Staying Connected: Non-Profit Alumni Engagement

Ann Marie Feiden Baddoo

Vanderbilt University

Capstone Project

November 2023

Abstract

The Project for Equitable Schools is a pseudonym for a small non-profit organization in the Midwest that serves education stakeholders from PK-12 through higher education. The main focus of the organization is to address the teacher shortage and high turnover rates in historically under-resourced schools across the region. The Project provides support to pre-service and aspiring teachers in high school and college. The problem investigated in this project is the Project's lack of engagement with alumni that have graduated from college and are serving as licensed teachers. The questions that guided this project were: 1. What actions have the Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni? 2. To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with the Project for Equitable Schools? The design of the study included data collection through a semi-structured interview and document review analysis. The findings suggest that through better use of personal connections, the website, and social media, alumni engagement may increase. Based on these findings and the literature on alumni engagement, I recommend that the Project build on its current success with a recent initiative - Project Partners, and invest in their website and social media platforms to connect with and engage alumni.

Table of Contents

Introduction

Partner Organization

The Project for Equitable Schools (commonly known as The Project) is a small, non-profit organization founded 30 years ago with a focus on connecting pre-service through higher education educators and education stakeholders (such as the state departments of education) from across the multiple-state region to strengthen teacher practice and retention through collaboration, alignment and partnerships. Although The Project intends to stay connected with the teachers who are program alumni, it is experiencing a lack of alumni participating and volunteering in the professional learning, working groups and workshop events that The Project sponsors each quarter. Alumni in this organization are defined here as the pre-service teachers that were engaged with the organization as high school and college students, and are now current, in-service teachers.

Problem & Purpose. The purpose of this capstone investigation was to clarify the concept of engagement that The Project had in mind, examine the current state of alumni engagement, and explore opportunities for the organization to improve alumni engagement. The goal in this capstone is to offer the director of the organization high-leverage recommendations that can direct the next steps in this work of engagement. The organization has a wide reach, but limited resources, so it is important that they use their resources to enact strategies that are grounded in the relevant literature on alumni engagement and the constraints of their context.

What is engagement? Mael and Ashforth (1992) define alumni engagement as financial donations, but also attendance at events, volunteerism and reading alma mater publications. This conception of alumni engagement is useful in this investigation, as many alumni of The Project are new teachers that may not be in a position to make large financial donations, but are certainly

in a position where the organization's events are relevant to them. These events include professional learning workshops and an annual conference, working groups on items that directly impact them, such as the recent adoption and subsequent implementation of new culturally responsive teacher and leader standards.

Design. To explore these matters, I designed an investigation including document review and semi-structured interview. The documents included the websites, email correspondence and other text-based documents, such as agendas and planning documents. The interview included the director of the organization, who has been with the organization since the beginning. These methods were employed to answer the two main project questions:

1. What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?

2. To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?

Findings. First, I found that the organization has recently launched an initiative with a few alumni called Project Partners where The Project specifically crafted opportunities for alumni to donate, volunteer and attend the monthly events. This initiative has resulted in the alumni engaging in these opportunities - donating, volunteering their time, and attending events each month. I found that if the director or a faculty member directly contacts one of the alumni through a personal text message or visit to their school, the alumni engages through volunteering or attending an event.

Second, I found that the organization does not maintain current, accurate contact information for the alumni. The primary cause of this is that their email addresses have changed

from university email addresses to personal or work emails, which is a barrier to engagement - as I found that the primary method to connect with alumni is through email.

Third, I found that the website does not offer the opportunity to register for events or connect with the organization. In addition, the social media channels are not active, even though there are icons for them on the website.

Recommendations. First, if The Project updates its website with the ability to register for events and connect with the social media channels, it will be possible for alumni to connect with the Project and engage in the events. Second, if The Project updates their social media channel, it will be possible for The Project to develop ads that inform and invite educators to the upcoming events to target alumni for both of these channels of communication, and to collect accurate, current contact information. Third, if The Project uses text messaging, in addition to email, it will enable personal invitations to engage with The Project.

Partner Organization

The Project for Equitable Schools (commonly referred to as The Project), is a non-profit organization founded in 1994 by faculty in a small, private university located in Northern Illinois, and local non-profit organizations, such as the local chapter of the NAACP. The purpose of the organization was and is to respond to the increasing number of children living in poverty in the stateline, and the area's lack of effective and experienced teachers in their classrooms, recognizing that a disproportionate percentage of those children were from historically marginalized groups in the United States. The goal of the organization in the beginning was to eliminate the shortage of highly qualified teachers, and particularly high turnover and persistent vacancies in high-need schools, and the racial imbalance between teachers and students across the region.

The theory of action for The Project is that if institutions that have a stake in PK-12 education will strategically partner and collaborate, then the persistent problems of highly qualified, diverse teacher shortage and retention, and disproportionate academic outcomes for students of color and students in poverty will be greatly mitigated or solved in the region. The Project is governed by a Board of Directors and has one full time employee, the Director, and one part-time employee, several volunteers and contract employees.

There are four key focus areas at The Project to enact this work. The first one is The Project Working Groups where representatives from various stakeholder groups come together to lead or support an initiative or solve a problem. The working group members typically include faculty from higher education, teachers and leaders from PK-12 schools, Illinois State Department of Education (ISBE) folks, and often another stakeholder group (usually a

non-profit). An example of a recent working group is the implementation of the newly-adopted

Illinois Culturally Responsive Teacher and Leader Standards (CRTL Standards). The state

adopted the standards, and then set a timeline for implementation in teacher preparation

programs, followed by public school districts across the state. However, initially, ISBE did not

offer any technical support or training for this work. So, The Project created a CRTL Standards

Working Group to lead the work. The working group created training modules for the content of

the standards, and a process for teacher preparation programs to redesign licensure programs to

be aligned with the standards. This working group filled an important need for educators and

teacher educators in the state, and has already had success in supporting teacher preparation

programs' alignment of the CRTL standards approval by ISBE.

One of these working groups is named Project START, with a focus on pre-service

teachers. Project START is a collaborative endeavor that brings faculty and diverse students from

multiple campuses together to build capacity to:

- deeply understand the profession of teaching to promote persistence in the field;
- support diverse candidates in the pipeline and highlight their work;
- develop a network to support them as they face the challenges of novice teaching.

Project START organizes an online fall and spring symposium each year for pre-service teachers,

free of charge, where they network, attend workshops and listen to keynote addresses by

educational leaders involved in diversifying the teacher workforce.

The second focus area is a monthly publication that showcases national and international

work in education by highlighting articles, clinical practice, and policy matters associated with

Pre-K-12 education in under-resourced communities. The publication specifically highlights partnerships and collaboration between and among education stakeholder groups.

The third focus area is the Project Learning (PL), a community that supports teacher retention through access to high-quality professional learning and related resources. PL offers strands of learning through webinars hosted online live and on-demand aligned with relevant topics that teachers in the region are facing in their daily work. The PL is open to all teachers and leaders, especially those serving in under-resourced schools. PL sessions introduce teachers to The Project and address a variety of topics, including personalized learning and differentiated instruction, technology, social and emotional learning, culturally relevant/ sustaining pedagogy, teacher leadership and education policy and meeting the needs of Illinois' increasingly diverse student body. The PL hosts an annual conference online for teachers in the region to attend free or at a minimal cost.

