



**Drexel University Office of Alumni Relations  
Developing Professional Affinity Groups at Drexel University  
2016-17 NEAT Grant Report**

**Describe the purpose of the Grant Project.**

The project “Developing Professional Affinity Groups at Drexel University” was designed to promote alumni engagement and career development on the basis of a shared professional specialty.

This project was undertaken in response to feedback from graduates (via formal survey research, as well as anecdotally) which indicates that there is a desire to connect with each other, current students and the university on the basis of a shared affinity. As a result, the Office of Alumni Relations has facilitated the development of volunteer-based organizations to connect alumni from their respective colleges/schools, student organizations or common interests (such as ethnic background).

At the same time, alumni had also reported that they value the opportunity to engage in ongoing career and professional development, a finding which is the foundation for Drexel’s Alumni Career Services (ACS) program, which was formally launched in 2008. ACS features networking events and career development seminars, conducted in-person and online, that are executed in partnership with alumni volunteers, faculty members, career development professional staff and outside experts.

In light of these findings, the Office of Alumni Relations determined that there was an opportunity to expand on the successes of these two initiatives, by developing professional affinity groups. These volunteer based organizations are intended to help alumni to build connections, talk about their work and engage in professional development opportunities with others who work in their field.

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

This project entailed the identification, development, implementation and evaluation of professional affinity groups during fiscal year 2017.

In addition to enabling alumni to engage with each other, a variety of constituents were involved in this initiative. For example, faculty members, alumni and outside experts contributed to the program by facilitating career development workshops and lifelong learning opportunities that speak to the identified areas of interest. In addition, current students participated in many of the programs, which connected them to alumni who are already working in their future professional specialty.

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

The following process was used to implement this project:

**Identification:** The professional affinities that will form the basis of these groups were determined based on data already known about alumni (i.e. which career specialties boasted critical mass of alumni) alumni who self-identify as having an interest in starting a group and/or in consultation with college/school based alumni organizations. In fiscal year 2017, the groups that were identified were:

1. The Drexel University Architecture Alumni Association
2. The Real Estate Alumni Network
3. Alumni in Hospitality Group
4. Marketing Alumni Affinity Group
5. Biomed Dragons

**Development:** The Executive Director of Alumni Relations served as the liaison to these groups, by identifying potential volunteers, assisting in the development of an annual strategic plan and facilitating programming.

**Implementation:** Professional affinity groups deployed their programming throughout the year. Possible areas that Alumni Relations proposed for programming included:

As of the end of fiscal year 2017, the professional affinity groups were officially recognized and hosted the following events in partnership with the Office of Alumni Relations:

1. The Drexel University Architecture Alumni Association
  - a. December 2016—Holiday Happy Hour
  - b. March 2017—Tour of the Perelman Center for Jewish Life and talk with architect Stanley Saitowitz
  - c. April 2017—Reception and Talk at Voith and Mactavish, an alumni owned firm; Belmont Block Build Community Service Project
  - d. June 2017--Reception in Honor of Graduating Seniors
2. The Real Estate Alumni Network
  - a. February 2017—Winter Networking Reception and Insider's Look at the Philadelphia Real Estate Market with Alumni Speaker
3. Alumni in Hospitality Group
  - a. March 2017—Kick-Off Reception and Behind-the-Scenes Tour of the Racquet Club of Philadelphia
4. Marketing Alumni Affinity Group
  - a. May 2017—Alumni Career Services Reception and Discussion with Marketing Faculty member on the topic of Corporate Political Activism
5. Biomed Dragons
  - a. May 2017—Kick-Off Networking Reception

**Evaluation:** The success of professional affinity group activities was measured by tracking event attendance numbers and satisfaction expressed by event attendees via post-event Net Promoter surveys.

At the outset of the project, the following timeline was proposed for implementation. It should be noted however that some of these phases overlapped; in particular, the identification and planning phases actually continued throughout the year, as group steering committee members were solidified and programs were deployed at various points throughout the year.

1. July-September 2016: Identification of professional specialties that will be the

focus for the first year of project implementation; Identification of potential volunteer steering committee members.

2. September-October 2016: Development of annual plan for each of the five groups, in collaboration with volunteer steering committees
3. November 2016-May 2017: Execute programming plans
4. June 2017: Conduct comprehensive evaluation of outcomes of professional affinity group activities; Begin to develop strategy for 2018.

