Key Findings of the
2017 VAESE Alumni Relations Benchmarking Survey

Web Clinic
May 23,2017

Panelists

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Agenda

Overview and Data review

Q & A From Participants

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What is VAESE?

- Acronym pronounced "vase," stands for **V**oluntary **Alumni Engagement** in **S**upport of **E**ducation survey
- Filling a gap due to a lack of research focused on alumni relations and engagement practices. (most research relates to fundraising)
- Survey instrument was a collaboration from alumni relations professional world-wide.
- **Not academic research, but a business intelligence tool to help us identify important trends.**
- A Key objective: "to increase the body of reliable data that alumni relations professionals can use to better do their jobs."
- Results shared openly under a relatively unrestrictive Creative Commons license (permits remixing, re-purposing and building upon this work.) This can conflict with researchers to charge for results
- Responses from all 50 states, 17 countries.
- 91% are from United States, 3% Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa.
- 85% participation from the Power 5 Conference Schools/Independents.
- Overall margin of error 2.69% +/-

Key Observations

- Two years worth of data shows consistency and validation.

- Alumni organizations continue to struggle with life-long engagement, and many focus mostly on short-term objectives.

- Alumni and advancement officers are struggling to execute many of the basic <u>fundamentals</u> of alumni/advancement.

  - Failing to <u>cultivate alumni before soliciting</u> them.

  - Failing to offer alumni any benefits and incentives that can attract and engage them.

  - Ignoring common marketing best practices like <u>list management</u>, <u>segmentation</u>, or <u>measurement</u>.

  - Relying on assumptions and guesswork instead of gathering data to make decisions.

Key Observations

Among all higher education survey respondents, **70% of alumni organizations state their top goal for the next year is to increase alumni engagement**. Of those:

- **5%** don't have an alumni website.

- **17%** are struggling with database administration, as measured by having contact information for less than 50% of their alumni or email addresses for fewer than 30% of alumni.

- **19%** do not use any tools whatsoever to measure the effectiveness of their engagement efforts.

- **24%** don't offer their alumni any type of career services benefit.

- **29%** admit to having no dedicated strategy to boost alumni engagement (That stat is self-reported, and likely much higher)

- **42%** have never surveyed their alumni.

- **46%** choose not to offer their alumni any benefits, but instead appeal to their alumni's philanthropic generosity and/or loyalty as their primary method of getting their alumni to engage, join or give.

- **70%** to not track ROI (return on investment, or amount spent vs. revenue) to evaluate the success or failure of their programs
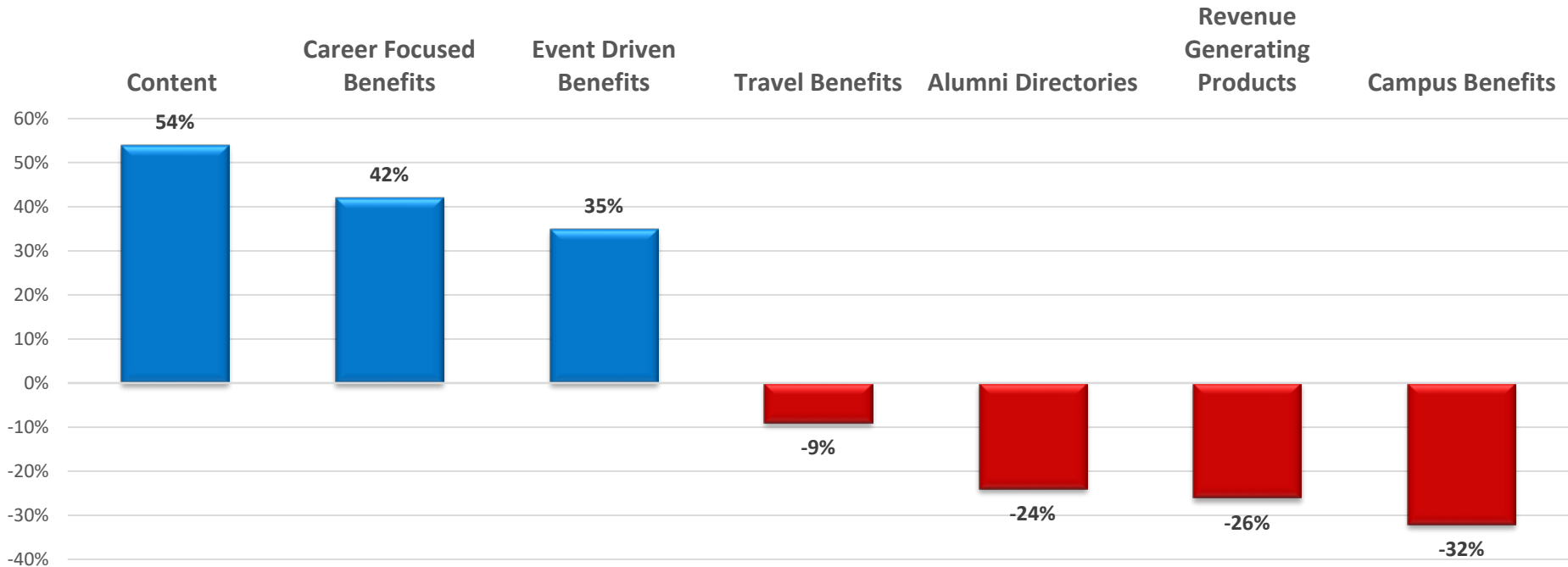
6 Trends to Watch

