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**Alumni Relations at the Heart of Philanthropy:
Exploring volunteering and volunteer management opportunities**

Abstract

‘Friend-raising before Fundraising’ is a common phrase used in advancement work, implying that building relationships with alumni within our Higher Education Institutions is a pre-cursor to the ultimate effort of securing donations. In this keynote presentation, I hope to dispel this myth and demonstrate why Alumni Relations in and of itself is at the heart of philanthropy, in particular, through the interface of alumni and volunteering efforts.

Throughout this interactive and energising session, I present academic and professional research literature, in both alumni relations and volunteer management, to show the central place of Alumni Relations to realise the philanthropic aims of our institutions. Philanthropy comes from the Greek ‘for the love of humanity’ and it is from this simple definition that Alumni Relations can reclaim its prominent and rightful place at the core of philanthropic work. Philanthropy concentrates on the giving of time, talent, treasure and ties, all of which can be fostered effectively through Alumni Relations. This “4Ts” framework also reveals the role of volunteer management programmes and engaging alumni as volunteers in a strategic, concerted and diffused way across our institutions. We will explore, through research evidence and case studies, the ways that these “4Ts” of philanthropy promoted through volunteering can build the 4Is: interdependence, integration, identity and inherence, for lifelong value to our institution and especially for our alumni community.

By the end of the session, we reflect on the following questions: What key strategies can I undertake—the small steps— to raise the profile and value of Alumni Relations as the heart of philanthropy within my institution? And, how can I enhance my volunteering initiatives to maximise the time, talent, treasure and ties by and for my alumni community?

Alumni Relations at the Heart of Philanthropy: Exploring volunteering and volunteer management opportunities

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Friendraising before fundraising. This is a commonly cited phrase in educational advancement. It is so ubiquitous, that it seeps into the psyche, the strategy and the operations of alumni relations professionals in institutions worldwide. In this paper as a keynote session for the ICARE Alumni 2019, I wish to dispel the myth of friendraising before fundraising, that is, the idea that the alumni relations function is only valuable as an output towards a fundraising outcome. We will navigate together the reasons why we need to reclaim alumni relations in its rightful place at the heart of philanthropy.

In fact, philanthropy itself in another term that has lost its true meaning. The definition of philanthropy means for the love of humanity, at its core are the transformative ways we can change society for the better through our collective generosity. This generosity manifests itself through the ‘4Ts’ of philanthropy: time, talent, treasure and ties. Thus it is evident, even at a glance, that the alumni relations discipline with relationship building at its core, is ideally positioned to be at the epicentre of philanthropy.

Philanthropy has been claimed, and even understood, in the wider public as financial giving, in particular wealthy donors giving immense “treasure” to causes, including to higher education and educational projects. It is time for alumni relations to reclaim and educate our alumni on philanthropy!

Central to philanthropy, consistent with alumni relations, is building relationships, most poignantly for our discussion today the relationship with volunteers and volunteering. I am careful about my phrases here: this is not only about alumni volunteers, this is specifically the role of alumni relations—with volunteers and volunteering *for* and *by* alumni— at the heart of philanthropy. This paper offers a provocative critique, drawing on alumni relations good practice and case studies along with literature from advancement and volunteer management.

Let’s take each of the “4Ts” in turn. First, is **time**, examining the giving of time as a volunteer *by* alumni and *for* alumni as part of an alumni relations programme. Often, an alumni relations programme offers volunteering opportunities *by* our alumni *for* alumni. However, the alumni-volunteering coupling can be beyond this narrow viewfinder, to reveal volunteering *for* alumni by others—namely students, even faculty and staff— and indeed alumni volunteering for other broadened causes across the institution and beyond. For instance, alumni volunteers have the opportunity to offer support across the entire student lifespan—from student recruitment through curriculum support towards graduation and even peer alumni volunteer support. This is a framework, focused on employability, that is articulated so clearly by Jessica Vanderlelie where she examines the volunteer opportunities *for* alumni, she describes as ‘towards, in, through, out, up & back’ as the transition stages of the student lifecycle¹. This alone shows the incredible

¹ Vanderlelie, J.(2015). ‘Re-visioning alumni relationships to improve graduate employability’ *STARS –Student Transitions, Achievement, Retention and Success Conference Proceedings Melbourne July* [accessed 9/11/2018 <http://www.unistars.org/papers/STARS2015/07G.pdf>] also visit a visual version of the framework <http://www.engagingalumni.com/framework/>

potential of alumni relations—especially connecting with key alumni volunteers—to manage some of the greatest priorities facing higher education today: student recruitment, retention, success, graduate employability, career advancement, even internationalisation.

