

S-2003 – Alumni Relations

Evaluate alumni engagement and provide recommendations as to what changes could be made, if necessary, particularly while students are still enrolled, to further Rutgers-Alumni relations.

Introduction

The mission of the Rutgers University Alumni Association (RUAA) is “to strengthen Rutgers, the alumni association builds community and fosters scarlet pride through the meaningful engagement of all current and future alumni.” As stated in Article II of the RUAA’s foundational documents, the purpose of the Association is to advance the best interests and well being of Rutgers University by engaging all alumni in the life of the institution through communication, programming, services and volunteer opportunities.

In approaching charge S-2003, the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) quickly realized how broad the alumni engagement topic is and determined to limit our focus on how the RUAA might improve alumni’s engagement to better benefit students. Given the focus of this committee on students, our attention then has been on how to incorporate alumni into the student experience. As such, areas that are not addressed in this resolution can and should be addressed in future charges by the Rutgers University Senate.

In order to address this charge, SAC created a sub-committee to conduct necessary research, make recommendations, and craft a resolution. The work that has taken place in preparing this report includes:

- Arranging for a presentation to the SAC by Joshua Harraman, Rebecca Trump, and Roberta O’Hara of the RUAA at the December committee meeting (Powerpoint presentation is included with this report)
- Seeking to identify programs currently available that incorporate alumni into the student experience, University-wide and by campus.
- Contacting and meeting with key point people on each campus to learn more about work being done and areas in most need of development

In short, we learned that there is a good deal being done to connect alumni and students at the University-wide level, the campus level, and department/discipline level. It’s clear that we’ve only identified a selection of offerings and that there are many more in existence. In addition, many of these efforts are unknown to students and alums alike. Rutgers University has over 540,000 living alumni worldwide and has over 65,000 students enrolled across all of its campuses. The RUAA has 104 charter organizations under its umbrella, of which many have some form of alumni/student engagement programs.

This report shares what we learned about programs that integrate alumni into the student experience. The research is organized according to the University-wide efforts, campus-level efforts, and additional efforts we identified by field or discipline. This research is followed by a set of recommendations and a resolution.

University-Wide Initiatives:

The Rutgers Veteran Alumni group, School of Nursing, School of Business, Rutgers University Rainbow Alumni League, and Rutgers University Muslim Alumni Association all span across all of the chancellor-led campuses.

RUAA Scarlet Council provides leadership opportunities for selected students to build and develop skills to take on essential roles within the university and after graduation. This program is currently in New Brunswick and is in the building/strengthening stage. A rollout to Camden and Newark is presently in exploration.

Career Development Centers University-wide launched **Rutgers Handshake - Career Exploration and Success**, which is the number one platform for all things related to career success. Students can utilize Rutgers Handshake to access thousands of job and internship listings in the system, schedule appointments with career advisers, read employer reviews from other students, network with employers, register for career events, access exclusive online resources, and much more. Students who are eligible for the Federal Work-Study Program can explore those opportunities with the Student Employment Office. Career Development Centers regularly share information via emails and social media posts. Department chairs also promote it to students on their rosters. Included on the App, there are sections including Contacts, Locations, Events calendar, Giving Opportunities, Resources and Services, and a Student/Alumni Help Desk.

Additionally, one of the most notable initiatives for Career Developments is the launch of The Rutgers Student Alumni Connect, which has more than 5,000 students and alumni across all campuses. The platform allows students to connect to alumni who share similar interests and goals (see image below). Although the Student Alumni Connect is a helpful platform, it is not well known amongst students and alumni. Questions regarding alumni buy-in, visibility, and overall engagement have arisen within both the Office of Alumni Relations and the Career Development Center.

The screenshot displays a user interface for the Rutgers Student Alumni Connect platform. At the top, a yellow banner reads "We found a top connection for you based on your background & goals" with a "Skip" link on the right. The main content is divided into two columns. The left column features a profile card for Erich Radlmann, a Managing Partner at Spherion Staffing & Recruiting in Bridgewater, NJ. His profile includes his education (Rutgers University, Master's, 2...), his role (Managing Partner), his company (Spherion), and his interests (Careers in Life Sciences and Pu...). Below this is a "Brief Bio" section describing him as the Co-Owner of a premier Staffing & Recruiting firm. The right column contains a message interface for sending a message to Erich Radlmann. The message body reads: "Hello Erich, Your profile was suggested by Student Alumni Career Connect as someone great to learn from. Would you be open to sharing your experience and professional journey with me?" Below the message is a "Say Hello" button. Further down, there are sections for "Shared Interests" (Government / Public Administration, International Affairs & Development) and "My Professional Journey" (Spherion, Managing Partner).

