing large university opportunities. University staff strived to promote excellence in teaching and scholarship in addition to creating a supportive and productive community. With an enrollment of more than 20,000 students, the university had six colleges, thirty-four academic departments, and offered over 160 programs of study for undergraduate and graduate students.

Northern Research University's alumni association was not an independent 501 (c) (3) corporation; instead, the organization was considered a nonprofit since it fell under the umbrella of the university. Membership in Northern Research University's alumni association was automatic; all graduates were considered to be members and there were no alumni membership dues. Former students who attended the university but did not graduate may also request to be added to the alumni membership. As of December 2004, the alumni/development database had records for 156,757 living alumni, of which 93.5% or 146,617 had

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current addresses (Database statistics, 2004). The alumni association's mission was "to support the university through the knowledge, skills, financial resources, and loyalty of its alumni; to communicate and interpret the university's goals and achievements to others; and to promote a spirit of unity and loyalty among former students and friends" (Board of directors orientation manual, n.d.).

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, Northern's alumni association was not an independent 501 (c) (3) corporation and did not charge annual dues; therefore, the organization, while considered interdependent, was the most dependent on the host institution of all the sites visited for this study. Yet, it still met the study's selection criteria as it received at least twenty-five percent of its annual operating budget from the university. The department of alumni services received funding in the following forms: general revenue/state dollars; earned income, royalties paid from service providers such as credit cards, student loan consolidations, travel, and merchandise; foundation supplement, operational dollars provided by the Foundation Board from private donations; and, interest paid on balances in University agency accounts as well as on an endowment account in the Foundation, which was started and added to from earned income (personal communication, September 1, 2005).

The department of alumni services was organized within the division of university advancement. The division of university advancement was headed by a vice president who reported to the president of the university and who was responsible for overseeing development, university marketing and communications, media relations, and alumni services. The alumni services staff

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worked together with the alumni board, as well as the division of university advancement, to provide valuable programs, services, and benefits to alumni. Northern Research University's alumni association was governed by twenty-seven volunteer leaders, called the Board of Directors. Alumni board members were elected by alumni members for three year terms, and board members could be re-elected for four terms. The alumni association's Board of Directors worked together with the university's alumni services staff to serve alumni, as well as "to strengthen the University's traditions, its future growth, and its networks of influence" (Board of directors orientation manual, n.d.).

Observations

The researcher began her observations in the alumni services office, which was located in the student union building. A large parking lot with hourly rates and an attendant was adjacent to the student union building making it easily accessible to students, alumni, and other campus visitors. As the researcher entered the alumni services office, she was greeted by a receptionist at the front desk. Several cubicle style offices were located behind the front desk, and the director of alumni services' office was in a separate room adjacent to the front desk. Alumni magazines and brochures were available in a sitting area next to the office's entrance. Photographs of campus buildings were displayed on the office walls in addition to miscellaneous alumni awards, a display of class rings available for purchase, and artwork done by alumni. Overall, the alumni services office area was significantly smaller in size than the other three campuses that the researcher visited.

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Shortly after the researcher's arrival, she was greeted by the director of alumni services. The director's office was larger than the researcher expected considering the size of the rest of the alumni services office. Floor to ceiling windows lined one wall of the office and bookcases lined another wall. The director's desk was located near the windows at one end of the room and a table and two chairs were at the opposite end. The director also had some artwork done by alumni displayed on her office walls, as well as a CASE certificate, donor recognition plaques, and a university clock. Moreover, the director had an alumni association board meeting gavel on a bookshelf and pictures related to work and family.

The researcher also briefly observed the student union building at Northern Research University during her site visit since the department of alumni services office was located in the student union. While the student center was built in the late 1970s, it was clean and well maintained. Many of the signs in the student center showed the university's colors and the school's mascot. The researcher noted that the student center housed the university bookstore, credit union, computer store, print shop, food court, student lounge, and an information center. The student center building also had seven rooms that could be used for various activities and receptions. The university's website called the student center "The Gateway to Campus" because it offered students a central place to meet and socialize. However, due to the timing of the researcher's site visit, winter break, she was unable to observe whether the student center was used by a large number of students. In the following sections of this chapter, the researcher

discusses the participant interview and supporting documents collected. The alumni services director compiled the documents requested prior to the researcher's visit so that she could briefly discuss the contents of each.

Profile of the Participant

The researcher initiated the interview by asking the director of alumni services to discuss her educational and work history. She replied that immediately after she graduated from the university she was hired to work for the Vocational Education department. The position was funded with grant money for the Vocational Education Act, and she was responsible for developing workshops, writing newsletters, and developing teaching materials for a program that taught teachers how to mainstream special needs students into their vocational education classes.

After three years of working in the department, the director saw an ad in the alumni newspaper. The director of alumni services was looking for an assistant coordinator, who would be responsible for planning regional events, editing the newsletter, and working with the student group. The director of alumni services, at that time, was a woman who had previously worked in the admissions office, where the current director had also worked as a student. The current director decided to apply for the assistant coordinator position and was hired in 1983. In the past twenty-one years, the director of alumni services has had the opportunity to work in all areas of alumni services at Northern Research University.

When asked to describe her leadership style, the director of alumni services commented, "I like to think I am pretty hands-off. This is what you need to do, here are the resources, let me know if you have questions or need more resources, and let me know if it is not working" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). Overall, the director stated that she was not a strong motivator because she felt uncomfortable giving accolades and recognition. Moreover, she said that she expected her employees to do their jobs well. At the same time, she added that she and her coworkers had been together for a long time and they were comfortable with one another, so she felt that the office environment was relaxed and her employees enjoyed what they did.

Defining Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

The researcher and the director of alumni services discussed how she defined effectiveness in alumni relations. Again, as noted in the other three cases, the director discussed evaluation and measurement instead of a clear definition of effectiveness. Consequently, her answer to this question will be discussed in the following section on measuring effectiveness. After she commented on methods for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, she added, "I think a definition of effectiveness is always fluid. You can't apply the same rules to one program that you apply to another and it probably is related somewhat to the university's needs and past history" (personal communication, December 17, 2004).

Next, the researcher asked the director of alumni services how she perceived the university president would define effectiveness in alumni relations. Since the

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university president was only inaugurated in October 2004, the director felt that she was still in the process of determining that. However, during the previous year when he served as the interim president, she had conversations with him about alumni events and attendance. The director did not want the university president to become discouraged if alumni event attendance was low because she believed that she could brand the president, thereby increasing attendance. By branding him, the director meant that the president could be used to draw alumni to events once alumni had the opportunity to get to know him. Overall, the director felt that the university president viewed effectiveness in alumni relations as "having the opportunity to tell the university story" (personal communication, December 17, 2004).

The researcher continued asking about the director's perceptions of other members of the institutional advancement team and their definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations. She replied, "I can tell you our directors of development define effectiveness...this is a broad generalization...it is an effective program only if there is an opportunity to cultivate...some of them feel very strongly that everything we do needs to lead to donor cultivation" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). The director believed that alumni contributed in many other ways to the institution than solely financially and sometimes she had to remind her colleagues of that. However, she felt supported in her efforts to build relationships with alumni due to the long history and excellent working relationship that she and vice president of university advancement had. She thought that the vice president would define effectiveness

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in alumni relations as providing opportunities for positive contact with alumni. In other words, alumni staff members were effective when they created alumni programs, services, and benefits that interested alumni, led to building relationships with alumni, emphasized the importance of alumni involvement, and communicated university messages.

<center>*Contributing Factors of Effectiveness*</center>

As for common factors of effectiveness in alumni relations, the director believed that it was important to view effectiveness through the eyes of alumni as well as through the alumni services' staff. She explained that an event was successful if alumni had a good time, if they said that they would attend again, and if they learned something about the university in the process. Alumni staff members, however, saw events and programs as effective when they had an opportunity for impact, such as getting alumni involved in future activities and communicating important university messages.

Organizational Structure

As mentioned in chapter three, the literature reviewed for this study discussed organizational structure as a contributing factor of effectiveness in institutional advancement (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The researcher inquired whether the director of alumni services thought that the organizational structure of institutional advancement at Northern Research University contributed or detracted from effectiveness in alumni relations. She replied that the organizational structure at the university contributed to the department's effectiveness "because we have many more opportunities than we

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would have if we were isolated" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). The director cited a recent example,

>This morning I attended the prospect management meeting, which development has every other Friday, and from that I pick up on a dean is going to be somewhere and maybe we can plan an alumni event around that program or what visits the development officers will make and how we can play a role in that. I think being around the table with my colleagues certainly has made us stronger as an organization in a lot of ways...developing strong relationships makes us part of the campus, we know what is going on, and what role we play. (personal communication, December 17, 2004)

Documentary Evidence of Organizational Structure

Organizational Chart (May 2004).

The researcher received a copy of the department of alumni services' organizational chart. The department of alumni services was organized within the division of university advancement. The director of alumni services oversaw one senior assistant director, three assistant directors, three support staff members, graduate assistants, and student workers. The alumni services staff worked together with the alumni board, as well as the division of university advancement, to provide valuable programs, services, and benefits to alumni.

The division of university advancement was headed by a vice president who reported to the president of the university. The vice president was responsible for overseeing the following administrators in university advancement: the assistant vice president and executive director of development, the executive director of

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university marketing and communications, the director of media relations, and the director of alumni services. The organizational structure at Northern Research University was the same configuration that the literature cited as being the most effective for institutional advancement, with directors of development, alumni relations, and communications all reporting to the same administrator of university advancement (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003).

Collaboration

Another area associated with effectiveness in alumni relations was the opportunity to collaborate (Arnold, 2003). The researcher wanted to know how the director of alumni services and her staff collaborated with other departments and programs on campus. Before providing examples, the director said that she thought her longevity with the institution, as well as that of her staff members, contributed to the collaborative relationships that the department had developed. She added, "We have all been here a long time so we know a lot of people, and when someone wants to work together on something it is easy to make those kinds of contacts" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). However, she commented that sometimes communication between campus departments was not optimal. She provided the following example,

> We work fairly well with athletics and thought we were on pretty good terms
> with them and then found out they were offering alumni night and we didn't
> know about it. The funny thing is I have asked for years, 'Can't we do an
> alumni night at the men's basketball game? You know alumni night for a

buck...let's just get people in the door, and once they are here, they will

spend money on refreshments...they will have fun and want to come back

and will purchase a ticket on their own.' The reply was, 'Can't give the house

away.' Well, now we have a new administration, new athletic director, and

now they are offering an alumni night. I thought...remember we talked about

this...if you had told us, then we could have advertised it in the alumni

magazine, we could have put it in mailings or the e-newsletter...but for the

most part we work well with athletics. (personal communication, December

17, 2004)

While a portion of the communication problem was likely due to the change in

athletics administration, the director felt that the athletics department still had

staff members who should have remembered that conversation or at least should

have thought that alumni services should be notified about alumni night.

During the interview, the director also said that the alumni services staff

collaborated with other areas of campus. She commented that overall alumni

staff members pushed themselves "to be a service unit for campus" (personal

communication, December 17, 2004). One way that the alumni staff developed

relationships with the campus community was to serve as college and/or unit

liaisons. Alumni staff members assisted their assigned college/unit with planning

alumni receptions, helping develop alumni awards programs, hosting programs

sponsored by a college/unit for alumni, assisting with homecoming event

planning, and serving on committees. The liaisons' role helped to strengthen the

alumni office's place on campus. The following colleges/units had one alumni

staff liaison: College of Fine Arts, College of Business, College of Arts and Sciences, College of Applied Sciences and Technology, College of Nursing, College of Education, Library, Student Affairs, and Intercollegiate Athletics.

Institutional Culture

Institutional culture was also identified in the literature as a contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). In this study, institutional culture referred to the student experience and the traditions formed during students' time on campus. As discussed in the previous chapters, the literature recognized the importance of building relationships with students that would grow as they became alumni.

The researcher asked the director of alumni services about the institutional culture at Northern Research University and whether it affected the department's ability to be effective. She replied,

> Sure, both negatively and positively. Negatively, the institution grew extremely
> fast in the late 1960s and early 1970s when we became a multi-purpose
> institution. Good example...my brother from the time he started to the time he
> graduated, the population went from 4,000 to 14,000 students. Then, it went
> from 14,000 to 20,000, and so in a pretty short time period, the population
> exploded. I have alums from the early 1970s who feel very detached from the
> institution because it was at that time a very impersonal place, and they say
> that the philosophy was...get in here, get you graduated, and then we don't
> want to hear from you again. I cannot go back and touch those alumni now
> and make them feel good about the institution. So, that is my lost cause...not

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all feel that way, but a lot do...so that culture makes it difficult. The positive

thing is that whole philosophical feel that if you can find those pockets of

people that really had those positive experiences...student leaders...those

with good relationships with department faculty, etc. (personal

communication, December 17, 2004)

While past students might have felt detached, the alumni services department

had implemented several programs to reach out to current students. The Student

Alumni Council (SAC) was a student organization that was sponsored by the

department of alumni services. Approximately forty students participated in SAC

during the 2003-2004 school year. One of the group's greatest accomplishments

was the production and distribution a graduate guide, which included tips from

alumni on how to survive after graduation and other various real-life issues. The

booklet was distributed to graduates during the Commencement Fairs held in

October and March.

In addition, SAC members were given opportunities to participate in

philanthropy through involvement with the new Student Foundation, as well as

various other community service projects, such as Habitat for Humanity, a blood

drive, and the campus' Relay for Life. Moreover, SAC provided students with the

opportunity to be recognized for the involvement and support of the university.

Student members were eligible for scholarships and Future Alumni Leader

awards.

Documentary Evidence of Institutional Culture

Key Chain Return system.

The department of alumni services also tried to build connections with those students, who were not members of SAC. One CASE award-winning method developed by the alumni services staff was the distribution of Alumni Association key chain graduation gifts at the October and March Commencement Fairs. The key chains were engraved with the university's seal and motto on the front side and the address of the alumni services department on the back side. The key chain came attached to a card, which requested student information, such as post graduation address, telephone number, email address, and involvement in student organizations. After completing the information, students were asked to return the card to alumni services. The card and the key chain had the same identification number that was used by the alumni services department to return the keys and key chain to the graduate in the event that the student lost his/her keys and the finder dropped the keys into a mailbox.

Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

The director of alumni services provided several examples of methods the staff used to measure effectiveness of alumni programs. She responded that the majority of measurement tools involved evaluating alumni satisfaction. For example, event evaluation cards were distributed at events, and alumni who participated in the travel program were also asked to complete an evaluation form. Both the event evaluation cards and travel program evaluations will be discussed later in this section.

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The alumni staff also developed an online survey to measure alumni's satisfaction with the e-newsletter, and the staff received approximately 1200 responses. While the director did not provide a copy of the online survey, it was discussed at the December 6, 2003, alumni board of directors' meeting. A staff representative reported that the survey's purpose was "to get a sense of how many messages from the university is perceived by alumni as too many" (Board of Directors' meeting minutes, 2003). The alumni staff's concern was that alumni would become frustrated with the university as more campus units were relying on email to communicate important messages.

Additionally, the staff had conducted exit interviews with graduating students in order to get feedback about what students knew about alumni services. Again, the director did not provide a copy of the exit interviews or the results. However, she did mention that the staff discovered students knew very little about the programs, services, and benefits that the department of alumni services offered.

Another measurement tool was used in preparation for the university's first comprehensive fundraising campaign. The department of alumni services conducted focus groups with the assistance of a research group that helped with campaign readiness. The results of the focus group discussions will be discussed later in this section.

As far as future plans for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, the director responded that she would like to do a readership survey for the alumni magazine. She was also interested in life-phased marketing, which was identifying the generations of alumni and marketing specific services and benefits

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to these groups. The director commented, "I want to take these characteristics or life phases and ask our staff to take these and overlay with them what we offer for each life phase, and I think we will use that to help us determine effectiveness" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). The director recently became a member of CAAE, which provided information for benchmarking to its members, so she felt that this would serve as an additional measure of effectiveness.

Overall, the director stated, "I guess the best way is just what you hear from people and those actually are probably more meaningful than the formalized instruments" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). In terms of the three best measures of effectiveness in alumni relations, the director replied,

I really think talking with people individually is going to give you the best information because you have the opportunity to ask questions...more valuable information when you are able to carry on a conversation one on one than just a list of questions on a survey. That would be my preferred method, but obviously not very realistic. I think online surveys are working well...certainly a disadvantage is that you may end up with not a representative sample...I guess really the best way to do it is customer satisfaction...so maybe a mail survey. (personal communication, December 17, 2004)

Documentary Evidence of Measuring Effectiveness

Event Feedback form.

The director provided the researcher with a copy of an event feedback form that was distributed at alumni services' events. Alumni were asked to complete the form, which was a large postage-paid postcard, and mail it back to alumni services. The form asked event attendees to list the event and date in addition to indicating their agreement, disagreement, or neutrality according to a five point scale with the following six statements:

- The date and time of the event were appropriate.

- The location of the event was convenient for me.

- The food/beverages and service were good.

- The facilities were appropriate.

- I received a good value for the event cost.

- The program was good/left me with a good impression of [university name].

Moreover, the form also requested that alumni indicate how they found out about the event by marking the method(s) that applied, such as alumni magazine, e-mail announcement, alumni services website, and/or friend/fellow alum. Finally, the form asked alumni to reveal what they liked most and least about the event, as well as their overall impression of the event and whether they would likely attend future alumni events. Based on alumni feedback, the director and her staff modified events to better meet the needs of alumni.

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Travel Evaluation form.

Another form the researcher obtained during the site visit was the travel evaluation form. Alumni who participated in the university's travel program received this form and were asked to return it to alumni services in a postage-paid envelope. The form asked alumni to rate several items on a scale ranging from excellent to poor. Next, alumni could write short statements about the highlights of the trip, disappointments, suggestions for future travel locations, and preferences regarding the best time of year for travel. Additionally, alumni were asked to provide a quote about the travel program that alumni services staff may use in future promotional materials. Finally, alumni rated the factors that were important when selecting a tour, such as destination, length of stay, education emphasis, and price, in addition to marking whether they would consider traveling on future alumni programs and whether they would encourage others to participate.

Alumni Focus Groups (April 2003).

In preparation for Northern Research University's fundraising campaign, the alumni services department worked with a qualitative research company to explore methods for reconnecting with alumni. The research company's staff conducted six, ninety minute focus groups during March 2003. The focus groups consisted of alumni who were separated into age groups and active or non-active groups.

During the focus groups, alumni were asked to discuss their experiences at the university, both social and educational, as well as whether they had been

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back to the campus since graduation. Participants also talked about their relationships with the institution and the reasons for being involved or uninvolved. Moreover, alumni discussed communication materials that they received from the university and alumni services in addition to reasons for event attendance/non-attendance, volunteer opportunities of interest to them, and reasons for giving monetary contributions to the university.

Overall, the research company staff made the following recommendations in the summary report after analyzing the qualitative data:

- "Connect early: An emotional connection needs to be made between current students and the alumni association in order for more students to maintain a relationship with the university after graduation."

- "Connect often: To 'reconnect' older alumni, the university needs to fill in the gaps between the university that older alumni reminisce about and the university of today."

- "Reach out to alumni in the [name of city] area: Bring speakers from the university to the [city] area in order to bridge the gap between the university's campus and [city]."

- "Brand the alumni association: Branding the alumni association would distinguish the university's alumni services and build awareness for the association…Branding should signify that the university recognizes that alumni are no longer students and speak to them as professionals."

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- "Update the alumni database: If the university desires to build a larger alumni community within the [city] area, the university has to spend the time gathering correct information on alumni in order to extend its reach."

During the researcher's interview with the director of alumni services, she emphasized that the research company's report did not provide the department with information that they did not already know. The focus groups were conducted for two reasons: the university was preparing for a fundraising campaign and the research company volunteered its services because it wanted experience conducting research in this area. Another interesting point that the director discussed during the interview was that the university had "very accurate records as to who our graduates are...we have good addresses for 93.5 percent of our alumni" (personal communication, December 17, 2004). As mentioned previously, the alumni/development database had records for over 156,000 living alumni, of which over 146,000 had current addresses. So, it seemed contradictory that one of the research company's recommendations was to update the alumni database.

Evaluation of Alumni Services

Evaluation of the alumni services department was completed informally by the alumni board. The alumni staff and board annually held a meeting where the director presented the annual report. Board members received the report prior to the meeting so that they could review it. Overall, there were typically no issues and the director felt that the alumni board members were very satisfied with the alumni services department.

As for a formal evaluation, the director stated that her performance was evaluated by the vice president of university advancement, but the organization itself was not formally evaluated. The vice president used the director's annual plan to assess performance. The director commented, "You have to talk about productivity. This is how she makes sure I'm doing a good job and leading this organization in the right direction" (personal communication, December 17, 2004).

Rewards for improved effectiveness in alumni relations at Northern Research University existed in the form of accolades and recognition. The alumni services staff members also had the opportunity to receive merit based raises, which were typical in the university environment. However, these merit based raises were not directly linked to improved effectiveness.

The alumni board and alumni services staff seldom discussed defining and measuring effectiveness in alumni relations. She said,

> We try to get them to do that, but they see their role very differently. They
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> have no control. It is a little different because I do not report directly to the
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> board to be hired or fired by them. But we try to engage them, find out what
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> they think…this year they implemented for the first time a committee
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> evaluation process, and it engaged the executive committee and the full
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> board in a conversation at meetings about what went well and what did not
>
> and what we can do to improve. We never got to the 'what can we do to
>
> improve' part. This year we just went through a list of accomplishments, but
>
> we will get there. One thing that did happen is that we realized one committee

was no longer functioning the way it needed to, so we no longer have that committee. (personal communication, December 17, 2004)

Documentary Evidence of Evaluation

Alumni Association Committee Evaluations (July 2004).

The director of alumni services provided the researcher with a copy of committee evaluations that were completed by the alumni association's board of directors in July 2004. The following nine committees evaluated their performance during the past year: awards, board development, chapter and clubs, external relations, financial services, half century, homecoming, nominating, and scholarship. The committee members were asked to provide the name of the committee, the committee's mission, and to answer seven questions:

- Do you feel your committee's mission meets the needs of the alumni association? If no, please explain your thoughts.

- Do you feel your committee assignments were an appropriate use of volunteer time and alumni association funding? If no, please explain.

- Do you feel that the amount of alumni services staff participation was appropriate? If not, would you recommend more/less (please explain)?

- Please include a 2-3 sentence evaluation on each committee event/project which was completed this year.

- Is there anything that was planned, but you were not able to complete? If yes, please answer what obstacles kept this from occurring.

- Any additional obstacles you would like to share?

- What recommendations do you have for next year's planning committee?

As mentioned previously, due to the committee evaluations, the alumni board decided to disband one of the committees. Overall, the evaluations focused more on accomplishments, but the director hoped that in the future the board would also make recommendations regarding areas that could be improved.

Director of Alumni Services Annual Evaluation Guidelines (FY 2004).

The director of alumni services provided the researcher with a copy of the annual evaluation guidelines used for university advancement administrators. The vice president of university advancement was responsible for completing the director of alumni services' annual evaluation. The evaluation consisted of the following seven appraisal factors:

- Provide effective leadership and management of unit in meeting fiscal year goals and objectives established in work plan, within budget and in a timely manner.

- Demonstrate creative problem solving and flexibility in responding to unanticipated university demands and new expectations of university advancement supervisor.

- Demonstrate willingness and ability to work with university advancement colleagues to meet fiscal year division goals, objectives, and university priorities.

- Be proactive in providing outstanding customer and client services to external (other VPs, units, colleges, boards, etc.) and internal (other university advancement units) groups.

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- Establish unit plan for fiscal year evaluation period that demonstrates understanding and commitment to university priorities and division goals and objectives.

- Identify any services, activities, accomplishments and professional growth you would like to highlight to assist in evaluations.

- Identify activities of supervisor that could assist you in achieving your goals and objectives.

The director of alumni services was responsible for providing supporting materials that offered evidence that she was following her annual plan, which was developed by the director and her staff members, and being a supportive and productive member of the university advancement team.

Annual Report (2003-2004).

The researcher obtained a copy of the department of alumni services' annual report for 2003-2004. The purpose of the report was to highlight the activities and outcomes of alumni services' programs over the past year. The report included a section on results and how success in alumni relations could be measured. It stated,

> Measuring the success of an alumni relations program can be difficult at best. Individual events are evaluated on a regular basis; feedback is sought from volunteers and participants; and statistical information on event participation and use of services can be tracked. These evaluations all help provide analysis of the touches to alumni as well as the engagement of them. (Annual Report, 2003-2004)

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Furthermore, the following areas were also cited as factors for gauging effectiveness within alumni relations: recognition from professional organizations, earned income from affinity partnerships, alumni participation rates, and alumni giving rates.

Alumni Administrator's View of Responsibilities

Following the discussion of how the department of alumni services was evaluated, the researcher and director talked about the appropriate balance between serving alumni and serving the institution. The director of alumni services believed that the department's first purpose was to serve the institution. She said, "Our goal is to find a way to serve the interests and needs of our alumni so that they can then serve the institution...even beyond fundraising we're serving the institution by getting the alums to realize that there are other ways they can give...money just happens to be one of them" (personal communication, December 17, 2004).

The director of alumni services also stated that she felt more responsible to the university president and the vice president of university advancement than to the alumni board. She added, "I think our alumni board would have no problem with that. They would agree that they are a conduit to help make happen what this university wants to happen" (personal communication, December 17, 2004).

As for alumni giving and the impact it had on the types of services the alumni services department offered, the director commented that alumni giving had minimal impact. However, she said that with the campaign that recently

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concluded, fundraising, including alumni giving, was the ultimate goal of the division of university advancement. The director added,

> Our work [within the division] revolved around making the campaign goal. Were we asked to put a fundraising campaign message tilt to all of our programs? Not at all, but if we had an opportunity to tell alumni about new things on campus, then yes, certainly mention the campaign and what opportunities alumni have to become involved...alumni giving is extremely important to the university...so that certainly is an interest, but are we pressured to make that happen? No, we are seen as a way to help make that happen. (personal communication, December 17, 2004)

Overall, the director of alumni services said that the role of the alumni board in the comprehensive campaign was minimal. The vice president of university advancement gave regular updates at alumni board meetings and all board members were donors. Overall, the department of alumni services and alumni association continued normal operations throughout the campaign.

Summary

The observations of the alumni office provided the researcher with some insight into the value the institution placed on its alumni. The alumni office was located in the student union building. Of the four sites visited, Northern's alumni office was the smallest in size. It did not provide alumni with space to meet; however, the student union had ballrooms and other gathering areas that could be used for alumni events. The alumni office displayed photographs of campus

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on its walls, as well as miscellaneous alumni awards and class rings available for purchase. Overall, the alumni office was appointed with items meant to evoke a sense of belonging and pride in the institution among alumni.

The director of alumni services at Northern Research University had worked in the department for twenty-one years. During this time, she had the opportunity to experience many different aspects of alumni services. As the director, she had implemented several measures of effectiveness for the alumni services department and its staff. The director believed that effectiveness in alumni relations involved satisfying her customers, the alumni, campus community, and students, in addition to providing opportunities to tell alumni about the university.

The literature discussed organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture as contributing factors of effectiveness to alumni relations (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001; Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003). The organizational structure at Northern Research University was the same as the institutional advancement model cited in the literature as being most effective. An institutional advancement administrator oversaw development, alumni relations, and communications. The director of alumni services believed that the organizational structure was effective for the institution, as it allowed her to work closely and be involved with the other areas' operations.

While the organizational structure of the division of university advancement allowed for close collaboration, the director of alumni services had also developed partnerships with other areas of campus. Alumni staff members

served as liaisons to colleges and units on campus. Building relationships with campus entities helped to strengthen the alumni office's role within the university.

The director also believed that the institutional culture at Northern Research University contributed to her department's effectiveness. The alumni staff assisted in creating a culture of pride and loyalty among students through its support of the Student Alumni Council. SAC members had the opportunity to plan and organize programs and events that built loyalty, tradition, and pride within the student population. Additionally, the alumni staff had developed a key chain return system where graduates received a key chain engraved with the university's seal and motto on the front and the alumni services department's address on the back; if graduates lost their keys, the keys could be placed in the mail and the alumni services department would return the keys to the graduates.