This is an impressive start to the potential and indeed the power of alumni relations with volunteering within its central place within philanthropy. Even outside the student lifecycle, alumni volunteers undertake crucial leadership roles as volunteers: appointments for institutional governance positions within committees and councils, on alumni associations and foundation boards. Alumni give their time to lead regional chapters, provide content for publications and even support the running of events. This alumni time helps to advance their alma mater, to support students and fellow alumni, as a sense of duty, knowing—almost instinctively—that others have done it before them. Dick Merriman, President of Southwestern College sums it up best in his article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* entitled: “The College is a Philanthropy, Yes a Philanthropy.”² Merriman writes:

This college exists as a philanthropy because thousands of people, many of whom you and I will never know, have built it. They built it for your benefit, knowing they would never meet you. The college's facilities, our endowment for scholarships, our mission—all of these have been built, and protected and sustained, for your benefit. They were built so you can gain a college education, find and pursue your passion, and commit yourselves to living a valuable life. In short, this college exists so you can become a better person and, in turn, help make the world a better place.

The idea conveyed by Merriman summarises active citizenship, why alumni volunteer, get involved and perhaps never expect a return, simply the joy in knowing this stewardship was also available in many ways to them as students and as alumni. Sometimes in return as a residual and indeed crucial benefit alumni *do* gain benefit, acquire new skills, build their network and gain a sense of pride for giving back.

As alumni relations professionals though it can be challenging to vie for the time of alumni in their increasingly hectic lives. Becoming an active citizen is noble, but in our time poor society, as alumni relations professional we need to show a pressing sense of urgency on why volunteering with their alma mater should be the key investment of time for their lives.

Talent too, the second ‘T’ of philanthropy, connects very closely to the first. Our alumni, through the expertise gained through their studies, their career and life, they offer immense opportunities to give of their talent to and through their alma mater. The overlap between time and talent is most evident in curricular or student-focused volunteering by alumni: entering the classroom as guest speakers, as mentors, offering work placement or internships, even providing direction for programme curriculum design. What is particularly obvious about this section on talent is how much alumni can offer their talent *beyond* the traditional alumni relations brief, thus requiring an awareness and appreciation of the alumni talent across the entire university. There is potential for the alumni relations function within the institution to become a facilitator of alumni relations, watching it become diffused across the institution, an idea I return to later in this paper.

² Merriman, D. (2010). ‘The College is a Philanthropy. Yes a philanthropy.’ *The Chronicle of Education*. 31st October. [accessed 13/10/18, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/The-College-as-a-Philanthropy/125176>].

Our alumni develop certain passions during their studies, in their academic discipline or perhaps even through their volunteering or extra-curricular involvement. This passion for a cause, a sport, an interest doesn't disappear upon graduation. Granted, graduation does change the lives of the student towards the intensity of the "real world", however, there remains a craving by alumni for something more to life, fostering a civic duty, an active citizen nature remains. As alumni relations professionals there are ways we can harness this appetite for giving, through talent in so many other ways that are not only focused on employment, while meeting their civic engagement mission of the institution (and fostering the interests of alumni). Julie Ellison, Founder of Citizen Alum, believes this is transforming the perception of alumni not only as 'donors' but also 'doers.'³ The response from universities by offering special Alumni Day of Service programmes, usually one day where groups of alumni work together on one day to give back to their community. I will return to Julie Ellison's critique of Alumni Day of Service later, and indeed other opportunities to offer a strategic, robust volunteering programming for alumni to maximise their talent.

Treasure, seems like the obvious place for our fundraising colleagues. However, the alumni relations function plays a crucial role in the fundraising and development work of the institution. Alumni relations function's *raison d'être* is not narrowly the supplementary function at the behest of asking for money from alumni. Instead, we can consider *how* our alumni volunteers participate in fundraising practice. There are the obvious ways in sophisticated and highly developed fundraising campaigns, where alumni volunteers work directly with institutional fundraisers to support asking other alumni for their support. Alumni get involved in many other ways too, they might provide testimonials on why they give, or even attend a fundraising event or sit on a committee that oversees fundraising priorities. They might be donors, but they may also be volunteers by giving their time and talent to realise these causes. They may share or promote fundraising campaigns of the university, when they do—or even if they aren't in a position to give themselves—this is a form of volunteering activity, albeit small it signals support for the university in a public fashion.

Finally, alumni can also participate in philanthropic giving by sharing their ties. This can include their connections to their employer, a business that may engage in a partnership with the institution. Thus begins the knock-on effect: the employer, by virtue of the introduction by an alum (and their employee) may provide an internship or graduate career opportunities, they may become a supplier of the university or even engage the university in industry research work. The same can be said when alumni engage their own business with the university or their own network.

