

**Wayland Baptist University
Association of Former Students & Office of Alumni Relations
Strategic Plan 2017-22**

Mission Statement: The Association of Former Students provides meaningful connections with current and former Wayland students to keep them engaged and build an attachment that ultimately provides benefit to WBU to perpetuate programs and experiences.

Rationale: Wayland's alumni are the foundation of its future. As they share about their positive experiences, serve the university through volunteer service or recruitment of current students and give financially to support ongoing initiatives, they are strengthening the reputation of the university and perpetuating its success for future generations. In so doing, they are adding value to their own Wayland degrees and to those who will come behind them.

To this end, the university (through the Alumni Office) must have a comprehensive plan to build those relationships with students from the time they enter as a freshman to the day they graduate and continue to connect with them in ways that are meaningful to their life stages as they mature in their careers, family life and eventual retirement.

We believe a successful alumni relations office will result in a mutually beneficial relationship between the university and its former students, and such a relationship will help both parties grow and improve.

Key Terms to Define:

- **Engagement:** Engagement is defined in this context as an alumnus making regular connections with the university at some level that implies a continued relationship. This typically manifests itself through service to the university, financial giving, regular communication to the university and event involvement. This typically also follows some outreach by the university, thus completing the communication cycle. Engagement is measurable.
- **Attachment:** Attachment is defined in this context as a feeling of warmth, affection and/or appreciation toward the university that compels an alumnus to remain connected and engage at the highest level they are able.

Impact of the Plan: The Association of Former Students' strategic plan provides a map for the future of the organization, setting forth its goals, guiding and building its programs, and defining metrics to assess its performance over the next five years. Through the leadership of the executive board of the Association, university staff and alumni volunteers, the plan shapes the Office of Alumni Relations operations and budgets to achieve its defined objectives.

Strategic Priorities:

With a vision of what our Association is and can be, we propose the following strategic priorities, followed by the action items we plan to achieve those goals:

1. **Strengthen alumni engagement** by providing meaningful benefits and connection points for Wayland's diverse alumni population through a clearer understanding of its makeup and interests.
 - 1.1 Develop a platform for career networking, job opportunities via the Wayland website to aid alumni in successful workforce transitions.
 - 1.2 Develop alumni chapters in population areas of alumni concentration and where Wayland campuses operate to provide connection and networking where alumni live and work.
 - 1.3 Program annual homecoming weekend in Plainview to provide meaningful experiences to returning alums, stimulate engagement and grow attendance.
 - 1.4 Provide events on Wayland's extension campuses to reconnect alums and stimulate engagement.
 - 1.5 Develop a legacy program to engage the children of alumni from birth through the college admissions funnel, with the ultimate goal of their enrollment at WBU. This could include scholarship possibilities with growth of endowment.
 - 1.6 Develop opportunities for alumni to connect in additional meaningful ways such as an alumni travel program, organized mission trips, etc.
 - 1.7 Involve the President in as many event venues as possible, particularly regional alumni gatherings, to grow his exposure and promote the university vision.
2. **Cultivate current students as future, engaged alumni** -- from acceptance through graduation -- in order to facilitate their lifelong relationship with the Association and the university.
 - 2.1 Plan strategic opportunities built around current student events or newly hosted events to build awareness of the Association of Former Students and its benefits.
 - 2.2 Extend the career networking platform to current students for alumni mentoring and career guidance, including internship possibilities.
 - 2.3 Develop programming specifically for graduating seniors to provide valuable skills for their transition into the workforce and build a solid attachment before they leave campus. Utilize alumni in relevant career fields for this programming for another engagement avenue.
 - 2.4 Reenergize the Proud Heirs program to build attachment for current students and their legacy family members, developing programming and connection opportunities for this unique group.
 - 2.5 Cultivate strategies to build on natural affinity groups within the student body to grow engagement and attachment.
 - 2.6 Reprogram the Student Alumni Council to include aspects of donor appreciation, student-led philanthropic endeavors and class gift initiatives.

- 2.7 Consider a school ring program with a built-in fee to students that provides each new graduate with a ring. Grow the ring ceremony into a more meaningful and inclusive tradition, perhaps integrating with Torch and Mantle each semester.
- 2.7 Develop a parent relations program involving parents of current students to grow their own attachment to Wayland and identify parents with interest and propensity to support the university now or in the future.
3. **Build a vibrant volunteer program** to identify, train, encourage, and recognize good leaders and provide opportunities to serve the university and the various communities in which Wayland operates.
 - 3.1 Develop a list of ongoing volunteer opportunities for alumni to serve the university on the Plainview campus as well as from a distance.
 - 3.2 In cooperation with the Office of Admissions, plan a campaign to encourage recruiting and retention assistance from alumni.
 - 3.3 Reenergize the Degree of Difference Day service efforts on the Plainview campus, with extended participation on extension campuses and eventually expanding to communities of alumni chapters and other cities where alumni live.
4. **Create a comprehensive communication plan to share university news, send clear and consistent messages and encourage loyalty and continued engagement with the university.** Build a plan that prioritizes new initiatives according to audiences, message, channels, and available resources with respect to how and what alumni want to receive.
 - 4.1 Redesign alumni magazine to reflect a more modern look and feel.
 - 4.2 Develop plan to distribute alumni magazine to as much of the alumni population as possible in order to regularly share university news and stories with alums.
 - 4.3 Plan a comprehensive social media strategy to engage with more alumni in online channels such as Facebook, LinkedIn and other mediums.
 - 4.4 Build an electronic newsletter that can be sent to alumni with news and event updates in between magazine editions.
 - 4.5 Execute a campaign to update alumni contact information, particularly focusing on cell phones and emails that allow for more efficient communication.
5. **Cultivate alumni into financial supporters of the university** in order to perpetuate the programs and experiences offered at Wayland.
 - 5.1 Create a campaign to encourage support for endowed scholarships and the general fund, including the “pay it forward” messaging.
 - 5.2 Create a specific GOLD campaign to encourage financial support at a small level starting with an alum’s first year out of college.
 - 5.3 Support the IMPACT 2020 campaign through messaging to alums.
 - 5.4 Create specific alumni scholarships to grow the endowment and aid in recruiting of legacy students. Ideally, alumni chapters would take these on as a group project and award to students from their geographic area.