To evaluate effectiveness in alumni relations, the director of alumni services had implemented several measures, including event and travel program evaluations, online surveys, exit interviews with graduating students, and alumni focus groups. However, she believed that talking with alumni was one of the best methods for discovering successes and failures of alumni programs. While this may not be the most realistic method, the director felt that formalized instruments sometimes omitted important information.

The director of alumni services believed that the organization's purpose was to serve the institution. She also felt more responsible to the university president and vice president of university advancement than to the alumni board. The director mentioned the importance of alumni giving for the university's future. She

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viewed alumni services as an organization that provided the opportunity to build relationships with alumni. These relationships may or may not result in monetary contributions, but alumni could give back to the institution in other ways, such as through volunteering and advocacy.

Overall, the director of alumni services at Northern Research University had implemented several methods for measuring effectiveness of the department. The director also annually reported on the department's operations and programs. The vice president of university advancement assessed the director's performance according to the department of alumni services' annual plan. However, the organization itself was not evaluated as a whole by the university administration or the alumni board. All in all, the alumni services department had measures in place that assisted in reporting and being held accountable to the university.

CHAPTER 8

COMPARISON OF CASES AND ANALYSIS

In chapters four through seven, the researcher described how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness, how they perceived other university administrators defined effectiveness in alumni relations, and how they viewed their responsibilities. In this chapter, the researcher compares the four cases and analyzes the data in order to provide answers to the questions that guided this study:

- Research question one (part one): How do senior alumni administrative officers define effectiveness?

- Research question one (part two): How do senior alumni administrative officers perceive that other senior campus administrators (i.e., the university president and senior institutional advancement administrators) at their institutions define effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question two: What factors contribute to effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question three: How do senior alumni administrative officers currently measure effectiveness?

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- Research question four: How do senior alumni administrative officers view their responsibilities to alumni and the host institution?

Data Analysis and Results

As mentioned in chapter three, the researcher analyzed the data for this study using Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework. Following familiarization with the observational notes, interviews, and documents collected from each site visit, the researcher identified a thematic framework that highlighted the key concepts and themes constructed from the notes, interview transcripts, and documents (see Appendix II). Next, the researcher applied the thematic framework to the interview transcripts using a process called indexing (Ritchie & Spencer, 2002). Index numbers and topics taken from the thematic framework were noted by the researcher within the transcripts. Then, the researcher arranged the data constructed during the thematic framework and indexing processes into thematic charts based on the study's research questions (see Appendices III, IV, & V).

Following the charting process, the researcher further analyzed the data within the charts to identify key themes and issues in addition to finding similarities and differences among the case study sites. Ritchie and Spencer (2002) referred to this final phase of the framework as mapping and interpretation. During the mapping and interpretation phase, the researcher focused on answering the study's research questions by defining contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations and developing strategies for measuring effectiveness because the purpose of this study was to explore how

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senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations.

Research Question 1 (part one)

Senior Alumni Administrative Officers'

Definitions of Effectiveness

First, the researcher analyzed how the four senior alumni administrative officers defined effectiveness in alumni relations. As mentioned in the case study chapters, all of the participants referred to methods for evaluating effectiveness in alumni relations when asked for their definitions of effectiveness, but they had difficulty providing comprehensive and succinct definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations. It was not surprising that the participants found it difficult to define effectiveness, as many theorists suggested that effectiveness involved multiple criteria, not a single definition (Tsui, 1990; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). While the participants struggled to define effectiveness in alumni relations, they easily listed factors that contributed to effectiveness (see Appendix III). Consequently, the researcher used the contributing factors of effectiveness identified by the participants to illuminate their attempts at defining effectiveness in alumni relations. An in depth discussion of the contributing factors can be found in the section covering research question two.

Research Question 1 (part two)

Senior Alumni Administrative Officers' Perceptions

of Other University Administrators'

Definitions of Effectiveness

The four senior alumni administrative officers had different perceptions of how university presidents and senior institutional advancement administrators defined effectiveness in alumni relations (see Appendix III). Metropolitan's executive director perceived the president to view effectiveness based on the number of complaints from alumni, while she thought the other institutional advancement administrators would likely view effectiveness as knowing the alumni constituency and building relationships with alumni. Southern's executive director thought the president saw effectiveness as alumni participation/attendance at events and the percentage of alumni who were members of the alumni association, whereas he felt the institutional advancement administrators viewed effectiveness in alumni relations as helping them to do their jobs by generating goodwill, communicating important messages, and conveying the importance of giving to alumni. The president of Central's alumni association was hesitant to speak for other administrators, but he felt that the university president and other institutional advancement administrators were supportive and would be confident in allowing the president of the alumni association to determine what made an effective alumni program. Northern's director of alumni services believed that the president viewed effectiveness as having the opportunity to tell the university's story to alumni, while she thought other institutional advancement administrators

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believed alumni programs were effective if there were opportunities to cultivate alumni.

One of the researcher's reasons for studying effectiveness in alumni relations was that she believed that senior alumni administrative officers would be held fiscally accountable to university administrations in the future, if not currently, and that they would be required to conduct program reviews that measured effectiveness in order to retain university funding. However, only the president of Central's alumni association seemed to have the same concern, which was particularly interesting because that alumni association was independent and received funding based upon the renewal of an annual contract. The other three participants felt that effectiveness was important, but two of the senior alumni administrative officers, Metropolitan's and Southern's, actually stated that their university presidents were more concerned with development/fund raising than effectiveness in alumni relations. Moreover, there were overtones throughout the three interviews at Metropolitan, Southern, and Northern that university presidents did not have time to worry about effectiveness in alumni relations other than alumni attendance and participation. In the next section, the researcher discusses how senior alumni administrative officers measured effectiveness, as well as whether they were evaluated either by the host institutions' administrations or by the alumni boards. Generally, the researcher found that the alumni administrators experienced less pressure for accountability than she expected, which could explain why alumni administrators had few comprehensive and consistent measures of effectiveness in place.

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Research Question 2

Contributing Factors of Effectiveness

As mentioned in the discussion of research question one, the researcher used the contributing factors of effectiveness to help define effectiveness in alumni relations. In addition, the researcher reviewed the observational notes, interview transcripts, and documents in order to extract additional data that referenced effectiveness in alumni relations, possible definitions, and contributing factors (see Appendix III). By using the lists of factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations, information gathered from the remaining portions of the interviews, and the documents/observational notes, the researcher extrapolated nine factors on which the senior alumni administrative officers agreed defined and contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations: building relationships with alumni, understanding reasons for alumni participation, knowing alumni constituency, facilitating communication with alumni, offering an array of alumni programs, creating pride/tradition/loyalty, instilling a sense of belonging, offering opportunities to impact the future of the university, and understanding institution specific missions and histories. Two of the participants, Metropolitan and Northern, felt that increasing awareness of the alumni programs could lead to greater effectiveness, and the president of the alumni association at Central believed that alumni ownership of the alumni association was a contributing factor of effectiveness. The following table provides a summary of the contributing factors identified by the participants (see Table 1).

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Table 1: Contributing Factors of Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

	AA1	AA2	AA3	AA4
1.1 Build relationships	X	X	X	X
1.2 Participation	X	X	X	X
1.3 Communication	X	X	X	X
1.4 Array of programs	X	X	X	X
1.5 Know constituents	X	X	X	X
1.6 Create pride	X	X	X	X
1.7 Increase visibility	X			X
1.8 Institution specific	X	X	X	X
1.9 Belonging	X	X	X	X
1.10 Ownership			X	
1.11 Impact university	X	X	X	X

The nine factors that the participants agreed contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations were discussed throughout the interviews and supporting documents. The four participants in this study claimed that effective alumni relations programs built relationships with alumni by providing frequent opportunities for contact. These contacts occurred in the form of events, e-newsletters, alumni magazines, career services, mentoring, volunteer opportunities, regional clubs, travel programs, and many other alumni services and programs. For example, Southern's alumni association had a strong regional club program, so the executive director built relationships with alumni by encouraging involvement with the regional clubs. Since alumni who participated in the regional clubs resided in the same areas, they developed strong relationships with fellow alumni, which resulted in a stronger connection to the university.

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However, to build relationships with alumni, the participants agreed on the importance of understanding what engaged alumni to connect with and participate in alumni services and programs. Therefore, knowing the constituency at the institution became integral in assisting alumni administrators and staffs with designing alumni programs of interest to alumni. To become acquainted with alumni, the senior alumni administrative officers at the four institutions used various methods, including conducting surveys via email and surface mail, administering exit interviews with graduating students, and administering evaluations at alumni events and programs. Central's alumni association implemented many methods to become better acquainted with its alumni members, such as through the alumni census and web surveys. After reviewing these documents, the researcher discovered that the instruments provided the alumni association with vital information regarding alumni interests and needs.

Another contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations cited by the participants was communication. The four senior alumni administrative officers expressed belief that fostering effective and frequent communication with alumni enhanced their effectiveness because alumni felt informed and connected to the universities. To ensure that alumni received the alumni programs' communication materials, the participants agreed on the importance of accurate alumni records. Northern's alumni services director provided the researcher with a document that reported the number of the living alumni on record; the department had current addresses for 93.5%, which was particularly remarkable since Northern's alumni

association considered all alumni to be members and did not have annual dues to assist in tracking alumni addresses.

The participants also noted that effective alumni organizations provided a comprehensive array of programs and services for all alumni. The president of the alumni association at Central Research University explained that some alumni may prefer the technological services that alumni programs offered, such as online directories and e-newsletters, while others favored more traditional alumni programs, such as homecoming celebrations and reunions. The alumni director at Northern Research University also mentioned the importance of offering a variety of programs and services that would meet the age-specific interests and needs of alumni. Overall, the participants felt that offering a comprehensive array of programs for alumni of all ages and backgrounds would best serve alumni.

Creating pride, tradition, and loyalty during the student experience and beyond was also viewed as a contributing factor of effectiveness in alumni relations by the participants. The four senior alumni administrative officers agreed on the importance of creating an institutional culture where students took pride in their institutions and developed feelings of loyalty. Southern, Central, and Northern had student alumni organizations established, while Metropolitan was in the process of developing one. Student alumni associations helped to create pride, tradition, and loyalty within the student population. By introducing students to the services and programs offered by alumni relations programs and alumni

associations, students became aware of the benefits, which could lead to their participation when they became alumni.

All of the participants in this study had additional student programs in place, as well, to help build relationships between students and the alumni associations. These student programs included career mentoring and the Collegiate Membership program at Central, young alumni guides at Metropolitan, the key chain graduation gift and return program at Northern, and the Grad Bash and free memberships for students and/or recent graduates at Southern. All of these programs facilitated the engagement of students and young alumni and encouraged feelings of pride, tradition, and loyalty.

During the researcher's observations of the four campuses, Southern was the site that stood out as an institution that highly valued its alumni and as the campus with the most school pride. The reasons for these impressions included that the university recently completed construction of a lavish alumni building that was solely dedicated to serving alumni; the campus community displayed its pride and loyalty through signage; and, many students were seen wearing clothes with the school's colors and mascot. The researcher definitely knew that she was in [mascot's name] territory. The researcher's impression might have been influenced because the visit to Southern occurred during football season; Southern's football team had a long history of national recognition due to its past successes, which generated much pride among students, alumni, and the city community. While the researcher's impression was that Southern had the most school pride and loyalty, this conclusion should be treated with caution.

The researcher noted during her observations that the other three campuses also made an effort to provide alumni with an identifiable home on campus, which could help build and maintain relationships with alumni in addition to creating a sense of belonging. At Metropolitan, Alumni Hall served as the central gathering place for alumni even though it also housed many other university offices. Central and Northern's alumni offices were both located within the student unions, which served as central meeting locations as well. In addition, all three campuses had photographs and/or displays within the alumni offices and/or buildings meant to evoke memories among alumni. Overall, the institutions seemed to purposefully place the alumni offices in central locations on campus and the office décor inspired feelings of pride, tradition, loyalty, and belonging.

In addition to creating pride, tradition, and loyalty, the participants also felt that effective programs instilled a sense of belonging among graduates. The four senior alumni administrative officers believed that alumni were more likely to remain connected with the university if they saw themselves as being affiliated with a successful institution. The area in which a university experienced success did not matter; instead, the participants postulated that alumni would be satisfied by their association with an institution known for any recognizable achievement. For example, the president of the alumni association at Central commented that alumni were extremely proud of academic accomplishments, such as the university's two Nobel prize winners. At Southern, alumni developed a sense of belonging through "common threads...whether it's athletics or academics or research at the medical school...it provides a commonality for people to band

together..." (personal communication, November 30, 2004). Thus, by being alumni association members or graduates of the university, alumni felt like they were affiliates of a preeminent group.

Moreover, the participants noted that effective alumni organizations offered opportunities for alumni to impact the university's future. For example, alumni volunteers assisted in advocacy efforts at the local and state level at Southern and recruited prospective students at Metropolitan. Offering these opportunities to alumni required collaboration between the alumni relations department and/or alumni association and other university departments. Southern's alumni association demonstrated particular skill in this area, as alumni staff members coordinated advocacy volunteers with the government relations staff, recruitment volunteers with the admissions staff, and development volunteers with the foundation staff. By engaging alumni in these types of activities, they felt that they were beneficially impacting their alma mater's future.

The final contributing factor of effectiveness that the four senior alumni administrative officers cited was the understanding of institution specific missions of alumni programs related to university needs and/or history. The participants emphasized that each alumni organization was unique to that institution. In many ways, the uniqueness of alumni associations was a result of how the associations were originally organized. For example, the alumni association at Central Research University was established by alumni for the purpose of serving alumni and was an independent nonprofit corporation, while Northern's alumni services department was established as a university department and was

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dependent on the university for funding. Overall, senior alumni administrative officers who understood the uniqueness of their purposes, universities, and alumni; who used the organizational structure of alumni programs to their advantage; and, who created programs, services, and benefits that met the needs of alumni and the institutions would have more effective alumni programs.