The fourth focus area is a Project Pathway for college juniors and seniors majoring in education. The pre-service college students who plan to teach in under-served schools engage in an internship in an underserved school where they teach alongside veteran teachers. PK-12 students are provided with weekly and monthly educational supports and enrichments such as tutoring, college visits, book club and literature circles, panels, enrichment events like coding and chess classes, speakers, after school and evening study groups, homework help and summer enrichment camps that support the PK-12 scholars to succeed in their school classes; be curious, creative, and innovative thinkers; and engage in thinking about and planning for college and career.

The Project has engaged in countless initiatives since 1994 to combat the problem of the teacher shortage and lack of diversity among teachers in under-served schools. While there have been anecdotal successes in their work since 1994, the problems that they are targeting have grown to an overwhelming and unsustainable crisis, not only in the high-needs schools across the region, but in nearly every community. According to the most recent Illinois Educator Shortage Report (2023, January), over 30% of posted teacher, special education and support staff (e.g., school counselors) positions went unfilled or were filled with a less than qualified hire (un/underfilled). In the six years IARSS has conducted the survey, that's the highest percentage of un/underfilled positions reported. In total, 2,728 teacher, special education and support staff positions were un/underfilled in the 2022-23 school year across the state of Illinois.

Problem Under Investigation

Lack of Alumni Engagement

The Project currently tracks the number of participants that it reaches through its various activities each year. Anecdotally, they receive positive feedback about their activities. However, they do not have data on their impact on the teacher shortage/diversification, nor do they have an effective strategy for gathering information on the pre-service teachers that participate in their programs once they enter the field. Recently, in an attempt to stay in touch with these graduates, they launched The Project Partners. This is a group of practicing educators that are alumni of their programs. However, they have only been able to connect with a handful of them, and once they connected with them, they did not have a plan for what to do next. So, The Project does not have an effective plan to stay connected and engaged with current teachers in the field that participated in The Project's work while in their pre-service programs during their college years.

Purpose of the Investigation. The purpose of this investigation, therefore, is to determine the extent to which The Project is connected to alumni. By alumni, The Project is referring to aspiring teachers that have participated in one or more of The Project's programs as a high school or college student, and are now serving as a licensed teacher in a school in Illinois or Wisconsin.

Literature Review

I reviewed the research on alumni donors from the 4-year and 2-year institution context, as these studies have relevant application to the phenomenon in this capstone (Arnett et al., 2003; Etzelmueller, 2014; Johnson, 2013; Kim, Chang, & Jae Ko, 2010; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Porter et al., 2011; Stephenson, 2013). The body of literature related to alumni engagement concludes that many variables increase the likelihood of alumni giving, with demographics and student experience the most common categories explored (Skari, 2014).

For the purpose of this study, alumni engagement is defined through the activities used to describe alumni engagement by Mael & Ashforth (1992) as continued interaction after graduation between an alumnus/na and their graduate alma mater through philanthropic donations, attending events, volunteerism, and/or reading alumni association publications. All forms of engagement are important as they affect the financial health of the institution, promote the brand, mobilize volunteers, extend alumni networks, and can increase student–alumni interactions (Drezner, 2013). This definition of alumni engagement is useful in this study, as the four activities of donations, attending events, volunteerism and/or reading Project publications are relevant activities in which the organization's executive director is working to increase alumni participation.

Existing literature related to alumni engagement suggests that alumni with a stronger organizational identification toward their alma mater are more likely to donate, and thus be more engaged with their alma mater. For the last two decades, scholars have been exploring the connections between alumni giving motivations and college experiences. Numerous studies found that alumni perceptions of their college experience were the second strongest predictor of

giving, only after prior contributions (Clotfelter, 2003; Gaier, 2005; Marr et al., 2005; Monks, 2003).

Second, the existing literature related to alumni social identity will play a role in alumni giving and engagement. Scholars of higher education have noted that students with marginalized social identities are less likely to feel as though they belong on their campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Johnson et al., 2007; Nuñez, 2009; Strayhorn, 2008b; Velásquez, 1999). Similarly, researchers found donors' social identities are a factor in their decisions to give and how those donations manifest (Cabrales, 2013; Drezner, 2013; Drezner & Garvey, 2016; Drezner & Huehls, 2014; Garvey & Drezner, 2013, 2019).

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification has been researched through the connection between an employee and employer context, and expanded to study the context of the connection of alumni to higher education institutions (Arnett et al., 2003; Etzelmueller, 2014; Johnson, 2013; Kim, Chang, & Jae Ko, 2010; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Porter et al., 2011; Stephenson, 2013). According to Watson (2018), when contrasted with other variables impacting work behavior, such as ability, satisfaction, and motivation, the concept of organizational identification has seen much less research until recently. Although previously identified, researchers in a number of fields, including organizational behavior, social psychology, and communication began placing an emphasis on organizational intelligence in the late 1980s (Riketta, 2005). After Ashforth and Mael's (1989) work outlining the relevance of these theories to organizational behavior research, the focus on this construct in research significantly increased (Riketta, 2005). In addition, during

this time there was concurrently occurring research from a social identity perspective and in communication research (Riketta, 2005).

Mael and Ashforth (1992) conceptualize organizational identification as "a specific form of social identification where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization." The definition proposed by Mael and Ashforth is narrower than some other proposed definitions, and this conceptualization from the social identity perspective has garnered mainstream consensus (He & Brown, 2013). The process of organizational identification occurs as the individual perceives oneness with the organization, which acts as a salient social category, and feels that he or she belongs to it (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Organizational identification is important to institutions, including those in higher education, for a number of reasons. Ashforth, Harrison, and Corley (2008) describe four specific reasons why this is true: it is important to the concept of self-identity in that it is a significant way in which people come to define themselves, make sense of their place in the larger world and appropriately navigate their environment; identifying with and feeling part of the larger group is a principal human need, and identifying with an organization fulfills this need, as well as the need to enhance self; organizational identification is associated with a number of critical organizational outcomes, including satisfaction, performance and employee retention; and organizational identification has been linked to behaviors, including leadership, perceptions of justice and the meaning of work (Ashforth et al., 2008). In the higher education environment specifically, increased organizational identification has been shown to play a role in numerous areas across the student life cycle. With current students, organizational identification contributes to academic achievement, retention (Wilkins et al., 2015), and satisfaction (Wilkins & Huisman, 2013). In the area of university graduates, organizational identification has shown to influence

financial giving, alumni involvement, and promotion of the school to others (Arnett et al., 2003; Porter et al., 2011; Stephenson, 2013). Mael and Ashforth's (1992) research was the first to apply the concept of organizational identification in a higher education context.

