

Alumni Relations Strategic Plan 2007 - 2011



Introduction

For over 130 years, alumni have played a significant role in defining and shaping the University of Adelaide. As one of the oldest Universities in Australia, we have a long and proud tradition of alumni and community engagement. The Adelaide University Graduates Union, followed by the Alumni Association, were instrumental in providing opportunities for alumni to reconnect with their alma mater, to recognise the contributions of graduates to industry and the wider community, and to encourage alumni to support the University in various ways. The Alumni Chapters of the Alumni Association have played a pivotal role in providing these opportunities through their annual programs, both locally and internationally.

The University of Adelaide's approach to its alumni program is inclusive, with alumni defined as current and former students, current and former staff, and graduates. The University of Adelaide also encourages individuals and organisations, which are not included in the alumni definition, to engage with and support both alumni and University programs as 'Friends of the University of Adelaide'.

In 2006, the University acknowledged the growing importance of our alumni and community engagement programs in the overall achievement of the University's Primary Goals. The University recognised the need for a more focused and coordinated approach to alumni relations to maximise the opportunities for our alumni, the wider community and the University. In response, the Vice-Chancellor commissioned an external consultant to review the University's existing alumni arrangements and to make recommendations on the future role of alumni relations at the University of Adelaide. As an outcome of this review, the University Council dissolved the Alumni Association on 4 December 2006 to enable the establishment of a University-wide Alumni Relations Program, to be driven and guided by an Alumni Relations Strategic Plan.

At the commencement of 2007, the Development and Alumni Office was placed within the Division of the Vice-Chancellor and President, further reinforcing the University's commitment to the role of alumni relations at the University of Adelaide.



Statement of Strategic Direction

The 2006 Review highlighted the importance of positioning alumni relations as a core function of the University and recommended an integrated alumni relations model as the most effective approach to encourage and engage the Faculties and Schools in the development of a University-wide Alumni Relations Program. This Plan provides the structure and the support mechanisms to establish alumni programs within the Faculties and Schools that meets the needs of both alumni and the respective area. It also clarifies the leadership role of the Vice-Chancellor and the Development and Alumni Office in facilitating and supporting a coordinated alumni relations program across the whole of the University.

The success of this Plan relies heavily on building a culture and community that embraces the overarching principle of the mutual value proposition. That is, the implementation of this Plan must consider the benefits of engagement for both alumni and the University. Consultation with alumni representatives and University leaders identified the following major areas of benefit.

For alumni these include:

- Opportunities to reconnect with fellow graduates and University staff and to support their alma mater in a meaningful way
- Opportunities for career development through lifelong learning (postgraduate study, short courses offered by Professional and Continuing Education etc), access to business networks, mentoring programs and employment opportunities
- Recognition, promotion and utilisation of their professional skills, experience, status and knowledge
- Access to a global alumni community where membership provides unique benefits and services.

For the University, the benefits of engaging with alumni include:

- Support for the University's recruitment, marketing and philanthropic initiatives
- Increasing the profile of the University both locally and globally as a leader in teaching and research
- Enriching and supporting the student experience
- Seeking feedback and advice to develop more effective and mutually beneficial relationships with industry, government and the wider community and to ensure relevance of curriculum and research.

The University recognises the significant effort and commitment of Alumni Networks within Australia and overseas. This Plan clarifies the University's support to these networks through the Development and Alumni Office and, with the integrated model to be implemented, this support will be expanded to include Faculties, Schools and other key areas of the University. Although



networks are encouraged to be financially self sufficient in their overall operations, there are specific projects which should be supported financially by the University that will increase the profile of the University, encourage greater alumni engagement and support student involvement. A fund and guidelines will be established to support these projects.

To further support and recognise the contribution of alumni, forums will be held every two years, alternating with the existing biennial Australian Universities International Alumni Conventions.

The purpose of these Alumni Forums is to:

- Provide information on alumni trends and innovative programming
- Showcase best practice in alumni programming
- Provide opportunities for alumni to give feedback to the University of Adelaide on its Alumni Relations Strategic Plan
- Provide opportunities for interaction between graduates, University staff and students
- Highlight current achievements and future developments at the University of Adelaide
- Increase the profile of the University through a prominent alumni speaker series.

It is essential that this Plan addresses the engagement of our young alumni, from prospective students to new graduates. Students have increasing expectations that their University will not only provide high quality courses, but also a package of services that will assist them to achieve success in their careers and professional lives. By investing in our students we are preparing our future alumni network leaders, board members, donors, and potential staff members.

In developing the student program the following criteria should be considered:

1. The program should teach students what being an alumnus/a is all about
2. The program should provide a tangible connection between students and graduates
3. The program should demonstrate that the alumni community cares for current students
4. The program should promote the overarching principle of the mutual value proposition.

The major factors in this Plan that will contribute most significantly to the advancement of alumni relations at the University of Adelaide are:

- Substantive support to the Faculties and Schools in developing their own alumni program
- Broadening the alumni program through the Online Community and Membership Program
- Establishment of Alumni Forums to build stronger and more effective Alumni Networks
- Creation of a funding program to support specific Alumni Network and Volunteer initiatives
- Greater focus on the student experience and their role in the University's alumni program.



