



Northern Illinois University Alumni Association and Northern Illinois University Foundation

NEAT Grant for Campus Partner Training Report

PROJECT PURPOSE

The Northern Illinois University Alumni Association (NIUAA) and Northern Illinois University Foundation (NIUF) sought a \$5,000 NEAT Grant for Alumni Relations to expand upon an existing campus partner training program designed to help increase rapport with faculty and staff and encourage alumni engagement at all department levels.

Prior to this application campus partner workshops were piloted and NIUAA/NIUF staff identified that many campus partners both had an interest in engaging with alumni but lacked the support, experience and awareness necessary to leverage their interest. They also recognized that many campus partners did not have a full understanding of the purpose and service the NIUAA/NIUF could provide. Thus, staff applied for the grant to help shine a light on the efficacy of campus partner education through this avenue, as well as to entice more campus partners to attend the workshops to learn about the NIUAA/NIUF and how to partner.

PROJECT SCOPE

Desired outcomes were:

1. To empower NIU faculty and staff to best engage with their alumni through training
2. To demonstrate to NIU faculty and staff the value of the resources provided to them through the NIUAA and NIUF
3. To build strong intra-departmental relationships between professional and academic units and the NIUAA and NIUF.

With these outcomes in mind, staff created a six-workshop series called the Advancement, Communication, and Engagement Series (A.C.E.S.) to highlight NIUAA/NIUF staff expertise in alumni engagement, the services and value of a partnership with the NIUAA/NIUF, and create spaces for campus partners from across campus to meet NIUAA/NIUF staff.

Alumni relations staff took information from surveys sent prior to the workshops and worked with colleagues throughout the NIUAA/NIUF to identify session topics that would be both of interest to campus partners and help the NIUAA/NIUF convey key information about its purpose and the services it can provide.

Workshop Sessions:

- 1) What is University Advancement?
- 2) Leveraging and Partnering with University Advancement
- 3) Philanthropy at NIU Part 1 – The Basics
- 4) Alumni Communications
- 5) Alumni Engagement and Volunteerism
- 6) Philanthropy at NIU Part 2 – The Comprehensive Campaign

Survey Instruments

As a result of these workshop, we hoped to be able to identify a change in campus partners' understanding of the purpose of and services provided by the NIU Foundation and NIU Alumni Association across campus. This was to be accomplished by sending a survey to all NIU employees prior to the workshops and sending the same survey to all employees following the series completion. After identifying that only 1.8% of the employee population attended the workshops, it was determined that more time would be needed to create a culture shift expansive enough to be reflected in a campus-wide survey. To assess efficacy, staff sent a survey to all attendees at the conclusion of the workshop series. The questions within identified the impact that the series had on their understanding of the role and services of the NIUAA/NIUF.

Of note is the fact that, although these events were originally intended to be completely in person, the status and evolution of the impact of COVID-19 throughout the series required that the workshops be offered virtually or in person and likely impacted overall attendance.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

1. July
 - a. Grant received
2. August
 - a. Survey sent to campus/baseline metrics established
 - b. Training topics and speakers identified
3. September – November
 - a. Workshops occurred monthly
4. February - April
 - a. Workshops occurred monthly
5. May
 - a. Closing survey sent to campus
6. June
 - a. Survey sent to workshop attendees
 - b. Final metrics completed

Staff worked with staff in the Division to identify topics they were regularly asked and consulted with administrators to identify strategic topics between July and August. In August, a baseline survey was sent out to the campus to understand their current awareness of the NIUAA and NIUF roles and services. The trainings were advertised via the University Communications system, advancement officers, and through NIUAA and NIUF networks each month, with a workshop occurring in September, October, November, February, March, and April

METHODOLOGY

In August, a baseline survey was sent to all NIU staff and faculty to identify their awareness of the role and services of the NIUAA and NIUF. This survey was sent to over 3,000 campus faculty and staff again in May. After concluding that the number of folks engaged in the workshops was not great enough to make a demonstrable difference in attitudes/awareness campus wide, we surveyed workshop attendees to identify the value of attending workshops for them. We were pleased to see the impact of these workshops on those who attended. In the future, our goal is for the continued delivery of workshops like these will create an incremental shift in awareness amongst the greater faculty/staff population.

BUDGET

We hosted events over the lunch hours to encourage employees to use their off time to attend the workshops. Room rental and food for six workshops with 105 attendees (55 unique) was \$1982.71. We also purchased notebooks with the workshop logo on them, to help remind attendees of the information they learned. These totaled \$473.50 for a grand total of \$2,531.31

FINDINGS SUMMARY

Originally, we hoped to set a baseline of understanding about the role and services provided by the NIUAA and NIUF through a campus wide survey delivered before and after the workshops. However, since 55 unique faculty/staff (105 total), which is 1.8% of the total employee population at NIU, attended the workshop we determined that this comparison would likely not yield valid results. A review of the pre- and post-data confirmed this. Our desire is to see greater shifts in awareness in the overall employee population over time and acknowledge that the baseline gathered this year will set us up for a better comparison in the future.

After this discovery, staff surveyed those who attended the workshops to see what impact the workshops had on attendees understanding of the role and services of the NIUAA and NIUF. Below are the results:

- 25.5% of workshop attendees participated in the final survey (14/55); 35% of respondents had worked for NIU for 0-3 years and 35% for 16+ years
- As a result of the workshop(s) they attended:
 - 100% stated they had a greater understanding of the work of the NIUF
 - 100% stated they understood how to partner with the NIUF
 - 100% stated they had a greater understanding of the work of the NIUAA
 - 92% stated they understood how to partner with the NIUAA
- 100% felt that the presenters were knowledgeable and prepared
- 17% stated that food enticed them to attend the workshop, and one mentioned the benefit of the food in an open feedback question

IMPACT AND CONCLUSION

In summary, we identified that the type of cultural shift we were looking for from staff in understanding the role and services the NIUAA/NIUF provides will take a sustained effort over time. We also learned that efficacy of the workshops on those who attended was what we were looking for and that, given the

time to connect with enough campus partners, we would likely see the positive shift we were looking for.

This investment in campus partner workshops has had both short-term and long-term effects for our organization. In the short term, we have been able to see how the presentation of this information benefits our campus partners and have already seen attendees connecting with our staff to collaborate. This has also showed our leadership that these activities are worth investing in and, with a continued investment over time, we will likely see a larger shift in perception.