Predictors of Alumni Giving

In 2011, Bekkers and Wiepking conducted two literature reviews of over 500 empirical articles related to the predictors of charitable giving to clarify the major factors that influence giving. There have also been a multitude of studies within the area of traditional college alumni giving (Clotfelter, 2003; Srnka, Grohs, & Eckler, 2003). This research has produced a number of elements that are correlated with increased giving, including demographic factors, student experiences, satisfaction, and alumni engagement. The predictors that are most relevant to this study are explored below.

Perceived Need of Institution. The perceived need of the institution can influence alumni giving (Hanson, 2000). When donors perceive their financial gifts will be used to meet significant needs of the institution, they prefer to give to higher education over other competing charitable opportunities (Hoyt, 2004).

Experiences and Satisfaction as a Student. Variables that relate to the experience that alumni had as students also contribute to the likeliness of giving, including relationships with faculty members, engagement while a student, financial aid and scholarship receipt, and satisfaction with the overall experience at the institution. A number of studies have shown that two of the strongest indicators for future alumni gifts are satisfaction with educational experiences or positive emotional attachments/engagement with colleges or universities (Clotfelter, 2003; Gaier, 2001; Hoyt, 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Monks, 2003; Okunade & Berl, 1997; Stutler & Calvario, 1996; Sun, Hoffman, & Grady, 2007; Weerts & Ronca, 2007).

Student-Faculty Relationships. Strong relationships with faculty while a student at an institution have shown to have an impact on students and alumni. Having had a faculty member take an interest in developing a mentor type relationship had a strong association with alumni reporting satisfaction with a college experience, which also had an association with higher levels of alumni contributions (Clotfelter, 2003; Monks, 2003; Sun et al., 2007).

Alumni engagement

Alumni engagement, defined as the choice to remain connected to the institution after graduation, has been documented through numerous studies as another possible predictor of giving (Bruggink & Siddiqui, 1995; Hoyt, 2004; McAlexander & Koenig, 2001; Radcliffe, 2011; Young & Fischer, 1996). Drew-Branch (2011) found a statistically significant correlation between the frequency of donating one's time and the willingness to donate financially to the institution among alumni. Highly involved alumni, as both donors and volunteers, did not appear significantly different from non supporter alums with regards to their experience at the institution, however they were more likely to get involved after graduation and become engaged as alumni, initiating a lifelong relationship with the institution (Weerts & Ronca, 2007). Alumni who are dissatisfied with the emphasis or issues surrounding the institution have been shown to give less (Monks, 2003).

Engagement in Nonprofit Organizations

Organizational identification has also been examined within the context of nonprofit membership, which may share characteristics to the alumni/university relationship. Building on the instrument from Mael and Ashforth (1992), Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn (1995) proposed and tested a model of organizational identification for members of a large art museum. The

findings show that identification is positively related to prestige, donation activity, length of

membership, visiting frequency, and confirmation that the museum's services are in line with

member expectations.

Conceptual Framing

Organizational identification is conceptualized by Mael & Ashforth (1992) as an individual defining themselves by a specific organization. In the context of higher education, "I am a student at . . ." or "I am an alumna of . . ." are examples of embracing the organizational identification of one's alma mater. The findings of Mael and Ashforth (1992) delineate institutional and individual antecedents that might lead to a graduate's organizational identity. They offer the proposition that individuals with a positive organizational identity with their alma mater are more likely to have the "organizational consequence" of supporting their college or university. The major organizational antecedents that Mael and Ashforth (1992) found that have an effect on organizational identity include the perception of institutional distinctiveness, prestige, and competition between different institutions. However, competition within an institution has the opposite effect. For example, if a graduate has a stronger sense of loyalty to their specific major or degree program or to a particular student activity (e.g., athletic team or Greek organization) over the larger institution, organizational identity with the college or university decreases.

STAYING CONNECTED:
A FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING & IMPROVING
NON-PROFIT ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Donations

Attending Events

Reading Publications

Organizational Identification
(Mael & Ashforth, 1992)

Volunteerism

"...a specific form of social identification where the individual defines him or herself in terms of their membership in a particular organization."
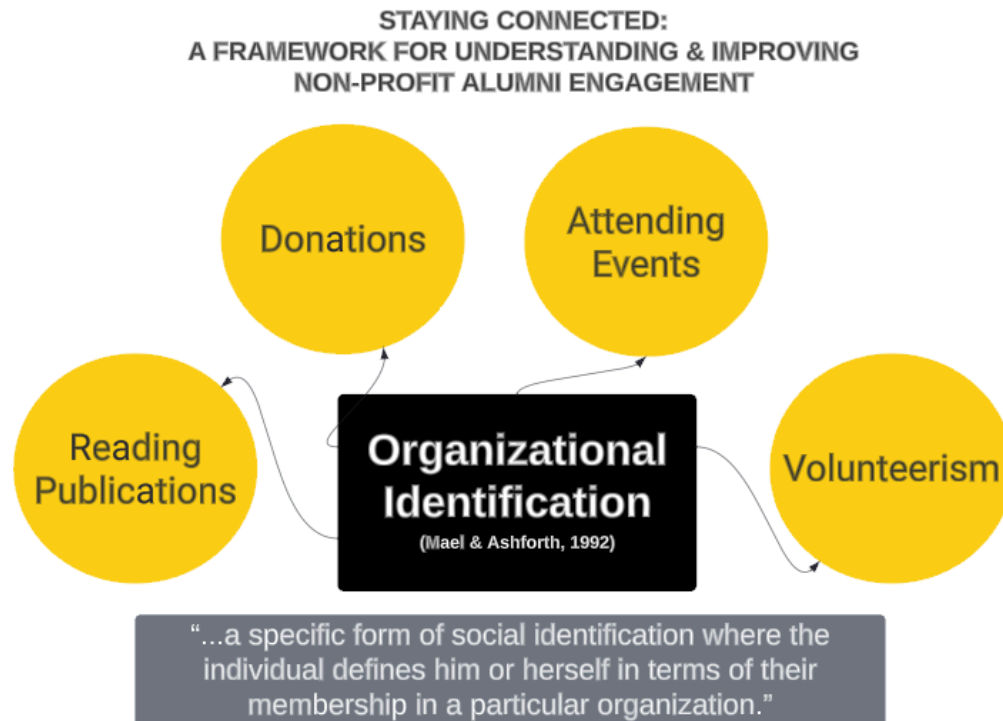
Figure 1: Staying Connected: A Framework for Understanding & Improving Non-Profit Alumni Engagement

In addition, beyond organizational antecedents, Mael and Ashforth (1992) propose individual antecedents that can impact organizational identity. These include time spent at the institution, the existence of a mentor, overall satisfaction, the proximity to having a positive experience, and the perception of one's own time at the college or sentimentality. However, they also found that those with degrees or other connections at multiple institutions often have a weaker organizational identity, suggesting that organizational identity has some aspects of being a zero-sum game.

