



**2020-2021  
NEAT Grant Program Report**

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## Project Purpose

With more than 200,000 alumni and nearly 39,000 enrolled students, Texas Tech University (TTU) is experiencing continued growth each year. As part of the mission of the Texas Tech Alumni Association (TTAA) to *support our university, build relationships and foster growth*, the organization constantly looks for ways to effectively engage students and provide connections with alumni. Over the past year, the traditional method of face-to-face engagement has shifted drastically with an increase in virtual events and engagement opportunities. The TTAA recognized the lack of online networking opportunities for TTU students and alumni and felt an urgent need to establish an appropriate program to facilitate virtual engagement opportunities that focused on career networking, employment opportunities and Red Raiders helping Red Raiders.

The primary purpose of the project “Techsan Connection: Planning and Implementing an Alumni Networking Platform,” is to establish a campus collaborative networking platform that not only provides much-needed resources for both Texas Tech and the alumni community, but also reduces the financial burden and workload for TTU colleges with a unified approach.

Through the assistance of the NEAT Grant, the TTAA, in conjunction with TTU Career Center, established Techsan Connection – an exclusive online networking platform for TTU alumni, students, faculty and staff. The platform, hosted by Graduway, allows for a robust virtual mentoring and career development program, employment and engagement opportunities, private networking communities, and much more. The TTAA spearheaded the program as a central hub for alumni. With a campus collaborative approach, the TTAA sought out campus representatives from TTU to join the project by creating private networking communities for colleges, or “premium groups,” within the Techsan Connection platform.

## Scope of the Project

This project consisted of selecting an appropriate online networking platform, hosting workshops with representatives from Texas Tech University to create a robust, campus collaborative effort, implementation and evaluation of the program, hiring a student worker for program management, as well as research and reporting.

The specific goals of the project included:

- Selecting an appropriate vendor that was affordable and reputable, and provided an easy-to-use platform.
- Implementing the Techsan Connection alumni networking platform by Fall 2020.
- Developing a campus collaborative approach through premium groups within the platform.
- Growing the number of registered users in year one to 5,000.
- Recruiting at least five premium groups to the platform by end of year one.

- Hiring a student assistant to help with management of the platform.

For this project, the TTAA worked with campus representatives to determine and establish the best online networking platform for TTU. This included several informative sessions from different vendors. Once the provider was selected, the TTAA team worked with Graduway representatives to create and launch the online networking platform and created the marketing and implementation plan. After launch, the focus was on establishing collaborative partners through premium groups, growing registered users and driving engagement.

### Project Timeline

#### July 2020

- Graduway selected as online networking platform provider.
- TTAA team began training for platform development.
- Connected with campus collaborators for update on vendor and premium group proposal.

#### August - October 2020

- Development of Techsan Connection platform and premium groups.
- Development of marketing plan and marketing collateral.

#### November 2020

- Launched Techsan Connection to alumni.
- Connected with campus collaborators for premium group proposal.

#### February 2021

- Launched Techsan Connection to recent graduates.
- Connected with campus collaborators for premium group proposal.

#### April 2021

- Student assistant hired to assist with Techsan Connection management.

#### June 2021

- Hosted campus collaborators event for premium group proposal.

#### July-September 2021

- Implementation of new premium groups on Techsan Connection.

## Methodology

For this project, research was conducted through informative meetings where various providers demonstrated each networking platform. Campus representatives were present at the events and provided feedback to TTAA and the TTU Career Center on vendor preference and need. From this research, Graduway was selected as the alumni networking provider.

A detailed launch plan and timeline assisted with building the platform in a timely manner to launch in fall of 2020. The Graduway team was extremely helpful in assisting with the build and implementation of the platform. The overall build took three months. The TTAA team also created a launch plan and detailed year-one marketing and communications calendar to assist with platform awareness and increase registrations.

To encourage new premium group participation, the TTAA tracked key performance indicators such as registered user growth, engagement rates, new and returning users, page views and job interactions. These measurements were provided through the Graduway platform and used to track participation and growth of the program.

## Project Budget

Total cost of project:                      \$20,578

Total amount of grant:                      \$2,500

Budget outline for project:

    \$478 campus collaborative workshops

    \$100 marketing

    \$20,000 program year 1

## Summary of Findings and Alumni Impact

The TTAA set a goal to reach 5,000 registrants on Techsan Connection by the end of year one. Upon initial launch of the platform, there were 1,305 registrants. After six months, registration nearly doubled to 2,482. With target marketing to recent graduates, and the full launch to the student population, the TTAA is confident it will reach its registration goal by November 2021.

Another year-one goal was to have at least five premium groups committed by November 2021. The program initially launched with two premium groups, the Rawls College of Business and the College of Architecture. The TTAA hosted campus collaborative events with TTU college representatives to showcase the Techsan Connection platform and promote the opportunities

available through Graduway. In June 2021, three more university colleges, the College of Media & Communication, College of Arts & Sciences and the College of Education, committed to establishing premium groups, bringing the total number of premium groups to five in just over six months. This resulted in reaching the year-one goal of five premium groups in half the time expected. The TTAA will continue to reach out to campus colleges and school as well as interest groups during the remainder of year one to surpass this goal and increase engagement activities and opportunities for registrants.

As part of the organization's mission to support the university, the alumni association took on the sole responsibility of establishing and maintaining the networking platform. This included primary funding for the five-year contract and overall management and marketing of the platform. Taking on this responsibility lessened the financial burden and workload for campus collaborators. With the small TTAA team dedicated to daily management and anticipated growth, it was important to have a plan in place to support staff and adjust the workload as the program progressed. In April of 2021, the TTAA was able to hire a student assistant to help with the growing Techsan Connection platform, reaching another year one goal.

Overall, the TTAA is pleased with the success of Techsan Connection and is excited to experience continued growth as more premium groups establish a presence on the platform and more alumni, students, faculty and staff become registered users. With the assistance of the NEAT Grant, this program will help the TTAA further its mission to support TTU and provide a valuable service for alumni, students, faculty & staff. The planning, implementation and growth of this project not only benefits Texas Tech, but other alumni organizations as well, as we continue to look for new ways to engage and assist university students and alumni.