The researcher found it particularly interesting that the three factors, organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture, identified in the literature as contributing to effectiveness in alumni relations were mentioned by the participants as parts of other contributing factors (Tromble, 1998; Worth, 1993; Buchanan 2000; Arnold, 2003; Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001). Each of the senior alumni administrative officers in this study viewed the organizational structure at their institution as effective even though they were organized differently. In the previous paragraph, Central's alumni association and Northern's alumni services department were discussed. In terms of organizational structure, Central and Northern were at opposite ends of the spectrum, with Central being an independent nonprofit corporation and Northern being a dependent department of the university. However, the president of the alumni association at Central and the alumni director at Northern both believed that for their association/department the organizational structure was effective. Hence, the researcher concluded that the participants in this study believed that the contributing factor of organizational structure was related more to the senior alumni administrative officers' understanding of their organizations' histories and needs than the organizational structure.

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Moreover, the participants felt that providing alumni with opportunities to impact the future of the university was a more powerful contributing factor of effectiveness than collaboration. Collaboration between alumni organizations and institutional departments/units enabled alumni to impact their alma mater's future by volunteering to recruit students, by advocating at the state and local level, and by soliciting fellow alumni and community members to contribute monetarily to the institution. As mentioned previously, Southern's alumni association was skilled at facilitating collaboration with the university departments/units that handled student recruitment, government relations, and fund raising. From the participants' comments, the researcher inferred that although collaboration was cited in the literature as a contributing factor of effectiveness (Arnold, 2003), offering alumni the chance to impact the university's future was the more powerful and encompassing contributing factor identified by the participants.

Finally, institutional culture was viewed by the four senior alumni administrative officers as part of creating pride, tradition, and loyalty during the student experience. All of the participants in this study had student programs in place, such as student alumni organizations and young alumni guides, that introduced students to the services and programs offered by alumni relations programs and alumni associations. These programs facilitated the engagement of students and young alumni and encouraged feelings of pride, tradition, and loyalty. Thus, even though organizational structure, collaboration, and institutional culture were important to the participants, they felt that these three factors were associated with portions of other contributing factors.

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Research Question 3

Measuring Effectiveness

While the participants felt that university administrators were not overly

concerned with effectiveness in alumni relations, each senior alumni

administrative officer who participated in this study provided a number of

methods for measuring effectiveness (see Appendix IV). However, only

attendance of alumni at events was identified by all four participants as a useful

tool. One interpretation of the variance in measurement methods, supported in

the literature (Calvert, 2003; Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002), was that alumni

administrators believed that due to the uniqueness of each alumni organization,

assessment varied depending on what was needed for the particular organization

and program at a certain point in time. However, the evaluation methods

discussed throughout the participant interviews together with the supporting

documents helped the researcher build a preliminary effectiveness framework

from which alumni administrators could begin to design their own unique

assessment protocols to use on an annual basis (see Figure 2 & Appendix IV).

In chapter two, the researcher discussed organizational effectiveness theories

and program evaluation. The literature review confirmed that organizational

leaders had difficulty developing comprehensive evaluation tools because

effectiveness could be defined differently depending on the mission, values, and

goals of the organization (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Daft, 2001; Quinn &

Rohrbaugh, 1983). While the participants in this study had measurement tools in

place, with the exception of Southern due to the executive director's recent

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appointment to his position, the assessment methods were not used consistently and on an annual basis; only Metropolitan and Central had developed more structured evaluation tools.

At Metropolitan Research University, the university president implemented an Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan. Each unit was expected to determine appropriate goals and measurement methods. Metropolitan's executive director of the alumni association identified three areas to be measured: membership, participation, and awareness and satisfaction. According to the plan, the alumni staff would evaluate membership in three categories: new, renewed, and free one-year new graduate memberships. The alumni staff set a goal of increasing memberships by five percent or more, and they planned to track memberships using a database program. The second area that alumni staff planned to assess was alumni participation, measured by the number of alumni attending alumni sponsored events. Again, the alumni staff set a goal of increasing participation by five percent or more, and they planned to maintain attendance data for each event so that attendance numbers could be compared to previous years, as well as to other events. Alumni awareness and satisfaction was the third area that alumni staff planned to assess. The executive director and staff planned to measure alumni satisfaction via surveys distributed at events and inserted into membership packets. The alumni staff's goal was to achieve a ninety percent satisfaction rating. Overall, the Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan at Metropolitan compelled the executive director

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of the alumni association to implement measurement methods that could be used consistently and on an annual basis.

The president of the alumni association at Central also developed an evaluation tool, the Incentive Compensation Performance Measures, because he wanted to ensure future accountability for his organization. The evaluation instrument addressed six areas and had separate thresholds, targets, and maximums defined by specific objectives. The first four performance measures evaluated contributions and revenues generated from the life membership fund, annual membership dues, annual non-dues revenue, and the alumni center fund. The fifth performance measure addressed the development and implementation of a performance incentive and performance review program for all direct report managers. The final performance measure evaluated overall performance of the president of the alumni association and the alumni association as a whole. The compensation committee, which consisted of alumni board members, was responsible for evaluating the performance of the president of the alumni association and the alumni association itself, with the executive committee having final approval regarding the compensation committee's recommendations. Overall, the performance of the president and the alumni association was to be judged as satisfactory, excellent, or exceptional.

The incentive compensation performance measures developed by the president of the alumni association at Central Research University was a first attempt at measuring effectiveness and rewarding alumni association staff for improved effectiveness. While the four areas that involved contributions and

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revenues had concrete objectives for measuring success, the final performance measure, overall performance, was more subjective. The instrument did not provide information regarding how the compensation committee would judge the performance of the president and the alumni association. However, this evaluation tool provided a starting point for the president of the alumni association as he continues to develop comprehensive and consistent methods for measuring his organization's effectiveness.

Other assessment methods discussed during the participant interviews and evaluated from the supporting documents were commitment of alumni staff, strength of the organization in terms of visibility and support, and quality and influence of alumni board members. These items were inherently difficult to measure, and while participants identified staff commitment, organization strength, and alumni board influence as methods for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, they did not have objective measures for these items in place.

The participants in this study also mentioned other evaluation methods during the interviews (see Appendix IV). Northern's alumni director believed that exit interviews with graduating students, magazine readership surveys, event evaluations, verbal feedback from alumni, and alumni board committee evaluations served as useful tools. In addition, she considered the number of alumni at events in relation to the event's cost and opportunity to engage alumni, which could be viewed as a cost-benefit analysis. Metropolitan's director stated that alumni focus groups, the number of alumni volunteers for specific programs, and the number of complaints from alumni about alumni services, programs, and

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benefits were used at her institution, while the number of calls to alumni, functions, and mailings were possible measurements at Southern. Central and Northern also used informal benchmarking when reviewing programs. The researcher concluded that all of these miscellaneous methods identified by the participants could be used to measure strategic constituencies satisfaction, as well as evaluate the various programs within alumni associations.

Additionally, the researcher found it particularly interesting that while strategic planning was discussed by the participants, only Northern's alumni director said that her evaluation was linked to her annual plan for the organization. Less surprising was that only Southern's executive director discussed revenue as a possible measurement tool; as discussed in the literature, many alumni administrators believed that revenues should not be used for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations (Brant, 2002; Regan, 2002). Finally, the alumni director at Northern and the executive director at Southern identified current alumni addresses and records as an evaluation tool because they believed that associations with accurate alumni data would be more effective.

In terms of evaluation of the organizations, all four reported annually via a written report to university administrators, alumni, and board members. However, Southern Research University's alumni association did not have a separate report, instead the organization reported in conjunction with the university foundation's annual publication recognizing donors. The senior alumni administrative officers at Metropolitan and Central included their annual reports in the alumni magazine, while Northern had a separate publication. Overall,

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evaluation of the alumni programs was mainly informal among interview

participants, with Metropolitan and Central having more structured assessment

tools in place than Northern or Southern (i.e., Institutional Effectiveness

Assessment Plan at Metropolitan and Incentive Compensation Performance

Measure at Central). The following table provides a summary of the

measurement methods identified by the participants (see Table 2).

Table 2: Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

	AA1	AA2	AA3	AA4
2.1 Alum focus groups	X			X
2.2 Strategic plan	X	X		X
2.3 Alum sat surveys	X		X	X
2.4 Event evals	X	X		X
2.5 Benchmarking			X	X
2.6 Program review	X		X	X
2.7 Exit surveys	X			X
2.8 Alum bd comm evals				X
2.9 Alum verbal feedback			X	X
2.10 Readership survey				X
2.11 Membership	X	X	X	
2.12 Attendance	X	X	X	X
2.13 Volunteers	X			
2.14 Records		X		X
2.15 Complaints	X			
2.16 # of calls/func/mail		X		
2.17 # of people/cost				X
2.18 Staff commitment			X	X
2.19 Revenues		X		
2.20 Strength of org			X	X
2.21 Alum bd influence		X	X	
2.22 Inc Comp Perf Meas			X	
2.23 Annual report	X	X	X	X
2.24 Eval by VP	X			X
2.25 Verbal feedback from alum	X	X		
2.26 Inst Eff Assess Plan	X			

Research Question 4

Senior Alumni Administrative Officers'

Views of Responsibilities

Although the associations they managed were very different in many respects, the senior alumni administrative officers who participated in this study viewed their responsibilities quite similarly (see Appendix V). While the alumni association at Central Research University was independent and formed by alumni for alumni, the president of the association agreed with the participants from the three other campuses, who all oversaw interdependent associations, that the institutions were served when the alumni associations served the alumni. Thus, the relationship between alumni, alumni associations, and the institutions was mutually beneficial. In terms of reporting and accountability, all four participants reported to the university administration by way of written reports. However, the two participants from the larger institutions, Southern and Central, felt more responsibility for reporting and accountability to their alumni boards, whereas the two participants from the smaller institutions, Metropolitan and Northern, felt that they were more accountable to the university administrations.

The participants also felt that they had specific responsibilities to their alumni. One role of the alumni administrators and staffs was to facilitate interaction between students and alumni, among alumni themselves, and between the university and the alumni. Southern's executive director stated that one method he used to facilitate interaction between alumni was to provide programs and events of interest to specific affinity groups. He provided the example that the

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alumni association might sponsor a reunion for alumni who were members of fraternities and sororities (personal communication, November 30, 2004). An example of interaction between the university and alumni was discussed at Central's alumni board of directors' meeting (May 15, 2004). The alumni travel program enabled alumni and faculty members to interact while traveling, as faculty members with interests in specific regions were asked to accompany the alumni travelers and offer their expertise. Metropolitan's alumni association provided opportunities for students and alumni to interact by sponsoring freshman send-offs, where alumni hosted an event in cities where prospective students lived (personal communication, November 22, 2004).

Additionally, the participants stated that they were responsible for tailoring the benefits, services, and programs to satisfy alumni needs and interests. Central used web surveys and the alumni census to tailor its alumni programs, while Northern, Southern, and Metropolitan used event evaluations and alumni satisfaction surveys. The participants also agreed that their responsibilities included recognition of alumni board members and members of the alumni association who demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment to the institution and the association, and each association had alumni recognition awards in place. In addition, increasing diversity of alumni who participated in programs and services was mentioned in supporting documents that the associations provided. However, the researcher found it particularly interesting that diversity was not mentioned during the participant interviews as an area of responsibility.

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The participants also mentioned other responsibilities that they believed to be important. The senior alumni administrative officers at Southern and Northern both felt that they had a responsibility to facilitate alumni board participation. In the interviews, both noted that they were trying to increase their alumni boards' engagement because they believed that this would help their programs to be more effective. Metropolitan's executive director felt that helping to increase the alumni association's visibility and alumni's awareness of the alumni association was one of her responsibilities in order to foster new memberships and the building of relationships with alumni.

All four participants believed that they also had specific responsibilities to their host institutions as well. These responsibilities included generating goodwill on behalf of the institution by building relationships with alumni, maintaining the alumni database and updating alumni records, and complementing fund raising by helping to establish a culture of giving at the institution and conveying the importance of alumni giving. To establish a culture of giving, the participants felt that student alumni organizations were key, as these organizations motivated students to become involved, give back to the institutions through service, and learn about the alumni associations and its purposes. The level to which the alumni associations participated in complementing fund raising varied. For example, Central and Southern acknowledged frequent collaboration between their alumni associations and the university foundations, which involved identifying alumni volunteers who might be interested in assisting with the fund raising process. Metropolitan and Northern's alumni associations also

collaborated with their university foundations; however, these contacts mainly focused on scheduling events and discussing important messages that needed to be communicated to alumni at the events. Overall, the participants agreed that it was important to generate goodwill, maintain alumni records, and complement fund raising by coordinating with the universities' foundations and presidents to offer alumni events that provided opportunities to discuss the current state of the universities and to tell the university story.

Finally, three participants discussed other responsibilities that they felt were important to their universities. Only the president of the alumni association at Central Research University believed that sharing resources with the campus community was not a responsibility of the alumni association, which was likely due to the alumni association being its own independent nonprofit corporation. The other participants felt that sharing resources was one of their responsibilities. Metropolitan's executive director stated that she was responsible for building a national program because the university president saw this as a need, while the alumni director at Northern felt that she was responsible for providing the university president with opportunities to tell the university's story. Even though these three participants listed some additional areas of responsibilities that were specific to their alumni populations and universities, overall the participants agreed on core responsibilities. The following table provides a summary of the responsibilities identified by the participants (see Table 3).

Table 3: Alumni Administrators' Views of Responsibilities

	AA1	AA2	AA3	AA4
3.1 Facilitate interaction	X	X	X	X
3.2 Facilitate bd part		X		X
3.3 Increase visibility	X			
3.4 Tailor programs	X	X	X	X
3.5 Recognition	X	X	X	X
3.6 Increase diversity	X	X	X	X
3.7 Records	X	X	X	X
3.8 Complement FRing	X	X	X	X
3.9 Generate goodwill	X	X	X	X
3.10 Share resources	X	X		X
3.11 Collaborate	X	X	X	X
3.12 Build nat'l program	X			
3.13 Accountability	X	X	X	X
3.14 Coordinate	X	X	X	X
3.15 Pres tell univ story				X

Conceptual Framework

Following data analysis and interpretation, the researcher developed a

conceptual framework of effectiveness in alumni relations based on the data

collected during the observations, participant interviews, and from the supporting

documents gathered at each site visit in order to assist understanding of the

research results (see Figure 2). The first part of the conceptual framework

illustrates an ideal relationship where alumni relations programs and/or alumni

associations interact with students and alumni, as well as university

administrators, faculty, and staff on a regular basis. These positive interactions

are essential in helping to create an institutional culture that will leave students

with fond memories of their student experiences, while continuing to engage

alumni in the life of the institution. The framework also demonstrates the

importance of institutional culture, specifically creating pride, tradition, and loyalty

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during the student experience, in the effectiveness of alumni relations programs. The culture of the institution and students' experiences on campus serve as an umbrella for fostering and building relationships with students that will continue once they become alumni.