Sense of Belonging

Mael and Ashforth's (1992) conception of organizational identification's impact on alumni giving accounts for individual antecedents, however, they are all related to the individual's interaction with the institution, such as time spent at the institution with a mentor, and/or volunteering and /or attending campus-sponsored events alongside peers. Mael and Ashforth do not center the individual themselves and their interpersonal relationship with others, they center the engagement level in these activities as a predictor of alumni engagement. This conceptualization is different from Sense of Belonging, which explores alumni engagement through a frame that centers the graduate's interpersonal relationships, rather than the alumnus/na's relationship with the institution.

Project Questions

1. What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?

2. To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?

Project Design

In what follows, I describe the design of the investigation in light of the project questions noted above. First, I describe the methods of data collection that I chose to answer the questions, specifically, document review and a semi-structured interview. The organization does not have software systems to collect data, but they do have documents and a director that has decades of history with the organization. Next, I describe how I coded and analyzed the data through the categories that define engagement in the project's conceptual frame. Finally, I describe the findings related to engagement to provide insight and recommendations for the organization.

Data Collection

To learn what The Project has done to maintain contact with its alumni, I reviewed existing documents, including the website, and data they have collected related to alumni engagement. These items include emails that they have sent to alumni and replies to the emails, as well as any follow up documents from these email communications. In addition, I conducted a semi-structured interview with the director to learn more about who is involved in Project Partners (the initiative to bring alumni together).

Document Collection. What I refer to as document collection includes review of a range of text-based sources, including material documents, but also websites and emails correspondence. The purpose of exploring these text-based data sources was to learn about The Project's activities and current communication strategies, tools and practices.

Websites. I reviewed The Project's archived website and current website. The archived website is one page and provided insight for me into the throughlines, core values and activities that The Project has been engaged in since the founding of the organization. The most important data that it provided to me is the understanding that for most of The Project's history, the

organization had a distinct and separate focus in their work with in-service teachers from their work with pre-service teachers.

Historically, according to the director, the work that the organization has done with pre-service teachers has focused on networking, collaborating and learning with other pre-service teachers in the context of their university and led by their faculty. For the first 18 years, the only instances that this work has brought both pre-service and in-service teachers together is in the context of clinical and field experiences designed for pre-service teachers. In these activities, the in-service, classroom teachers are not working directly with the pre-service teachers - it is the faculty that work directly directly with the pre-service teachers, while the in-service, classroom teachers generously offer their classroom and students as the context for this work.

The current website has several pages and a considerable amount of information that is relevant to this investigation. The pages that were the most useful, and that I spent the most time reviewing are the "About Us" and "Services" pages. In the "About Us" page, I found data related to the work of the Project Partners, their leadership team and the information they collect to communicate with prospective Partners (alumni). They use a google form to collect names, teaching positions and email addresses. I did not find anywhere that they collect social media account links or cell phone numbers, nor did I find any opportunities for prospective Partners to follow or join The Project's social media accounts. I did not find a specific invitation for prospective Partners to engage in the ways that I conceptualize engagement in this project - attend events (outside of the Partners events) or volunteer, or donate or read The Project's publications.

In the "Services" page, I reviewed the comprehensive set of offerings that The Project creates or co-creates for educators, including alumni of The Project to engage with The Project.

These offerings include attending, volunteering or participating in one of several working group meetings on a range of relevant topics, professional development sessions, an annual conference, and serving as a mentor teacher (clinical or field experience) for the high school students aspiring to be teachers. Many of these offerings are online through zoom or a combination of online/ in-person, so educators are able to access the offerings even if they are not able to access them in person. In this page, there are many recordings that have been uploaded of past events and a few links to descriptions of upcoming activities. I did not find links to register for any of the upcoming offerings, and for several of them, there are only past activities. On the "Home" page, the only opportunity to engage with The Project is through the "donate" hyperlink at the bottom of the page. I did not find information about upcoming events or how to attend or volunteer. There is a page to access and read The Project's publications.

Email correspondence. The Project invites educators to engage in most of its offerings through a monthly email about all of the upcoming events of the month, and then follow up emails about individual offerings near the date of the individual offering each month. The email with all of the events and the individual events include a blurb about each offering and a link to register for each offering. I reviewed several of these emails. The director reported to me in the interview that there are no alumni that respond to these emails or register for the offerings as a result of these emails. There are a few alumni that engage in these offerings, but they are contacted by her or a faculty member with whom they had a relationship through an email (or text or call) with a specific and personal ask. I reviewed the registrations that resulted from the emails over the past three months, and they were all non-alumni, current educators or higher education faculty.

There is a separate email group at The Project for the leadership team of the Project Partners. The leadership team members are current in-service teachers, and are all alumni of one or more of The Project's initiatives as aspiring teachers. I reviewed the emails and responses from the past three months to this email group. There is a personal greeting from the director at the opening of each of these emails, with an invitation from her for each of them to participate in the month's overall offerings, but also to the monthly meeting that she hosts for the leadership team. There is a response from each of the members in this email group to every email, and from the content of these emails, every one of them attended the monthly leadership team meetings. In addition, each one attended and volunteered at the Project's annual conference and they planned a fundraiser for The Project, which was an event that they were able to invite other Project alumni to attend.

Other Text-based documents. The director of the organization shared several documents with me that are used for planning The Project's events and activities. The documents are either google documents or word documents. The various faculty that support the work of The Project use google documents to collaborate during the planning process. The director exclusively uses word documents, prepared ahead of time, and then she emails them to the group after the planning meeting. The components of the planning document include logistical and content plans and notes. In every one of these documents, there is a component that involves who to invite to the event or activity, including keynote speakers, workshop facilitators and panel members, as well as participants. I was not able to find in any of the documents a note about inviting or including The Project alumni as participants. The work is largely focused on pre-service and in-service teachers for many of these events and activities. However, the alumni are only noted in these documents if they are going to be asked to serve on a panel.

Semi-Structured Interview. To test the preliminary findings of my data analysis of the first research question, I looked into what data is available related to donations by alumni, alumni attendance at events - and the type of attendance (participation or volunteerism) and electronic publications (specifically, responses by alumni to the publications). In addition, I looked at how alumni have responded to electronic publications from The Project. What is a typical number of responses within 5 days? I conducted a semi-structured interview with the executive director to learn more about who is involved in Project Partners (the initiative to bring alumni together).

The reason I selected the director for the interview is because she is the one that drives all of the work of The Project related to the pre-service teachers and the alumni. She has years of history with the organization, and personally knows the alumni. She is the one that has prioritized this work of alumni engagement. For example, Project Partners is her project - and she personally meets with the Partners once every month. She was able to provide insight into lingering questions that I had from my document review, and to test my preliminary answers to the project questions. From the document review, I learned about Project Partners, but missed how alumni have been included in some of the other work at The Project.

The questions that guided my interview are in appendix A. My intention in designing the interview protocol was to learn what The Project has done to engage alumni and the results of these efforts. For example, have they tried many different strategies, or just one? Do they have the capacity to prioritize this work? I wanted to highlight the actions that are resulting in alumni engagement as a guide for what they are doing well. For example, Project Partners is a project that shows a great deal of promise with alumni engagement.

I conducted the interview in September, 2023 in zoom. I recorded the interview using voice memos on my iphone and took detailed notes throughout the interview.