- **Most Engaging Benefits in 2017**
- **Winners and Losers in Career Services**
- **The Integration of Alumni Relations with Career Services**
- **The Decline In Institutions Offering Benefits To Attract & Engage Alumni.**
- **Soliciting Gifts as a Form Of Cultivating**
- **Rising Opt-Out Rates**

Trends to Watch: Most Engaging Benefits (Quantitative)

ALUMNI BENEFIT RATINGS (BY CATEGORY)
Calculated by subtracting Negative Ratings from Positive ratings

BENEFITS BY CATEGORY

Content: Targeted communication/ information distributed digitally or in print

Career Focus Benefits: In-person networking and all career related services

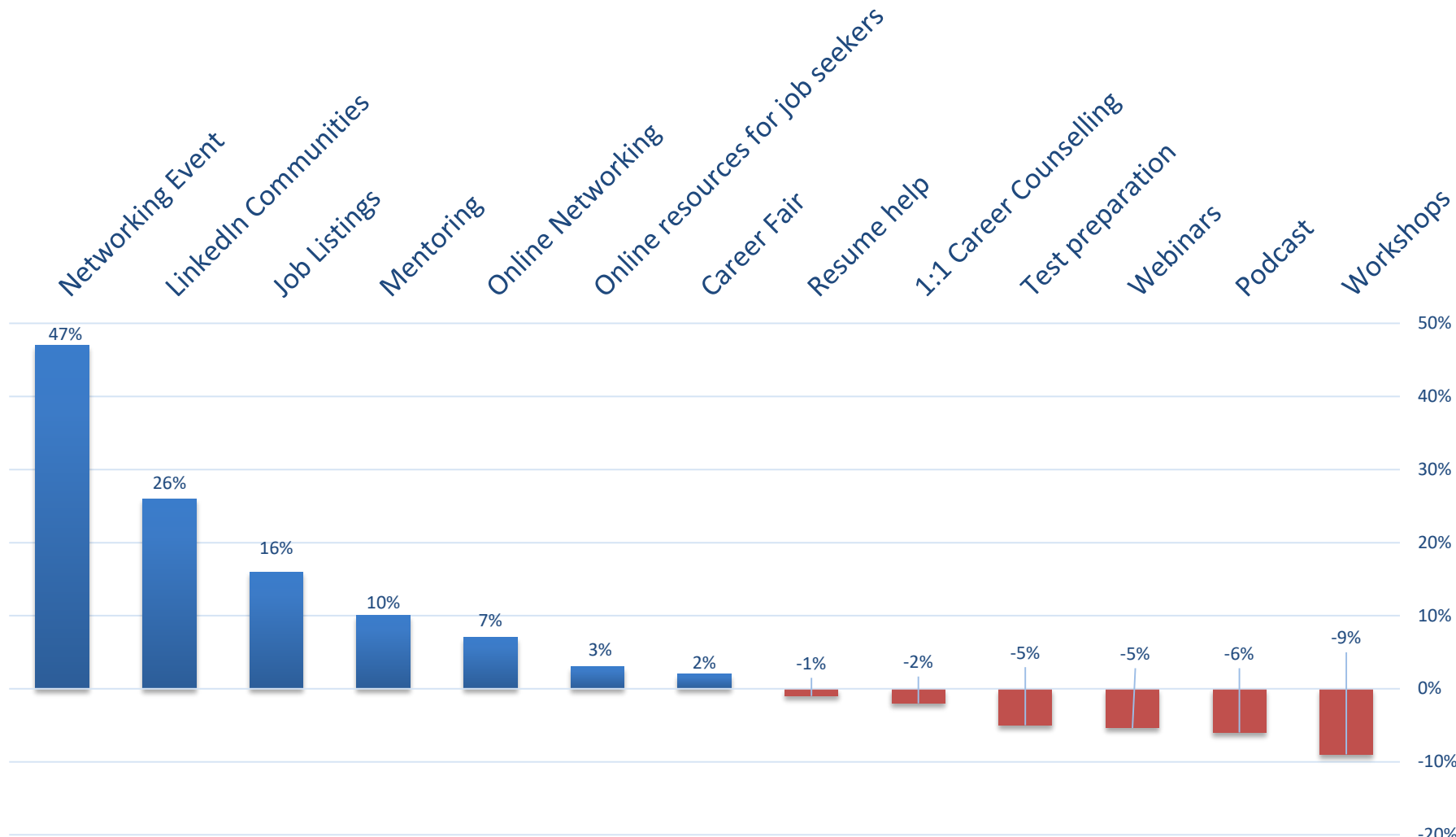**Event Driven Benefits:** reunions, chapter, club, and recognition events, etc.

Travel Benefits: Vendor operated or custom travel programs

Alumni Directories: Online communities. and printed directories

Revenue Generating Products: Insurance, financial and other products/services

Campus Benefits: Seminars/lifelong education, access to library/gym, campus discounts, lifetime email, etc.

Trends to Watch: Most Engaging Career Services
(Calculated by subtracting Negative Ratings from Positive ratings)