In the case of ties, the role of alumni relations becomes one of door opener and especially as educator. We can inform alumni of the potential opportunities that might then spark them to decide to initiate this process and share their ties to their alma mater. They might sponsor a university or alumni event. They might begin an alumni social within their company. This is where alumni relations professionals we need to remain sharply attuned to the opportunities that might be available around the entire campus and how alumni could provide a special dimension—and their ties—to supporting their alma mater. In addition, the element of ties also complements may trends emerging in volunteering: family volunteering—where a family decides to participate in volunteering experiences together—or episodic volunteering, that is once-off or infrequent volunteer opportunities that meet the needs of alumni volunteers. Aligned to this is micro-volunteering—small acts of volunteering that can be done in minutes or even from home. Finally, there is virtual volunteering, with alumni all over the world, providing for ways to give back that doesn't require a presence on campus broadens the ways we can enable alumni to give of their ties- their

³ Ellison, J. (2015). 'Happy Graduation, Now What? From Citizen Students to Citizen Alums.' *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*. January/February, pp.81-83.

connections to their alma mater. Often when we consider alumni volunteers it can often be a long term relationship and the trends in volunteering can enable alumni relations –and indeed all alumni-related volunteering by the institution to take into consideration the changes to volunteering preferences, thus potentially expanding those alumni that can give their ties to the institution.

After this overview of time, talent, treasure and ties, we can delve a little deeper, consider a critique, examples and consider how we can preserve and enhance the place of alumni at the core of philanthropy through our alumni citizens.

First, alumni relations role is to inform alumni on their alumni capital. What's alumni capital? Without dwelling too much on the concept, this is a phrase I developed through my research as a form of social capital, the richness of the networks, the connections alumni have simply by virtue of sharing their alumni status with hundreds, thousands or even hundreds of thousands of others. This broadens the people and the possibilities for our alumni. To involve them as active alumni citizens that is fundamental.

From a time perspective, there are often traditional ways to involve alumni as volunteers, however, our alma mater is competing with so many other things for our time. The challenge is, how do we make our volunteering programme attractive—even prioritised—by our alumni? Katherine Gaskin over two decades ago conducted research on what younger volunteers ideally desire in volunteering opportunities, which she cleverly created into an acronym: FLEXIVOL⁴. Alumni relations can learn from when creating or considering volunteering for and with alumni, that is, volunteer opportunities need to consider the spirit of flexible volunteering, thus creating these alumni FLEXIVOLs. The acronym is as follows, adapted for alumni relations practice:

Flexibility – the ability to alumni to adapt volunteering in their hectic lives, including once-off or flexible opportunities to volunteer, even with online volunteering opportunities; The Holland Alumni Network-NL – provides once-off opportunities for alumni speakers at their events across the Netherlands, offering flexibility in location and topics that resonate with a broad alumni base, from career advancement to managing stress.⁵

Legitimacy – institutions need to show that alumni volunteering is meaningful not tokenistic. Emma Packman from the University of Sheffield outlines 7 Principles of Alumni Volunteering in a short blog post⁶ and echoes this sentiment. More poignantly though is her position—Alumni Volunteer Manager--someone responsible specifically for alumni volunteering, drawing on the good practice from volunteer management within the non-profit and charitable sector.

Ease of access – make alumni volunteering stress-free and also taking into consideration the needs of individual alum, including their motivation for volunteering in the first place will help to increase alumni volunteering. removing barriers in place as much as possible to volunteer, even for volunteers who live away from campus. CERN in Switzerland, alumni can engage in advocacy activity, as their Web site outlines to alumni:

⁴ Gaskin, K. and Smith, J. D. (1997). *A new civic Europe? A study of the extent and role of volunteering*. London, The National Centre of Volunteering.

⁵ Rincon, S. (2018) 'It's a Small World: How a global alumni association is benefitting international alumni and students--in the Netherlands and abroad.' *CASE Currents*. July/August, p. 32-37. [accessed 16/09/2018 <https://www.case.org/currents/its-a-small-world>]

⁶ Packman, E. (2017). '7 Principles of Alumni Volunteering.' *The Medium- CASE Europe*. 23rd March [accessed on 27/04/19 https://medium.com/@CASE_Europe/principles-of-alumni-volunteering-49fe7412de9f]

Many of you are asked to talk about CERN and the research that is conducted in the Laboratory...We are thrilled and lucky to have you as ambassadors!...we have selected for you reliable and up to date online resources that you are welcome to use to prepare your presentation and tailor to your audience.⁷

This is a simple way to ensure that CERN Alumni can easily volunteer their time to be an advocate. What barriers can we remove to make key alumni volunteering in our institution easier?

(E)Xperience – put in place the parameters to ensure alumni have a positive volunteering experience. Volunteers are not an afterthought, they should be an essential to institutional programming, only and especially if the roles for volunteers are developed to ensure they are meaningful, with alumni gaining benefits—new skills, networking, seeing the positive benefit to their alma mater, student or fellow alumni. Valuing alumni volunteers means giving them the ability to voice their expectations for the volunteering experience and ensuring this matches with the role or expectations within the institution. Gretchen Dobson argues for the merits of a role descriptions for alumni volunteers⁸, which can mitigate any confusion about the volunteering role. At the University of Greenwich, the Greenwich Portraits are the ultimate in alumni experience. The curation of the portraits is carefully designed so the photographs of featured alumni reflecting the diversity of the university alumni, have become viral sensations while also become the aspirations of current students ‘to become a portrait.’⁹ At the University of Calgary, they provide an pre-recorded course for alumni (and students) to demonstrate the value of volunteering, offering resources to maximise the volunteering experience both on and off campus.¹⁰