Data Analysis

In this phase of the investigation, I analyzed data from the documents that I collected and the interviews that I conducted to gain insight into the issue that I am investigating in this organization and to support my findings and recommendations. The evidence from the document review was useful both for initial findings, and to triangulate the findings from the interviews (Bowen, 2009).

> PQ1: What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?

Document review analysis. To review the documents that I collected, I developed thematic codes aligned with the conception of alumni engagement for this project - specifically, I looked for evidence of alumni donations, participation and/or volunteerism at Project events and activities, and reading Project publications. I printed out all of the documents that I collected along with the website pages. I used a physical highlighter to highlight each of the four themes in a different highlighter color. I then physically cut each page into pieces, so that each piece had one highlighter mark. I organized the pieces into four columns, one column for each of the four themes using a thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998). The thematic analysis process provided not just current, but also historical insight into the project questions.

Websites. The Project has two websites (a total of 10 pages) included in this document review analysis. I found a description of The Project Partners, and bios for each member of the leadership team. I found evidence that there is a hyperlink for donations on the homepage of the current website, information about past activities and events, but not all upcoming events. There is no link to register for upcoming events on the current website. I found little evidence of strategies or actions, beyond the Project Partners, to maintain contact with alumni on the

websites. I followed the same thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998) in terms of identifying and highlighting the four themes in the text on the page, cutting each highlighter marked text out into separate pieces with one highlighter mark on each piece, and organizing the pieces in columns according to the four engagement themes in the conceptual frame of this investigation.

      Emails. In the monthly mass emails that are sent to the entire database of people, I found that many of the email addresses for alumni are the university-generated emails they used as students when they were pre-service teachers, not their current emails at the schools where they work. There is no evidence that alumni respond to these emails, as I examined the registration responses from these emails over the past three months. The exception to this evidence is the email group for the leadership team of the Project Partners. It is a small email group of four alumni, and includes the email addresses for each of them at the schools where they currently work as teachers. I found evidence through the email review that the Project Partners planned a fundraiser for The Project, all four of them attended the annual conference in August, and three of them volunteered their time at the annual conference. I found through the emails that they have a monthly meeting with the director in zoom to connect and to plan the next event or activity sponsored by The Project. I followed the same thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998) in terms of identifying and highlighting the four themes in the text on the page, cutting each highlighter marked text out into separate pieces with one highlighter mark on each piece, and organizing the pieces in columns according to the four engagement themes in the conceptual frame of this investigation.

      Other Text-based documents. I reviewed the event and activity planning documents from The Project's work with its stakeholders. I found evidence that alumni engagement in The

Project's activities or events is limited to occasional participation on a panel or co-designer of a professional learning session by fewer than five alumni. I found that these engagements are a result of one of the faculty on the planning team for the panel or professional learning session personally reaching out to the alumni based on an ongoing professional relationship. I followed the same thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998) in terms of identifying and highlighting the four themes in the text on the page, cutting each highlighter marked text out into separate pieces with one highlighter mark on each piece, and organizing the pieces in columns according to the four engagement themes in the conceptual frame of this investigation.

Collapsing and Clarifying Text-based Data. In order to clarify the answer to PQ1, I combined the various identified text-based segments under each theme by literally laying the cut paper pieces out on a large table in my sunroom. Once I had the text segments organized into themes, I was able to identify what The Project has done to engage alumni through the fall of 2023. I then wrote an analytic memo summarizing the preliminary findings to PQ1 based on the text-based data.

PQ2: To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?

Websites. To gain insight into the impact of the actions identified in my analysis of PQ1, I reviewed the remainder of the printed out documents and website pages. Once again, I used a physical highlighter to highlight each of the four themes in a different highlighter color. I then physically cut each page into (additional) pieces, so that each piece had one highlighter mark. I organized the pieces into four columns, one column for each of the four themes using a thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998). The thematic analysis process resulted in deeper insight

into how effective the websites have been in engaging alumni. With the exception of the donation link, the links on the websites are not live. So, it is difficult to engage with The Project through the website.

Emails. Using the same thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998) as I employed for the website pages analysis, I was able to highlight and organize the data into the four engagement themes conceptualized in this investigation. The majority of the email responses from alumni were with the alumni that are Project Partners.

Other Text-based documents. Using the same thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998) as I employed for the website pages and email document analysis, I was able to print out, highlight by theme and organize the data into the four engagement themes conceptualized in this investigation. I found in the planning documents that a handful of alumni engage with The Project by volunteering their time to serve on a panel or co-design/lead a professional learning session through a personal invitation from one of their former faculty as pre-service teachers.

Collapsing and Clarifying Text-based Data. In order to clarify the answer to PQ2, I employed the same method as I did for my analysis of text-based data for PQ2. I combined the various identified text-based segments under each theme by literally laying the cut paper pieces out on a large table in my sunroom. Once I had the text segments organized into themes, I was able to identify what The Project has done to engage alumni through the fall of 2023. I then wrote an analytic memo summarizing the preliminary findings to PQ2 based on the text-based data.

PQ1: What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?

Interview with director. I conducted a semi-structured interview with the director to learn more about who is involved in Project Partners (the initiative to bring alumni together). The reason I selected the director for the interview is because she is the one that drives all of the work of The Project related to the pre-service teachers and the alumni. She has prioritized this work of alumni engagement. For example, Project Partners is her project - and she personally meets with the Partners once every month. She was able to provide insight into lingering questions that I had from my document review analysis, and to test my preliminary answers to the project questions. For example, from the document review, I learned about Project Partners, but was not able to find how alumni have been included in some of the other work at The Project, such as participating and volunteering at events.

To analyze the interview data, I developed thematic codes aligned with the conception of alumni engagement for this project - specifically, I looked for evidence of alumni donations, participation and/or volunteerism at Project events and activities, and reading Project publications. I reviewed my recording of the interview three times and added data each time to the notes that I took during the interview. I printed out the interview notes that included the notes that I took during the interview and the notes added while reviewing the recording of the interview. Similar to the analysis method that I employed for the document review, I used a physical highlighter to highlight evidence for each of the four themes in a different highlighter color. I then physically cut each page into pieces, so that each piece had one highlighter mark. I organized the pieces into four columns, one column for each of the four themes using a thematic analysis process (Merriam, S. B., 1998).

I was able to triangulate the interview data with the document review evidence as the director described the engagement of the Project Partners. For example, she described the

fundraiser that the leadership team of the Partners organized and participated in as volunteers and donors. She also described the attendance of the Partners in the monthly professional learning sessions and the annual conference. Since the launch of the Partners at The Project eight months ago, at least one of them has attended one or more of the sessions each month, according to her registration records. In terms of the annual conference, she described how the four members of the Project Partners leadership team volunteered their time to set up, support the presenters with their technology and clean up at the end.

