

UTEP AA NEAT Grant: Young Alumni Programming
Final Report; May 6, 2011

Purpose of the Grant Project

The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) has identified the need to develop a young alumni program to complement existing student and alumni services. As the alumni population of the University continues to grow, it is incumbent for the UTEP Alumni Association to diversify its programs and service delivery to various target groups segmented by age, geography, and lifestyle. The UTEP Alumni Association provides oversight for the Student Alumni Association (SAA), which is a strong and self-sufficient student organization. The Alumni Association also sponsors the most prestigious student awards on campus, The Top Ten Seniors Awards. This award was created to recognize student leadership and academic achievement, and has sponsored this award for the last 60 years. More recently a Senior Gift Campaign as part of a comprehensive "Senior Year Experience" has also been developed to enhance the transition from student to alumni. In recognition of student support by their family members, a new and evolving Parents Association has also been established. On the post-graduate side, there are a wide range of services, programs, and special events for alumni, which include campus-wide as well as chapter and board leadership opportunities. In our own assessment of services, there is a void that bridges the immediate student to alumni linear path. Therefore, there is a need to develop a strong, comprehensive student to alumni transition program for recent graduates.

Scope

The UTEP Alumni Association is invested in the continued development of a comprehensive young alumni program, to engage alumni that have graduated within the last five years. It is to be a program based on "best practices" that can help to bridge outreach, membership development and service delivery on behalf of these recent graduates. The program includes both social networking and career development components.

Events to promote social interaction and self-sufficiency have been developed. The online experience of providing and allowing for the access of appropriate user-friendly web content is one facet to encourage networking, reinvestment, and the continuation of good will as the new graduates focus on graduate school or their chosen career path. One important task that has been developed is the social and networking events. These events have included alumni gatherings and dances which were promoted through the Student Alumni Association and the UTEP Alumni Association Facebook pages to encourage attendance.

The following events and programs were completed:

- The development and implementation of the first Graduation Fair (GRAD FAIR) was established. The GRAD FAIR was held over the course of three (3) days on March 1-3, 2011. This event brought in 527 new memberships and was a collaborative effort with the University Bookstore, Josten's & Herff Jones (vendors), alumni and student alumni volunteers and various departments within UTEP. The GRAD FAIR also kicked off the Senior Gift Campaign Program where graduates were asked to give a monetary contribution or make a pledge. The Senior Gift Campaign Committee is in the process of collecting the pledges by making calls and sending out reminder/thank you letters.

- The continued success of the Senior BBQ hosted by the Student Alumni Association added a new dimension as Young Alumni were invited to attend in order to network with graduating seniors. This enabled graduating seniors to begin to develop relationships with Young Alumni for social and networking opportunities. In addition, Alumni Association Board members were in attendance and networked with future Alumni.
- The Alumni Association worked in collaboration with a Young Alumni group, to include them as participants of a Holiday Party at the local Double Tree Hotel which was well attended. This event was the beginning of the development of a Young Alumni strand within the Association. During the spring elections for the UTEP Alumni Association Board of Directors, the nominating committee specifically targeted Young Alumni nominees for representation on the Board. Through those efforts, we were successful in gaining two Young Alumni positions on the UTEP Alumni Association Board of Directors.
- The online experience of providing and allowing for the access of appropriate user-friendly web content has been promoted and enhanced via Facebook. Both the Alumni Association and the Student Alumni Association promote all events, programs and achievements through the respective Facebook pages and the website. E-blasts are also highly utilized to invite alumni to social gatherings and other events.
 - An Affinity Survey was conducted online and specifically targeted Young Alumni to better gauge what benefits Young Alumni are looking for when joining the association.
 - UTEP's online community is a data bank where alumni demographic information is stored and is constantly being updated. Once Alumni have logged on, they are able to update their UTEP alumni profile, manage e-communications, search the UTEP alumni directory and join/renew their membership. We are also able to request lists of alumni specific to our needs for whatever event or programs we are attempting to promote at any given time. Contributions, gifts, etc. are also tracked through this venue.
- The formation of a UTEP Young Alumni Program is currently in the planning stages. The Task Force has comprised some preliminary strategic initiatives which include board development, membership drives, chapter formation, network opportunities, advocacy efforts all of which involve the development of a marketing plan.
- Membership calling has also been conducted on a regular basis by the Office of Alumni Relations call center which employs current students on a part time basis. Calls are made to alumni to inquire about membership and services they would like to see happen. From time to time, Alumni volunteers also conduct calls as part of membership drives.

