Service beyond the campus: An Evaluation of the customer service of UNIBE alumni office

Rochelli Subero

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Service beyond the Campus

An evaluation of the Customer Service of UNIBE Alumni Office

March 2004
Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Department of Hospitality and Service Management
Graduate Studies

M.S. Service Management
Presentation of Thesis/Project Findings

Name: Rochelli Subero SS# 999-95-6331 Date: 5/2/04

Title of Research: "Service Beyond the Campus: An evaluation of the customer service of UNIBE alumni office"

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cc. Department Student Record File – Original
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Abstract

The Universidad Iberoamericana – UNIBE- has been using strategies to attract and maintain graduates’ involvement within the university. Furthermore, UNIBE has invested financial and marketing efforts to continue being part of their lives. After attracting alumni, the association’s intention is to maintain their interest and focus on enhancing customer satisfaction and customer value.

The purpose of the present study is to evaluate the customer service delivered by the alumni office to 2,371 Dominican graduates so far reached. Since the foundation of the office, the university hasn’t evaluated the perception and attitudes of graduates towards the service offered by alumni office. The main tools used to achieve the intended purpose of this study were surveys emailed to the entire alumni database, literature review and analysis of the best practices.

According to the results of the surveys, graduates have been satisfied with the courtesy and treatment received by the staff. On the other hand, however, former students are not using the facilities they are allowed to use on campus. Finally, our findings showed that graduates are likely to participate more enthusiastically in activities where they can interact directly with former classmates or in those which offered a direct benefit, particularly Job Fairs.
**Service Beyond the Campus**

An evaluation of the customer service of UNIBE alumni office

"They may forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel"

Carl W. Buechner

**CHAPTER 1**

**i. Introduction**

Every educational institution has several customers, such as faculty, community, current and prospective students, alumni, Government agencies, staff, competitors, parents, among others. Over the years, academic institutions have been using strategies to identify, evaluate and measure communication as well as marketing efforts in order to satisfy such target market needs and expectations.

Alumni are considered to be one of the most important ‘customers’ of a university. Firstly, because their ‘satisfaction’ is the most essential pre-condition to become donors, and secondly, because alumni involvement is a move toward enhancing the value of the university.

Most universities around the world have devoted significant financial as well as marketing resources to maintain their relationship with its graduates. Universidad Iberoamericana – UNIBE, located in Dominican Republic, is not an exception; since 2001 the University has been using tools to attract and maintain its current student population.
As a private institution that is tuition-dependant, UNIBE has been considering the alumni’s satisfaction as a condition for engagement and involvement of alumni within the university’s life.

This research will evaluate the customer service UNIBE has been delivering to its graduates through its Alumni Office. After the analysis, we would be able to determine a set of more accurate strategies to satisfy their needs or simply improve our plan in order to satisfy their expectations.

ii. Background

Universidad Iberoamericana –UNIBE is a private, higher education institution founded in 1982 in Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic’s capital city. The University started running on September 1983 offering three undergraduate degrees: Civil Engineer, Law and Medicine. In addition to local recruitment, the University has been focusing its efforts into attracting international students, in particular from Spain, United States, Puerto Rico and Canada. Today, the university offers 14 undergraduate degrees and 3 graduate programs.

In 2001 on its 20th anniversary, the Board of Trustees realized the importance of reaching graduates to have them together with students, professors and administrative staff, so as to jointly participate in a series of different activities to celebrate the special occasion; a ‘committee’ formed by graduates that were working as administrative staff was in charge of developing strategies nationwide to attract former students: newspapers articles, phone calls and pamphlets are examples of the tools used at this early stage to achieved this goal.

A group of innovative graduates that were working as administrative officers on campus during 2001, helped create and form the alumni association, which was named “Círculo de Egresados de UNIBE” (CEU). At the beginning, the association has as a broad mission “to improve alumni relations and keep the University in touch with graduates and their classmates”.
During 2001, the association celebrated the first homecoming meeting. Workshops and elections among graduates to select the different positions such as President, Vice President and Secretary were held. They also elected the directors of two committees: Planning and Follow-up Committee.

Subsequently, the university provided a full time office on Campus devoted to serve graduates concerns. The main task of the office was not only to keep alumni better informed about its services and benefits, but also to inform everyone about the positive contributions the university and graduates were making to society, as well as to promote continuing education programs.

UNIBE has been supporting the alumni association in its planning related activities as well as in its financial requirements. CEU has been organizing different types of activities (academic and social) and developing strategies to motivate alumni involvement. Examples of tools the university has been using are alumni annual meeting, conferences, job fairs, alumni ID that allows the usage of the Gym, the library and laboratories located on Campus. The association is currently working to develop a Career Network program for alumni and students.

iii. Problem Statement

UNIBE has been using strategies to attract and maintain graduate involvement within the university. The University has invested financial and marketing resources to continue being part of the alumni’ lives. After attracting alumni, the association’s intention is to maintain their interest as well as to focus on enhancing customer satisfaction and customer value. It’s not just about attracting, is about retaining.

The main objective of this research is to evaluate the customer service the alumni office is delivering to its 2,371 alumni network. Since the establishment of the alumni office, the University
hasn’t evaluated the services it has been delivering for over a year; knowing the CEU’s strengths and weaknesses would benefit the association and further enable redesigned services, if necessary.

iv. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to be able to measure alumni satisfaction and to identify whether ‘tools’ the University is currently using are achieving the expected goals. After analysing the alumni’s perspectives and perceptions, the objective is to be able to improve the service systems in general. If graduates are expecting more from their *alma mater*, the university needs be able to improve service to the alumni population.