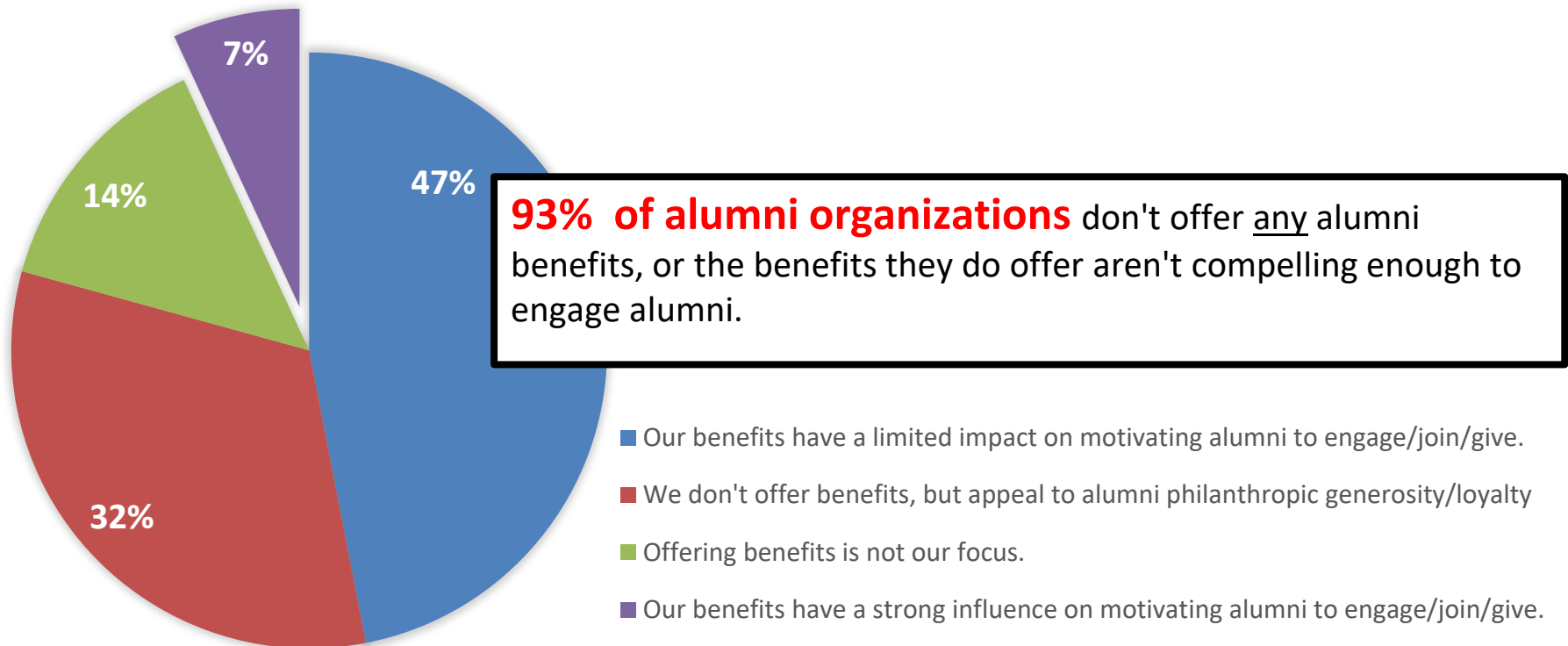| Service	Value
Networking Event	47%
LinkedIn Communities	26%
Job Listings	16%
Mentoring	10%
Online Networking	7%
Online resources for job seekers	3%
Career Fair	2%
Resume help	-1%
1:1 Career Counselling	-2%
Test preparation	-5%
Webinars	-5%
Podcast	-6%
Workshops	-9%

Trends to Watch: The Integration of Alumni Relations with Career Services

- **12% of alumni organizations report having implemented the integration of Alumni Relations and campus career services**

- **52% have recently studied the pros and cons of increasing the level of career services offerings**

- **36% have considered improving their career services within their existing organization**

- **14% have considered integration**

- **4% of alumni organizations oppose offering more career services**

- **18% are still considering the integration of alumni relations and career services.**

Trends to Watch: Soliciting Gifts As a Form of Cultivation

- **79% of institutions** believe that appealing to alumni loyalty and philanthropy is all that's needed to motivate their alumni to engage/join/give.

- **82% of institutions** send at least one gift solicitation to new grads within the first year of graduation.

- Higher education institutions send, on average **4 solicitations** to new graduates within the first twelve months of graduation.

See this article and analysis here: When Development Treats Alumni Like Their ATM.

Trends to Watch: Rising Opt-out Rates