**Separately or include in the report your survey instrument, if applicable.**

A survey was not conducted at the outset of the project, but feedback was collected from attendees who participated in professional affinity group programming, via a post-event survey, based on the Net Promoter model. A sample of the survey is attached to this report.

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

Communications strategies (mainly electronic and social media) were deployed throughout the last year, in order to raise awareness of events and to ask alumni to identify their interest in a particular group. Additionally, alumni were invited to assist in the organization of these group and to participate in programming via personal contacts from alumni relations staff members, college/school faculty and fellow alumni.

Since part of the goals of this project were to engage alumni volunteers in the leadership of groups and development of programming, the Office of Alumni Relations worked in partnership with those volunteer leaders to develop their annual plans, frequency of programming and content of offerings. With this guidance, steering committee leaders to crafted mission statements, goals/objectives and annual plans to develop their groups in a way that would be responsive to the needs and interests of their constituents. A sample professional affinity group outline is attached to this report.

**Provide a listing of the final Grant Project budget and how grant money was allocated**

At the outset of the project, total costs for programming expenses (food, beverage, venue rental, audiovisual support, event materials) were projected at \$15,000. At the conclusion of the project, the total cost of the programs described above came to \$11,962.68. Funding from the NEAT grant will be used to cover \$5,000 of these costs, with the rest of the funding provided by the Office of Alumni Relations operating budget.

Two events, the Architecture Alumni Holiday Happy Hour and Belmont Block Build did not have expenses associated with them. Attendees covered their own costs at the Happy Hour, and the Block Build was a Community Service experience.

Documentation for the summary of expenses is attached to this report.

**Provide a brief summary of your findings.**

A total of eight professional affinity group programs took place in fiscal year 2018, engaging a total of 306 alumni, guests and students.

In reviewing data related to event and volunteer participation, the following findings are particularly significant for Drexel, given the demographics of its alumni community and the need to engage new participants in advance of the launch of the next capital campaign in November 2017:

1. 55 percent of program attendees graduated within the last ten years.
2. 13 percent of attendees were identified fundraising prospects.
3. 15 percent of attendees at professional affinity group events had never participated in an alumni event previously.
4. A total of 23 volunteers participated in steering committee activity across the five groups. The majority of individuals had not engaged in previous volunteer activity at the university and most of them were also graduates of the last ten years.
5. Survey feedback from participants who attended a professional affinity group event resulted in an average Net Promoter Score of 63.

**Provide a brief summary of your conclusions.**

The findings described above are meaningful to alumni engagement at Drexel for several reasons, and lead to several conclusions about professional affinity groups at the university:

1. **Professional affinity groups represent an opportunity to engage recent graduates:** At the outset of the program, it was thought that mid-career alumni would be the primary audience for professional affinity group activity, as this is the traditional demographic for Drexel's Alumni Career Services offerings. However, as noted above, graduates of the last ten years were the majority of participants in professional affinity group events and steering committees. This is significant, as this group makes up the majority of Drexel's current alumni base, and thus represents the biggest area of opportunity for increasing alumni engagement.
2. **The development and implementation of professional affinity groups can also serve larger institutional goals of increasing overall alumni engagement and building the donor pipeline:** As noted, professional affinity group activity engaged fundraising prospects and first-time event attendees/volunteers. In addition, when alumni indicate their interest in an affinity group, they will be asked to share their business contact information. This not only improves the quality of alumni data, but can provide additional insight into financial capacity. Promoting engagement among donor and first time participant populations is critical, as Drexel prepares for its next capital campaign. For the first time, the campaign will include non-financial engagement goals, making it imperative for the Office of Alumni Relations to implement new opportunities for alumni to become involved in the life of the university, and for the office to demonstrate how its programming can complement the fundraising cycle.
3. **Participants recognize the value-added elements of professional affinity group programming:** The average score reported above is within the range that represents potential for growth, as posited by Bain and Company (2017). Survey respondents indicated that they found the focused networking opportunities valuable for a variety of reasons, including the high-level of expertise evidenced by the event speakers/hosts, ability to participate in unique/behind-the-scenes opportunities and the ability to add like-minded professionals to their network, who they could later leverage in seeking career opportunities, industry contacts or business development leads. Drexel alumni have indicated via other surveys and anecdotally that they are seeking this kind of value-added programming that is rich with content, a good use of their time and that offers the ability to make meaningful connections. It appears that professional affinity group programming fulfills these requirements.

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

The Office of Alumni Relations will continue to support the development of the five professional groups that are currently operational and will continue to identify additional groups and areas to expand professional affinity programming moving forward.