The second part of the conceptual framework addresses the nine contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations identified by case study participants: building relationships with alumni, understanding reasons for alumni participation, knowing alumni constituency, facilitating communication with alumni, offering an array of alumni programs, creating pride/tradition/loyalty, instilling a sense of belonging, offering opportunities to impact the future of the university, and understanding institution specific missions and histories. These factors were discussed previously in this chapter in the section on research question two. The researcher included the nine contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations in the conceptual framework to provide interested alumni administrators with a brief illustration of what they could do within their alumni relations programs or alumni associations to improve effectiveness.

The last section of the conceptual framework provides a preliminary effectiveness framework for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations programs or alumni associations. Primarily, the researcher developed the effectiveness framework to organize the plethora of evaluative methods discussed by the participants (see Figure 2 & Appendix IV). In doing so, the researcher assigned data taken from the site visits to organizational effectiveness categories cited in the literature review (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001;

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Daft, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Overall, the conceptual framework presents alumni administrators with a brief depiction of the research findings. The conceptual framework will be discussed in detail in chapter nine.

Summary

From the participant interviews, observations, and supporting documents, the researcher gained insight that assisted in addressing the research questions that guided this study. The researcher discovered that the participants had difficulty providing comprehensive and succinct definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations. Moreover, the participants not only had difficulty providing definitions of effectiveness but also were hesitant to comment on how they perceived campus administrators, specifically the university president and the senior institutional advancement administrator, at their institution defined effectiveness in alumni relations. However, they easily identified factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations. As a result, the researcher used the contributing factors of effectiveness identified by the participants, as well as those drawn and taken from the supporting documents and observations, to illuminate their attempts at defining effectiveness in alumni relations (see Appendix III). The researcher analyzed the data and extracted nine factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations: building relationships with alumni, understanding reasons for alumni participation, knowing alumni constituency, facilitating communication with alumni, offering an array of alumni programs, creating pride/tradition/loyalty,

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Figure 2: Conceptual Framework of Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

Institutional Culture & Student Experience

Students & Alumni ←——→ Alumni Relations/ ←——→ University
                          Alumni Association

Nine Contributing Factors of Effectiveness in Aiumni Relations
- Building relationships with alumni
- Understanding reasons for alumni participation
- Knowing alumni constituency
- Facilitating communication with alumni
- Offering an array of alumni programs
- Creating pride/tradition/loyalty during student experience and beyond
- Instilling a sense of belonging
- Offering opportunities to impact the future of the university
- Understanding institution specific missions and histories

Preliminary Effectiveness Framework for Aiumni Relations Programs
- Goal accomplishment
    - o Achievement of goals in strategic plan, which could address alumni participation and alumni record maintenance and acquisition
- Resource acquisition
    - o Revenues generated by alumni memberships and alumni giving
    - o University funding
    - o Influential alumni board members, based on private sector positions
    - o Participation of university administration, based on attendance at alumni events and alumni board meetings
- Internal processes
    - o Employee commitment and satisfaction, based on longevity in positions
- Strategic constituencies satisfaction
    - o Alumni satisfaction based on surveys, focus groups, event evaluations, verbal feedback, and number of complaints
    - o Alumni board satisfaction based on committee evaluations
    - o Student satisfaction based on exit interviews
- Program evaluations
    - o Assesses need for programs, monitoring of programs, and costs vs. benefits on an as needed basis

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instilling a sense of belonging, offering opportunities to impact the future of the university, and understanding institution specific missions and histories. These nine factors will be examined further in the following chapter, which discusses the results and provides implications for practice.

The researcher also discovered that the participants used numerous measurement methods for assessing effectiveness in alumni relations (see Appendix IV). Yet, only alumni attendance at events was identified by all four as a useful tool. Metropolitan and Central had implemented the most structured forms of evaluation, with the institutional effectiveness assessment plan at Metropolitan and the incentive compensation performance measure at Central. While Metropolitan and Central were making efforts to comprehensively and consistently measure effectiveness, overall, the alumni associations seemed inconsistent in the use of comprehensive measurement methods on an annual basis. Even so, the evaluation methods discussed throughout the participant interviews and supporting documents were analyzed by the researcher in order to develop a preliminary effectiveness framework from which alumni administrators could begin to design their own unique assessment protocols to use on an annual basis (see Figure 2). In chapter nine, the researcher describes the effectiveness framework in more detail and discusses the implications for practice.

Finally, the researcher learned that the participants viewed their responsibilities to both the host institution and alumni quite similarly (see Appendix V). Mainly, they agreed that their host institutions were served when

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the alumni associations served the alumni. Moreover, the participants felt that they had specific responsibilities to their alumni: to facilitate interaction between students and alumni, among alumni themselves, and between the university and the alumni; to tailor the benefits, services, and programs to satisfy alumni needs and desires; to recognize alumni board members and members of the alumni association who demonstrate outstanding leadership and commitment to the institution; and, to increase diversity of alumni who participate in programs and services. Additionally, the participants agreed that they had specific responsibilities to their host institutions, which included generating goodwill on behalf of the institution by building relationships with alumni, maintaining the alumni database and updating alumni records, and complementing fund raising. Overall, the participants agreed on core responsibilities.

Overview

In this chapter, the researcher compared the four cases and analyzed the data. Additionally, the research questions that guided this study were addressed and the conceptual framework was explained. The following chapter offers a summary of the study, as well as the researcher's conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore how senior alumni administrative

officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness

in alumni relations. In this concluding chapter, the researcher restates the

problem, summarizes the study, reviews the research methodology, and briefly

recounts the results. Additionally, the researcher discusses implications of this

research for practice and future research.

Statement of the Problem

Alumni relations programs exist to further the goals of institutions while

meeting the interests of alumni (Webb, 1989). In healthy university environments,

the relationship between the alumni and the institution is mutually beneficial

(Webb, 1989). In an era of accountability, college and university administrators

require evidence that programs are satisfying the missions and accomplishing

the goals of the institution (Brant, 2002). Alumni relations professionals are

challenged to find ways to include as measures of program effectiveness

evaluations of the relationship building aspects of alumni programming.

Alumni giving provides one measure of effectiveness for alumni relations

programs (Brant, 2002; Regan 2002). Using that measurement alone fails to

assess the full value of these programs. However, the alumni relations profession does not have in place consistent and comprehensive definitions and measures of program effectiveness (Calvert, 2000). Because it is important to have such measures in place, the researcher decided to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness within their organizations' programs.

Summary of Study

This study specifically addressed questions regarding definitions of effectiveness, measurement methods used, how senior alumni administrative officers viewed their responsibilities, and identification of factors contributing to effectiveness in alumni relations. Exploration of these areas through observations, qualitative interviews, and document collection provided the researcher with valuable information that contributed to developing a preliminary conceptual framework of effectiveness in alumni relations. The following research questions guided this study:

- Research question one (part one): How do senior alumni administrative officers define effectiveness?

- Research question one (part two): How do senior alumni administrative officers perceive that other senior campus administrators (i.e., the university president and senior institutional advancement administrators) at their institutions define effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question two: What factors contribute to effectiveness in alumni relations?

- Research question three: How do senior alumni administrative officers currently measure effectiveness?

- Research question four: How do senior alumni administrative officers view their responsibilities to alumni and the host institution?

This study to define and measure effectiveness in alumni relations at public research universities involved making observations, collecting documents, and conducting interviews at one pilot site and four case study sites. This research contributed to the research literature by providing alumni practitioners with preliminary definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations; by examining factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations; by exploring measurement methods for effectiveness in alumni relations; and by clarifying how alumni administrators viewed their responsibilities to the host institution and alumni. Since minimal research existed linking effectiveness and alumni relations, this study provided an exploratory look at the topic that could inspire future research in this area.

Review of Methodology

The researcher used Yin's (2003) case study methodology to facilitate the design of the study. The researcher determined that qualitative case studies would be most appropriate for the study as this type of design allowed for rich, thick description in addition to achieving an in depth view of senior alumni

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administrative officers' understanding of effectiveness and methods for measuring it (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003). The researcher conducted one pilot study and four site visits over a period of two months in the fall of 2004.

During the visits, the researcher interviewed the participants using semi-structured formal interviewing techniques (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, the researcher collected a number of documents from the sites and made general observations of the buildings where the alumni offices were located. Following the site visits, the researcher analyzed the data according to Ritchie and Spencer's (2002) framework, which involved familiarization, identifying a thematic framework, indexing, charting, and mapping and interpretation of the qualitative data collected during the case studies.

A limitation of this research included the inability to generalize the findings of qualitative research (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Because the researcher conducted case studies with a limited number of senior alumni administrative officers, selected based on specific criteria discussed in the methodology chapter, caution should be taken when applying these findings to other alumni relations programs. Findings from this research might not hold across other institutional types. The researcher also chose to limit the case study interviews to include only the viewpoints of the senior alumni administrative officers. In doing so, the researcher asked the participants to discuss their perceptions of other campus administrators regarding effectiveness in alumni relations. The researcher decided not to interview other campus administrators

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directly because the sole purpose was to explore the senior alumni administrative officers' perceptions and experiences.

Summary of Results

The researcher gained insight from the participant interviews, observations, and supporting documents that assisted in answering the research questions that guided this study. The first question asked how senior alumni administrative officers defined effectiveness. As mentioned in chapter two, organizational leaders defined effectiveness in numerous ways depending on the mission, values, and goals of the organization (Daft, 2001; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). The participants had difficulty providing comprehensive and succinct definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations. In fact, all four participants mentioned methods for measuring effectiveness in their definitions rather than focusing on specifically defining effectiveness. However, the senior alumni administrative officers who participated in this study easily identified factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations, which will be discussed later in this section. Overall, it was not surprising that the participants found it difficult to define effectiveness, as many theorists had suggested that effectiveness involved multiple criteria, rather than a single definition (Tsui, 1990; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). Therefore, the researcher used the contributing factors of effectiveness identified by the participants to illuminate their attempts at defining effectiveness in alumni relations (see Appendix III).
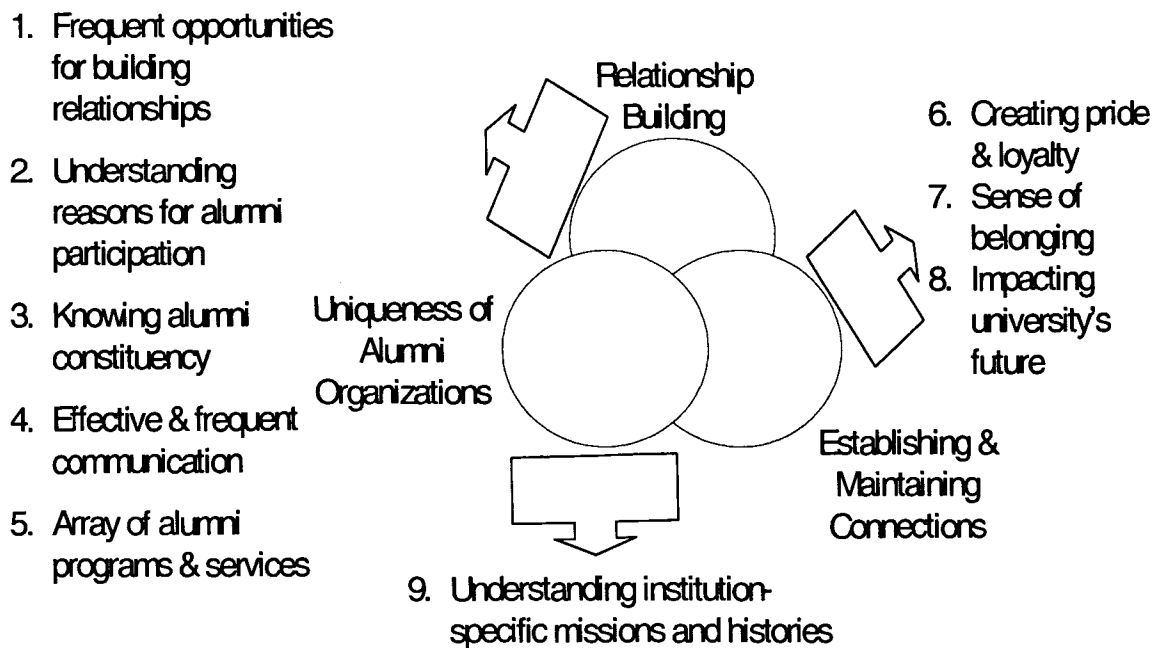
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The first question also had a second part, which asked how senior alumni administrative officers perceived campus administrators, specifically the university president and the senior institutional advancement administrator, at their institutions defined effectiveness in alumni relations. Perhaps what was most intriguing was not the content of the participants' answers, but instead, that the participants were very hesitant to speak for the university presidents or the senior institutional advancement administrators on their campuses. The participants' reactions to the question seemed to indicate that they had not had many conversations about effectiveness in alumni relations with their university presidents or with their senior institutional advancement administrators.

The second research question that guided this study assisted in identifying contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations. The researcher used information gathered during the observations, participant interviews, and from the supporting documents to extract nine factors that contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations on which the participants agreed: building relationships with alumni, understanding reasons for alumni participation, knowing alumni constituency, facilitating communication with alumni, offering an array of alumni programs, creating pride/tradition/loyalty, instilling a sense of belonging, offering opportunities to impact the future of the university, and understanding institution specific missions and histories (see Appendix III). The first five factors; building relationships, understanding reasons for participation, knowing alumni, facilitating communication, and offering an array of programs; seemed closely related, as all five involved relationship building between the alumni organization and alumni in

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order to better serve alumni needs. The next three factors; creating

pride/tradition/loyalty, instilling a sense of belonging, and offering opportunities to

impact the future of the university; also seemed interconnected as each factor

contributed to maintaining students' and alumni's connections to the institution.