- **32% of higher education institutions report at least 10% of their alumni have opted out of all contact with their alma mater.** *(Do Not Call, Do Not Contact, Do Not Solicit, etc.)*

- **6% of institutions have suffered opt-out rates as high as 39%**

- **Only 8.5% of institutions report having a decrease in their alumni opt-out rates.**

- **31% of institutions admit they don't know or don't track alumni opt-out rates.**

Other Trends: Decline in Dues-Paying Alumni Organizations

- **Of all institutions who have studied the pros and cons of implementing a dues-paying model over the past five years,**
    - 61% have rejected dues-paying programs.
    - 11% have approved or implemented a dues-paying model
- Dues-paying organizations impact on opt-out rates:
    - 12.4% of alumni opt-out of contact at dues-paying organizations
    - 9.1% of alumni opt-out of contact at non dues-paying organizations.
- **Dues-paying organizations are 63% more likely to have alumni opt-out rates above 30%.**

The "Alumni Professional's Anxiety Index"

- **64.1% of professionals report that being under-staffed is either "very" or "somewhat concerning," 64% report that a "general lack of engagement among their alumni" is of greatest concern.**

- **Only 10% of alumni professionals report concern about job satisfaction.**

- **Only 21% are "very" or "somewhat concerned" about the work ethic of their fellow employees.**

Using the Power 5 Conference to Identify Trends in Alumni Relations

- Unique because of their size, budgets, and reach

- The gap is significant between Power 5 (P5) alumni organizations and those not affiliated.