The director described a recent example of organizing a panel of alumni to speak at an event. Because she was not able to connect with any of them beyond the Partners, she asked the faculty advisors from the colleges and universities on the event planning committee to ask if they had a way to get in touch with recent alumni that were involved in The Project. The advisors texted or stopped by the schools where the alumni currently work, and each one of them were able to connect with one or more alumni. With permission, the advisors shared the alumni's phone numbers with the director. She texted them, and in some cases, visited them at their schools. In addition, she asked the Project Partners to help her secure panelists that are alumni. In each case, she was able to make a connection, and in most cases, a commitment from the alumni to volunteer as a panelist. In every case, the alumni were responsive and curious about ways that they can re-engage with The Project through attending the professional development offerings, volunteering at an event, or making a donation to The Project.

Looking across text-based data and interview data. After I concluded the interview, I was able to clarify my preliminary findings from the text-based data by reviewing the data in each coded theme for both the text-based data and the interview. I found that The Project has taken up several actions to engage with alumni prior to September, 2023. In each coded theme,

the evidence showed The Project working to engage all alumni through monthly mass email, and

targeted alumni through personal invitations for specific events by text messages, zoom meetings

and phone calls from faculty with whom they have a prior, personal relationship in their

undergraduate teacher preparation programs. In the following section, I will discuss to what

extent these actions taken up by The Project resulted in engagement with alumni.

> **PQ2: To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?**

I was able to strengthen my findings about the extent to which The Project's actions have

resulted in alumni engagement through triangulating my interview data with my preliminary

findings from my analysis of the text-based data. The director described a typical planning

meeting for an event where the faculty look for current, practicing educators to serve as panelists

or co-presenters in an upcoming professional development workshop or other convening of

education stakeholders. Often, she described, she will ask the faculty on the planning committee

if they have alumni that would like to volunteer, and she will also reach out to the alumni that

she has contact with to ask them to volunteer. She explained that the alumni are "one of the most

dependable groups" to take them up on their ask to volunteer, and that there have been very few

times that the alumni have declined over the past year. The alumni are responsive to these

actions, and have engaged in giving, volunteering at and attending events through these actions,

she reported. The Project has been able to launch the Project Partners program through personal

invitations and ongoing, individual text, zoom and phone interactions. In addition, she described

that the alumni panelists and co-presenters are engaged through the same actions - individual

asks through text messages, zoom meetings and phone interactions by faculty with whom they

have a personal relationship from their undergraduate teacher preparation programs. The alumni

that are engaged in these activities of giving, volunteering and attending events have all been engaged through these individual asks from faculty. None of them have engaged as a result of responding to the mass monthly email(s) from The Project.

Looking across text-based data and interview data. The interview data strongly clarified my preliminary findings from the text-based data. Specifically, as the director described the success of the Project Partners initiative and the personal one-to-one outreach to alumni from faculty related to engaging as panelists and co-presenters at Project events. These personal asks/invitations by faculty resulted in a high level of alumni engagement with The Project. I found by reviewing the data from both sources that there was little to no alumni engagement outside of these two actions. There is no evidence that the monthly mass email(s) and the website result in alumni engagement.

Findings

Guided by the project questions, I identified three findings related to what the organization has done to cultivate organizational identification, maintain contact with alumni, and to what extent these efforts have resulted in engagement with the organization.

PQ1: What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?

Finding 1: The newly launched Project Partners program has deepened the engagement of particular alumni who volunteer and participate at Project events, and donate financially to the organization.

The most successful initiative that The Project has launched, in terms of deepening alumni engagement, is the Project Partners program. The director described that the Project Partners program is a small group of alumni that meet in a monthly zoom meeting, beginning nearly one year ago.. They were selected by the director and other faculty because they were engaged with The Project as undergraduate students, and had maintained a relationship with the faculty since graduating and beginning their careers as teachers. The director or a faculty member contacted each one of the Partners through text or a phone call prior to the launch of the program to explain the initiative and to ask them to be one of the inaugural Partners. In the monthly zoom meetings, they discuss their challenges and successes as teachers, and they discuss the upcoming Project events, particularly how they might engage in the upcoming events. The Partners offer input, and discuss how they will participate in the events. For example, the director described how the Partners took the lead in planning an event - a frisbee fundraiser

for The Project. In these ways, the director pointed to the importance and success of the newly launched Partners program in deepening alumni engagement.

I found in the text-based data analysis that the Partners rarely miss one of the monthly meetings, and I found that they co-plan and/or co-present one or more of the monthly PL sessions with one of their former faculty members. For example, one Partner co-planned and co-presented an hour-long workshop for teachers on Integrating Technology in the Classroom in the fall of 2023, and another Partner served on a panel in a session led by a faculty member on a new piece of legislation in fall 2023. Through examining the agendas for these events, the text-based data confirmed the importance and success of the newly launched Project Partners program in deepening alumni engagement.

Although the Project Partners represent a small group of alumni, they are engaging in three of the ways that The Project is looking for its alumni to engage - through financial donations, attending events and volunteering at events. For example, as I included above, the director described to me how the Partners took initiative to plan a fundraiser. They planned a frisbee tournament, and invited other Project alumni, as well as their current colleagues in the schools where they teach. Through this event, she reported that they recruited two new Partners, raised money for The Project and introduced teachers to The Project. In this way, the director highlighted the success and importance of the newly launched Project Partners program in deepening engagement through not only volunteering and attending events, but also donating financially to The Project.

Finding 2: When the director or faculty contact individual alumni with whom they have a personal relationship, then the alumni are likely to engage by volunteering their time to

serve on a panel, co-present a professional development session and/or handle setup of events, technology and clean up after events.

The ways that the Project Partners are engaged with The Project is initiated by a personal ask/invitation from a faculty member through text or phone call, not through the monthly mass email(s) that The Project sends to alumni. For example, in examining the text-based data, I found "follow up items" in the notes of some of the planning documents for professional development events which included names of alumni that specific faculty members in the working groups and/or planning committees would call or text to ask them to volunteer, participate or attend in a specific way - as a panelist, co-presenter or volunteer in the set-up or logistics of an event. These faculty members, based on my interview with the director, had the contact information of these alumni because they had a relationship with them as students, and have continued those relationships as their students graduated and entered the field of education as teachers in their own classrooms. In every instance, they were able to connect with the alumni, and in most instances, the alumni agreed to participate in the way that the faculty member asked them. The director described these instances of engagement as effective, as she described that the alumni that engage through the "ask" of a former faculty member are very likely to continue to engage in other events beyond the initial one. For example, two of the Partners that planned and led the fundraiser, also were the alumni that volunteered to co-present the Integrating Technology in the Classroom and serve on the panel during the faculty's session.

Weerts and Ronca (2009) emphasize in their research studies the "characteristics of alumni donors and non-donors, and that among the factors that were found to impact alumni giving were… the extent to which alumni were connected to the campus, and their ongoing intra-campus affiliations." The director suggested that The Project has been successful at

engaging these Partners initially because of the identification they crafted with them as undergraduate students. For example, she described their intentions to do this with the alumni as undergraduate students through naming them Project START leaders, bringing them together for an education summit each fall and spring, yearly book studies, taking them on outreach events together, providing branded t-shirts and other merchandise and dedicating time to spend with them each month. In these ways, the data show the importance and success of the initial individual connection that faculty make with alumni through text or a phone call to deepen engagement with The Project.