Our intention is to create a responsive office focusing on alumni. Clearly, alumni turn out to be one of the best promoters of the institution:

1. Their goodwill and favourable word of mouth would enable better recruitment, hence enabling us to attract and serve more people.
2. Alumni take pride in the institution and are glad to contribute to its future success.
3. The institution receives favourable attention from the news media, further spreading its story.

v. Major Questions

Through this research, we will measure aspects of alumni awareness, perceptions and attitudes toward the university. The basic questions to be addressed are:

1. **What is the level of responsiveness of the alumni office? Are graduates satisfied with the information or responses they received?** Responsive institutions focus on the
customer, striving to see things from the customers’ viewpoint while satisfying their needs and expectations.

2. Are we using the right tools to deliver our services? Are we writing or speaking from alumni perspective? Using the right tools at the right time would be an essential part of customer service. The effective use of email, direct mail and phone calls can determine the efficiency of the service. Are the association’s communications and publications effective?

3. After years of forgetfulness, are the benefits we are offering attractive enough to maintain alumni’s interest? If the benefits are not attractive enough it could be very difficult to maintain alumni’s interest in the association. How do alumni view and evaluate association services? Are there services that should be reduced or eliminated?

vi. Methodology

The methodology that is going to be used in this research is Quantitative. Data will be accessed through questionnaires using Stratified Random Sampling, applied to more than 2,371 Dominican graduates from 13 undergraduate programs. Questionnaires would be the main tools of the research because of the rapid turnaround in data collection.

vii. About literature

The literature will examine books, journals and basic documents that have information about UNIBE’s alumni association. In addition, books about marketing such as Marketing in Higher Education Institution written by Philip Kotler (1999); Excellence in Advancement: application for higher education and non profit organization by William W. Tromble; New Directions for

viii. Why this study is important?

*How does the alumni association determine how well it is performing?* If the association seeks to be excellent, to be distinctive and to provide a high level of satisfaction, it needs to develop a strategy for evaluating its mission and resources.

The existence of alumni associations is not common in Dominican Republic: according to our research just 8 higher education institutions have alumni associations established, out of 33 universities nationwide. So UNIBE is investing efforts and resources in creating a valuable asset, which in the long run can become a role model for the other higher education institutions in the country.

On the other hand, short range consequences of this research can determine if the efforts are appropriate. For example, in considering the relevance of alumni contact, it is essential to evaluate which method of contact is the most important for each graduate in order to address each individual preferences. The importance of the study is to empirically examine the reactions of alumni to different methods of service the university is using.

A long range consequence of this study is the possibility of continuous improvement in a process that requires a mindset of constant monitoring, problem identification and research.
Giving alumni more choices regarding services and frequency of contact, as well as preferred information in newsletters and memos will be an important task for universities interested in maintaining a deep relationship with their alumni over decades to come.

ix. Delimitations and limitations

The research will be limited to evaluate the satisfaction of graduates regarding the customer service the alumni office delivers in order to maintain their involvement and interest. The academic programs, professors and facilities during their academic life won’t be evaluated. The study will be limited to national graduates, because the university doesn’t have yet proper contact with its graduates abroad.

x. Summary

This study will be very significant for UNIBE’s alumni association. It will allow the association to evaluate strategies it has been using in order to become a national role model regarding alumni association in Dominican Republic. For the research, the method used is Quantitative. Through questionnaires, the level of satisfaction of the alumni so far contacted will be determined. This charter provides a general idea about the research aims and scope, the next chapter will describe in more detail literature about alumni associations, it missions, services and so on. Chapter 3 will talk about the methodology, chapter 4 will refer to our analysis and key findings and finally, in chapter 5 we arrived to the general conclusions from this research study.
II. Customer Service

The service sector encompasses a diverse and complex range of organizations and enterprises, which include:

(1) National and local government: In such areas, for example, as education, health, social security, police, military, transport, legal, information, etc.

(2) Non-profit private services: For example, charities, churches, research foundations, mutual societies, and art foundations.

(3) For-profit private services: For example, utilities, hotels, airlines, restaurants, retailers, banks, insurance companies, advertising agencies, entertainment, etc.

a. Evolution of customer service

Barnes (2000)\(^1\) stated that understanding the customer and identifying his or her needs was unheard of in many business in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, when markets were production oriented. Business generally knew that whatever could be produced would be sold. Little attention was paid to what consumers wanted.

This product orientation continued into the 1920s, when manufactures faced increased competition and, as a result, began to emphasize selling as the foundation of the marketing initiatives. This sales orientation focused on finding customers to buy the products manufactured by a company. Still, there was little attention paid to individual customers' needs or trying to understand the customer.

\(^1\) Barnes, James. “Secrets of Customers Relationship Management”. 2000. Page 6
Although some companies today still adhere to a sales orientation in carrying out of their business, by the middle of the 20th century, many companies began to take a more customer-oriented view of marketing. Many awoke to the realization that maybe they should produce what customers want and need. (Barnes, 2000)²

As the field of marketing matured, managers in businesses and academic institutions began to realize that customers were not as passive as had been thought. By the late 1960s, marketers began to pay a lot more attention to taking a much more strategic approach to marketing. (Barnes, 2000)³

The result was a new era of marketing, one dominated by great progress in a strategic approach toward market segmentation, product and brand positioning, differentiation of the product offering and true understanding of what customers wanted and needed.