Incentives – recognition for their volunteer efforts, opportunities to validate and reflect on their experience (even provide their feedback) and cover any expenses incurred while volunteering; Some universities simply provide a letter thanking a new volunteer from the President of the Alumni Association or Director of Alumni Relations to demonstrate the gravitas for which they see the partnership with alumni volunteers. Others like Nottingham Trent University Business School offer an Alumni Fellows programme, where after a certain number of volunteering hours during the academic year, alumni can use the ‘alumni fellow’ designation.¹¹

Variety – Offer a breadth of opportunities and interesting tasks and responsibilities to attract different kinds of volunteers, different talents and expertise;

Organisation – a professional volunteer management system—with role descriptions and proper induction to demonstrate the value of the role of alumni volunteer for their alma mater, with flexibility and building alumni relationships. LSE- The London School of Economics, offers an excellent suite of materials online to support a professional volunteering management programme¹², including guidelines for alumni volunteer-led alumni groups and even an invitation to join a closed LinkedIn group for alumni volunteer leaders.

⁷ CERN Alumni Web page ‘Online Resource for Advocacy.’ [accessed on 29/04/19
<https://alumni.cern/page/advocacy>]

⁸ Dobson, G. (2012). ‘Why you should write a job description for your alumni volunteers.’ *The Guardian*. 22nd May [01/05/19 <https://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2012/may/22/using-alumni-volunteers>]

⁹ University of Greenwich Portraits Web site [accessed 14/09/18 <https://alumni.gre.ac.uk/greenwich-portraits/>]

¹⁰ University of Calgary Web site: ‘The Value of Volunteering for Your Career’ [accessed on 07/05/19
<https://alumni.ucalgary.ca/grow-your-career/webinars/value-volunteering>]

¹¹ Nottingham Trent Web page for the Alumni Fellow initiative
[03/09/18 https://www.ntualumni.org.uk/getting_involved/alumni_fellows]

¹² LSE – London School of Economics Alumni Volunteer Guidelines [accessed 27/04/19
<https://www.alumni.lse.ac.uk/s/1623/interior-hybrid.aspx?sid=1623&gid=1&pgid=541>]

Laughs – design alumni activities to be fun and enjoyable!

Alumni volunteers are partners in our process of offering services and programmes to other alumni, therefore they need to be valued, engaged and involved in the process. Volunteers are not a *nice to have* they are a *need to have*, they are integral to alumni relations work and the mechanics of the university.

It is not only alumni *as* volunteers, also alumni interfacing *with* other volunteers—whether these are students, other members on governance or curriculum committees.

Aligned to volunteering management is the challenge of actually maximising the talents, the expertise of the alumni *for* the institution in the best way possible while also maximising the talent *for* the alumni to get the most out of the experience for whatever reason they feel motivated to give of their talent to their alma mater. This means *listening* to an alum on what they can actually offer to ensure they are being placed appropriately in what they can offer the institution—this will also ensure longer retention of a volunteer who feels their talent is being recognised and fostered during their volunteering experience.

Is there is also the danger of under-engaging our alumni? Julie Ellison, offers the critique of the Day of Service because she believes this undervalues the talent we have in our alumni base. Alumni may really enjoy going and cleaning up a local playground, however, imagine they could volunteer to help students understand the factors to take into consideration to make a playground more accessible as part of a service learning project, where student learning for credit is balanced with a project that supports the needs of the community. This is a lasting and more meaningful way to involve alumni with their talent. The University of Notre Dame Mendoza College of Business devised ND Impact Partners¹³, a way for a group of alumni to work together on a pro bono consultancy over a three to six-month period to provide a non-profit organisation in their community with a needed project, such as creating the non-profit organisation with a marketing plan. This allows alumni to network with other alumni in their area (this happens in Chicago and Washington as well as South Bend, the location of the University) and allows alumni with different skills and even of different ages and experience to work together and build their own local alumni network while also helping the local community.

When examining treasure, examples of alumni volunteer-led campaigns, where alumni relations professionals can focus on the alumni volunteer, with the outcome being mobilising a fundraising campaign. SSE Riga, a business school nearby, created an award winning campaign ‘Let’s Beat Stanford’ in building their annual giving from 11% to 35% (1% higher than Stanford, seen to be a gold standard in annual giving). As the promotion video for the campaign says: “We couldn’t go with force, so we had to turn to wisdom.”¹⁴ They turned to building affinity online by posting old photographs and getting attention from alumni who attended over 15 years previously (who went to university before social media, so the photos posted were first time on the Web). What is particularly poignant about the campaign is the crowdfunding feel of the campaign, even before crowdfunding was a popular medium, and the mobilising of SSE Riga alumni volunteers worldwide in this campaign. The use of the SSE Riga distinct mascot and quirky messages to mobilise fellow alumni to participate in the campaign and also to share the word, as micro volunteers. Micro-volunteering, a recent trend in volunteering circles, in something that takes so little time—only a few minutes of retweeting, sharing a post or participating in a short survey—that can

¹³ Mendoza College of Business, University of Notre Dame ND Impact Partners [accessed on 3/3/19
<http://mcob.undgroup.org/s/1210/clubs-classes/2col-grid4.aspx?sid=1210&gid=583&pgid=28283>]

¹⁴ SSE Riga ‘Let’s Beat Stanford’ Campaign Video [Uploaded by DDB Latvia accessed on 01/05/2019
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tMlvNNKdVVc>]

reap huge dividends to a fundraising campaign and indeed in mobilising alumni to reconnect to their alma mater.