PQ2: To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?

Finding 3: Beyond the Project Partner program, alumni do not engage initially through response to email, newsletters, or social media.

The actions that are taken up by The Project to engage alumni, beyond the newly launched Project Partner program, are the monthly newsletter that is published on the website and emailed to all current students and alumni, the monthly email inviting all current students and alumni to specific events coming up that month, and the monthly facebook, twitter and LinkedIn post with a link to the newsletter and information about events coming up. However, these actions are the least effective in engaging alumni. For example, I found through my analysis of the text-based data that the responses to emails within 5 days are over 60% of current students and 100% of the Project Partners. However, there is a 0% response to email rate within 5 days from alumni outside of the Partners. I was not able to find the newsletter on the website, and the director did not suggest that alumni read the newsletter. The links to the social media channels are not live, so I was not able to find The Project on social media through the website,

or through my personal search on the internet. When I reviewed the email list, the majority of

alumni still have the email they had as students through their university, so it is possible they do

not even have access to the outreach. So, as I have demonstrated earlier, The Project Partners

program is an effective strategy for connecting with alumni and deepening their engagement, but

the data show that the other strategies of email, newsletter and social media currently have

barriers that are impacting their ability to engage or even reach alumni.

Limitations

In the design of this study, I was able to interview the director of the organization and review the documents relevant to the alumni engagement. Ideally, I would have been able to interview alumni that are engaged as well as those not engaged. The literature on alumni engagement provides general insight into the reasons why alumni are not engaged with their alma maters, but not specific to this organization. Given that I was not provided the opportunity to interact with alumni, I encouraged the organization to view the findings of this project as a starting point for ongoing improvement efforts in the area of alumni engagement. At the time of writing, I am in contact with the organization about next steps in data collection that can inform the actions recommended below and guide ongoing improvement efforts.

Recommendations

Given the findings outlined above and scholarship on engagement through participating and volunteerism at events, donations and reading alma mater materials, how can The Project respond to promote alumni engagement? In what follows, I draw on the findings in this investigation, as well as the literature related to Organizational Identification (Mael and Ashforth, 1992), to offer insight into what is next to engage alumni in the work of The Project.

Recommendation 1: Build on the success with The Project Partner program by expanding the scope of their work to include connecting with their peer alumni.

When I asked the director "What has The Project done to maintain contact with alumni?" and "To what extent have these efforts resulted in engagement with The Project" I found the Project Partner program to be the most successful strategy in the organization for every category of engagement, and this initiative was launched not even a year ago. As the director described, although there are only 4 of them, they are eager to do more! The Project made an impact on them, and they want to stay connected with The Project through volunteering, attending events and fundraising. Currently, they meet once a month, and support each other as teachers, in addition to engaging with The Project. However, they are not asked to do anything beyond the support they provide to each other and their current engagement with The Project.

Finding alumni role models for students and expanding programs to include larger groups of students and more alumni through any number of programmatic initiatives can achieve many goals simultaneously. As mechanisms for role modeling, networking, and learning altruistic behaviors, alumni participating in the lives of students re-enforces the messages student

philanthropy teaches (Brittingham et al., 1990; Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Drezner, 2010). Programs such as alumni mentoring, career networking, and sponsored internships have the added benefit of showing students that their institutions are committed to their being successful and well-rounded, which will be beneficial to the students' overall satisfaction with their experience (Astin, 1993; Chickering, 1969). Furthermore, it is important for students to understand how their experience with their alma mater can change and develop post-graduation (Trice & Beyer, 1993). By providing opportunities for alumni and students to connect with each other, the students, the alumni, and the institution benefit. Ikenberry (1999) and Young and Fischer (1996) established that alumni who stay involved with their institutions post-graduation are more likely to donate as well.

If The Project uses this group to create a strategy to engage their alumni, and to actually enact parts of the strategy. then they will be able to find and connect with alumni when the director needs panel participants and/or volunteers. This strategy should be simple: 1) What are you going to ask of the alumni? 2) Target number for each of the Partners to connect with and engage in the ask. Start small - with a target they can meet or exceed between their monthly meetings. Build on the success and learn from what does not work each month. In exchange for this outreach, The Project can offer free admission to the annual conference, which offers much-needed professional development hours for the Partners (as a requirement of the State of Illinois for licensed teachers).

Recommendation 2: Update The Project's website to draw educators to visit and interact.

The director described The Project as a small, non-profit organization with limited resources. However, they do have a partnership with a website developer that has a personal

connection to the organization, and offers them a low, set rate for the year to maintain their website. If The Project updates the website to include the registration links for all of the events, and links to resources that are currently sent through email, and the ability to capture contact information from those who interact with the website, it is possible for them to drive much more traffic to the website and capture information easily. Google for Nonprofits also offers products and support to non-profits related to ads. If these ads target alumni, it is possible that they will engage with the website and provide current contact information.

Recommendation 3: Update social media channels and mass text messaging to target alumni.

This recommendation has the possibility to make the second recommendation more impactful. The director described her communication with the Partners through not only email, but text messaging and zoom. The local Chamber of Commerce offers free workshops and a personal social media consultant (with the first consultation free) to non-profit organizations that are working on their marketing and communications with social media. To simplify this work, it may be useful for The Project to create a schedule for updating the social media channel, mass text messaging and website with a specific individual responsible for these updates. As a result, all communication will link to the website and all social media posts will link to the website. Myrah Abrar, a web developer and digital marketing expert, has published several articles and blogs with guidance and tools to post content across multiple platforms on the site https://www.dynamologic.com/blog/. The top five tools that she recommends are Crowdfire, Hootsuite, Social Pilot, Buffer and Planable in her blogpost *5 great tools to simultaneously post content to multiple social media sites*. These tools have different pricing structures based on their

uses, and are reasonably priced (and even offer free trials) for the capacity to post across social media channels.

Bent (2012) states "When communicating with young alumni, it is important to have a balance of technology and personal contact." Key characteristics and traits influence young alumni preferences in receiving communication from their alma mater, including technological savvy, the need to be part of social change, team-oriented messaging, and the desire to feel special (Howe & Strauss, 2000). Although including a multichannel approach to communicate with young alumni is important, substantial personal contact and messages are also necessary.

Meer & Rosen (2009) recommend a personal solicitation as their main finding as it has a strong effect on probability of making a gift. They also found that women respond more strongly to a personal solicitation than men. This is consistent with a robust result in the psychology literature, that women find it more difficult than men to refuse requests that they perceive as being legitimate. Although Meer and Rosen's focus was on alumni giving, its implications extend to engagement beyond giving as Mael and Ashforth (1992) found giving one of four possible responses to solicitation - including volunteering, attending events and reading alumni publications.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to determine to what extent The Project for Equitable Schools is engaged with its alumni, and then to recommend some ways to strengthen and improve the engagement of alumni with the organization. Through reviewing their relevant documents and through interviewing a key stakeholder in the organization, promising recommendations emerged. The Project is off to a great start with alumni engagement through its recent Project Partners program. The bright spots (Heath & Heath, 2010) that I found utilizing the lens of our conceptual framework - Organizational Identification, and our project questions, provided direction for what The Project should do more of and do less of in this work.

