

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

ALUMNI RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN

October 17, 2003

INTRODUCTION

For many years, the senior officers of New Jersey Institute of Technology and the leadership of the Alumni Association have felt a growing need to engage more alumni in the life of the institution. At the start of last year, the Alumni Association recommended retaining a consultant to review the relationship between the university and the Alumni Association. President Robert Altenkirch expanded that recommendation to include a comprehensive audit and a survey of alumni, and to make recommendations for change and improvement.

The audit and survey confirmed that NJIT alumni, while they ranked well with alumni of other schools in their pride of degree, were not participating at a level commensurate with their feelings and our hopes and aspirations as a university. For example, the vast majority (92 percent) of our alumni body feel proud of their degree and what it represents; and almost the same percentage would give a strong recommendation to prospective students today. On the other hand, less than half our alumni body feels engaged with the university.

One of the recommendations from the audit was to initiate a strategic planning process to develop an action plan that would produce new, sustainable levels of alumni involvement within the next three years. We began a strategic planning process this past May. With a Strategic Planning Committee composed of representatives of the university's senior leadership, the NJIT Alumni Association, other alumni, faculty and staff, we met over a period of three months to produce a plan that we believe will enhance and intensify alumni engagement and systematically prepare students to become more active alumni citizens early in their alumni lives.

STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Breslin, Pat – Executive Director, Alumni Relations, NJIT
Coopersmith, Bernie – Alumni Association Board (alumnus)
Deek, Fadi – Associate Dean, College of Computing Sciences, NJIT (alumnus)
Dees, Chuck – Vice President for University Advancement, NJIT
Esperdy, Gabrielle – Assistant Professor, Architecture, NJIT
Schuring, John – Chair, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, NJIT

Steffen-Fluhr, Nancy – Associate Professor, Humanities, and Director of the Murray Center for Women in Technology, Associate Professor, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, NJIT
Vaccari, Ray – Alumni Association Board (alumnus)
Wallace, Don – Alumni Association Board (alumnus)
White, Dan – Facilitator, eAdvancement

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Alumni body – collectively all alumni of the university

Alumni Association – the formal organization of alumni inclusive of all alumni and constituted to conduct business on behalf of the alumni body

Alumni relations – the cumulative effects of policies and actions undertaken by different entities to build relations between the university and its alumni body, and among alumni.

Alumni office – the professional staff employed by the university to implement alumni relations

Institution – the university and all of its components including the alumni body

NJIT – the university

SPC – the Strategic Planning Committee on Alumni Relations

MISSION

Alumni relations serves the university and its alumni body by seeking to engage as many alumni as possible in the life of the university, beginning as students and extending throughout their lives.

VISION

Alumni relations at NJIT will be characterized by a broad base of alumni participation and support, by the high quality of its programs and services, by the professionalism of its alumni staff, by its seamless integration with the development and communication functions of the university to create a dynamic advancement program, and by a vibrant alumni association working selflessly to promote the welfare of the university.

SPC PROCESS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee initially identified six potential strategic areas of focus:

- Communications
- Organization/Structure/Governance

- Programs/Services
- Students
- Women/Diversity
- Regional chapters/Outreach

Mindful of its mission to develop a plan of action with deliverable, measurable goals, the SPC chose to focus on three strategic areas in particular, recognizing that there would be considerable cross over, and that the eventual plan would touch on all areas.

The three Strategic Areas outlined in the Plan are:

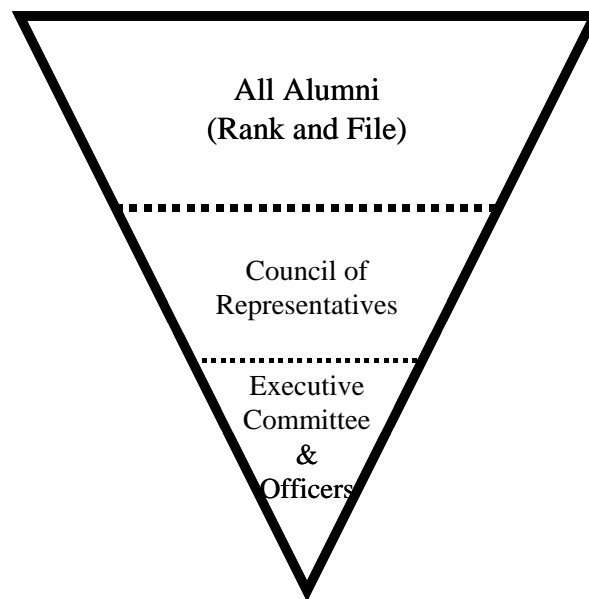
- Organization/Structure/Governance
- Communications
- Programs/Services

Strategic Area I – Recommend structural and organizational changes that will promote and support increased alumni participation in the university

The SPC views this as primary in any initiatives to improve alumni engagement. The current model, while it has many virtues, requires basic changes if NJIT is to achieve its goals and objectives moving forward.

- A. Identify a vision that conforms to Best Practices that will fulfill the vision of NJIT alumni relations, and which will lead to increased alumni engagement.
- B. Create a partnership for the management of alumni relations between the university and the Alumni Association based on trust and facilitated through regular structured communication and interaction between the President and Alumni Association leadership.
- C. Enhance the advisory role for the Alumni Association Board that provides regular strategic input to the university in the ongoing development of alumni relations.
- D. Redefine and reinforce the role of the Director of Alumni Relations as follows:
 1. Serves as the university's director of alumni relations.
 2. Serves as the director of the alumni office professional staff.
 3. Serves as an ex-officio member of the executive governing entity of the Alumni Association.