It should be noted that the RUAA is always looking for ways to improve alumni coding so that they can improve the overall alumni experience while also being able to better identify alumni for student-facing needs. The RUAA is currently exploring ways to solicit better campus partners to help secure this data on alumni, as well as how to best request that data from within the boundaries of the RUAA.

Veteran Alumni and Student Engagement

As with other RU communities, alumni who are military veterans are engaged with current students. A hub of these engagements is the Office of Veteran and Military Programs and Services under the directorship of Ann Treadaway. The office maintains a portfolio of initiatives that are intended to support both graduate and undergraduate students that are military veterans. At any one time, approximately 400 students benefit from the Office's offerings. The Veteran's House at 14 Lafayette St in New Brunswick is the main administrative location with smaller contingents on the Newark and Camden Campuses.

Alumni-student engagement is achieved through a variety of activities. For example, the Newark office links students with lists of alumni with academic credentials aligned with their career interests. As another example, the Office maintains a close relationship with the Veteran Alumni of Rutgers University (VARU). The VARU is a volunteer-led group that consists of alumni who are highly decorated and experienced military leaders. Moreover, the VARU is a highly networked group with linkages to community veteran's groups, employers that have veteran-preference programs, and state-level veteran entities. The VARU has been integral to several initiatives that engage students. Of particular note is an alumni-student softball game. By all accounts, this game was a significant success. Other student-alumni engagement efforts include veteran attendance at football games accompanied by food and refreshments organized and staffed by current students that have student-work arrangements at the Veterans' House. Also noteworthy is the collaboration of the Warrior Writers Organization for writer's workshops at the New Brunswick and Camden Campuses (planned for Spring 2021). It is anticipated that this program will have significant student involvement.

The Business School at the New Brunswick campus is also involved in engaging veterans and alumni. In this regard, a senior business school staffer administers a program that links current students to business school alumni and actively supports military veterans seeking to take coursework in the business school.

Camden Campus

The Rutgers-Camden Alumni Association has many programs currently in place connecting students and alumni, including "Shark Tank," where students present their ideas to a panel of alumni, "Theater Night," where alumni attend student productions, along with a senior year "100 days 'til Graduation".

Other programs on the Camden Campus include the Rainbow Alumni League, which has a student mentoring program, as well as hosting a Rainbow Graduation. The Camden Law Alumni Association grants scholarships as well as hosts a "Ask a Lawyer Day."

Rutgers-Camden Alumni Association maintains several websites for alumni and students to connect.

Website URL: <https://www.camden.rutgers.edu/information/alumni>

Rutgers University - Camden Alumni Engagement

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rutgers-university-camden-alumni-engagement-86934419/>

Emailalumni@camden.rutgers.edu

Rutgers Law School Alumnae Inaugural Networking Event

<https://www.cvent.com/events/rutgers-law-school-alumnae-inaugural-networking-event/event-summary-8d0235f3a0114a3899bfb80244f95227.aspx>

Newark Campus

When researching The Charge on the Newark campus, we needed to review the Campus-wide Alumni Relations initiatives and the department-specific ones. Overall, we spoke with individuals from the Office of Alumni Relations, Career Development Center, Veterans Affairs, Director of Public Engagement of the School of Public Affairs & Administration (SPAA), Dean of the School of Criminal Justices (CJ).

In an effort to alleviate the financial burdens on students and to further engage with the law school demographic, the Office of Alumni Engagement created a scholarship fund. Once fully funded, the Alumni Engagement Office and the Financial Aid office will begin distributing the funds to students. Additionally, the Business School established a mentoring program that works with the Office of Academic Services and the Alumni Office to pair mentors (alumni) with mentees (students).

Annually, Graduating students of Rutgers University-Newark are invited to a virtual graduation celebration on May 13 from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Graduates will be congratulated and formally welcomed into the Rutgers University Alumni Association by members of Rutgers University leadership, followed by a virtual dance party.