Steering committee members of the groups that are currently recognized will soon begin to plan their programming for fiscal year 2018 and several members have noted a desire to partner with each other on events. Indeed, there are overlapping interests between disciplines such as real estate, architecture and marketing, which could lead to collaborative programming. This cross-pollination of groups can lead to expanded networking opportunities for attendees.

Additionally, although the groups that are currently operating are doing so, solely in the Philadelphia region, there is potential to begin regional chapters for some of these disciplines, and in some cases potential volunteer leaders have stepped forward, after seeing Philadelphia area events advertised in alumni e-newsletters and other publications. This trend of broader interest also raises the possibility for some professional affinity activity to take place online, either through focused virtual networking events (which could utilize the Brazen platform to which Drexel already subscribes) and/or online lectures.

Finally, professional affinities related to the health sciences, technology, public sector/government and entrepreneurship have already been identified as additional avenues to explore for these groups; it is already known that a critical mass of Drexel alumni work within each of these disciplines, as potential volunteer leadership has already been identified to aid in forming a group.

As these groups expand and activity becomes more consistent, these groups will also serve larger institutional goals of increasing overall alumni participation and building the donor pipeline, which will support both the engagement and non-financial goals of the upcoming campaign.

## **References**

Medland-Slater, J. (2017, June 6). *What is a Good Net Promoter Score?* Retrieved June 28, 2017 from <https://blog.customermonitor.com/what-is-a-good-net-promoter-score>

## Sample Post-Event Net Promoter Score Survey

Post-Event Survey: Real Estate Group Winter Program

Q1 Based on your experience at the Real Estate Group Winter Program, how likely would you be to recommend a similar event to another alumnus?

- 0 (0)
- 1 (1)
- 2 (2)
- 3 (3)
- 4 (4)
- 5 (5)
- 6 (6)
- 7 (7)
- 8 (8)
- 9 (9)
- 10 (10)

Q2 Would you please share why you chose that number?

Q3 Is there anything else you would like to share with us about this event?

Q4 How did you hear about this event (please check all that apply)?

- Drexel University Alumni website (1)
- E-mail (2)
- Drexel University Alumni Facebook Page (3)
- Drexel University Alumni LinkedIn Networking Group (4)
- Drexel University Alumni Twitter feed (5)
- From my college/school (6)
- From a friend (7)
- Other (please specify): (8) \_\_\_\_\_

Q5 I am interested in serving on the steering committee for the Real Estate Alumni group, to help plan future events and programs:

- Yes (1)

Q6 Preferred contact information

Name (1)

Phone Number (2)

E-mail Address (3)

**Sample Professional Affinity Group Application**

**DU-AAA**

Drexel University Architecture Alumni Association

Application for Recognition

Submitted by:  
Brian Nunziato  
Caitlin Youngster  
Samuel Emory

Dear Drexel University Alumni Association Board of Governors,

We request that the Drexel Alumni Office establish a Drexel University Architecture Alumni Association.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The DU-AAA's purpose is to provide a framework for Drexel alumni associated with Drexel University's Department of Architecture that will foster the empowerment of Drexel University architects and architecture students, and facilitate collaboration on issues that are important to its members and its associated community.

### **Vision: Stakeholders and Goals**

Stakeholder: Alumni

Goals: Community Empowerment + Culture

1. Networking
2. Career development
3. Information sourcing
  - a. Surveying/data collection and analysis
  - b. Publish findings for use by alumni and Drexel U
4. Fostering lifelong relationship with Drexel

Stakeholder: Undergraduate Students

Goals: Experience + Counseling

1. Professional Experience
  - a. Networking
  - b. Salary comparison, negotiation training
  - c. Learning opportunities
2. Design and Culture Experience
  - a. Hands-on building
  - b. Travel
3. Scholarship fund

Stakeholder: Public

Goals: Service + Local Involvement

1. Philadelphia-based charitable design
  - a. Collaborate with Philadelphian non-profits
  - b. Collaborate with local community members, business, initiatives
2. Service expeditions



## BYLAWS OF THE DREXEL UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

### ARTICLE 1. Name

The name of this organization shall be the “Drexel University Architecture Alumni Association”. It may be abbreviated as the “DU-AAA”. The board of directors may designate other names for specific activities and programs as it deems appropriate.