The recommendations build a bridge between the positive identification and impact that The Project had with the alumni as students, and their current work as graduates and teachers. The Project has done the hard work to develop a shared identity of social justice teachers and advocates through their investment with their alumni as students, so they only need a better way to communicate with them and explicit opportunities for them to engage in specific activities. With these tweaks and changes in their overall outreach strategy, I am confident that they will be able to fully engage the majority of the alumni that they are targeting in the near future.

References

Bent, L. G. (2012). Young alumni giving: An exploration of institutional strategies.

    [Dissertation. Johnson and Whales University.]. Available from ProQuest Dissertations

    & Theses Global.

Bhattacharya, C. B., Rao, H., & Glynn, M. A. (1995). Understanding the Bond of Identification:

    An Investigation of its Correlates among Art Museum Members. *Journal of Marketing,*

    59(4), 46-57.

Cabrales, J. E. (2013). An approach to engaging Latina/o alumni in giving initiatives: Madrinas y

    padrinos. In N. D. Drezner (Ed.), *Expanding the donor base in higher education:*

    Engaging non-traditional donors (pp. 26–39). Routledge.

Clotfelter, C. T. (2003). Alumni giving to elite private colleges and universities. *Economics of*

    Education Review, 22(2), 109–120.

Drezner, N. D. (2013). *Expanding the donor base in higher education: Engaging non-traditional*

donors. Routledge.

Drezner, N. D., & Huehls, F. (2014). *Fundraising and institutional advancement: Theory,*

practice, and new paradigms. Routledge.

Drezner, N. D., & Garvey, J. C. (2016). LGBQ alumni philanthropy: Exploring (un)conscious

    motivations for giving related to identity and experiences. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector*

    Quarterly, 45(IS), 52–71.

Drezner, N. & Pizmony-Levy, O. (2021). I belong, therefore, I give?: The impact of sense of

    belonging on graduate student alumni engagement. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector*

    Quarterly 2021, Vol. 50(4) 755.

Gaier, S. (2005). Alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate academic experience and the

impact on alumni giving and participation. *International Journal of Educational Advancement,* 5(4), 279–288.

Garvey, J. C., & Drezner, N. D. (2019). Towards a culturally inclusive understanding of alumni philanthropy: The influence of student involvements and experiences on LGBTQ alumnx giving. *The Review of Higher Education*, 42(5), 363–392.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools,* 30, 70–90.

Hausmann, L. R., Schofield, J. W., & Woods, R. L. (2007). Sense of belonging as a predictor of intentions to persist among African American and White first-year college students. *Research in Higher Education,* 48(7), 803–839.

Howe, N. & Strauss, W. (2007). Millennials go to college: Strategies for a new generation on campus (2nd ed.). *American Association of Collegiate Registrars.*

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education,* 70, 324–345.

Johnson, D. R., Soldner, M., Leonard, J. B., Alvarez, P., Inkelas, K. K., Rowan-Kenyon, H. T., & Longerbeam, S. D. (2007). Examining sense of belonging among first-year undergraduates from different racial/ethnic groups. *Journal of College Student Development,* 48(5), 525–542.

Mael, F., & Ashforth, B. E. (1992). Alumni and their alma mater: A partial test of the reformulated model of organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior,* 13(2), 103–123.

Marr, K. A., Mullin, C. H., & Siegfried, J. J. (2005). Undergraduate financial aid and subsequent

   alumni giving behavior. *The Quarterly Review of Economics and Finance,* 45(1),

   123–143.

Maslow, A. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being.* Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Meer, J., & Rosen, H. S. (2009). The ABCs of Charitable Solicitation. *National Bureau of*

   Economic Research.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education.*

   Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Monks, J. (2003). Patterns of giving to one's alma mater among young graduates from selective

   institutions. *Economics of Education Review,* 22(2), 121–130.

Nuñez, A. M. (2009). A critical paradox? Predictors of Latino students' sense of belonging in

   college. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education,* 2(1), 46.

Ostrove, J. M., & Long, S. M. (2007). Social class and belonging: Implications for college

   adjustment. *The Review of Higher Education*, 30(4), 363–389.

Skari, L. A. (2014). Community College Alumni: Predicting Who Gives. *Community College*

   Review, 42(1), 23–40.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2008a). Fittin' in: Do diverse interactions with peers affect sense of belonging

   for black men at predominantly white institutions? *Journal of Student Affairs Research*

   and Practice, 45(4), 501–527.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2008b). "Sentido de pertenencia": A hierarchical analysis predicting sense

   of belonging among Latino college students. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education,* 7(4),

   301–320.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2019). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students.* Routledge.

Velásquez, P. (1999). The relationship between cultural development, sense of belonging, and persistence among Chicanos in higher education: An exploratory study. Paper presented to the *Association for the Study of Higher Education,* San Antonio, TX, United States.

Walton, G. M., & Cohen, G. L. (2007). A question of belonging: Race, social fit, and achievement. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 92(1), 82–96.

Watson, J. T. (2018). *Organizational Identification and Giving Behaviors among Distance Learning Alumni at a Major Southeastern Public University*. ProQuest Dissertations Publishing.

Weerts, David J. and Justin M. Ronca (2009) Using classification trees to predict alumni giving for higher education. Education. *Economics.* 17(1): 95 – 122.

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Is it important to The Project to maintain contact with alumni? Why?

What is an example of your most successful alumni activity?

- ○ Is that ongoing? Why? Why not?

- ○ What was it about that which made it so successful?

- What could The Project do to promote greater alumni engagement?

- ○ Have you ever suggested this? Tried it?

What happens if The Project fails to maintain contact with alumni?

Has this been something that personnel discuss?

Tell me about any other interactions The Project has had with existing alumni, in terms of

donations, attending events, volunteerism, and/or reading publications/media?

How do you stay in touch with them?

You recently started Project Partners specifically as a space for alumni to network and learn

together. How is the program impacting your relationship with alumni?

Of the alumni that have stayed connected to The Project, how have they engaged with The

Project specifically?

- ○ Donations? What percentage or number of alumni have donated? How often?

- ○ What events have alumni been invited to, and what percentage or number have attended?

- ○ How do the alumni show up to these events - as participants or volunteers, or both? Examples?

Appendix B: Data Collection Process

Project Questions:	Data From:	Collection Method:
What actions have The Project for Equitable Schools taken up prior to September of 2023 in order to maintain contact with alumni?	Interview with Director	Interview notes and recording
To what extent (if at all) have the actions identified in PQ 1 resulted in engagement with The Project for Equitable Schools?	Current tools (websites, emails, agendas, planning documents, registration forms)	Director shared links to these documents and emailed me documents that are not online

These documents and notes were color-coded by themes based on evidence of engagement in four categories - donations, attendance at events, volunteering and reading Project publications.