Finally, when considering the ties we have, I think about ways alumni can reintroduce the university to networks, companies, potential clients, even fellow alumni that have fell out of touch. Each alum has a unique, wealth within their networks and alumni relations professionals have the formidable role of trying to have alumni consider the university as a beneficiary of such wealth. Nini Poore describes the College Connections programme at the University of Michigan College of Literature, Science and the Arts. College Connections meets with alumni to listen to their stories, in particular their stories of their student experience and life after graduation as a means to shape the university's future work. The aim is that alumni become co-educators for students and engage alumni accordingly in giving back their impressions of the university and allows normally underrepresented groups to be have a voice, to create an oral history of the university, that helps shape College policy and curriculum.¹⁵ Alumni are valued and are free to give their expertise, their advice and also their ties to the institution based on this College Connections experience.

The 4Ts and the 4"I"s: Interdependence, Identity, Integration, Inherence

Alumni relations is often synonymous with alumni, which seems like an obvious assumption. However, what occurs in institutions often is that anything related to alumni automatically becomes the role of the alumni relations function—whether this is an office of 1 or 20. I wonder if the association between alumni and alumni relations has become the victim of its own success. That is, the alumni relations function is often so committed to working specifically with alumni—and often so well—that the institution sends all the alumni work the way of the institution.

Alumni are the only permanent stakeholder of the institution and as alumni citizens in the wider world they are the informal ambassadors for the institution. Therefore, they are crucial to all functions, services and programmes of the institution. Through my research I have developed the 4 "I"s to demonstrate excellence in the practice of advancement, alumni relations and most importantly the position of alumni within the institution.

The 4 "I"s are: interdependence, identity, integration, inherence, each of which I will take in turn in this section of the paper. Interdependence is the symbiotic nature of the advancement profession, the three overarching areas of advancement—community & marketing, alumni relations, fundraising & development are most effective when they work together and share common goals, values and beliefs. These values can be the mission-based goals of the institution and also the integrity of understanding the transformative nature of their work; Advancement profession is not *just* a job, it is an opportunity for enacting incredible change. For true, positive change to happen, it needs to be anchored in these university values and also have students—and alumni—at the core of its work. The best way to ensure that we don't forget about our most important lifelong constituent—alumni—is by involving them meaningfully in the governance, management and operations of advancement work. Consider the advisory boards and even editorial committees of alumni volunteers that can support our work.

Next, is *identity*. This identification is on two fronts. First, alumni need to identify themselves as alumni, this seems obvious, however, in our daily identities of life—parent, partners, spouse, employee, sibling, sports fan and others alum of a particular university or institution can be forgotten. To build identity, an "Alum From Day One" strategy, as employed as a strategic and concerted effort to educate students from

¹⁵ Poore, N. (2018). 'The View from Alumni Relations: Creating a Culture of Giving and Engagement.' *Diversity & Democracy*. Spring, Vol 21: 2, <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2018/spring/poore> .

the moment they arrive on campus. Georgetown university, as with many other American universities hold an orientation ceremony with gowns and parents in the audience and replicating the graduation that happens four years later. The Alum From Day One example here and the way it works at the University of New South Wales Business School in Australia shows the way that the leadership within the institution have identified and recognised the importance of alumni in their work. All academic and support staff identify and support the belief of the key role of alumni for the institution.¹⁶

Imagine too alumni volunteers involved in a reverse mentoring programme that is popular trend at the moment. In this case, alumni provide mentorship with senior administrators in the institution in key areas to gain the true outcome perspective—how their student-related decisions impact ultimately on alumni.

The third “I” acts upon the identification through *integration*. This is ensuring there is a diffusion of alumni imprints across the whole institution. Once management and staff identify the importance of alumni for their section of work, the next is implementing this through integrating them in their work. This is where student services might have it right and alumni relations may get it wrong. As mentioned earlier, when the word ‘alumni’ comes up, the work automatically ends up on the alumni relations desk. This doesn’t happen with student services, they coordinate certain services *for* students, however the responsibility for student welfare, well-being, academic achievement is diffused and understood across the institution. We need to foster an internal understanding and promote the benefit of involving and engaging alumni in all aspects of the institution with our academic colleagues, institutional management and with our fellow supportive services of the institution.