In higher education, Pearson (1998)⁴ stated that “Alumni in focus groups expressed frustration with marketing communications, and they felt were random and insufficiently salient to their interests and not written from an alumni perspective. The survey data indicated that readership of the main alumni newspaper was moderate, at best, and that most alumni had little awareness. Not surprisingly, the study confirmed that the relationship alumni had played a paramount role in their gift making decision: alumni are more likely to be donors if they are very satisfied with their student experience”.

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² Idem. Page 6
³ Idem Page 6
b. Customer satisfaction

Customers enter into a purchase situations with certain expectations. Whether buying a car, a stereo, a vacation, attending the symphony or donating to a charity, customers have ideas about how they want to feel when they complete the interaction and while they are using or experiencing the product or service.

Customer care is the single most important factor for any organization success. Delivering good service to your customers becomes challenging when you realize that one size will “not fit-all” (not all your customers want to contact you or interact with you in the same way). Technology provides customers multiple channels as telephone, emails, fax and Internet to contact services.

Pearson’s (1998)\(^5\) said that one of the revealing findings in his research indicates that satisfaction is greater among alumni who are most satisfied with the advising they have received, and the second, the degree in which alumni are engaged with and involved with the university. “... just about every such measure in surveys indicated that the relationship alumni have with their university falters badly in this regard. This identifies a major challenge that universities must address” Pearson stated.

c. How expectations are formed?

*How do the various publics form their expectations?* Kotler (1999)\(^6\) considers that expectations are formed on the basis of the person’s prior experience, statements by friends and associates, and communications with the institution and other like it. If the

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5 Idem.  
institutions raise expectations too high, some publics may be disappointed when the institutions fail to deliver.

If a school maintains lower expectations, it may result in high satisfaction among students and other publics; but by downplaying the benefits it offers, the school may discourage applicants who would, in fact, be quite satisfied with the institution. The safest path is for the school to plan for and to deliver a consistent level of performance, and at the same time to communicate this level to its students and other publics.

Kotler (1999)⁷ “In a like manner, educational institutions seeking to attract and retain customers must track their customers’ expectations, their perceptions of the school, their level of satisfaction, and their perceptions of competitors as well.”

Pearson (1998)⁸ believes that alumni do form perceptions of the institution, which are formed more from vague impressions gleaned from outside sources than from information provided by the university. Indeed, alumni who were more informed about a university form its own sources had more positive perceptions of it and were likely to be donors.

Pearson (1998)⁹ suggested that universities would benefit from a comprehensive and coordinated communications strategy to ensure that communications with alumni are strategically timed rather than occasional and fortuitous, designed to articulate consistent messages, develop with alumni interests in mind and informed by clear objectives.

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⁷ Idem. Page 42
⁹ Idem. Page 4
i. Word of Mouth

Service quality is considered a critical determinant of competitiveness. Attention to service quality can help an organization to differentiate itself from other organizations and through it gain a lasting competitive advantage.

Ghobadian (1994) \(^{10}\) considers that service quality affect the repurchase intentions of both existing and potential customers. Market research has shown that customers dissatisfied with a service will divulge their experiences to more than three other people. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that poor service will reduce the potential customer base. “According to the Technical Assistance Research Project (TARP), it costs about four times more to attract new customers. Positive word of mouth can be a powerful tool for attracting new customers. Negative word of mouth can have devastating impact on the credibility and effectiveness of the organizations' efforts to attract new customers”.

**Word of Mouth** is defined as the extent to which customer informs friends, relatives and colleagues about an event that has created a certain level of satisfaction.

Taylor (1997)\(^{11}\) stated that “According to a McKinsey & Co. study, 67% of U.S. consumer-goods sales are based on word-of-mouth. Heavy exposure to the best and most expensive advertising is not enough to get people to part with their money, whereas a mere mention of a product by friends, family and even strangers will often do the trick. Recommendations and advice are usually given freely, but now, with more and more companies applying stealth marketing, that 'free' advice might have been paid for”.

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\(^{11}\) Taylor, James. Word of mouth is where it's at. 1997. Page 26
ii. Loyalty

Rowley (2003)\(^{12}\) considers that loyalty is associated with the customer’s willingness to continue in a relationship, which is often represented by switching the behavior or the propensity to switch to another provider. Loyalty is a complex construct that involves both behavioral and attitudinal aspects. Customers who exhibit loyalty behavior engage in a repeat business, where this is appropriate.

Customers who are loyal in attitude are likely to make recommendations to someone else, and sometimes their loyal attitude will lead to loyal behavior in the form of repeat purchases. For instance, loyal students, might not only stay themselves, but also have a role in encouraging other students to stay. This means that strategies for relationship building need extend to all students, and not be restricted to those in a potential withdrawal situation. (Rowley, 2003)\(^{13}\)

d. The nature of satisfaction... Keep your CUSTOMERS COMING BACK!

What determines whether the consumer is highly satisfied, somewhat satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied? Kotler (1999)\(^{14}\) believes that “satisfaction level is determined by the difference between the service performance as perceived by the customer and what the customer expected: perceive performance and expectations.”

