

Vermont Tech Strategic Planning – Alumni Engagement Plan 2018-2023

Executive Summary

Vermont Tech’s alumni engagement and giving participation rates are far lower than most comparable and regional colleges, and this has a negative effect on public image, financial contributions, industry rankings, and ultimately enrollment and continued success. To turn this around in the next five years, we will boost alumni engagement through greater emphasis on events that bring alumni back to the college, such as Homecoming, on-campus celebrations, and regional gatherings. We will increase outreach to alumni through regular publications and social media opportunities, and we will increase peer-to-peer opportunities such as creating Class Agents and Alumni Ambassadors. Building and strengthening affinity between alumni and their alma mater is the “friend-raising” that will lead to improved engagement, fundraising, and public image.

Tactics

- Marketing outreach
 - Regularly publish and mail a paper alumni magazine twice a year (one Summer issue, one Winter issue); by 2023, determine whether another one or two issues a year would be beneficial.
 - Publish a monthly e-newsletter (shorter, with links to News on the website) every month, with July and December issues just electronic versions of the Summer and Winter mailings.
 - Print and mail a once-a-year VAST newsletter/magazine, only to VAST graduates, whether they stayed at VTC or not.
 - Re-establish a Vermont Tech Yearbook, available to graduates, and researchable by alumni in the future.
 - Create an “Alumni Benefits Summary” including application fee waivers, SHAPE membership deals, reduced tuition, et cetera, that can be sent to alumni, posted online, and presented to all new graduates to keep them engaged with and interested in the college.
- Peer-to-peer engagement
 - Create Alumni Ambassadors – These are alumni with a strong affinity to VTC who have the time and inclination to join us in public outreach, community awareness, enrollment opportunities, and more; this will be an elite, and hopefully coveted, position among alumni, ultimately having ambassadors available in every region served by Vermont Tech, including surrounding states.
 - Create Class Agents – Ideally, these people would be identified at graduation as someone to stay in contact with their classmates; for existing alumni, find those strong voices in each class with the interest in reaching out or even finding other alumni; Class Agents would work with the Alumni Association to boost attendance at Homecoming and events, and would be the point of contact between the class and the college.

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- Boost the Alumni Association – Build the association to be more robust, with more alumni from all age ranges and geographic locations; create more opportunities for the association to reach out to and engage alumni.
- Pop-up events – Create alumni networking events where there may be a specific interest, such as nursing graduates in Southern Vermont, construction and engineering alumni working on projects in the Burlington area, all alumni in the Boston area, et cetera; also possible to have an alumni-run business host an event.
- Homecoming
 - Create a strong, on-going Homecoming Committee, featuring active alumni as well as staff and faculty.
 - Recognize and award Alumnus/Alumna of the Year.
 - Create an Honorary Alumni Award, recognizing staff, faculty, or community members who have worked so long and closely with students as to be invaluable to the alumni community.
- Fundraising
 - Send two regular appeals per year - Summer and Year-End – to alumni, and send via both USPS and email.
 - Create at least one special appeal per year, outside of the Summer and Year-End, targeting specific alumni groups, such as lapsed donors or donors who have never given, or for a specific need (nursing, manufacturing, et cetera)
 - Create a regular major donor visit schedule, including regions outside Vermont where alumni are established, such as Boston and Connecticut.
- Staffing

To accomplish all of the above, we will need to increase the staffing in the Alumni Affairs office. The below position is full time and dedicated entirely to Alumni Relations:

- An Alumni Relations Director would handle all of the logistics within the office: setting up and executing events (with a particular focus on Homecoming), editing the Alumni Magazine, creating content for the magazine and newsletters, keeping track of alumni happenings and class notes, overseeing the yearbook, and coordinating with Development on fundraising events and appeals. The Director would oversee work study students and volunteers to the Alumni Affairs office.

Goals by 2023

- Increase attendance at Homecoming annually to 300 alumni.
- Increase alumni giving participation to 25% annually.
- Raise \$75,000 in alumni gifts each year.
- Raise Net Promoter Score among alumni above 60%.

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- Annually publish and mail 2 Alumni Magazines.
- Annually post 10 unique e-newsletters and 2 e-versions of the Alumni Magazine.
- Host 1 annual VAST reunion, with attendance of 50 VAST alumni.
- Send an annual VAST newsletter.
- Host 2 regular events each year, aside from HC & golf: Boat Cruise, 1 other.
- Host two golf tournaments a year: one at Randolph HC, one in Chittenden County.
- Annually host 4 pop-up events by campus, major, and/or School.
- Increase participation in the Alumni Association to at least 8 regular members.
- Re-establish an annual yearbook.
- Development officers personally visit 25 potential major donors annually.
- Raise 5 major donor gifts of at least \$5,000 each year; another 10 at \$1,000.
- Support a full-time Director of Alumni Relations.