Alongside this is the ability to have alumni volunteers across the institution—and not simply for alumni relations purposes. University College Dublin has a concerted Alumni Volunteering Programme, a portal both for alumni to source all types of volunteering experiences—including micro-volunteering, small volunteering opportunities that take only a few minutes to complete. This portal also provides other staff at the university to design and post alumni volunteering roles with the support of the alumni relations function to help in the process to ensure it is a meaningful realistic role. Alumni have a menu of volunteering options on this Web page portal and through the UCD Alumni Community (the online platform for alumni) including informal mentoring.¹⁷

To achieve this fully engaged institution in alumni volunteering, the research and practice suggests that it is ensuring alumni has a presence in key institutional documents—strategic plans, operational documents, task force reports. Alumni volunteering can be the solution for many of the challenges at the institution.

Finally, the involvement and engagement of alumni within the institution needs to be *inherent*, that is, it needs to be mainstreamed, embedded into the fabric of the institutional work. In the Irish higher education context, which I am intimately familiar through my recent research, it is evident that the influence of the alumni relations function on senior management level is reflected in the presence of alumni in the strategic plans. The more recent the plan, the more alumni are featured and how they are featured has also changed, to include ways that alumni can become strategic volunteers to achieve university aims: mentors for current students, offering job placements, supporting fundraising targets.

Alumni volunteering is an ultimate result, an ultimate outcome in a philanthropic sense. Alumni can be central to philanthropic activity, but first they need to be *aware* of the potential of what opportunities are available. The 4Ts and the 4Is are two structures that make some broad assumptions about alumni: that

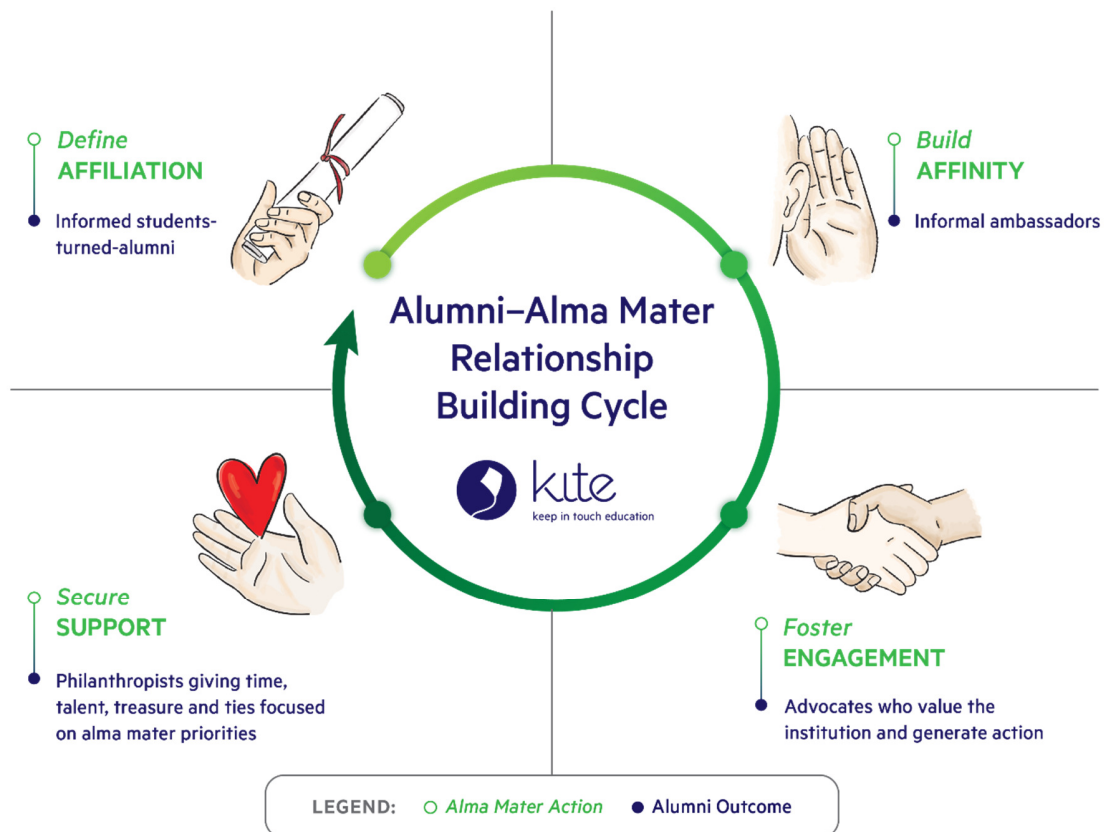
¹⁶ University of New South Wales Business School (2019) Web site [accessed on 22/11/2018
<https://www.business.unsw.edu.au/alumni/alum-from-day-one>]

¹⁷ UCD Alumni Volunteering Web page: [accessed on 08/05/19 <https://alumni.ucd.ie/volunteering/>]

alumni understand ways of giving back to their alma mater and the institution is ready and willing to accept alumni generosity with open arms.