Kotler (1999)\(^{15}\) a person could experience one of three levels of satisfaction. If the institutions’ performance falls short of expectations, the person is dissatisfied. On the other hand, if the college meets the expectations, the graduate tends to be satisfied and


\(^{13}\) Idem. Page 251

\(^{14}\) Kotler (1999). Page 41

\(^{15}\) Idem
will stay. If the institutions’ performance exceeds the person’s expectations, the person is highly satisfied, pleased and even delighted.

Of course, various publics and customers of the institution may have differing expectations and perceptions of the alumni’s office performance. Two people may see the same performance but evaluate it differently because their expectations and interpretations are different.

Barnes (2001)\(^\text{16}\) believes that marketers in the early 21\(^{st}\) Century must accept the principle that customers are long-term assets of a company. It is necessary to invest in them and to manage that investment to ensure their repeat business. "Getting customers to come back again and again is a challenge for business that operates in a competitive environment" he stated. More and more companies are placing an emphasis on customer retention through superior service and increased knowledge about individual consumers, with the view that this will lead to more satisfied customers.

Why do customers come back? In business, if product and price are perceived by the customer to be virtually the same everywhere, what will be the differentiating factor? Customers will return to business where they feel good, where they are treated well. Barnes (2001)\(^\text{17}\) considers that when all else is perceived to be equal (price, product, warranty, delivery, etc.) how the customer is treated and made feel before, during and after the transaction will be the deciding factor in whether the customer returns. "Whether a customer comes back to deal with a company again often has absolutely nothing to do with what they sell or even what we charge for the product or service. The

\(^{16}\) Barnes (2000). Page 9
\(^{17}\) Idem. Page 13
customer's decision has everything to do with how he or she is treated and is made to feel when dealing with the business” he stated (Barnes, 2002).

In the case of education, Pearson (1998)\(^{18}\) strongly believes that “Alumni who are most satisfied with their students experience are the most likely to remain engaged with the university; alumni who are most engaged are the most likely to read communications from the University; and those who are most informed about the university are most likely to remain engaged”. Although is important to consider that some graduates could be hooked by attractive benefits and services from university.

e. Creating Quality

Improving quality and increasing customer satisfaction are continuous processes, not discrete events. Kotler (1999)\(^{19}\) considers that institutions pursuing quality improvement need to adopt a system and processes to define customer’s needs, collect performance-relevant information, refine or revise procedures, implement new initiatives and review progress and improvements on a continuous basis.

Institutions running total quality often begin by educating a core group about quality principles and then initiating a few pilot projects, often in administrative services. For example, the first project might involve identifying causes and process improvement to shorten the time to reply to information requests, to reduce the average duration of remodeling jobs or to reduce errors in billing. Kotler (1999)\(^{20}\) believes that these type of procedures are often the easiest way to implement because they are a frequently repeated...

\(^{19}\) Kotler (1999) Page 45
\(^{20}\) Idem
procedures, amenable to the application of manufacturing-based *Total Quality Management* methods.

Total quality for an educational institution includes but goes beyond administrative services. According to Kotler (1999)\textsuperscript{21}, the *United Kingdom Institutional Quality Assurance* is a required part of government inspection procedures for every institution of further education. The Government’s 1993 *Charter for Further Education* sets out the rights of those who attend further education colleges and requires these colleges to survey customer satisfaction at least annually.

Another example about creating quality in higher education occurred in the 1980’s. The North Dakota University System tried everything to deal with the demands for quality. But there was little success and no confidence that the system could survive the 1990’s until the board examined the potential of TQM and concluded that “*TQM holds great promise for higher education institutions*”. In its “Partners for Progress Plan for 1990-1997” the board established goals for setting and achieving constantly improving standards of service that meet the needs of students, citizens, economic enterprises and colleagues in education, as appropriate for each operating unit and level of the system. The plan spelled out 1997 goals for graduates, faculty, staff, research, and public service personnel, creating a campus community and ensuring quality.

e. Measuring quality

Educational institutions offer a range of services, not just one. The core service is usually instruction, but the other services of a college often includes residential dining, counseling, advising, career planning, tutoring, library, computer and other services.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid
But, who defines what quality means in those venues? The ultimate judge is the customer, the person who decides which services to buy and which to avoid. Customer defined quality is determined by expectations and perceived performance. Kotler (1999) considers that judgments about quality often reflect one or more of the following views:

a. Conformance of standards or specifications. In this view, the more important determinant of quality is performing the service according to the stated guidelines.

b. Consistency. Educational institutions should aim to produce routine services in a consistent manner. Consistency by itself isn’t enough: consistent service quality could translate into “dependably mediocre” or “always outstanding” service.

c. Outcome quality. Did the service result in the client receiving what was desired? Did the student get the scholarship or career information he or she sought? Did the graduate succeed in getting a job? Services must be designed to provide outcomes customers’ value.

d. Process quality. This describes how the service was delivered. Was the service delivered in a manner that was appropriate and positive for the customer? For example, a student could get the information he or she needed (good outcome quality), but the process might have been slow and confusing and the personally unpleasant.

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22 Kotler (1999) Page 35
Those who are in charge of quality improvement should seek out what customers value most and then apply the approach (es) most relevant to a particular situations.