- Can be precursor of successful programming in the not-so-distant future.

- Not all of these P5 best practices will translate to smaller alumni organizations

Trends/Best Practices of Power 5 ALUMNI Organizations

- 98% P5 organizations offer benefits as a tool to attract and engage alumni

- 16% <u>less likely</u> to use a student call center

- 48% more likely to have a YouTube channel

- 52% more likely to send an e-newsletter/e-zine

- 78% more likely to have a blog

- Annually send 16% more emails to their alumni, but have the same opt-out rate as organizations who send fewer emails per year.

- 182% more likely to use Instagram, Snapchat or other social media app (other than Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn)

- 409% more likely to have a dedicated mobile app

- 900% more likely to use webchat

Trends/Best Practices of Power 5 ALUMNI Organizations

Analytics/Measurement Tools

- 139% more likely to use Net Promoter Score as a tool to measure engagement.

- 64% more likely to use ROI as a measurement tool.

- 26% more likely to measure social amplification metrics (shares/reposts etc., as opposed to digital responses such as "likes")

- 35% more likely to conduct regularly scheduled alumni surveys (annual or otherwise)

- 201% more likely to track opt-out rates.

Trends/Best Practices of Power 5 ALUMNI Organizations

Integration of Career Services

- 65% more likely to have studied the pros and cons of integrating Alumni Relations & Career Services, and

- 99% more likely to have approved integration of Alumni Relations & Career Services.

Trends/Best Practices of Power 5 ALUMNI Organizations

Solicitations

- Send 37% fewer gift solicitations to first year graduates.

- Are 43% <u>less likely</u> to appeal to alumni generosity, loyalty and philanthropy to engage their alumni, and...

- Are 51% <u>more likely</u> to invest in offering meaningful benefits as a means of influencing alumni engagement.

Trends/Best Practices of Power 5 ALUMNI Organizations

Dues Paying Membership Programs

- 115% more likely to have a dues-paying organization.

- 110% more likely to have a member renewal rates of 71% or higher

- Have 24% higher success rate with direct mail to renew members.

- Are 40% more likely to have "lack of engagement" be the primary reason members don't renew.

Data Highlights

Staffing Benchmarks

Technology

Marketing & Communications

Alumni Programming

Staffing Benchmarks

- 75% of alumni organizations report their biggest concern is a "lack of sufficient staff to complete necessary tasks."

- 72% of alumni offices have six or fewer full-time employees.

- 52.9 is the average age of executive directors/senior alumni executives, meaning the majority were born prior to 1964. When excluding the senior alumni executive, the average age of all other full-time professional alumni staff members is 34.5 years. Most of these staff members were born after 1980. The gap between senior alumni executive and staff is 20.4 years, or a typical generation. As most senior alumni executives are digital immigrants, and most alumni staff are digital natives, this article talks about the Digital Generation Gap in Alumni Relations.

Technology

- 73% of alumni organizations believe they need to update the technology solutions they offer alumni.

- 65% of senior alumni executives report they are "mostly" or "somewhat" proficient with technology, versus 85% of staff members that rate themselves the same way.

- 17% of alumni professionals believe their organization is doing well at attracting & engaging young alumni.

- 17% of all alumni organizations have a dedicated mobile app to engage their alumni.

Marketing & Communications

- The average alumni organizations can communicate with 85% of their alumni constituents.

- The average alumni association has an email address for 56% of their alumni.

- 79% of alumni organizations use response rates (opens/ clicks/visits, etc) as a primary tool to measure the effectiveness of their communication and engagement efforts.