Final Grant Project Budget

Projected and Actual Grant Budget Allocations:

Budget line name/purpose	Estimated allocation:	Actual expenditure:
<u>Telephone Expenses (project for 1 yr)</u>	<u>\$200</u>	<u>\$250</u>
<u>Mailing costs (outgoing and C.O.D)</u>	<u>\$100</u>	<u>\$250</u>
<u>Travel Expenses (2 site visits min. /1 staff)</u>	<u>\$600</u>	<u>\$250 (only 1 visit)</u>
<u>Duplication and Printing Expenses</u>	<u>\$250</u>	<u>\$800</u>
<u>Web design</u>	<u>\$500</u>	<u>\$500</u>
<u>Task force Catering (3 lunch meetings/10)</u>	<u>\$300</u>	<u>\$100</u>

Data Management Consultation/Info. Tech	<u>\$ 350</u>	<u>\$150</u>
Holiday Party & Annual Membership Meeting – Young Alumni were targeted	<u>\$350</u>	<u>\$500</u>
Total:	<u>\$2,650</u>	<u>\$2,800</u>
Source: NEAT Grant	\$1,500	
Source: UTEP Administration	\$1,150	

Brief Summary of Findings

The need to develop a strong, comprehensive student to alumni transition program for recent graduates still remains a top priority for the UTEP Alumni Association. It is imperative that we continue to engage Young Alumni as they are vital in their contribution to the success of the University as well as the Association. Throughout our efforts, we have found that the most impact that can be made when targeting this population is before graduation. This would mean that we will have to continue to engage students throughout their student life through our Student Alumni Association and existing and/or future events. By way of the Student Alumni Association, we will be able to teach and encourage a more philanthropic nature in every student thus creating strong, future Alumni.

Our commitment will be from the beginning until the end of their student life, there will be many critical touch points where we can create positive experiences that will make them want to stay engaged. This engagement will continue to feed the base of our Young Alumni group and enhance their transition from student life into a career or furthering of their education.

Brief Summary of Conclusions

The addition of Young Alumni on the Board of Directors will add a different perspective to the Board's efforts and mission. The use of technology will continue to be key in our outreach efforts as this is an ever evolving form of communication and the preferable mode of communication for Young Alumni. Resources from both the University and the Association will continue to be actively involved with the development of the UTEP Young Alumni Program of the Alumni Association. This is an exciting time for our Alumni Association and UTEP as we approach our 100 year celebration and the prospect of significant growth in membership is on the horizon. Our mission to continue to get Young Alumni excited about UTEP will create a desire to remain engaged with the University.

Brief summary of the impacts this project will have on the future of your alumni association/office programming

This project has helped launch our recruitment for Young Alumni. As the Alumni Association and Office of Alumni Relations continue to be essential players in the University's campaign towards Tier One status, we are creating future philanthropists that will ensure the success of the Alumni Association and UTEP by giving back. It is critically important that we engage Young Alumni with the University from the onset of graduation due to the fact that we need to raise the level of alumni participation as it relates to alumni giving, networking, support and service to the University. The increase in graduates within the last ten (10) years points to the fact that if we as an institution progress towards our strategic goals, we must have alumni involved throughout their lifetime which begins as students and continues into alumni status.