### ARTICLE 2. Objectives

The DU-AAA’s purpose is to provide a framework for Drexel alumni associated with Drexel University's Department of Architecture that will foster the empowerment of Drexel University architects and architecture students, and facilitate collaboration on issues that are important to its members and its associated community. This purpose will be obtained through the following initiatives:

- Create a community among the Drexel architecture alumni through ongoing educational, social, service and professional networking opportunities
- Utilize the experience and resources of alumni to provide counseling, scholarships, and professional insight for undergraduate students.
- Organize community outreach initiatives to engage Drexel alumni in public service projects.
- Provide an avenue for alumni to remain interested, informed and involved in Drexel’s Department of Architecture and the larger University.

### ARTICLE 3. Membership

3.1 Alumni Membership in the DU-AAA is open to all graduates of Drexel University who hold a Bachelor of Architecture degree.

3.1.1 Alumni Members are entitled to all rights and privileges guaranteed by the DU-AAA, including the right to vote, the right to hold leadership positions, and the right to attend all Alumni Member events.

3.2 Associate Membership in the DU-AAA is available to individuals in affiliated communities with interest in the activities of the DU-AAA.

3.2.1 Associate Members shall be permitted to participate in activities to the extent of Members, except the right to vote and hold leadership positions.

3.3 Requests for membership should be submitted to the designated organization email address and include the applicant's name, email address, degree and year of graduation.

3.4 Membership to the DU-AAA is free to all members.

## ARTICLE 4. The Board

### 4.1 The Board shall consist of the following elected leadership positions:

#### Chair:

The chair of the board shall oversee all board positions, coordinator DU-AAA efforts, open and close meetings, and coordinate with larger invested institutions such as Drexel University and the DU-AA.

#### Vice-Chair:

The Vice-chair shall oversee initiatives related to DU-AAA membership, maintain member lists, and organize recruitment and outreach efforts.

#### Treasurer:

The Treasurer of the board shall be responsible for management of organization funds, scholarship and sponsorship initiatives, and fundraising efforts.

#### Secretary:

The Secretary of the board shall be responsible for recording and maintaining records of organization meetings, dissemination of information to members, and efforts related to general communication.

#### Event Coordinator:

The Event Coordinator shall be responsible for identifying and organizing event opportunities, including service events and social events. The Event Coordinator shall oversee any as-needed committees formed to support specific events.

### 4.2 Committees

Committees shall be formed on an as-needed basis and consist of general alumni and associate members. The board will assess, with input from the general member body, the need for a committee. The board will be responsible for the appointment of committee members and committee heads, as needed, and for the oversight of committees.

### 4.4 Terms

The length of term for elected board members is one year. Board members may hold a single position for up to 3 years consecutively.

### 4.5 Elections

Election of board members will occur on an annual basis during a general assembly. All Alumni Members will be notified and are eligible to vote. Voting is to be conducted anonymously by ballot. Winners are determined by majority vote.

## ARTICLE 5. Meetings

### 5.1 Board Meetings

Board meetings will occur bi-monthly in person or as required.

## 5.2 General Body Meetings

General body meetings will occur quarterly, or on an as needed basis as determined by the board. Meetings are open to all Alumni Members and Associate Members, and reminder emails will be sent out at least one week prior to the meeting date.

## 5.3 Quorum

For voting or decision-making purposes, quorum shall be defined as 2/3 member representation either in person or virtually.

## 5.4 Voting

Voting is consensus-based.

## ARTICLE 6. Parliamentary Process and Amendments

### 6.1 Upholding Bylaws

It is the responsibility of the board to uphold all by-laws to the best of their abilities. By-laws shall be made publically available to all Alumni Members. Any Alumni Member has the right to question the upholding of bylaws and can bring up issue at any time. Action can be taken by 2/3 vote at a general body meeting, or a special meeting called by any board member to discuss any such issue.

### 6.2 Amendments to Bylaws

Amendments to bylaws must be approved first by a 2/3 vote of the Board Members. If the by-law passes Board vote, it must also be approved by a majority vote of the Alumni Members.

## Yearly Plan of Events and Initiatives

- I. Proposed Annual Plan/Events
  - A. Quarterly social events
  - B. DU-AAA annual event (fundraising, social, etc)
  - C. Annual service trip
  - D. Educational event
    1. lecture/speaker
    2. student/alumni rendez-vous etc
  - E. Quarterly General Body meetings
  
- II. Proposed Ongoing Initiatives
  - A. Newsletter
  - B. Public Outreach/Non-Profit Work
  - C. Promotion of local service opportunities
  - D. Relationship building between Arch. students and Arch. grads