This brings me to another paradigm, an alumni-alma mater relationship building cycle that I developed through my research, outlined in Figure 1 below. This model shows the clear steps—developed with clear empirical research—on how to get to achieve philanthropic giving by alumni and an embedded place of alumni within an institution. The steps are: affiliation, affinity, engagement and support, divided clearly by the actions of the institution and that of alumni. First and foremost, universities need to know their alumni, understand them and have good alumni data. In our GDPR compliant world, this can be more challenging, which is why it is even more crucial to ensure students-turned-alumni understand the lifelong value of staying in touch with their alma mater after graduation. At this **affiliation** stage, institutions can understand who their alumni *are* and what motivated them to engage in their student experience—programme of study along with potential information on student volunteering and extra-curricular involvement.

Figure 1: Alumni- Alma Mater Relationship Building Cycle



Gallo, M. (2012). "Beyond Philanthropy: Recognising the Value of Alumni to Benefit Higher Education Institutions" *Tertiary Education and Management*, 18:1, pp.41-55 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13583883.2011.611892> (DOI link)

Next, institutions need to consider the messaging to alumni and tailoring this message, with segmentation as much as possible. Social media has increasingly become a strategic way to understand the interests of alumni and segmenting out messages based on graduation year, programme of study can also contribute to building **affinity** in the institution. At this level, institutions may begin to create informed, informal ambassadors of the institution, this is the beginning of micro-volunteering- sharing institution's posts, speaking to prospective students informally about their university experience. At this level the alumni relations function benefits from a positive working relationship with the communications and marketing function of the institution.

The progress of alumni through this relationship cycle is to **engagement**, which in this case is defined as involvement in the 'WIFM' activity- what's in it for me—activity this can be the social activities like reunions and professional advancement programming such as career development events. This has become the comfortable home of the alumni relations function, with the support from the career services. I say comfortable because alumni relations in this part of the alumni relationship building cycle remains clearly away from the traditional definition of philanthropy, and this is a place where alumni relations are providing the giving, they are the generous giving back to alumni with services, benefits and events. What is key and valuable about this level of alumni relations work is that it fosters action. Action by alumni to get re-engaged in their alma mater as they derive benefit in their relationship with the institution. The alumni relations function maximise this engagement with alumni when they draw on the data they have about their alumni in the affiliation stage and understand the affinity of their alumni in the following stage.

The final stage in the relationship building cycle *seems* to be left particularly to colleagues in fundraising and development. However, this may be in partnership with these crucial functions of the institution, however, alumni relations needs to play a more crucial role in securing **support** from their alumni base. Support is the altruistic giving by alumni, this is the generosity, this is the time that alumni decide to give back with the primary beneficiary is the institution, not them. This is a crucial place where alumni volunteering, giving their time, talent, treasure and ties comes into play. This is volunteering as discussed earlier in this paper. In order to get to the point where institutions are securing the support of their alumni, going through the cycle, creating informed alumni by *defining affiliation*, then *building affinity*, moving along to *foster engagement*, only then is there the opportunity to *secure support* by alumni.

Based on the ideas in this paper, this is an opportunity for alumni relations professionals to reflect on the following questions:

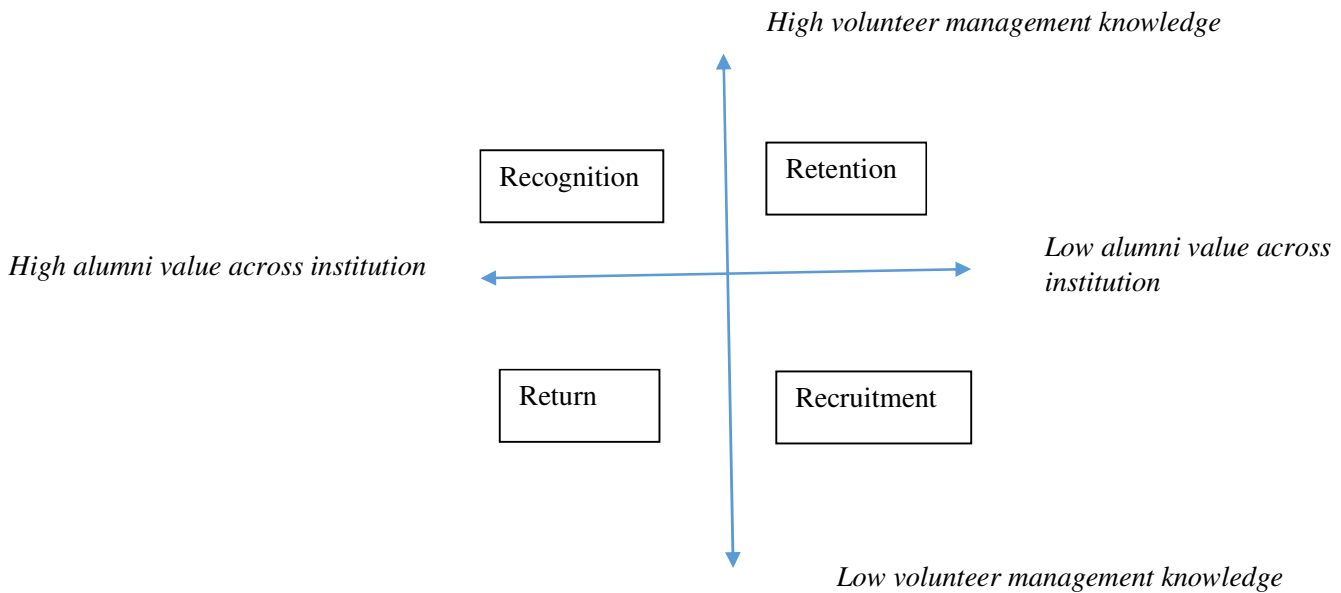
- What key strategies can I undertake—the small steps—to raise the profile and value of Alumni Relations as the heart of philanthropy within my institution?
- How can I enhance my volunteering initiatives to maximise the time, talent, treasure and ties *by* and *for* my alumni community?