Finally, the last factor, understanding institution specific missions and histories,

stood alone, and the participants' responses indicated that they believed this

factor was critical to leading an effective alumni organization, as each was

unique.

Figure 3: Nine Contributing Factors of Effectiveness

1. Frequent opportunities for building relationships

2. Understanding reasons for alumni participation

3. Knowing alumni constituency

4. Effective & frequent communication

5. Array of alumni programs & services

Uniqueness of Alumni Organizations

Relationship Building

6. Creating pride & loyalty
7. Sense of belonging
8. Impacting university's future

Establishing & Maintaining Connections

9. Understanding institution-specific missions and histories

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The figure on the previous page illustrates the interconnectedness of the nine contributing factors, which will be examined further in the following section on implications for practice (see Figure 3).

The third research question led to discussions of measurement methods used by the senior alumni administrative officers. As mentioned in chapter eight, the study's participants identified numerous measurement methods for assessing effectiveness in alumni relations. However, only alumni attendance at events was identified by all four as a useful tool. One interpretation of the variance in measurement methods, supported in the literature (Calvert, 2003; Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002), was that senior alumni administrative officers believed that due to the uniqueness of each alumni organization, assessment varied depending on what was needed for the particular organization and program at a certain point in time. Nonetheless, the evaluation methods discussed throughout the participant interviews and supporting documents assisted in building a preliminary effectiveness framework from which alumni administrators could begin to design their own unique assessment protocols (see Figure 2). The effectiveness framework will be discussed in depth in the following section where the researcher discusses the results and provides implications for practice.

The fourth question that guided this study elicited conversations regarding the way in which senior alumni administrative officers viewed their responsibilities to both the host institution and alumni. The participants viewed their responsibilities quite similarly overall, even though the alumni associations studied for this project were different in many respects (see Appendix V). They agreed that their

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host institutions were served when the alumni associations served the alumni, which indicated that the relationship between alumni, alumni associations, and the institutions was mutually beneficial. The participants also agreed that they had specific responsibilities to their alumni: to facilitate interaction between students and alumni, among alumni themselves, and between the university and the alumni; to tailor the benefits, services, and programs to satisfy alumni needs and desires; to recognize alumni board members and members of the alumni association who demonstrate outstanding leadership and commitment to the institution; and, to increase diversity of alumni who participate in programs and services. All four participants stated that they had specific responsibilities to their host institutions as well, which included generating goodwill on behalf of the institution by building relationships with alumni, maintaining the alumni database and updating alumni records, and complementing fund raising.

The participants also noted additional areas of responsibilities that were particular to their institutions. Northern and Southern's alumni administrators felt that they had a responsibility to facilitate alumni board participation, while Metropolitan's alumni director believed that increasing the alumni association's visibility and alumni's awareness of the alumni association was one of her responsibilities. The participants from Metropolitan, Northern, and Southern believed that sharing resources with the campus community was a responsibility of the alumni association, whereas the president of the alumni association at Central did not, which was likely due to the alumni association being its own independent nonprofit corporation. Moreover, building a national program was a

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responsibility discussed by Metropolitan's executive director because the university president saw this as a need. Finally, Northern's alumni director felt that she was responsible for providing the university president with opportunities to tell the university's story to alumni. While the participants listed additional responsibilities specific to their alumni populations and universities, overall the participants agreed on core responsibilities.

Discussion of Results

Although this research alone cannot provide senior alumni administrative officers with an exhaustive guide for defining effectiveness and for measuring effectiveness, the findings suggested that certain factors contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations and that alumni administrators had the resources and capabilities to develop comprehensive and consistent evaluations for their organizations. Additionally, the results indicated that the senior alumni administrative officers viewed their core responsibilities to the host institutions and alumni similarly. The following discussion of implications for practice focuses on how senior alumni administrative officers could implement the nine contributing factors of effectiveness into their alumni organizations, how alumni administrators could use the preliminary effectiveness framework, and how senior alumni administrative officers viewed their responsibilities to host institutions in the area of complementing fund raising.

Implications for Practice

One of the purposes of this study was to discover how the participants defined effectiveness in alumni relations. After reviewing the participant interviews, observational notes, and supporting documents, the researcher recognized that the data collected regarding contributing factors of effectiveness offered a clearer picture of effectiveness in alumni relations than the definitions provided by the participants during the interviews. Hence, the researcher used the contributing factors to assist in defining effectiveness in alumni relations. These nine factors on which the participants agreed contributed to effectiveness in alumni relations could be analyzed to ensure more effective operations within alumni organizations.

Before elaborating on the nine contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations, it is important to discuss the conceptual framework (see Figure 2) briefly described in chapter eight. The researcher developed the conceptual framework to assist in organizing the information and results gathered during the site visits. As with any qualitative study, the amount of data can be overwhelming, and the researcher found it helpful to condense the information into a useable framework. The researcher also chose to focus the framework on the study's main purpose: to explore how senior alumni administrative officers at four public research universities defined and measured effectiveness in alumni relations programs. Therefore, the framework provides a concise depiction of the study's primary results pertaining to defining, through the nine contributing factors, and measuring effectiveness, by way of the preliminary effectiveness

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framework. The various aspects of the conceptual framework will be discussed further in the following paragraphs.

The first five contributing factors, identified by the participants and supported by the researcher's observations and supporting documents, involved relationship building between the alumni organization and alumni to better serve the alumni population. The first factor was building relationships with alumni by providing frequent opportunities for contact. The participants ensured regular contact with alumni in a number of ways, including offering events, career services, volunteer opportunities, travel programs, and many other services in addition to communicating via e-newsletters and alumni magazines. One of the key elements in building relationships with alumni was knowing who and where alumni were so that the alumni organization could maintain contact. Therefore, the participants' responses indicated that having a regularly maintained and updated alumni database was critical to building relationships with alumni and ensuring effective alumni operations.

The second and third contributing factors also involved relationship building and were interconnected with one another. Part of building relationships with alumni involved understanding what engaged alumni to connect with and participate in alumni services and programs. Consequently, knowing the institution's alumni was vital so that alumni staff could develop programs, services, and benefits that were of interest to the alumni constituency. Alumni administrators could become better acquainted with their alumni constituents by surveying via email and/or mail and by asking alumni to complete event and

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program evaluations. Moreover, alumni staffs could develop programs that focused on connecting with students who were seniors to gain an understanding of what was important to them and what would encourage participation of the institution's youngest, soon-to-be, alumni.

The fourth contributing factor, facilitating communication with alumni, again involved relationship building as those alumni who felt informed and connected to their alma mater would be more likely to remain in contact with the institution. As mentioned in the researcher's discussion of the first contributing factor, the participants recognized the importance of knowing who and where alumni were. Thus, an accurate alumni database, including email, mailing addresses, and telephone numbers, was a key component of communicating with alumni and securing effective alumni operations. In facilitating communication with alumni, it was also important to recognize that some alumni preferred more technologically advanced styles of communication, such as email and e-newsletters, while others favored the more traditional forms of communications, such as alumni magazines arriving in their home mailboxes.

The fifth contributing factor that involved relationship building was offering a comprehensive array of programs and services for all alumni. This factor was also closely related to the second and third factors, understanding what engaged alumni and knowing the alumni constituency. As Northern and Central's senior alumni administrative officers noted, every institution's alumni were represented by various ages and backgrounds. Conceivably, alumni interests varied, which meant that alumni staffs needed to develop methods, such as regular surveying

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and program evaluations, for recognizing alumni preferences and evolving programs and services so that they could continue to fulfill alumni's desires.

Contributing factors six, seven, and eight involved establishing and maintaining students' and alumni's connections to the university. The sixth factor was creating pride, tradition, and loyalty during the student experience and beyond. The primary way the participants created pride, tradition, and loyalty within the student population was by sponsoring student alumni organizations. However, these student organizations reached a limited number of students each year. Perhaps alumni organizations could form partnerships within the division of student affairs in order to help build relationships with students while on campus. For example, alumni associations could participate in annual orientations to campus for new students to establish the student-alumni connection from day one. Establishing a relationship base with students early on in their academic careers was especially important so that alumni organizations could continue to build on these relationships in the future.

Alumni associations could also arrange for a booth at career fairs to dispense promotional items with the university mascot. Encouraging school pride could assist in strengthening the students' connections to the institution. Moreover, the alumni association could sponsor university-wide pride days, where students, faculty, and staff would be asked to wear the university's colors. These types of activities could assist alumni administrators in creating pride, tradition, and loyalty during the student experience.

During observations of the alumni buildings/offices, the researcher recognized that the participants also created pride, tradition, loyalty, and belonging within their alumni populations by offering alumni with a central, identifiable home on campus. Southern had recently completed construction of a brand new alumni building that was conveniently located across the street from the university's football stadium. The location seemed appropriate considering the majority of Southern's alumni resided within the state and home football games drew many alumni back to the university's campus. Additionally, Metropolitan, Central, and Northern displayed alumni awards, campus photographs, and other miscellaneous artifacts that were meant to evoke memories and feelings of pride, tradition, and loyalty among alumni. Overall, alumni administrators might consider alumni office/building locations and décor as they work to connect with alumni and inspire loyalty and pride within their alumni populations.

The seventh factor, instilling a sense of belonging, was also related to maintaining alumni's connections to the institution. The participants' responses indicated that alumni were more likely to participate and remain connected with the university if they saw themselves as being affiliated with a successful institution. The participants believed that alumni identified with certain aspects of institutions. For example, if the university's football team had a winning season or the institution's medical school was ranked first in the nation, alumni developed a sense of belonging and valued their association with their alma mater. Hence, alumni administrators could find that spreading the "good news" at their

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universities to alumni could help to improve the alumni organizations' effectiveness.

The eighth factor, which also involved maintaining alumni's connections to the university, was offering opportunities for alumni to impact the future of the university. Examples of such activities included asking alumni volunteers to assist in advocacy efforts at the local and state level, to recruit prospective students, and to serve as development volunteers. Alumni administrators could identify additional opportunities by frequently collaborating with other university units and departments. Perhaps alumni could also volunteer in community outreach efforts, especially for those institutions needing to expand their campuses. By engaging alumni in these types of activities, they would feel that they were constructively impacting their university's future.

The ninth contributing factor of effectiveness was the understanding of institution specific missions of alumni programs related to university needs and/or history. Brant (2002) stated that all alumni organizations were unique to their host institutions. In many ways, the uniqueness of alumni associations was a result of how the associations were originally organized. Whether the organization was dependent, interdependent, or independent did not seem to impact effectiveness as much as having senior alumni administrative officers leading the organizations who understood the uniqueness of their purposes, universities, and alumni; who used the organizational structure of alumni programs to their advantage; and, who created programs, services, and benefits that met the needs of alumni and the institutions. Therefore, senior alumni administrative officers could find that

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they would be more effective if they focused less on what peer institutions were doing and more on the particular interests and needs of the alumni and the host institution.

Overall, the nine contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations identified in this study could be adapted by alumni administrators to ensure more effective operations within alumni organizations. The nine factors could be condensed into three main areas: building relationships with alumni, maintaining student and alumni connections to the institution, and understanding the uniqueness of the alumni organization. One factor that was especially important for alumni administrators to remember was that relationship building and creating pride, tradition, and loyalty can and should begin the first day that students arrive on campus. By constructing a relationship base early on, alumni organizations could continue to build student and alumni engagement that would last in the future.

Another purpose of this study was to determine how the participants measured effectiveness in alumni relations. As mentioned in chapter two, goal accomplishment, resource acquisition, internal processes, strategic constituencies satisfaction, and program evaluations were all methods for assessing effectiveness identified in the literature (Daft, 2001; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Consequently, the researcher used these categories, in addition to the participants' responses and supporting documents, to build a preliminary effectiveness framework for alumni organizations. This framework was

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summarized in the third section of the conceptual framework in chapter eight (see Figure 2). The researcher found this method of organizing the data collected from the sites to be helpful because the participants provided numerous methods that could be used to measure effectiveness in alumni relations. By grouping the methods into categories based on organizational effectiveness literature, the researcher was able to identify specific assessment methods that fit into the categories and would provide a comprehensive picture of organizational effectiveness (Daft, 2001; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). While the preliminary effectiveness framework depicted in the conceptual framework included a variety of measures, the researcher suggested that alumni administrators identify a collection of methods that best suits the needs of their alumni organizations and host institutions.

Using the preliminary effectiveness framework, senior alumni administrative officers could begin to design their own effectiveness measures according to the organizational effectiveness categories discussed in the literature in order to develop a comprehensive and consistent picture of organizational performance (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Daft, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983). For example, goal accomplishment could be measured by achievement of the programs' goals in the strategic plan, which might address alumni participation and alumni record acquisition and maintenance; resource acquisition could be assessed by the alumni administrator's ability to acquire resources, such as alumni memberships, university funding, influential alumni board members, and participation of university administration in alumni programs; internal processes could be

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evaluated by employee commitment and job satisfaction; and finally, satisfaction of strategic constituencies could be determined by assessing alumni, student, and alumni board member satisfaction. Additionally, alumni administrators could implement program evaluations as a part of their assessment protocols on an as needed basis. Alumni staffs could conduct a needs assessment to determine whether a new program was needed; a program theory evaluation could be used by alumni staffs to determine the best way to deliver services and to decide on a program's organizational and resource needs; program monitoring could be implemented to evaluate alumni satisfaction and to track alumni who were involved with the institution in some way and/or those who attended events; an outcomes evaluation could be used to determine whether program objectives were met; and finally, an efficiency assessment or cost-benefit analysis could be used to determine whether resources were used resourcefully and if the cost of a program was worth the benefits. All of these program evaluations could offer alumni leaders information and data that would help to identify the types of programs needed, to focus on ways to improve programs, and to modify programs to improve outcomes (Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). Overall, no single assessment protocol will fit all alumni administrators' needs. Thus, alumni leaders might consider different aspects of effectiveness in order to develop their own comprehensive assessment protocols that will suit their organizations.