Alumni Programming

- 87% of respondent organizations report they "do a poor job," or "need to do more" to attract and engage young alumni.

- 80% of alumni organizations report that "blogs, social media and e-newsletters" have the most impact on alumni engagement.

- 31% of alumni organizations don't know the percentage of GOLDs or young alumni in their database.

- 14% of alumni organizations rate their benefits as having a "strong influence on motivating alumni to engage/join/give."

- Dues paying organizations at 100K+ institutions see on average, 10.1% of their alumni database paying dues.

- Dues paying organizations at institutions under 100K alumni see just 3.7% of alumni paying dues to their alumni association.

Downloading the VAESE Report

Contents:

- **All attendees will receive a link to download the study**
- **Email with download link will arrive at 12 noon EDT.**
- **Includes 60 Pages of comparative data**
- **Questions/comments are welcomed.**
- **Final study for now. Next in 2021.**

Download the final results at

blog.AlumniAccess.com

Survey Conducted on behalf of: Alumni Access®
A division of Access Development®

2017 VAESE
The Alumni Relations Benchmarking Study
Voluntary Alumni Engagement in Support of Education

Crosstabs:

3- Within the past five years, has your budget for alumni programs and activities increased, decreased or remained the same?

n=602	Response Percent	Private	Public	Power 5	Non Power 5	100K+	<100K alumni	Dues	Non-Dues	Integrated	Not Integrated
Answer Options											
Increased	**38.4%**	36.9%	39.6%	58.3%	34.0%	50.0%	32.1%	43.1%	36.1%	40.1%	38.4%
Decreased	**23.6%**	29.1%	19.4%	10.0%	21.3%	14.3%	27.6%	21.6%	24.1%	22.3%	25.6%
Remained the same	**32.4%**	29.1%	35.3%	21.7%	42.6%	29.8%	35.9%	29.4%	34.8%	33.8%	29.1%
Don't know	**5.6%**	4.9%	5.8%	10.0%	2.1%	6.0%	4.5%	5.9%	5.1%	3.8%	7.0%

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Alumni Access Additional Content

Research:

- [Alumni Relations Staff and Budget Whitepaper](): benchmarks for alumni relations professionals and clerical staffing levels, general budgets and programming budgets.

- [The Ultimate Collection of Statistics for Alumni Engagement, Giving and Membership - 2017 Update]()

Articles

- [Boring Benefits Can Kill Alumni Engagement]() (CASE Currents "Talking Shop")

- [7 Lamest Alumni Benefits]()

- [14 Numbers That Explain Alumni Relations in 2017]()

- [Is Alumni Relations Now Subordinate to Fundraising?]()

- [The 3 Highest Rated (Not Lame) Alumni Benefits]()

- [3 Bad Habits in Alumni Relations]()

- [The Disheartening State Of Alumni Relations]()

- [Stop Using These Metrics to Measure Alumni Engagement]()

- [A Cockeyed Idea: Soliciting Alumni as a form of Cultivation]()

Whitepapers/Ebooks:

- [The Millenial Generation Gap](): What it Means to Alumni Organizations & What You Can Do About It.

- [Whitepaper for Alumni / Advancement Professionals]()

- [Discount Programs: The Ultimate Guide]() An Insiders Look at How Discount Programs Attract and Engage

Infographics:

- [Young Alumni Then & Now: How Are Today's Young Alumni Different from Other Generations?]()

About Alumni Access

Alumni Access is America's Premier Alumni Discount Network. This turn-key alumni benefit program offers a proven, top of the funnel alumni engagement platform that can attract up to 96% of your alumni, regardless of where they live in the U.S.

With over 200,000 participating merchants, these VIP discounts are in-store offers at popular national and local merchants, and are negotiated privately so your members can get over 100,000, BOGO, 50% off, and 2-for-1 discounts, plus other rich discounts, all at popular restaurants, retailers, major theme parks, and on movies, auto services, travel bookings and more.

Members get a branded mobile app and savings website with your colors/logo, to find discounts nearby, wherever they live, work or travel.

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