GOAL OF THE ALUMNI RELATIONS STRATEGIC PLAN:

To support the achievement of the University's Primary Goals by providing leadership and support to a University-wide Alumni Relations Program that demonstrates the mutual value of engagement for Alumni, the University of Adelaide and the wider community.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. We will recognise alumni as an integral part of our community and brand
2. We will ensure Alumni programs benefit both alumni and the University
3. We will recognise and celebrate the achievements of our alumni
4. We will respect the experience and knowledge of our alumni and actively seek their advice to advance the University's strategic direction
5. We will recognise alumni for their contribution to the University and support them in a meaningful way
6. We will provide development opportunities for established and emerging alumni leaders on contemporary approaches to engagement and alumni relations
7. Alumni who provide a program of engagement on behalf of the University must respect and protect the University's policies, its branding and standing within the wider community
8. We will recognise and support the pivotal role of staff in championing the alumni program



Implementation Strategies

1. **The University confirms its commitment to alumni relations as a core function of the University and clearly identifies leadership responsibilities for Alumni Relations including the Role and Responsibilities of the Development and Alumni Office.**
 - 1.1 Approval of the Alumni Relations Strategic Plan and Budget
 - 1.2 Develop and implement a communications strategy to inform key stakeholders of the Plan
 - 1.3 Review the Alumni Relations Strategic Plan on an annual basis
 - 1.4 Establish an Alumni Advisory Committee to provide strategic advice to the Vice-Chancellor
 - 1.5 Develop a resource kit for both internal and external stakeholders that clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of the Development and Alumni Office as the key facilitator for all alumni programs at the University of Adelaide
 - 1.6 Develop and implement a communications strategy to inform key stakeholders about the resource kit

2. **Develop tailored alumni programs that meet the needs and expectations of each Faculty and School: clarify the role and responsibilities of Faculties, Schools, Research Centres and other groups, senior executives throughout the University, and other staff with responsibility for engagement, especially the Office of Community Engagement; develop an appropriate liaison model to facilitate ongoing collaboration and communication between the Development and Alumni Office and Faculties, Schools and areas.**
 - 2.1 Identify the needs and expectations of each Faculty, School and relevant area
 - 2.2 Identify staff within each Faculty, School and relevant area to act as a contact point for Alumni Relations



- 2.3 Establish a University-wide Alumni Liaison Committee and produce a quarterly *Alumni Matters* Newsletter
- 2.4 Establish the position of a Development and Alumni Officer within each of the Faculties by 2010. Implement a Pilot Project within the Faculty of Sciences, commencing in January 2008.
- 2.5 Develop a tailored alumni program for each Faculty and School
- 2.6 Develop an International Alumni Relations Plan in collaboration with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and International Office
- 2.7 Develop a centrally-supportable University-wide system to more effectively capture and access graduate data

3. Build an information management system that captures, updates and utilises alumni data to further develop the University-wide Alumni Relations Program. Establish procedures and guidelines to effectively communicate and share alumni information.

- 3.1 Identify a provider to undertake market research in collaboration with the Development and Alumni Office
- 3.2 Conduct a survey of all graduates to gather information on career pathways and preferences for engagement
- 3.3 Conduct surveys and focus groups on selected alumni to gather information for specific alumni programs related to age and discipline
- 3.4 Develop a communications strategy to share information/data with key stakeholders
- 3.5 Establish an Online Community to enhance the currency, accuracy, access and relevance of information and to support engagement initiatives



4. Provide appropriate support to Alumni Networks and Volunteers to further programs in support of the Alumni Relations Strategic Plan. Establish a fund and guidelines for the provision of grants to support selected Alumni Network and Volunteer initiatives.

- 4.1 Develop an Alumni Leaders Manual to provide guidelines on the roles and responsibilities of the University and the Alumni Networks
- 4.2 Establish an annual fund to support specific alumni network and volunteer initiatives
- 4.3 Develop criteria for submissions and guidelines for selection
- 4.4 Establish procedures for the reporting and accountability of the use of funds

5. Establish biennial Alumni Forums and annual local and regional meetings for Alumni Leaders.

- 5.1 Establish an organising Committee for the inaugural Alumni Forum
- 5.2 Inaugural Alumni Forum to be held in 2009
- 5.3 Identify funding sources for both the biennial Alumni Forum and annual Meetings of Alumni Leaders
- 5.4 Prepare a schedule of Local and Regional Meetings for Alumni Leaders
- 5.5 Incorporate a virtual/online component into the Alumni Forum

6. Build a culture where alumni view the University as a lifelong resource for both social and professional development. Establish an Alumni Membership Program including a Benefits Package.

- 6.1 Define membership of the University of Adelaide Alumni (including the options for recognition of Honorary Alumni and other award and title holders) and develop a Membership Program that enhances the University's branding



- 6.2 Build a core benefits and services package to launch the Membership Program
- 6.3 Develop a communications and marketing strategy to inform key stakeholders of the Alumni Membership Program and Benefits Package
- 6.4 Develop a discipline specific benefits program in collaboration with the Faculties, Schools and Professional and Continuing Education
- 6.5 Organise focus groups to provide feedback on existing benefits and services and suggestions on expansion of the Membership Program that extends to interstate and international alumni

7. Build a culture of student volunteering and engagement with the University that extends beyond the formal course curriculum and that enriches the student experience by encouraging students to think more broadly about the University community.

- 7.1 Identify and engage 'key connectors' within the student community
- 7.2 Develop a program for students, in consultation with 'key connectors', that encourages volunteering and philanthropic values
- 7.3 Implement a student – industry program in liaison with the organisers of existing placement programs
- 7.4 Encourage and actively support alumni networks to engage students in their annual program and succession planning
- 7.5 Encourage alumni to actively support student programs