Whether or not senior alumni administrative officers believed that university presidents were concerned with effectiveness in alumni relations, having an assessment protocol with accurate data for the alumni organization could be

valuable in times of budget constraints and could also strengthen the role of alumni relations in institutional decision making. Plus, if the alumni administrators maintained the same assessment protocol every year, they would have longitudinal data to use for yearly comparisons in order to show program changes. Of the measurement methods discussed by the participants and evidenced by supporting documents, some were more suitable for annual assessment and yearly comparison, such as tracking alumni memberships and alumni participation/program attendance/volunteers, while others, such as alumni focus groups and program reviews, could be used as supplementary evaluations when needed for specific purposes.

A basic assessment protocol could consist of measuring goal achievement based on a strategic plan; tracking alumni participation, program attendance, and volunteers; maintaining current alumni addresses and records; tracking alumni memberships, new and renewals; and tracking revenues generated by alumni membership and alumni giving. Alumni administrators might also decide to use supplementary evaluations in order to inform program decisions, which could include alumni focus groups, alumni satisfaction surveys, event evaluations, program reviews, benchmarking with peer institutions, exit interviews with graduating students, alumni board committee evaluations, and readership surveys for alumni magazines. By using a basic assessment protocol every year and supplementary evaluations when deemed necessary, alumni administrators would be armed with evidence of program effectiveness that could be useful for future discussions with university administrators regarding budgetary allocations.

Additional evaluation methods discussed during the participant interviews and within the supporting documents were commitment of alumni staff, strength of the organization in terms of visibility and support, and quality and influence of alumni board members. While these items are difficult to measure, alumni administrators could determine measurement methods for each of these items to use as supplementary evidence of alumni relations effectiveness. For example, commitment of alumni staff could be measured by staff longevity in their positions; strength of the organization could be evaluated by the university president's attendance at alumni events and board meetings, as well as funding of alumni programs; and finally, the quality and influence of alumni board members could be assessed subjectively by the positions the members hold in the private sector.

While the participants in this study only agreed on alumni attendance at events as a measure of effectiveness in alumni relations, each administrator provided a variety of methods they used to evaluate their programs' effectiveness. Using a combination of these methods to develop an assessment protocol that could be used on an annual basis would provide senior alumni administrative officers with comprehensive evaluations that measured effectiveness criteria and armed them with evidence of their organization's performance. Having evidence, such as data from an assessment protocol that could be compared to past performance, might be useful in times of budget constraints.

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Additionally, the researcher found that the participants did not link the measurement methods to the contributing factors of effectiveness. Conceivably, best practice would involve developing assessments that specifically measure the contributing factors. While some measurement methods identified by the participants related to the contributing factors, others did not. For example, the contributing factor of knowing constituents could be evaluated by strategic constituencies satisfaction measures. However, the researcher could not find a contributing factor that could be measured by internal processes. The participants' inability to link the nine contributing factors to measurement methods underscored the main issue of this study, that senior alumni administrative officers could not provide clear definitions of effectiveness. Therefore, they failed to make the connection between the contributing factors of effectiveness and their measurement methods.

The final purpose of this study was to determine how the participants viewed their responsibilities to both the host institution and alumni. Overall, the participants agreed that the host institutions were served when the alumni associations served the alumni and that they had specific responsibilities to alumni and to the host institutions. The researcher found one responsibility identified by the participants that warranted additional discussion and had direct implications for practice. While the participants agreed that one of their responsibilities to the university administrations was to complement fund raising, each did so differently. All four participants had or were implementing student alumni organizations in order to assist in establishing a culture of giving, as these

organizations motivated students to become involved, to give back to the institution through service, and to learn about the alumni association and its purpose. However, the level to which the alumni associations participated in direct collaboration with the universities' foundations varied. Central and Southern acknowledged frequent collaboration between their alumni associations and the university foundations, which involved identifying alumni volunteers who might be interested in assisting in the fund raising process. Metropolitan and Northern's alumni associations also collaborated with their university foundations, but these contacts mainly focused on scheduling events and discussing important messages that needed to be communicated to alumni at events.

Although the participants did not provide reasons explaining why their level of involvement with fund raising varied, the researcher drew her own conclusions. One possible explanation could be the relationship between the university foundation president and the senior alumni administrative officer. If the relationship was viewed as adversarial or competitive by one or both of these administrators, then the level of involvement and collaboration would be minimal. Additionally, the experience that a senior alumni administrative officer had with fund raising might contribute to his/her involvement. Central and Southern's senior alumni administrative officers both stated that they were comfortable with the fund raising process because they had previous experience with it. These two administrators also exhibited the highest level of involvement in fund raising of the four participants in the study. A final explanation could be the expectations that university presidents placed on senior alumni administrative officers to

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become involved with fund raising. The participants' responses seemed to indicate that the level of involvement in fund raising was for the alumni administrators themselves to determine, so there was little pressure from the university presidents; however, all were expected to share the alumni database with the university foundations and all collaborated to some extent on fund raising efforts.

Conceivably, the varied levels of involvement in fund raising contributed to alumni administrators' hesitation, as cited in the literature, to include alumni giving as a measure of effectiveness in alumni relations (Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002; Calvert, 2000). While the participants in this study agreed that direct fund raising was not one of their responsibilities, Central and Southern collaborated frequently with their foundation counterparts. Furthermore, Southern's executive director cited revenues as one measure of effectiveness in alumni relations and Central's president of the alumni association included revenues on the incentive compensation performance measure that he developed. One suggestion could be that senior alumni administrative officers who were more involved with fund raising might be willing to use alumni giving as a measure of effectiveness. However, the participants agreed with the literature reviewed for this study (Regan, 2002; Brant, 2002; Calvert, 2000) that alumni giving should not be the sole measurement tool used for assessing effectiveness in alumni relations.

Implications for Research

Based on the analysis of the data, the discussion of results, and the

implications for practice, the researcher recommends the following areas for

future research.

1. Since this study was limited to senior alumni administrative officers at four

    public research universities, the researcher recommends future studies

    with a larger sample of participants in order to verify findings.

2. In addition to a larger number of participants, the researcher recommends

    using a sample that includes senior alumni administrative officers from

    various types of institutions, as this study was limited to public, research

    extensive or intensive universities with student enrollments greater than

    fifteen thousand.

3. The researcher developed a preliminary effectiveness framework and

    identified nine contributing factors of effectiveness based on information

    gathered during the site visits. Future research could focus on developing

    methods for evaluating the nine contributing factors of effectiveness in

    order to establish a link between the preliminary effectiveness framework

    and the contributing factors of effectiveness.

4. The researcher also recommends surveying senior alumni administrative

    officers regarding whether they feel pressure from their university

    presidents to demonstrate effectiveness. One of the assumptions of this

    study was that senior alumni administrative officers would feel pressure if

    they received greater than twenty-five percent of their annual budget from

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the host institution. However, the alumni services department at Northern, which received the largest amount of funding from the institution, seemed to feel the least amount of pressure.

5. One of the research questions in this study focused on how alumni administrators perceived other university administrators defined effectiveness in alumni relations. The participants were hesitant to speak for other administrators and seemed to have had limited discussions with their university presidents and senior institutional advancement administrators regarding defining effectiveness in alumni relations. Therefore, the researcher recommends future research that concentrates on university presidents' and senior institutional advancement administrators' definitions of effectiveness in alumni relations, as well as their expectations regarding alumni organizations.

6. In the literature review, the researcher discussed a group of alumni administrators at private higher education institutions who had developed a benchmarking tool for measuring effectiveness. The researcher recommends future studies that apply the benchmarking tool to alumni organizations at different types of institutions in order to determine whether the benchmarking tool would be useful for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations regardless of institutional type.

7. In the current study, the researcher included one question pertaining to alumni administrators' leadership styles in order to gain an understanding of how the alumni administrators perceived themselves as leaders. It was

not the purpose of this study to determine if leadership contributed to the alumni organizations' effectiveness. However, Quinn (1988) and Smart (2003) stated that leadership skills could impact an organization's performance. Consequently, the researcher recommends future studies that specifically focus on alumni administrators' leadership skills in relation to organizational effectiveness.

8. Another area warranting further research is exploring how alumni associations build relationships with students other than through student alumni associations, as these organizations touch a limited number of students, and the literature suggested the importance of building relationships with students from their first day on campus (Pearson, 1999; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001).

9. Finally, the researcher recommends additional time for campus observations in studies similar to this one. The researcher limited her observations to the alumni buildings/offices at the participating institutions and minimally observed the students and campuses. Therefore, further research involving extensive campus observations that focus on the areas of institutional culture and the student experience and how these areas impact the effectiveness of alumni organizations are suggested.

Overall, this study provided an exploratory view of how senior alumni administrative officers from four public universities defined effectiveness, measured effectiveness, and viewed their responsibilities to alumni and the host institution. This study contributed to the alumni relations literature by offering a

conceptual framework that identified nine contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations in addition to a preliminary effectiveness framework that could assist in the development of comprehensive and consistent evaluations of effectiveness in alumni relations.

APPENDIX I

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS

IN ALUMNI RELATIONS AT FOUR

RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

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Purpose

Alumni relations programs exist to further the goals of their institutions while meeting the needs of their alumni (Webb, 1989). In healthy university environments, the relationship between the alumni and the institution is mutually beneficial (Webb, 1989). In the era of accountability, college and university administrators demand evidence that programs are satisfying their missions and accomplishing their goals (Brant, 2002). Alumni giving provides one measure of effectiveness for alumni relations programs (Brant, 2002; Regan 2002). However, using this measurement alone fails to assess the whole value of these programs. Currently, the alumni professional community does not have consistent and comprehensive definitions and measures of program effectiveness (Calvert, 2000). Consequently, this research seeks to explore how alumni relations administrators at four public research universities define and measure effectiveness within their organizations' programs.

Research Description and Procedures

The researcher will study alumni relations programs at four public research universities. The participants will be selected based upon the following criteria: alumni relations program or alumni association that receives 25% or greater of budget from host institution, full-time student enrollment 15,000 or greater, alumni administrator has worked in the field of alumni relations and at the institution where currently employed for more than two years during his/her career, Carnegie classification of research extensive or research intensive, and

willingness to participate. The researcher will attempt to gain access by asking an alumni administrator who is a member of the Council of Alumni Affairs Executives (CAAE) to facilitate the researcher's initial contacts with the alumni administrators at the selected institutions.

The researcher will ask each alumni administrator to sign an informed consent form prior to beginning the interviews. All administrators will be asked to allow at least two hours for the interviews and for their permission to tape record the interviews. The researcher will take some notes during the interviews, but the tapes will be relied upon for the majority of the data. Additionally, the researcher will collect documents from the alumni office, such as annual plans and end of year reports (see section on Documents to be Collected for complete list), to supplement interview data. As needed, the researcher will make arrangements to copy information and/or take detailed notes regarding the documents. Each alumni director will be asked to have one alumni staff member available to answer the researcher's questions. The researcher also will allow time, approximately one to two hours, before or after the interviews to observe the alumni office/building area and surrounding campus. The researcher will bring various items to the case study site, including personal laptop, paper, pens, paper clips, computer disks, tape recorder, batteries, and tapes.

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Interview Questions

Profile of the Participant

1. Tell me about your education and work history pertaining to what specifically prepared you for this position.

2. How long have you worked in this position? How long have you worked for the university?

3. Tell me about your leadership style.

Defining Effectiveness in Alumni Relations

4. How do you define effectiveness in alumni relations? Does this definition change depending upon institutional needs and expectations?

5. What are the common factors that lead to effectiveness in alumni relations?

6. How do you think your university's president defines effectiveness in alumni relations?

7. How do you think other members of the institutional advancement team (i.e., Directors of Public relations, Government relations, and Development/Foundation) define effectiveness in alumni relations?

Measuring Effectiveness & Evaluating Alumni Relations

8. How are these factors that lead to effectiveness currently measured?

9. If the factors are not currently measured, how should they be measured?

10. If you had to list three "best" methods for measuring effectiveness in alumni relations, what would they be?

11. Is the alumni relations program evaluated by the university president or alumni board? If so, how and how often?

12. Is your office rewarded for improved effectiveness? If so, how?

13. Do you discuss measuring and defining effectiveness with your alumni board and/or the university president? If so, does one entity seem more concerned than the other with measurement of effectiveness?

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Alumni Administrator's View of Responsibilities

14. What do you think is the appropriate balance between serving alumni and serving the institution?

15. Which entity do you feel more responsible to: alumni board, president/university, or equal?

16. Tell me about the level of importance placed on alumni giving at your institution and how this affects the services that your program offers?

Contributing Factors of Effectiveness

17. Does the organizational structure of alumni relations and institutional advancement team at your university contribute or detract from the effectiveness of the alumni relations programs?

18. What opportunities do you have for collaboration with other university administrators?

19. How do you know how many alumni your institution has?

20. Tell me about the institutional culture at [institution name].

21. Does the institution's culture affect the alumni relations programs' effectiveness? If so, how?

Documents to be Collected

Organizational charts for the alumni relations program and institutional advancement department

Alumni relations mission statement

Annual plan and/or end of year report for alumni relations

Measurement and/or evaluation tools used in alumni relations (i.e., alumni satisfaction surveys, etc.)

