



1. Describe the purpose of the Grant Project:

“Making Connections” is an extension of a successful program that the CCSU Alumni Association and Office of Alumni Affairs have co-sponsored for the past three years. The program “Career Connections” brings together students, alumni, and faculty providing the opportunity for successful alumni to network with students, rekindle relationships with former professors and establish new relationships with faculty members they might not know. As a result, of the program, several students have obtained either full-time employment or internship opportunities. Faculty and alumni have been able to connect and establish relationships that have provided opportunities for alumni to speak in classes and for faculty members to make connections with companies and school districts that they had not been familiar with before this program. The purpose of our new initiative the “Making Connections Program” was to build on the success of our current program by working with individual departments during the fall semester to host events for their alumni and students and then have all the participants reconnect again during the spring semester at the “Career Connections” event. We hoped that by working with individual departments, we could build on relationships that alumni had with faculty in their academic major and that the faculty would be familiar with the alumni and be able to impress on their students the value of attending the programs associated with the project.

2. Describe the scope of the Grant Project, the alumni relations related research topic area explored and the constituency group that was involved.

This project was an alumni relations project that had several goals the first being to have alumni and students interact so that the students become aware of the Association. The second is to highlight for students the advantages a college degree has had for the alumni in hopes of encouraging them to persist and complete their degree. Additionally, the Association along with the Office of Alumni Affairs serves 75,000 with only one full-time administrator and two students as staff. By connecting with faculty who have stayed in touch with alumni and have personal relationships with them we had the opportunity to not only keep these alumni connected but in some cases they were able to assist us in reconnecting other alumni with their alma mater. Finally, by connecting with alumni, we gained valuable information about their employment, and specific areas of interest that we presently might not have in our database. The project involved the following constituent groups that the University serves students, alumni, and faculty and we had hoped to work with five departments, but due to demands from other areas of the University, we only worked with two departments English and Communication. A database was established to track participants and keep them connected during the school year with reminders about

department events and the campus-wide event in the spring. A graduate assistant handled all electronic outreach via social media, email, and texting.

3. Describe the process and timeline used to implement the Grant Project.

Timeline for the project.

July-August – Contact department chairpersons to explain the program and gauge their level of interest. Secure campus venues for the planned events.

September- Launch promotional campaign with the goal of having at least two departmental events in late October. Begin finalizing details for English Department event in late October.

October – English department who the Association and office had worked with on the departmental level in the past was all set to go and selected the date of Thursday, October 19th for their event.

November – Follow-up with attendees at English Department event by reaching out to alumni to thank them personally and remind them that the main event “Career Connections” will be held on Wednesday, April 4. Reach out to student attendees to encourage them to follow through on all leads and if they found any panelist exceptionally helpful they should follow up with an email.

January-February – Keep in touch with participants from the English department and work with Communications department on their event which will take place on April 26th. Begin campus wide publicity for “Career Connections” event encouraging all students and faculty to attend and assisting the English Department and Communications Department with targeted outreach. To attend the culminating event in April, 26, 2018.

March – Finalize plans for April events.

April – April 4th, Career Connections and April 26th – Alumni /Senior Networking event. Follow up with personalized thank-you notes to alumni who volunteered for the Career Connections event

June –Submit final report.

4. Discuss your methodology for the process and/or survey

Unlike quantitative or qualitative research no instruments were utilized the methodology involved trying to connect with the faculty and then they would hopefully become the conduit by which we could reach the alumni base.

4. Provide a listing of the final grant project budget and how grant money was allocated.

I realize we did not stick to the budget as outlined in the original grant proposal but below is a detailed breakdown of how we used the \$3,425.00 we were granted.

English Department Workshop:

- **Refreshments: \$486.38**
- **Gift Card Incentives; \$80.00**

Career Connections Campus wide event:

- **Gift Card Incentives - \$200.00**
- **Dinner - \$ 3,476.47**

Total for the 2 events: \$ 4,242.85

Communication Department event:

- **Refreshments - \$768.52**
- **Postcard mailed to homes - \$500.00**

No grant funds were spent on the Communication department event. The Association covered all the expenses as a way of providing a barometer for measuring the effectiveness between the two approaches faculty utilized in hosting their events.

5. Provide a brief summary of your findings.

The project proved to be enlightening the two departments we worked with were unique in the fact that the English department has the highest's number of full-time faculty members at the University and the Communication department has the second largest number of majors. The English department formed a committee to spearhead their efforts to engage alumni as a means of helping their students to realize all the possibilities of majoring in English presented. They reached out to the Alumni office and gave me a seat on the committee. They were extremely organized and formed subcommittees tasked with publicity including social media, reaching out to all members of the department seeking their support for the committee's efforts, and connecting with students and alumni on a one to one basis to explain what they were hoping to accomplish with the program and answering any questions that might arise. The fact that alumni were contacted personally by their former professor had a positive impact on getting them to participate.

The Communication department took a more hands-off approach to their event having only the chair work with the alumni office. The Alumni Office coordinated the mailing and design of the postcard announcement and all follow-up with alumni. The communication department secretary sent a dedicated email to the 42 graduating seniors from the chair of the department urging them to take advantage of the networking event.

6. Provide a brief summary of your conclusions.

We concluded that any collaboration with an academic department needs to be structured similar to the way we worked with the English Department. Multiple stakeholders need to be invested in the program for it to be successful. Honestly, I believe in the case of the Communication department the majority of faculty members were not invested and made no effort to encourage their senior students or alumni to attend.

7. Provide a brief summary of the impacts this project will have on the future of your alumni association/office programming.

To be successful, the CCSU Alumni Association needs to attract recent grads to the events they sponsor and have them become active participants. This group has been challenging to engage and even as students they did not embrace or take advantage of the multitude of activities that were available to them on campus. The "Career Connections" event and the smaller department hosted event seem to have provided a way to reconnect this population of alumni to the university. I believe having the faculty reach out to the alumni was key to having them volunteer to return to campus and participate in the programs. Once they returned, they have continued to stay in contact and individually they are working with current students by assisting them to find internships in their chosen fields.

After this collaboration, I believe the Alumni Association and the Alumni office are viewed differently by the faculty we worked with on the events. They now see us as a valuable resource and partner who can assist them in engaging their alumni in hopes of getting them to support their current students and programs and in some cases convince them that pursuing a graduate degree might be a benefit for their career.

I was struck by how Dr. Mary Ann Nunn, a faculty member in the English department summed up her feelings concerning the departmental event.

"Once again our alumni demonstrated how extraordinary they are, and our present students asked better questions than all of us presenters managed to frame. How impressive our students and former students are! A terrific evening, well attended, and thanks too to Cathie Jost and the Alumni Association for the door prizes, the support, and the enthusiasm! Thanks also to Jotham, for filming some interviews with our stellar alums, and yes, the WHOLE PANEL PRESENTATION was videotaped--website here we come! We're miles along the path of showing to the world how terrific it is to major in English, and what a great place CCSU is at which to do so!

Running out of exclamation points to express what a great night we had. Thanks to all who attended as well. Hooray!"

If nothing else this project accomplished a significant goal by highlighting how academic departments working in conjunction with the Alumni Association can achieve success that benefits all stakeholders and ultimately the University.