For instance, in the higher education field, the MIT Alumni Association’s board of directors initiates a long-range planning process in which they assess alumni needs for services from the association and determines whether the association is meeting those needs. During the academic years 1994 and 1995, a Long Range Strategic Committee (LRSC) was appointed by the board to take a fresh look at the work of the association. The LRSC engaged an outside market research firm to test the perceived needs and reactions of alumni both for services they were offering and others being offered by peers’ institutions.

III. Alumni

The term alumni is derived from the Latin “alumnus” meaning pupil or foster son, and is often used in connection with former member of an organization, former employees, patients, or clients. Most often, however, the term is used in connection with educational institutions, and the office that serves them is the Alumni Office.

a. The alumni movement

Webb (1998)\textsuperscript{23} states that during the winter 1913, representatives of 23 different private and public colleges and universities, representing a wide range of locations, responded to an invitation to meet at the Ohio Union on the campus of Ohio State University. It was a casual and friendly gathering to share information about alumni

activities back at their campuses. No formal constitution was adopted, nor was the organization incorporated during their two days together. The delegates were encouraged by the prospect of forming a new organization to bring together those individuals engaged in alumni work at their campuses. The annual membership fee for each college or university represented was tentatively set at five dollars.

Although, 1913, was the beginning of the Association of Alumni Secretaries, it was not only the beginning of alumni work at the various campuses. As early 1792, alumni work at Yale University began when a group of its graduates formed an organization based on the class structure and gathered information that would publish in newsletters and sent to alumni. These class activities soon became the catalyst for the solicitation of money and the formation of alumni organizations in major cities in United States. (Webb, 1998)\textsuperscript{24}.

The alumni movement began to gain momentum with the organization of alumni societies at various campuses, including Williams College (1821), Princeton University (1826), University of Virginia (1838), Amherst College (1842) and Michigan Agricultural College (1868). In 1897 the University of Michigan founded its alumni association and was the first to have a full time alumni secretary.

The year 1927 was pivotal in the history of the alumni movement. The fourteenth annual Association of Alumni Secretaries conference was held at the University of North Carolina, during which the Association of Alumni Secretaries, the Association of Alumni Funds and the Alumni Magazine Associated consolidated into a new incorporated organization known as the American Alumni Council. The purpose of this new association was the enhancement of friendly relations among members, the interchange

\textsuperscript{24} Idem
of ideas regarding their common problems and the encouragement of a spirit of professional pride of alumni work.

b. Alumni relations

Competition among educational institutions for students is increasing, requiring greater responsiveness to student’s needs. As a result, administrators and faculty are receiving the application of marketing principles to the university setting with increased enthusiasm. However, the development of true marketing philosophy is just beginning in most institutions of higher education.

One area of marketing theory, which holds relevance for higher education, is relationship marketing. The crossover of relationship marketing strategies into higher education is relatively new; however one area where colleges and universities have traditionally paid attention to long-term relationships with customers is the area of alumni relations. (Heckman, Guskey, 1998)25.

Alumni are the recipients of the ‘knowledge’ given to them by their teachers and classmates, by the administrators and staff, and in general by all personnel and experience they have been associated with in their journey through college all the way to the commencement platform or graduation day. As students, they were customers, and as alumni they remain customers.

Most institutions attempt to maintain current information about their alumni, and provide alumni with a stream of communications intended to keep them informed about their alma mater. For most universities, an obvious reason for lifetime attention to alumni

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is the hope of future donations. Yet other services performed by alumni can be equally important to universities.

Many universities depend on alumni to serve on advisory boards, assist on important campaigns, talk to prospective customers (students and parents), and provide cooperative education and employment opportunities for students and graduates.

Past university customers may also become future customers (attend to continuous education courses, graduate programs, etc.) and the *lifetime customer value concept is even more relevant when ones considers the role alumni plays as a potential word-of-mouth influences on family, friends and acquaintances*.

Du Wayne Peterson, the President of Alumni Association of MIT stated in his article “Friends for Life” of the Technology Review Magazine (1997) “Once students graduate, there are many tools to help maintain their ties to MIT, such as class reunions, class notes in Technology Review, and now the Alumni Network services and email forwarding for life. The association also offers ways to meet new people, to add to an existing social network or build a whole new one: regional clubs, the Enterprise forum, departmental telethons, alumni travel, affinity groups, Association Leadership, and Corporation visiting committees all bring together arums of different ages, backgrounds and regions”.

In 1958, the American Council Association created five objectives for an organized program of alumni activity:

1. To encourage the alumni to maintain a continuing relationship with the institution.
2. To enlist the alumni in constructive endeavour for the institution

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3. To bring to bear on the institution and its policies the judgement and view of the alumni.

4. To help the institution find ways for the encouragement of continuing education among its alumni.

5. To help create and develop among alumni a sense of responsibility not only to their institution but also to higher education in general.

c. Alumni associations

According to Webb (1998) the modern alumni association is a business organization. Its reason for existence is to afford the individual alumnus opportunity to greatly increase the efficiency of the individual effort, in behalf of the institution, and enable them to keep in touch with fellow alumni.

Fox (1997), vice president of Institutional Advancement of Emory University, said “We needed to know more about our alumni so we could know how we might better serve and involve them, and indeed, better understand how they both think about and feel about their alma mater”.

“Handbook of Alumni Organizations” (1997) states that the mission of alumni associations is to provide its members with individual development of the highest educational, moral, intellectual and social excellence; the commitment to a lifelong brotherhood of firm and enduring friendships; the opportunity for development of leadership skills that can be utilized in an undergraduate environment and throughout life.