- E. Create organizational structure that will promote increased alumni engagement by developing a model of an Alumni Association that would consist of three tiers:
1. Expanded Executive Committee to include senior officers of the alumni association and committee chairs (the Executive tier),
 2. A middle upper tier of alumni leaders and officers of all alumni organizations, including selected relevant student organizations eg Student Council, Class officers, (the Council of Alumni Leaders), and
 3. The remaining alumni body, as the third and largest tier.



(Diagram of 3-tiered Alumni Association)

- F. Develop process for generating more new members in leadership of Alumni Association.
- G. Increase diversity of the Alumni Association leaders and officers.
1. Expand Executive Committee principally through a committee structure that includes a select number of standing advisory committees (to reflect ongoing basic functions of alumni relations) and special advisory committees formed for specific, short term goals.
 - a. Include in committee structure, committees on students, young alumni and women to advise on special opportunities and needs for this and other critical dimensions of alumni body.

- b. Create standing committee on alumni annual giving and alumni scholarships to manifest importance of participation and support for NJIT.
- H. Define Alumni Association leadership roles; revise bylaws for congruency; publicize and promote roles and bylaws.

Strategic Area II – Improve communications between the university and alumni, and among alumni

The SPC recognizes that effective communications are integral to engagement, that the university must communicate tirelessly and effectively with its largest constituency, and likewise, must provide, promote and facilitate communication among alumni.

- A. Develop an accurate, comprehensive, interactive data base of alumni information. THE SPC VIEWS THIS AS AN IMPERATIVE FOR DEVELOPING ALL OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE PLAN.
 - 1. Audit alumni database including advancement data services.
 - 2. Establish internal task force to develop priorities for database enhancements.
- B. Develop a single alumni magazine as the major communication vehicle (print and online versions) to alumni to be published 3 – 4 times a year.
 - 1. Combine current NJIT alumni magazine and Alumni Voice.
 - 2. Establish editorial advisory committee to include alumni communications and journalism professionals.
 - 3. Conduct readership survey.
- C. Enhance and maintain NJIT alumni online presence.
 - 1. Develop/enhance online alumni presence that will reflect the excellence of NJIT's reputation as a public research institution.
 - 2. Offer online alumni directory and email forwarding as service to alumni
 - 3. Create an e-newsletter for alumni to carry university and alumni news and information.
 - 4. Create a standing advisory committee of the Alumni Association to include alumni with expertise in web design and communication to advise with regard to online effectiveness and new developments and products.
- D. Increase and formalize direct communication between the President and other senior university leadership and the Alumni Association and its leadership.

- E. Expand and formalize face-to-face communication opportunities between the university leadership and alumni.
 - 1. Schedule the President to meet regularly with alumni groups in key regions of the country regularly.
 - 2. Schedule the President to meet with alumni on campus annually at reunions and at special programs for alumni.
 - 3. Develop experimental program on campus that would host key alumni leaders periodically for briefings with the President and other senior leadership, as well as faculty and students: “NJIT Today and...Tomorrow”.
 - 4. Promote participation of the Alumni Association and its leadership in existing university events like convocation, freshmen orientation, etc.

- F. Provide/enhance support for alumni relations staff and Alumni Association leadership, where appropriate, for example to travel to meet with and develop alumni relationships that will further the goals of the university.

Strategic Area III - Improve core programs and services, and add new programs and services

The SPC proposes that programs and services be improved and new programs be created to provide increased opportunities for engaging alumni in meaningful ways with the university and with each other. It further believes that such changes will require increased resources and staff, and that without such, many of the goals advanced by this plan will be considerably compromised. It recommends therefore that the university allocate new funds as deemed necessary to achieve the goals of this plan.

- A. Enhance/develop a Reunion/Homecoming Weekend as the centerpiece of on campus alumni relations—a festival of university life appealing to all alumni, their families and all members of the university community.
 - 1. Target 25th and 50th year reunion classes and work with class volunteers to develop reunion program and attendance.
 - 2. Develop core university program with intellectual offerings (lectures, panels, and discussions), featuring faculty and alumni.
 - 3. Publicize and promote to all alumni, especially those in proximity to campus.

- B. Enhance/develop a national/international network of alumni chapters organized to promote NJIT.
 - 1. Develop regional chapters that will conduct at least one event per year in those areas with the largest concentrations of alumni.
 - 2. Develop and implement an annual volunteer training and recognition program for chapter leaders and other alumni volunteers.

3. Develop cadre of prominent, appealing faculty speakers for alumni groups on and off campus.
- C. Implement programs and services that will appeal especially to students, young alumni, women and other critical special interest groups, and promote their continued engagement with the university.
1. Include senior class in reunion weekend by scheduling activities for seniors and first year alumni class.
 2. Develop programs and services in the regions and on campus focused especially on young alumni, and women.
 3. Enhance/develop alumni admission network open to all alumni, but especially young alumni and women to help identify and recruit top students (in conjunction with Admission Office).
 4. Distribute alumni magazine to student rooms and gathering places on campus; include senior class notes with Class Notes.
- D. Establish program in educational travel to include theme travel that appeals especially to NJIT alumni interests and experiences (eg the architecture of ancient Rome).
- E. Establish staff-alumni task force to review merchandising needs, concerns, opportunities.
- F. Study feasibility with Career Development Services Office of different alumni career mentoring possibilities.
- G. Explore with Continuing Professional Education Office feasibility and desirability of utilizing on line capabilities to deliver alumni education non-credit courses that could be delivered by alumni experts as well as faculty.