

Introduction

The University of Texas at Tyler is at a vital point of growth and expansion that signals a need for growth in multiple departments of the University. One department that could greatly benefit from expanding alongside the University is the Alumni Association. At every University there is a need to reach out to alumni in order to establish the bond between past students and the current University. If a school has a healthy alumni presence then not only do students have role models to lead them towards their own graduation but also the University gains a class of people with the propensity to give back. With an endowed UT Tyler Alumni Association fund we would be able to provide long term support that would go toward funding alumni outreach. As the University grows in number of students the number of alumni will rise in direct relation, making this time of growth in our University a fantastic opportunity to expand upon the current methods of alumni communication.

Statement of Problem

As UT Tyler grows in size it also grows in its need for a stronger alumni network. The Alumni Association has a limited discretionary fund and therefore has a difficult time expanding itself and creating new experiences that will draw in new association members as well as keep them engaged and willing to give. In order to keep alumni interested in giving within the new system of free Alumni Association memberships a program is needed that will keep alumni up to date and feeling as though they are contributing to the growth of the University. Because of their need to feel as though their gift, whether small or large, is being optimally utilized I believe that an endowed fund will send a message that every gift is useful and will go towards the long term support of our goal to consistently communicate with alumni while also providing support to current students. The ultimate goal of this program is to fund a method of outreach that would feel authentic and personal to alumni. If enough money is raised by this call for support then I believe that a call center with the purpose of reaching out to UT Tyler alumni could become possible. Supporting student workers through the endowment would also be useful since alumni who donate to the endowment will be able to directly see how their gift is benefitting current University students. Also, if we were able to employ student workers in an alumni call center then we would have a more direct and reliable channel to contact alumni through. I believe that alumni would appreciate being contacted by current students rather than faculty since they will have a more personal connection with students of the University.

An Outreach Proposal to Strengthen UT Tyler Alumni Relations

The money to begin an endowment that would support the Alumni Association could be collected through small donations from multiple UT Tyler alumni over the course of two or more years.

Objective

- a. Start an endowed fund that will support the needs of the Alumni Association
- b. Assess willingness of alumni to support the Alumni Association
- c. Start a student call center that will focus on contacting alumni

It is my hope that through this project we can not only assess whether or not UT Tyler alumni are interested in supporting the University but also to establish an endowment that could lead to paying student workers to call alumni for the purpose of thanking them for donations, updating them on current events, and making asks for specific projects. If the funds needed for a call center are not raised then a small endowment with the purpose of supporting the Alumni Association could still be beneficial since the association will not have the income of membership fees. A main theme of this project's objective is to engage UT Tyler alumni in a donor relationship.

Plan of Action

This plan will begin with a two year email campaign that will entice any alumni who have signed up for the new free Alumni Association membership to contribute to a long-term fund that will benefit the University and its current students. The two years may be extended if sufficient support is not realized within the time frame provided.

Email

The emails will be sent out 4 times in a two year span. One in the spring and one in the fall each year. The purpose of this email will be to ask the alumni for a small donation that will go towards endowment so that the Alumni Association will be able to establish a call center with the money earned from the endowment. There will be two different formats of the emails sent to alumni and they will be categorized as follows: Emails sent to those who have not yet donated to this fund and emails being sent to those who have donated to the fund. Each email will have similar messages with the main difference being that emails sent to those who do make donations in response to the first, second, or third emails will be sent new emails

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thanking them for their support and updating them on how far along we are in our goal of establishing a significant endowment. Other than that, the emails will have the same content. Each email will outline the goal of this project which is to establish a long-term fund that will support current UT Tyler students first and provide funds to the Alumni Association for programs second. As stated before, the goal is to only send out two years' worth of these emails to reach the needed amount of funds for starting a call center. This can go on for a longer amount of time if the fund goal is not met by the two year mark.

Call Center

Once the endowment has reached an amount significant enough to fund a call center, the second phase of this proposal will begin. A call center will be established with the proceeds gained from the endowment. The call center will have three specific purposes which are as follows: Thanking alumni for contributions, reminding alumni to register each year, and informing alumni of current projects that require their support. The call center would employ two or more current UT Tyler undergrads.

If this program makes it to the final step of successfully starting a student call center then this fact can be capitalized upon by informing current Alumni Association members as well as those being approached for membership that their support is directly resulting in the employment of current UT Tyler students. This should be beneficial in making alumni feel as though their donations will not only provide benefits to themselves but also to current students.

Calls will be scheduled based around the Fall and Spring semesters since this is the easiest time to employ and retain undergraduate assistants due to many students leaving Tyler during the summer and winter breaks. Calls reminding alumni to re-register as their registration period comes to an end will be made through out the Fall and Spring semesters since these calls are a good conversation starter during which the students can explain why they call alumni and how alumni can stay connected through the call center. Calls made to garner support for specific causes will be limited to a certain time period in order to avoid annoying alumni by making too many asks within a certain period of time. A more specific overview of this schedule can be found on the attached spread sheet.

Conclusion

It is my hope that through these two steps the Alumni Association will be able to garner the support it needs to grow with UT Tyler and effectively stay in contact with alumni. If each step were to be successfully completed the Alumni Association would have a long-term connection with its members through the call center. However, even if this project were to end after the first step of emailing, the Alumni Association would at least be greater in its knowledge of how alumni do not prefer to be contacted. Through failure this program could grow and start again later with more input on how to communicate with UT Tyler graduates and therefore be farther along the path of successful communication than if the program had not been attempted. With that said, I am hopeful that alumni will respond positively to this program and we can carry out each step to completion.

Furthermore, this project may be judged as outdated as some Universities have recently shirked their call centers and dubbed them an ineffective way to gain support and stay connected. Yet due to the traditional nature of Tyler and the surrounding East Texas area it is my belief that a student call center would be well received by alumni in the area. Perhaps a more modern University with a strong social media presence would not see the benefit of a call center when comparing response from their twitter outreach. However, what works for one may not work for all and due to UT Tyler's history and traditional surroundings a call center could prove to be exactly to program that UT Tyler needs to keep alumni involved. In conclusion, it is my hope that this project is successful and continues into perpetuity. UT Tyler will always have alumni and it seems to me that an alumni outreach call center staffed solely by UT Tyler students could develop into a UT Tyler tradition that is effective, meaningful, and fosters patriot pride.