



Ashland University – NEAT Grant 2015

Project: Lost Alumni Measurement and Re-engagement

Throughout engagement activities, it was observed that a portion of the Alumni base was missing, omitted, and/or not being properly contacted. After initial tests of anticipated versus actual counts by graduating classes, it was found that older constituencies were not entirely converted from paper records to the electronic database. This project began the process of measuring the magnitude of Ashland University's unrecorded alumni and how they should be reincorporated into communications.

Advancement Services coordinated the efforts to identify and reincorporate the records of the lost alumni into the database and any relevant communications streams. The project began with 3 student workers and 1 supervisor who spent 12 weeks researching paper files for Alumni that were not listed in the database. Upon finding a missing record, all available demographic data, (Name, Last Known Address, Birth Date, and Social Security Number), were recorded. All found records were tagged with a "DVP" code to signify their origin as the "Development Paper Files" project.

The second phase of the project verified records and searched for current contact information for the reintegrated records. Staff used the last known address to search LexisNexis, Whitepages.org, and other online sources to find current contact information. Social media was also used to verify the locations of the lost alumni. Mailing addresses were verified through the National Change of Address registry (NCOA).

The third phase of the project was to re-engage the found alumni through a direct mailing initiative. The initial contact was slated to include:

- a.) Welcome letter and issue of the most recent Alumni Magazine
- b.) Survey about experiences since being at AU / verification of contact information
- c.) Roster of classmates

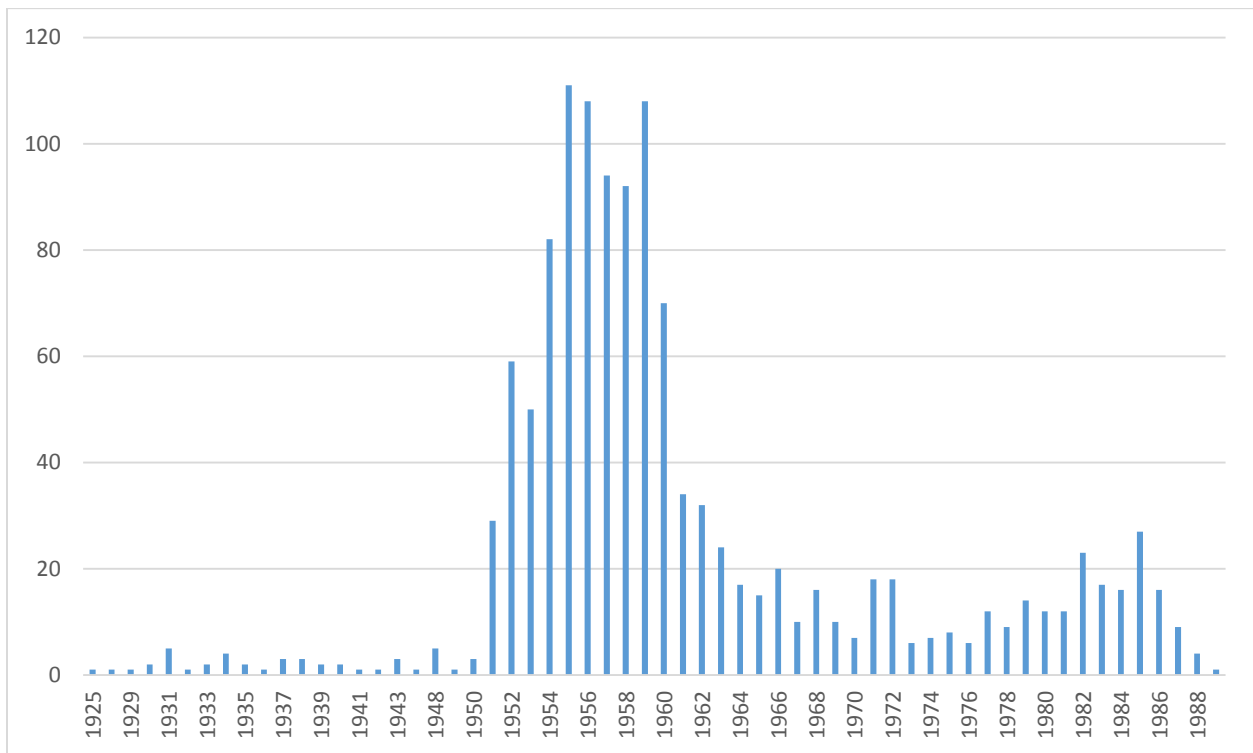


### Results:

In total, the project added 1715 individual alumni records to the database. Of those records, 1186 can be added to Ashland University's Alumni of Record. (Living with a valid mailing address.) Outside of the Alumni of Record:

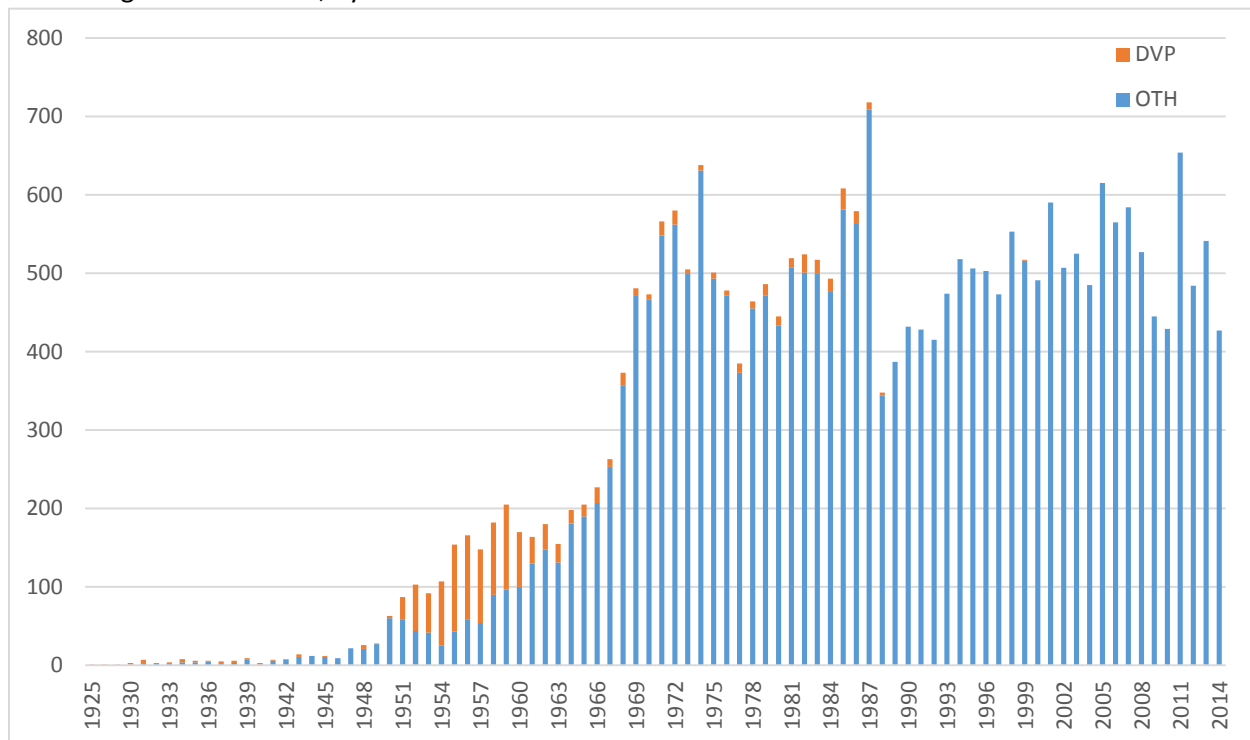
- 185 Alumni were confirmed as deceased
- 5 were unverified deceased records. (Likely deceased based on birth date, but no obituary found.)
- 84 addresses were not listed – Lost alumni
- 255 Individuals were previously on the database, but without Alumni coding / academic Information

### Reintegrated Records by Class Year:



The majority of the records were contained in the 1950's and 1960's. In addition, 368 Records did not contain enough information to assign a class year.

All Undergraduate Alumni, by Class Year



It still appears that there are gaps in the alumni population based on graduation rates. (Mid 1970's and 1980's, some in the late 1960's.) Alternative sources of data will need to be examined to assess if these populations are missing. This initial population is very encouraging and provides Ashland with a better picture of the entire alumni base.

The biggest payoff to this project is the ability to systematically analyze expectations of alumni populations and incorporate new information as needed. Workflows and procedures have now been standardized as to how lost alumni can be incorporated into existing communication flows. Building consistent methods to find current information from historical records will be essential to engaging lost alumni. The steps can be replicated by any staff member, meaning that larger "found" populations can be integrated into the database much faster and easier.

However, this final aspect of the project was put on hiatus due to budget shortfalls. A mailing containing this information is tentatively scheduled during the first quarter of Fiscal Year 2016. (June / July.) It was expected that the long term benefits of this study would not have immediate engagement payoffs, but rather provide a new audience with which to build relationships. The temporary delay of this contact may actually prove to be beneficial. Ashland University is welcoming a new President in June 2015, and including these found alumni would be a good first contact piece.

A study of results from the survey instrument for re-engagement will also provide valuable information about why alumni are disconnected or lost. Ideally, the goal would be to gain insights into the communications channels that can be used to best engage alumni of differing years, and cater communications plans and initiatives accordingly.



Budget –

Item	Cost Per Unit	Quantity	Total
Student Workers – 32 hours per week @ \$8 / hour. 5 Weeks.	\$1280	3	\$3,840
LexisNexis Monthly Subscription - Research	\$687.50	2	\$1,375
<b>Total Costs</b>			<b>\$5,215</b>