Although there isn't an undergraduate committee dedicated to Alumni relations, the Alumni services office is working to create one. This committee would be composed of upper-class students (third and fourth years) and would assist in organizing and directing campus-wide programs/events oriented towards alumni engagement. The hopes are for the committee to increase visibility to the Office of Alumni Engagement within the student body, and further utilize the Alumni Center. [The Rutgers University–Newark Alumni Center](#) was created to “support the contributions being made by alumni and enhance their presence in the community at

large. It is a place to reunite with friends, former classmates, and professors to engage in critical conversations about issues that are important to the university community and the city of Newark.” Nonetheless, the Alumni Center is rarely used by Alumni, and almost never by students.

There are four pillars the Office of Alumni Engagement used to measure success: Go, Give, Connect, and Help. The first pillar, *Go*, is about the attendance and participation of alumni in University-sponsored events. *Give*, is in regards to the contributions Alumni make to the university. Next, the Office of Alumni Engagement assesses how *connected* alumni are with the office on different platforms (social media, email list, [newsletter](#)). Lastly, how much alumni *help*, for example- are they volunteering on campus, mentoring students, etc. The Office of Alumni Engagement reviews each pillar every year and examines how much engagement took place and then it is compared with previous years.

Serving as a hub for many resources, the Newark Career Development Center (hereby referred to as the CDC) is brainstorming new and innovative ways to increase Alumni engagement and buy-in on the virtual connections. The CDC recently launched the Alumni Newsletter, which highlights certain events the Center hosts with the hopes of gaining interest from Alumni. Given the Newark campus's unique characteristics, instead of the CDC planning events around majors/school, their programs are centered towards identities and industries. In April of 2020, the Career Development Center launched a comprehensive [website](#) highlighting the plethora of opportunities and available resources for students. However, the response and utilization of the website were somewhat underwhelming. To increase visibility, the CDC created a course-like tab on the University Platform *Canvas*. It highlights and sends reminders to students about CDC-sponsored events (see image below).



In addition to our conversations with the Career Development Center, we also spoke with The Office of Veterans Affairs which works with four hundred students, both on the undergraduate and graduate levels. Suppose students are interested in connecting with Veteran Alumni. In that case, the VA office facilitates a school-to-school match or major to major match. For example: if a student is interested in connecting with a computer science VA alumni, the VA office compiles a list of students who graduated from the Newark School of Arts & Sciences (SAS-N) in the specified discipline. That list is then broken into students with Veteran Affairs affiliations and students that are not.

Rutgers School of Criminal Justice (SCJ)

When researching alumni efforts made by the School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) we asked: How does SCJ connect alumni to undergraduates? What challenges, prior and current to COVID-19, has SCJ faced while connecting alumni to undergraduates? What can be done to improve those challenges?

After discussion with SCJ staff, the school currently has a Criminal Justice Association that is currently undergoing an election. The Association typically handles alumni matters such as events and panels, however the ongoing pandemic has stalled the election process. The first meeting to discuss matters is set to take place in march and School of Criminal Justice University Senator Brianna Santiago has been invited to sit in on the process on behalf of the University Senate.

Other methods of alumni connections include: providing students with internship opportunities with Rutgers alumni in a variety of fields, executing agency panels hosted by alumni such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) , and consistent internal and external interaction. The DEA hosted a panel in early February, 2021 that was led by alumni panelists. In efforts to expand outreach, SCJ offers undergraduates ambassador opportunities that may provide them with alumni connections. Students can participate in community events such as Giving Day and Women's History Month.

School of Public Affairs and Administration (SPAA)

After researching alumni efforts with the Director of Public Engagement for SPAA, there is a record of elaborate attempts and opportunities to connect undergraduates with alumni. There are requirements that must be upheld including the alumni obtaining a MPA or MBA degree and undergraduates taking part in at least one internship to graduate. Internships provided by SPAA are in direct connection with alumni within different departments such as HR, Corporate America, federal and non-profit organizations, and more.

SPAA has a database that allows administrators to easily connect alumni to undergraduate students through panels and ambassador opportunities. The Ambassador Program allows students to create a pipeline to graduate students, leadership skills, and a \$500 stipend. SPAA's Dean also has an open door policy for all students inviting them to lunches and meetings to discuss furthering their academic careers and networks.

SPAA faces a challenge when attempting to attract undergraduates to events and opportunities. Connecting with alumni is easy compared to getting undergrad students to seek mentorships with alumni and attend panels. As of now the current alumni executive board is facing issues, however once resolved there are plans for outreach to be improved. The executive board is elected every two years and will run social media accounts to further outreach efforts and increase engagement with undergraduates in hopes to increase participation.