Evaluation instruments for alumni programs created by university president or alumni board

Agendas/minutes from alumni board meetings for the past year

List of alumni board members

Definition of alumni for the institution

Institutional data regarding number of alumni

Contract defining relationship between the institution and the alumni organization (if applicable)

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APPENDIX II

THEMATIC FRAMEWORK/INDEX

Defining Effectiveness/Contributing Factors of Effectiveness in Alumni Relations
1.1   Building relationships with alumni by providing frequent opportunities for contact/touch
1.2   Fostering alumni participation by understanding what engages alumni to connect
1.3   Fostering effective and frequent communication with alumni to share university messages
1.4   Providing comprehensive array of programs for all alumni
1.5   Knowing your constituents (alumni, parents, friends, university faculty and staff)
1.6   Creating pride, tradition, and loyalty during student experience and beyond
1.7   Increasing visibility/identity/awareness of the alumni association
1.8   Understanding institution specific missions of programs related to university needs/history
1.9   Sense of belonging/part of something that is of value to society
1.10   Ownership of alumni association
1.11   Offering opportunities to impact university's future (advocacy, recruitment, and giving)

Measuring Effectiveness & Evaluating Alumni Relations
Methods for measuring effectiveness
2.1   Focus groups
2.2   Strategic planning/goal achievement
2.3   Alumni satisfaction surveys
2.4   Event evaluations
2.5   Benchmarking
2.6   Program review
2.7   Exit interviews with graduating students
2.8   Alumni board committee evaluations
2.9   Alumni verbal feedback
2.10   Readership survey for alumni magazine
2.11   Memberships (new and renewals)
2.12   Participation/program attendance (tracking number of attendees)
2.13   Number of volunteers
2.14   Good addresses and records
2.15   Number of complaints from alumni
2.16   Number of calls (contact reports), functions, mailings
2.17   Number of people/total cost/opportunity for impact/touch
2.18   Commitment of alumni staff

2.19 Revenues
2.20 Strength of organization/place at the university table (visibility & support)
2.21 Quality/influence of alumni board members
Evaluation of organization by university administration or alumni board
2.22 Incentive Comprehensive Performance measures
2.23 Annual report
2.24 Formal evaluation by vice president
2.25 Alumni board provides verbal feedback
2.26 Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan (IEAP)

Alumni Administrators' Views of Responsibilities
To alumni
3.1 Facilitate interaction between students/alumni, alumni/alumni, and university staff/alumni
3.2 Facilitate alumni board participation
3.3 Help to increase visibility/awareness/branding of alumni association
3.4 Tailor benefits/services/programs to alumni needs/wants
3.5 Recognition of alumni board members and members of the alumni association
3.6 Increase diversity of alumni members and alumni board members
To university administration
3.7 Responsible for alumni records/database maintenance
3.8 Complement fund raising efforts by helping to establish culture of giving, conveying importance of giving, and having events
3.9 Generate goodwill on behalf of the institution
3.10 Share resources with campus community
3.11 Collaborate with campus staff/build partnerships
3.12 Build national program
3.13 Accountability/strategic planning
3.14 Coordinate programs/events with Foundation, Deans, and other university administrators
3.15 Provide opportunities for university president to tell university story

DEFINITIONS/CONTRIBUTING FACTORS OF

EFFECTIVENESS IN ALUMNI RELATIONS

This chart identifies where the researcher found the data for definitions/contributing factors of effectiveness in alumni relations.

	Interviews	Documents	Observations
1.1 Build relationships	X	X	X
1.2 Participation	X	X	
1.3 Communication	X	X	
1.4 Array of programs	X	X	
1.5 Know constituents	X		
1.6 Create pride	X	X	X
1.7 Increase visibility	X	X	
1.8 Institution specific	X		
1.9 Belonging	X	X	X
1.10 Ownership	X		
1.11 Impact university	X	X	

1.7 Increase visibility was not included as one of the nine contributing factors of effectiveness because Southern and Central did not mention it in the interviews or within the documents. Metropolitan and Northern felt increasing visibility was important because both were trying to "grow" their programs. Southern and Central already had relatively established programs.

1.10 Ownership was not included as one of the nine contributing factors of effectiveness because Central was the only participant who mentioned it. This was most likely due to the independence of the alumni association at Central.

The remaining nine contributing factors were included in the conceptual framework because the researcher found evidence that all four participants agreed on those factors within the interviews, documents, and/or observations.

The following chart identifies the sources of evidence found at the four sites for each index item number and heading by noting where the information was found, such as the page number from the interview transcript (i.e., p. 2), "obs" for observation, and/or document abbreviation (i.e., 1.1 Building relationships (AR)). Document abbreviations: AR=annual report; KRS=Key chain return system; SP=Strategic plan; YAG=Young alumni guide.

Respondent	Definitions/Contributing Factors of Effectiveness	
	Alumni Administrators	Perception of other administrators
AA1	1.1 Building relationships (AR, YAG, obs) 1.2 Participation (p. 2, 8, SP) 1.3 Communication (AR, SP) 1.4 Array of programs (AR) 1.5 Know constituents (p. 2) 1.6 Create pride (p. 6, SP, obs) 1.7 Increase visibility (p. 6, SP) 1.8 Institution specific (p. 2, 8) 1.9 Belonging (AR, SP, obs) 1.11 Impact university (AR)	1.1 Building relationships (p. 5) 1.5 Know constituents (p. 5) 2.15 Complaints (p. 3)
AA2	1.1 Build relationships (p. 2, obs) 1.2 Participation (p. 2) 1.3 Communication (p. 2) 1.4 Array of programs (p. 2) 1.5 Know constituents (p.2) 1.6 Create pride (p. 2, 8, obs) 1.8 Institution specific (p. 3) 1.9 Belonging (p. 3, 8, obs) 1.11 Impact university (p. 3, 5)	1.2 Participation (p. 3) 1.3 Communication (p. 3) 2.11 Membership (p. 3) 2.12 Attendance (p. 3) 2.13 Volunteers (p. 3) 3.8 Complement fund raising (p. 4) 3.9 Generate goodwill (p. 4)
AA3	1.1 Build relationships (p. 1) 1.2 Participation (p. 1) 1.3 Communication (p. 2, 7) 1.4 Array of programs (p. 1, 2) 1.5 Know constituents (p. 1, 2) 1.6 Create pride (p. 1, 7, obs) 1.8 Institution specific (p. 2) 1.9 Belonging (p. 7, obs) 1.10 Ownership (p. 1, 5, 6) 1.11 Impact university (p. 6) 2.11 Membership (p. 1)	See quote from interview on page 136-137.
AA4	1.1 Build relationships (p. 3, 6, KRS) 1.2 Participation (p. 3, 6) 1.3 Communication (p. 2, 3, 6) 1.4 Array of programs (p. 4) 1.5 Know constituents (p. 3, 4) 1.6 Create pride (p. 8, obs) 1.7 Increase visibility (p. 3) 1.8 Institution specific (p. 2) 1.9 Belonging (p. 8, obs) 1.11 Impact university (p. 3)	1.1 Build relationships (p. 3, 4) 1.2 Participation (p. 3) 3.8 Complement fund raising (p. 3, 4) 3.15 Pres tell univ story (p. 3)

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APPENDIX IV

MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS IN ALUMNI RELATIONS

This chart identifies where the researcher found the data related to measuring effectiveness and evaluating alumni relations.

	Interviews	Documents	Observations
2.1 Alum focus groups	X	X	
2.2 Strategic plan	X	X	
2.3 Alum sat surveys	X	X	
2.4 Event evals	X	X	
2.5 Benchmarking	X		
2.6 Program review	X	X	
2.7 Exit surveys	X	X	
2.8 Alum bd comm evals	X	X	
2.9 Alum verbal feedback	X		
2.10 Readership survey	X		
2.11 Membership	X	X	
2.12 Attendance	X	X	
2.13 Volunteers	X		
2.14 Records	X		
2.15 Complaints	X	X	
2.16 # of calls/func/mail	X		
2.17 # of people/cost	X		
2.18 Staff commitment	X	X	
2.19 Revenues	X		
2.20 Strength of org	X		
2.21 Alum bd influence	X		
2.22 Inc Comp Perf Meas	X	X	
2.23 Annual report	X	X	
2.24 Eval by VP	X	X	
2.25 Verbal feedback from alum	X		
2.26 Inst Eff Assess Plan		X	

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The following chart identifies the sources of evidence found at the four sites for each index item number and heading by noting where the information was found, such as the page number from the interview transcript (i.e., p. 6), "obs" for observation, and/or document abbreviation (i.e., 2.1 Alum focus groups (ABM)).

Document abbreviations: ABM=Alumni board meeting; BTC=Back to college evaluation form; EFF=Event feedback form; IEAP=Institutional effectiveness assessment plan; PE=Program evaluation; SP=Strategic plan; TEF=Travel evaluation form; WS=Web survey.

Respondent	Measuring Effectiveness in Alumni Relations	
	Measurement tools	Evaluation of organization
AA1	2.1 Alum focus groups (ABM) 2.2 Strategic plan (p. 6, SP) 2.3 Alum sat surveys (IEAP) 2.4 Event evals (IEAP) 2.6 Program review (p. 7, PE) 2.7 Exit surveys (ABM) 2.11 Membership (p. 4, IEAP) 2.12 Attendance (p. 4, IEAP) 2.13 Volunteers (p. 4) 2.15 Complaints (p. 4, IEAP)	2.23 Annual report (doc) 2.24 Evaluated by VP (p. 4) 2.25 Verbal feedback from alumni board (p. 4) 2.26 Institutional Effectiveness Assessment Plan (doc)
AA2	2.2 Strategic plan (p. 4) 2.4 Event evals (BTC) 2.11 Membership (p. 4) 2.12 Attendance (p. 5, 6) 2.14 Records (p. 5) 2.16 # of calls/func/mail (p. 4) 2.19 Revenues (p. 5) 2.21 Alum bd influence(p. 4)	2.23 Annual report (in combination with Fnd; bylaws doc) 2.25 Verbal feedback from alumni board (p. 6)
AA3	2.3 Alum sat surveys (p. 3, WS, Census) 2.5 Benchmarking (p. 3) 2.6 Program review (p. 3) 2.9 Alum feedback (p. 4) 2.11 Membership (p. 3) 2.12 Attendance (p. 2) 2.18 Staff commitment (p. 4) 2.20 Strength of org (p. 4) 2.21 Alum bd influence (p. 4)	2.22 Incentive Compensation Performance Measure (p. 5, doc) 2.23 Annual report (p. 4, doc)
AA4	2.1 Alum focus groups (p. 2, doc) 2.2 Strategic plan (p. 4) 2.3 Alum sat surveys (p. 2, 5) 2.4 Event evals (p. 2, EFF, TEF) 2.5 Benchmarking (p. 4) 2.6 Program review (ABM) 2.7 Exit interviews (p. 2) 2.8 Alum bd comm eval (p. 6, doc) 2.9 Alum feedback (p. 4, 5) 2.10 Readership survey (p. 4) 2.12 Attendance (p. 5) 2.14 Records (p. 1) 2.17 # of people/cost (p. 3) 2.18 Staff commitment (ABM) 2.20 Strength of org (p. 7)	2.23 Annual report (p. 5, doc) 2.24 Evaluated by VP (p. 5, doc)

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This chart shows how the researcher grouped the measurement methods, which were discussed by the interview participants and/or found in the supporting documents, within the organizational effectiveness categories identified in the literature (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2001; Daft, 2001; Quinn & Rohrbaugh, 1983; Rossi, Freeman, & Lipsey, 1999). This method for organizing the data assisted the researcher in developing the preliminary effectiveness framework discussed in chapters eight and nine (see Figure 2).

Goal accomplishment	Resource acquisition	Internal processes	Strategic constituencies satisfaction	Program evaluations
2.2 Strategic plan 2.12 Attendance 2.14 Records	2.11 Membership 2.19 Revenues 2.20 Strength of organization (visibility & support from host institution) 2.21 Alumni board influence	2.18 Staff commitment	2.1 Alumni focus groups 2.3 Alumni satisfaction surveys 2.4 Event evaluations 2.7 Exit interviews 2.8 Alumni board committee evaluations 2.9 Alumni feedback 2.10 Readership survey 2.13 Volunteers 2.15 Complaints	2.5 Benchmarking 2.6 Program review 2.16 # of calls/func/mail 2.17 # of people/cost

ALUMNI ADMINISTRATORS' VIEWS

OF RESPONSIBILITIES

This chart identifies where the researcher found the data pertaining to alumni administrator's views of responsibilities to alumni and the host institution.

	Interviews	Documents	Observations
3.1 Facilitate interaction	X	X	
3.2 Facilitate bd part	X	X	
3.3 Increase visibility	X	X	
3.4 Tailor programs	X	X	
3.5 Recognition	X	X	X
3.6 Increase diversity		X	
3.7 Records	X	X	
3.8 Complement FRing	X	X	
3.9 Generate goodwill	X	X	
3.10 Share resources	X	X	
3.11 Collaborate	X		
3.12 Build nat'l program	X		
3.13 Accountability	X	X	
3.14 Coordinate	X	X	
3.15 Pres tell univ story	X		

The following chart identifies the sources of evidence found at the four sites for each index item number and heading by noting where the information was found, such as the page number from the interview transcript (i.e., p. 6), "obs" for observation, and/or document abbreviation (i.e., 3.1 Facilitate interaction (AR)). Document abbreviations: ABM=Alumni board meeting; AR=Annual report; IEAP=Institutional effectiveness assessment plan; MS=Mission statement; SP=Strategic plan.

Respondent	Alumni Administrators' Views of Responsibilities	
	To alumni	To university administration
AA1	3.1 Facilitate interaction (p. 6, AR, MS) 3.3 Increase visibility (p. 6, SP) 3.4 Tailor programs (p. 4, AR) 3.5 Recognition (website) 3.6 Increase diversity (ABM)	3.7 Records (p. 2) 3.8 Complement FRing (p. 3, MS) 3.9 Generate goodwill (website) 3.10 Share resources (p. 7, 8) 3.11 Collaborate (p. 3, 7) 3.12 Build nat'l program (p. 3) 3.13 Accountability (p. 6, IEAP) 3.14 Coordinate (p. 3)
AA2	3.1 Facilitate interaction (p. 6, MS) 3.2 Facilitate bd part (p. 6, 7) 3.4 Tailor programs (p. 6) 3.5 Recognition (website) 3.6 Increase diversity (bylaws)	3.7 Records (p. 2, 5, 7) 3.8 Complement FRing (p. 4, 5, ABM) 3.9 Generate goodwill (p. 4) 3.10 Share resources (p. 4, 5, 7) 3.11 Collaborate (p. 7) 3.13 Accountability (p. 4, bylaws) 3.14 Coordinate (p. 7, ABM)
AA3	3.1 Facilitate interaction (p. 5, MS) 3.4 Tailor programs (website) 3.5 Recognition (website, obs) 3.6 Increase diversity (website)	3.7 Records (p. 1, contract) 3.8 Complement FRing (p. 5, ABM, MS) 3.9 Generate goodwill (p. 5) 3.11 Collaborate (p. 1, 6) 3.13 Accountability (p. 6, audit/ABM) 3.14 Coordinate (p. 6, ABM)
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