

Meeting with Alumni Relations (Nov. 3, 2022)

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Who we met with:

Jennifer Filasky, Senior Director of Constituent Experience, Alumni and Events: Recently transitioned to a new role at the University, still overseeing events like the Discovery Prize and Gala, but also overseeing Alumni Relations. Been with the University since 2007, but new title this year (Constituent Experience).

Brooke Carroll, Assistant Vice President of Constituent Experience: Oversees Alumni Relations with Jennifer, been at University for 2 months now.

Questions:

How has your agency navigated coming out of the pandemic? What are some noteworthy or unexpected successes/challenges? What has changed?

- Janet and Kris are still involved (which is who the committee spoke with last time Alumni Relations)
- 200 virtual alumni events and engaged 1000+ alumnus throughout those events during the pandemic.
- Was an opportunity to reach alumni that are not local.
- Thus there is still a place for virtual activities.
- Challenges are about how alumni might want to engage/re-engage in person and hesitancy after the pandemic still exists, especially for large in-person events.
- Homecoming is the largest engagement event, reunions (in June), and 40 under 40 are the largest activities, but still have noticed somewhat lower turnout. Most of these activities started back-up last Fall.
- Some programs are still put on hold.
- Programs are still being re-evaluated.
- Hybrid events are much harder, but on a smaller scale we've hosted some like the Statesman Reunion, panel discussions, some lectures.

Are there new goals, or metrics, for Alumni Relations?

- Strategic plan is being developed within Advancement.
- What programs and areas are most connected to the alumni. Build out programming and engagement opportunities to draw them back in larger numbers.
- Need to engage academic units on campus to help engage alumni.
- 3% of the alumni community currently give to the University, and a little more actively participate (still less than 5%). Hope to get this closer to 10%-12%.

What are ongoing challenges faced by your organization (as related to community relations, fundraising, etc.)?

- Need resources to be able to engage alumni and synergies across campus.
- It is an advantage that many of our alumni stay in the tri-state area, SBU has a younger alumni base which can impact alumni giving.
- Historically there's been less focus on alumni relations. Much funding in the past was state or federal and not alumni base. SBU lacks a historical record to fall back on.
- Engage students while they're here. 7k each year. Not waiting until they're successful, but we're helping them, partnering with the Career Center, for example.
- Engaging the alumni community required a multi-channel approach, it is a long-term decadal strategy.

How often are there any targeted alumni events that perhaps happen in the city?

- Planning regional activities in the spring, both in NYC and beyond.
- Had them pre-pandemic and are planning to bring them back and grow those numbers.
- It is important to bring SBU to where the alumni live.

Has your organization seen substantial shifts in policy or directive under the leadership of President McInnis?

- From the top it is a focus in Advancement on increasing alumni engagement.
- Engaging in discussions of what is needed to meet this goal.
- Feels like there is more targeted direction in this area now and key components are in place.
- *Consistency* for engaging alumni is a key!
- Brooke mentions putting together a proposal with the strategic plan on increasing staff and resources. This is a realistic 3-4 year plan that should be attainable. She mentions that should be

Is there any information you would like communicated to the University Senate?

- Alumni relations is eager to work with academic units on campus, and curious to how that will be received.
- The main message they'd like to distribute is that we are looking for partnership and new initiatives.