School of Nursing

The Rutgers School of Nursing alumni association (RSOANA) serves the three campuses of Rutgers (Newark, New Brunswick and Blackwood). The vision of the RSOANA is to:

- Foster the social and educational interests of alumni members
- Foster communication among alumni, students and faculty
- Maintain alumni interest in current Rutgers SON programs and promote loyalty of its alumni

- Foster continued interest in current programs of Rutgers SON, support its recruitment and sustain its mission and related activities.
- Promote and encourage bachelor's and advanced degrees in nursing education, and
- Encourage involvement in professional nursing organizations.

The largest function of the RSONAA is the annual gala for scholarships and awards, students are offered an opportunity for a variety of scholarships, including the RSONAA scholarship, the Elizabeth M. Fenlason Award, The Caruso Family Scholarship, the Aspire to Inspire Scholarship, the Scarpa Memorial Scholarship, In 2020 12 students were selected to receive these scholarships. RSONAA members participate in the student run annual forum for career planning, engaging with junior and senior students answering questions about the next steps to their career as nurses. The alumni association also has developed a mentoring program offering mentor relationships between alumni and students in all programs in the university, undergraduate and graduate studies. Many of these partnerships with mentors have continued post graduation from Rutgers. Alumni association members attend the annual RSON convocation to congratulate graduating students and formally welcome them as a fellow alum, of course, this has not been possible in 2020 and 2021.

The alumni association always seeks to engage with students especially to make them aware of the goals of the alumni association and invite them to become active members.

One challenge that the RSONAA faces is that it relies on alumni and graduates to keep the association active and effective.

New Brunswick Campus

Departments and units across Rutgers-New Brunswick partner with Alumni Relations on numerous initiatives every year. Each initiative seems to be developed by the individual unit and not necessarily coordinated or part of an overall model for engagement. The examples provided in this report are only a small sampling of what has been offered in New Brunswick in recent years.

As part of Welcome Week in 2019, alumni parents of new students were welcomed back to campus with an Open House at the Alumni House. Also during the 2019 Welcome Week, students participated in the Great Scarlet Search which included questions and clues to help new students find important locations on campus. The Alumni House was one of the locations. One of the prizes included a dinner at the Alumni House for the winning team and their guests and alumni who were selected based on the students' academic and career interests. Scarlet Council, a student organization with a focus on student/alumni engagement has been a partner in the Scarlet Knight Challenge, a series of workshops, programs and events to support new students with their transition to campus. At the other end of the continuum of students' time at Rutgers, is the Old Queens Senior Reception in which Student Affairs and Alumni Relations jointly sponsor this traditional event in advance of Commencement. Seniors are "officially" welcomed into their new status as alumni.

Networking nights are coordinated by numerous departments, academic units and schools, but a primary organizer is Career Exploration and Success (CES). They have formalized their connection with alumni with the Student Alumni Career Connect. This includes career interest exploration sessions (including virtual), internships and other experiential learning opportunities.

Scarlet Talks are alumni video talks about careers and a collaborative partnership with CES and Alumni Relations. The theme of networking and learning from alumni is also incorporated into Scarlet Conversations, a dinner series led by Scarlet Council and Alumni Relations.

In addition to returning to campus as part of programs to educate, mentor, network or provide career guidance and advice, many alumni have been active on campus over the years at student events and campus traditions such as Homecoming Bed Races, Scarlet Days of Services (both as host sites for service work and with teams to serve) Dance Marathon, Rutgers Day, and various Athletic and Greek Life events. Class year reunions, in previous years, had greater visibility on campus.

Interconnected to messages about alumni and engagement are messages about philanthropy and giving. Some programs in New Brunswick are designed to raise awareness about annual giving (TAG Days - Teaching Annual Giving) and recognize students who donate such as receptions and the distribution of graduation cords to seniors who give, etc. Scarlet Forever is a message that has been used interchangeably to promote alumni engagement as well as the importance of developing a “habit or pattern” of giving back to Rutgers.

Student/Alumni Career Connect managed through the Career Development Office

Digital mentoring program

All NB Students and Alumni

Rutgers Alumni Association

Undergraduate Committee

Various events, Alumni/Student Speed Networking, Reading Days Coffee Hour, “Meet the RAA” virtual meet and greet.

