



## **NEAT Grant Project Final Report 2020-2021**

### **PURPOSE**

To execute a digital marketing campaign to highlight and bring awareness to the student-alumni mentoring program, *The Guide Network*. Connecting current students and alumni is one of the most important engagement opportunities available to institutions. Assisting students with their post-graduation transition strengthens the affinity back to the institution. Utilizing alumni allows them to see the impact they can have and strengthens their engagement with their alma mater.

### **SCOPE OF THE GRANT PROJECT**

This project was a collaborative effort consisting of the Office of Alumni Engagement, Vinyl Marketing, and Career Center for Life Calling. An initial meeting was held in early August to discuss objectives and strategies of the OAE and CCCLC and how digital marketing plans would be developed around them. The OAE worked closely with Vinyl Marketing to develop video and photo ad content for the digital marketing plan. Vinyl oversaw the campaign management and execution with regular check-ins with the OAE on effectiveness and performance.

As the project developed, the scope expanded slightly to include some integration work between Vinyl Marketing and Wisr to improve the transition from The GUIDE Network to signup/login on Wisr. An additional onboarding video was developed to assist students and alumni with next steps after creating a profile.

### **PROCESS AND TIMELINE OF GRANT PROJECT**

The timeline and process for the grant project remained fairly consistent to the intended plan with few adjustments. The adjustment most noteworthy was waiting until after the Presidential election to begin digital ad campaigns and launching the website. Digital ad costs were at a premium during this time and messaging would have been lost. It also allowed time for the development and creation of an onboarding video.

## July

- Kickoff meeting with Office of Alumni Engagement (OAE), Career Center for Life Calling (CCLC), and Vinyl Marketing
- OAE and Vinyl Marketing discuss digital campaign plan and options for creative assets

## August – November

- Vinyl Marketing creates content and assets for digital marketing campaign
- Regularly scheduled project meetings with OAE and Vinyl Marketing

## January – April

- Onboarding video added to scope and developed
- The GUIDE Networking webpage launches
- Digital marketing campaign executed

## May – June

- Analyze data results and campaign outcomes

## **PROCESS METHODOLOGY**

We felt targeted social media ads would be more effective than standalone email marketing for the GUIDE Network. The social media ads built an awareness of the program which combined with the brand messaging was intended to drive an emotional connection to the program. By asking alumni to recall individuals who had an impact on their lives while viewing strong imagery, the call to action was not to simply join a network but instead provide a hand up to a current student or recent graduate.

## **FINAL GRANT PROJECT BUDGET AND FUNDING**

\$3,500	Digital Marketing Strategy & Campaign Management
\$1,500	Digital Ad Content Creation ( <i>includes branding and onboarding videos and photography for ad content</i> )
<u>\$3,000</u>	4-6 months paid digital advertisement and promotion
\$8,000	Total Cost of Project
\$5,000	Total Amount of Grant Request
\$2,000	Ashland University Alumni Association contribution
\$1,000	Ashland University Office of Alumni Engagement contribution

## **SUMMARY AND FINDINGS**

More than 8,000 individuals were reached through targeted social ads. This translated to more than 550 clicks and 473 landing page visits. The goal of the social media campaign was to generate awareness and drive people to the webpage. These statistics would suggest the campaign was a success. Below are statistics regarding the social media campaign and those found on the Wisr platform over the past 12 months.

### **Social Media Ad Statistics**

Launch Date: **January 11, 2021**

Campaign Type: **Traffic**

Audience: **Students, Alumni, and Faculty and Staff**

Reach: **8,302 people**

Clicks: **553**

Landing Page Visits: **473**

Time Spent On Page: **0:27**

### **Wisr Statistics**

Active Members: 1542 **(+377)**

Alumni: 765 **(+167)**

Students: 574 **(+156)**

Faculty/Staff: 139 **(+21)**

Connections: 66 **(+15)**

Active Topics: 943 **(+916)**

Active Posts: 1088 **(+1,026)**

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Primary audiences of students and alumni saw an increase in members of 37% and 28% respectively over the last 12 months. Additionally, connections and active posts and topics in the communities also saw an increase in activity. This would suggest that the campaign to generate awareness for the GUIDE Network was successful with the increase in members and that the branding and messaging left a strong call to action.

## **FUTURE IMPACT**

The grant project provided long-term outcomes. A fully branded mentoring program which includes a webpage and videos will continue to be utilized going forward. The GUIDE Network also aligns perfectly with one of the strategic themes, Personalized Mentorship, of Ashland's new strategic plan. Meetings have already occurred with others on campus on how the platform can help scale their mentoring initiatives.

<https://advancement.ashland.edu/guide-network/>