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28 Fox, Bill. The Alumni Survey conducted; finds high satisfaction levels. www.emory.edu .1997
and the commitment to contribute to their educational environment, their community, and their country throughout their lives.

The mission of the Association of Alumni and Alumnae of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is “serving the needs of our alumni for lifelong relationships with one another and with the Institute and serving MIT’s needs for alumni support and involvement”.

The challenge of alumni associations is to keep in touch, treat graduates well and provide the service they require. Without current information, alumni soon forget. When they return to the campus, they tend to remember the good things and block out the bad experiences. They often bask in the remembrance of pleasant and meaningful events, but that goodwill for the institution’s quickly fades when they encounter apathy, indifference, or even rudeness on the part of some secretary or staff person. Again, communication and service are the keys. (Tromble, 1998)30.

i. Officers of the association

The alumni clubs or chapters are means of establishing a connection. They require a large amount of staff time, a corps of willing volunteers, and adequate funding, but they have been part of alumni programming for many years. Staff at an alumni office usually handle the invitations, speakers, planning, and management of these events, which may include dinners, athletic events, theatre, or annual meetings.

Institutions have had, for many years, paid officers whose duty was, among a multiplicity of other duties, to look after the alumni. The work of such officers has been

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directed with a view to making use of the power represented by the alumni body, and to carry out definite and settled policies of the institution. (Tromble, 1998)31.

On the other hand, alumni associations are managed by a board of directors made up anywhere from three to fifteen alumni. Effective officers are very important running a successful alumni association. It will be their dedication and enthusiasm that will determine the success of the alumni program. A list of officers should include a President, a Vice president, Secretary, Treasurer, Chapter advisors, Risk Manager, Members-at-large.

"Handbook for alumni organizations" (1997)32 considers that to facilitate the effectiveness of the organization, officers of the alumni association should function within the framework of three areas of responsibility:

- Advising undergraduate chapter operations
- Housing and authority for related financial details
- Providing coordination of general alumni activities and communications.

ii. Financing

A successful alumni program needs the financial support from the alumni members. It is recommended that every alumni organization request an annual voluntary contribution. This provision is recommended to finance activities that are necessary to provide the services desired by alumni, to offer alumni continuity and also to make a reality of their continuity membership. “If an alumnus pays dues to an organization, they

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31 Idem.
32 Psi Upsilon Fraternity. 1997
know that they belong to the association and is more certain to be interested and involved”. “Handbook for alumni organizations” (1997)33

The need of funds can be divided into two areas – annual expenses and special projects. The former includes the costs of a newsletter, postage, stationary, programming, social functions, etc. Special projects include purchasing a house, remodelling, establishing a scholarship fund, etc.

There are many ‘secrets’ to obtaining regular financial support. First, the need must be clearly identified. Second, one must ask for the money. Third, supporters must be thanked and recognized. If alumni associations remember these secrets, alumni will begin to establish a “habit” for contributing.

- Funds and fundraising

In addition of attracting students, most educational institutions must attract financial support to carry on their activities. Most private institutions are not-for-profit organizations and rely on tuition from students, on income from endowment funds, and on donations and grants. Those individuals and organizations that make gifts of money and other assets to the institution are Donors. Thus, a university’s donors include alumni, alumni parents, friends of the university, foundations, corporations and government agencies.

Alumni associations also rely on fundraising to plan activities as well as to support their facilities and services.

33 Idem. Page 27
There are a number of funds set up by alumni associations. The funds are basically used for long-range planning. According the Psi Upsilon Fraternity, located in Indianapolis, Indiana, if an alumni association is well established, it will probably have at least one of these funds:

- **Chapter endowment fund**: This fund is comprised of monies set aside from initiation fees and other sources. This money is used for future emergencies or to make loans to worthy undergraduate members. The fund also may cover new purchases such as remodelling or new furnishings for a chapter room or house.

- **House ownership fund**: this fund arranges the financial plan and structure of the chapter so that it will own its house free and clear as soon as possible.

On the other hand, alumni will not contribute unless they know exactly where they donations are going. Possible uses of the money can be: chapter scholarship fund; a fund to help send members to annual conventions; capital fundraising campaign for chapter house acquisition, improvement or expansion; an account to help pay for the publication of the alumni newsletter, among others

**iii. Committees**

The number and type of committees will vary with each alumni association, as emphasized activities and needs differ. However, committees can greatly enhance the organization of an alumni group, and they also free the majority of the membership from the tedious details of administering a large organization. Committees provide an opportunity for everyone to get involved. “Possible committees that could be formed within the alumni association, depending upon its needs: attendance, hospitality, dues,
programs, finance, public relations, expansion, legislation and by laws, awards, networking, directory, community service, social, historian, editor”. (Handbook of Alumni Organizations, 1997)34

d. Alumni overseas

Reaching graduates overseas could be one of the most difficult tasks of an alumni association. Locating ‘lost’ alumni requires careful planning and availability of economic resources.