Cook Community Alumni Association

Alumni Board Member attends SGA Meetings, SGA President sits on the CCAA Board

“Life After College”, Happy Hour Hosts

Virtual Career and Internship Fair Series

Managed out of Career Exploration and Success and promoted by the RUAA

Key Takeaways & Related Recommendations

The history of Rutgers University is unique, starting in 1766 and evolving through numerous organizational changes, incorporating values for diversity and inclusion, visions for the student experience, academic excellence, and national prominence. These organizational changes have not only been transformational for students but also alumni.

Based on the initial research gathered, the Student Affairs Committee offers the following broad set of recommendations.

A more systematic survey and marketing of efforts

As is frequently the case at Rutgers University, there are a number of University-wide initiatives connecting alumni with students as well as efforts organized at the campus-level, school-level, and even discipline-level. As indicated in the introduction,

this report just scratches the surface. Moving forward, there is value in getting a better sense of what all is taking place in order to eliminate duplication and enhance the effectiveness by identifying synergies. Finding creative and meaningful ways to raise awareness of these efforts while students are enrolled at Rutgers also would be valuable.

Use the established mission of the Rutgers University Alumni Association (RUAA) as the framework for messaging and coordinated initiatives to showcase how alumni

- Strengthen Rutgers
- Build Community
- Foster Scarlet Pride

Provide key campus partners across the university (Athletics, Student Affairs, Career Services, Academic Schools, etc.) with an update of the mission and an overview of the new organizational and staffing model within the RUAA. Where appropriate, create opportunities for collaborations across key units/departments to develop coordinated initiatives associated with the goals and objectives to strengthen Rutgers, build community, and foster Scarlet Pride.

Share across New Brunswick, Camden, Newark, and RBHS examples of successful initiatives and programs which support these goals and objectives and provide assistance to units to replicate and implement - building on expertise and talent - and creating similar offerings and experiences across all campuses.

Create opportunities to regularly connect alumni “cohorts” with students based on interest areas, regions (prospective students and alumni groups), affinity/identity groups, career interests, etc. These can be on campus, virtually, at places of employment, and in regional locations.

Promote, in a consistent and coordinated way, the meaning of “Scarlet Forever”. Everyone who works at Rutgers as well as students and alumni should be able to speak about this concept in a consistent, coordinated, and meaningful way. If “Scarlet Forever” is a value to be championed, alumni need to be visible and actively involved in the life of the university - on campus, across the nation, and the globe - and everyone should be able to speak about this in a consistent way.

Focus future efforts more on amplifying “the Big R” and allowing other programs and efforts (at the campus, school, or discipline-level) to continue

Suggestions include:

- Reimagine alumni houses to become a hub where students and alumni can gather together
 - Hold Alumni Houses Open House at the beginning of each term and invite alumni organizations to have a seat at the table to showcase their programs
 - Utilize meeting rooms and spaces where students and groups meet-up with alumni both formally and informally

- RUAA co-sponsor in partnership with campus career centers a *SIGNATURE* semiannual university-wide alumni/student event focusing on alumni mentoring, career building.
- RUAA establish a large presence at each campuses Student Involvement Fair (2 times a year) incorporating each of the Charter Organizations that have student/alumni connections
- RUAA be a guest presenter at SGAs to promote programs and events
- Encourage the RUAA to incorporate Alumni/Student opportunities into all their Alumni messaging, eg Student/Alumni Connect, Handshake
- Encourage the RUAA to partner with all academic units in support of smaller localized events.

Resolution

Be it hereby resolved:

That the University Senate recommends the adoption of the following:

- That the University take steps to evaluate the effectiveness of current processes utilized to raise awareness about existing opportunities currently in place that incorporate alumni into the student experience and that awareness continue to be enhanced throughout all facets of each campus.
- That the University utilize the established mission of the Rutgers University Alumni Association as the *framework for messaging* and *for coordinated initiatives* to showcase how alumni strengthen Rutgers, build community, and foster Scarlet Pride.
- That the University pursue via the RUAA periodic, regular, and productive engagement with Rutgers students, during and after they are enrolled as students, inviting them to Rutgers academic and social events and encouraging their participation as volunteers, mentors, contributors.
- That the University build a capable and reliable organizational structure necessary to manage the complex network of past and present Rutgers University students.

Submitted by the Student Affairs Committee
2/24/2021