To respond to these questions, alumni relations professional may wish to factors:

- The extent to which their own knowledge/expertise in volunteer management is high or low, including the extent to which alumni volunteer management is enacted within the alumni relations programme;
- The extent to which the profile and value of alumni (and the potential for alumni volunteering) is understood and diffused across the institution is high or low.

These factors create a matrix to enable alumni relations professionals to better understand potentially the best starting point for a strategy to extend or develop alumni volunteer management programme. Figure 2 presents this original X/Y matrix that outlines the following four quadrants:

Figure 2: Volunteer Management-Alumni Value Matrix



The **Recruitment Quadrant** (bottom right), is characterised by low knowledge volunteer management, low profile of the value of alumni across the institution. In this quadrant, the key question to ask is:

How do I create an alumni volunteer management programme to address the needs of alumni and that of the institution? To respond to this question, alumni relations professionals can draw on key volunteer management resources that best fit their own local context. The CEV- the European Volunteer Centre, offers a listing of centres across Europe that provide good practice volunteering resources to help in the development of a professional programme. At the same time as recruiting volunteering resources, alumni relations professional can also recruit key senior management champions across the institution that recognise the benefits of involving alumni volunteers in various curriculum, extra-curricular, governance or alumni related volunteering activity.

The **Retention Quadrant** (upper right), is characterised by high volunteer management expertise and low profile of the value of alumni across the institution. In this quadrant, the key question to ask is:

How do I diffuse a volunteer management strategy that involves alumni across the institution? When exploring this question, alumni relations professionals recognise that although they may have ample expertise in volunteer management, it may be restricted to concentrated in the alumni relations function with little ownership of alumni across the institution. There may also be an extensive volunteering infrastructure for students available on campus, and the challenge for alumni relations professionals is how this can be extended to continue the active citizenship initiated as students throughout alumni life.

The **Return Quadrant** (bottom left) is characterised by low knowledge on volunteer management and high recognition of the value of alumni and alumni volunteers across the institution. The key question in this quadrant is: *How can I build an alumni volunteering programme to create alumni leaders and champions?* The focus of strategy in this quadrant is the identification of alumni with expertise and interest in leading specific volunteering efforts to support the building of a concerted volunteering programme with alumni. The focus becomes the return on investment of the alumni, already recognised or engaged across the campus to become involved in a formalised alumni volunteering programme to involve even more alumni volunteers. Drawing on alumni volunteering practice in other institutions may become particularly helpful to create a programme that meets the needs of the institution and continues to involve alumni champions and leaders. The acronym CASE also means, respectfully and strategically—copy and steal everything, as higher education institutions are not in competition, this is a collegial environment in which to learn from others within the alumni relations community.

Finally, the **Recognition Quadrant** (upper right) is characterised by high knowledge of volunteer management coupled with high recognition of the value of alumni across the institution. The key question in this quadrant for alumni relations professionals is: *How can I sustain meaningful volunteer engagement and opportunities for/with alumni?* It is very easy to rely on the same alumni volunteers for many different programmes on campus—alumni representatives on committees, event volunteers, speakers, mentors, representative to meet prospective students, the list goes on. This can create volunteer fatigue. To combat this fatigue a concerted stewardship plan—as you would for donors—is necessary to recognise the volunteering efforts of alumni and build momentum so they will recommend to others to also become alumni volunteers. Awards programmes for alumni volunteers, special recognition events are some ways to begin to show gratitude and sustain the alumni volunteer involvement.

Each of these quadrants may have some relevance to the development of your volunteering programme for and with alumni. Perhaps in many ways the mantra of “Friendraising before Fundraising” does in fact ring true. Alumni relations is in the central position to create a true relationship with alumni, from strangers, to colleagues to friends and lifelong partners with their alma mater. This is a partnership opportunity that alumni relations can forge with alumni towards creating not only alumni volunteer, but alumni leaders. The outcome then become not fundraising as the outcome, but as one of many outcomes—building alumni capital, a different kind of fund-raising to advance our alumni, our students and our institution. Alumni relations is the conduit to enable alumni to soar!

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