Birbeck University of London considers that graduates that are living or working outside United Kingdom can still keep in touch with its alma mater and other UK graduates, through offices that the institution has around the globe or through the British Council, which has facilities for alumni from UK to keep in touch with each other. They, also, run events, special offers and benefits in several countries including Australia, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Moreover, Rutgers University wants to stay in touch with its alumni and friends all over the world. The Alumni Abroad program keeps former students and scholars informed of developments on campus and facilities continued communication among Rutgers alumni all over the world. Alumni Abroad offers the opportunity to get together occasionally with friends and classmates from Rutgers, to help prospective students in the community decide whether Rutgers is the right choice, to network with other Rutgers graduates as they return home, to continue existing and develop new research collaborations.

34Idem (Page 28)
City University, located in London, states that almost 25 percent of its alumni live outside UK, so local contacts are invaluable in developing a true sense of its community worldwide. “Our vision is to support overseas branches by helping them promote the professional and social interests of their members. Whether you are travelling, re-locating or residing overseas, the wealth of international graduates allows for much scope in the development of alumni groups outside UK”.35

City University also believes that overseas groups can assist graduates to develop their business initiatives and careers, help with any enquiries from prospective students and generally offer a deficient infrastructure of support. They can also offer the opportunity organise and attend events held at both a professional and social level opening up the potential to develop from every perspective. City University Business School has international contacts in Australia, Canada, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Korea, New Zeland, Norway, Pakistan, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and United State of America.

On the other hand, Peterson (1999)36 stated that alumni who came to MIT from outside US and who have returned to their native countries to live and work, have opportunities to stay connected to MIT and continue the unique friendship of their student days have been limited or nonexistent. Many have invested time and resources to attend reunions and there has been well-established MIT clubs in few cities in Canada, Europe, Mexico and Asia, but there was little interest available to most foreign grads around the globe. In recent years, with the body of alumni outside North America

35 (www.cass.city.ac.uk)
growing to some 10,000 both association staff and alumni want to change the situation. In some cases, existing initiatives are well underway.

City University\textsuperscript{37}, suggests key activities to maintain international contact:

- Offering informal local advice to alumni moving into the area
- Sharing information about your experience studying abroad with prospective students
- Assisting members of International Offices at a local student recruitment fair, if relevant in the area.
- Organising informal gatherings alumni in the area.

As an international contact of the university it’s important to receive the support from the main alumni office, which may include: a simple information/guidance pack, regular copies of University publications to keep alumni up to date with what’s happening at the University; named contact in the alumni office for advice or support; and a list of other international alumni contacts worldwide.

e. Alumni involvement

To achieve alumni involvement, associations must develop attractive strategies that include both, services as well as benefits. Additionally, alumni involvement requires proper endowment of resources so that it becomes easier for them to contact the university.

Alumni must be informed. Granted some may not really care, but to engender interest and understanding, which leads to support, alumni have to be kept abreast of the

\textsuperscript{37}(www.cass.city.ac.uk)
changes at their alma mater. According to Tromble (1998)\(^{38}\) it is easier to keep alumni “in the loop” when they live close by: news releases, feature articles, special events, and social contacts help to keep the spirit alive. But, when graduates live thousands of miles away, other strategies must be used, like newsletters and correspondences.

i. Services and benefits

Alumni need to have connection with their alma mater. According to Tromble (1998)\(^ {39}\) they want to know what’s going on and who is doing what, especially as it pertains to classmates or personalities they know. They want to know about their programs and activities, because when good things are happening it makes them proud to be associated with the institution.

Alumni demand services. There are all sorts of ways in which they expect to receive such services. For example, they look to the alumni office to help them get tickets to athletic events, concerts or others happenings. They contact the alumni office when they may have a problem with getting transcripts, or to help their child in the enrolment process or to get in touch with a particular professor. Sometimes alumni need help finding a job, or moving from one field of employment to another.

Along with reunions and homecomings, associations preferences nowadays tend to be an array of financial services and travel benefits to alumni, from medical insurance and retirement investments, to deals on access to computers bulletin boards, to discounts in hotels and car rentals.

\(^{38}\) Tromble. Page 230
\(^{39}\) Idem. Page 231
Not every organization agrees on which “benefits” are truly beneficial—regardless of the income they may yield.

On the other hand, Leibowitz, (1999)\textsuperscript{40} considers that alumni offices at colleges and universities are pouncing on new technologies, attempting to form tighter relationships with their graduates via email discussion groups, web sites, web cameras, on-line courses, and searchable alumni directories.

Still other alumni offices consider that their graduates are interested in career-networking possibilities, and are turning to their alma maters for everything from online business-card exchanges to e-mail interviews.

Electronic services to alumni, such as e-mail accounts that end “@alum.yourschool.edu” do more than provide alumni with free email addresses for life. “E-mail, unlike any other type of communication, has the potential to put the name of the institution, the alumni association, the mascot, the school colors, or the school slogan in front of alumni on a daily basis” Leibowitz (1999)\textsuperscript{41}.

Institutions must be aware of the appropriate use of resources. While graduates might not want to receive too much email from their alma maters, when they send email to the university, they expect an immediate response, increasing the burden on the alumni-office staff.

Carlson (2001)\textsuperscript{42} stated that George W. Baker, the associate vice president for technology administration of Xavier University of Louisiana, said that “Once a student leaves here, it's very difficult to get them to report back here about what they are doing.

\textsuperscript{40} Leibowitz, Wendy R. . “Alumni offices use electronic media to forge closer ties with graduates” (1999)
\textsuperscript{41} Idem
\textsuperscript{42} Carlson, Scott. “More colleges offer graduates lifetime e-mail addresses” (2001)
Providing an email account to graduates would be a relative cheap tracking tool for Xavier, an institution of only 3,500 students”.

The news that missed the alumni magazine cannot, in the information age, simply be held until the next issue. When college rankings are published, for example, alumni will quickly turn to their institution’s web sites, each expecting to see a well-thought-out comment from the dean of the president.

An institution can also explain its position on a controversial issue, for example by attempting to rally its alumni using the Web. A good example of this practice can be found at the University of Michigan: At the bottom of the front page of the University’ site, is possible to find a link containing information about two admissions-related lawsuits the institutions is currently fighting.

Tromble (1998)\textsuperscript{43} considers that the operative phrase is “Keep in touch.” Give alumni something to look or to read every month, and find ways to let them communicate their feelings and interest back to the alumni office.

Below are some important higher education institutions that have different kinds of programs regarding discounts, technology and other benefits, which clearly represent a benefit for these institution’ graduates:

\textsuperscript{43}Tromble
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
<td>Corporate sponsorships</td>
<td>-Advertising benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of California at Los Angeles</td>
<td>Discount Programs</td>
<td>-Long distance calls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Lost cost mortgages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton University</td>
<td>Continuing Education</td>
<td>-Electronic Seminars and discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizona University</td>
<td>Medical Insurance</td>
<td>-Medical Insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith College</td>
<td>Discounts</td>
<td>-Discounts at national travel agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin</td>
<td>Corporate Sponsorships</td>
<td>-Advertising benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Mailing benefit nationwide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State University</td>
<td>Annuity program</td>
<td>-Help alumni investment for their retirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanford University</td>
<td>Web Portals</td>
<td>-Headlines, customized stock quote and financial news.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts Institute of Technology</td>
<td>On line services</td>
<td>-On line alumni directory to search for classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Email Addresses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blumenstyk (1994)\textsuperscript{44} considers as new challenge that colleges and their alumni associations must face and should think is about their mission and then evaluate money-making ventures in light of those institutional values, not "simply because they’re there".

\textbf{ii. Opportunity}

An important function of alumni affairs is to provide opportunity for personal growth and continuing interaction with their alma mater.

Through class reunions alumni are given the opportunity to renew old friendships and relive memorable times. There are other opportunities for volunteering, opportunities for giving, and opportunities for recruiting students, helping students, even monitoring students. Additionally, there are opportunities for career planning and placement.

\textsuperscript{44} Idem
opportunities for legislative advocacy and opportunities to be heard by the administration. The more opportunities an institution can offer to its alumni, the better it is for all concerned.

f. Evaluating alumni services

*How does an educational institution determine how well it is performing?* Most educational institutions focus their attention on student numbers and on budgets, but many rarely take a long look at their accomplishments and problems. Other educational institutions want to take steps to improve their performance. The institution that seeks to be excellent, to be distinctive and to provide a high level of satisfaction usually develops a strategy in line with its mission, resources and potential. It must plan how best to match the resources it has to offer with the needs and wants of defined group of potential students, alumni, donors, and others. (Kotler, 1999)\(^{45}\)

Evaluating marketing performance can take place at several levels in the institution. The type of evaluation will depend on the institution’s commitment to marketing and on its stage in their implementation process. Each school and college should periodically reassess its performance in serving its desire market.

*“We needed to know more about our alumni so we could know how we might better serve and involve them, and, indeed, better understand how they both think about and feel about their alma mater”,* said Bill Fox, Vice President of Institutional Advancement of Emory University. The results of their alumni research project showed that alumni generally have positive attitudes toward Emory and are interested in being involved with the university.

\(^{45}\) Kotler (1998) Page 465
Collins (1997)\textsuperscript{46} highlighted the evaluation of the alumni services subcommittee of MIT’s alumni association, which established its committee objectives:

- To evaluate how MIT’s alumni services are perceived by alumni as compared with other universities.
- To analyze and reach conclusions on prospective changes to services, such as adding new services and changing emphasis on current services, including reduction or elimination of some services.
- To propose a plan for action.

Early on, the working group determined that professional, quality market research would be required to evaluate its questions about current services and the advisability of new services.

One of the research objectives, according to Collins (1999)\textsuperscript{47} was to determine alumni attitudes about current services, services being developed, and services under consideration. Alumni ranked the seventeen services selected for evaluation by the following criteria: appropriateness, usefulness, and the likelihood that might use the service.

Each rating was interesting, but we were especially interested in the likelihood that alumni might actually use either current or developing services. The seventeen services were grouped according to whether or not they were “fully developed” programs; “currently being developed” programs, or “new opportunities”. The fully developed set of alumni programs- for example, the magazine, reunions and the travel

\textsuperscript{46} Collins, . (Page 23,1999)
\textsuperscript{47} Idem
program- were considered highly appropriate and very useful. The likelihood of use ranged from a high of 89% for the magazine to a low 35% for the travel program, reflecting the much smaller number of alumni who actually choose to travel with MIT (Collins, 1999).48

Looking at the data overall, the research reported a list of six services that scored "strongly in all three dimensions (appropriateness, usefulness, and likelihood to use). The six services are the alumni magazine, alumni registers and directories, access to MIT lectures, seminars, and faculty, sales of university intellectual material: use of computers and electronic technology for MIT services; and class reunions.

The lessons earned from the survey can be summed up in five statements, which became the guiding principles for the recommendations:

The associations' major ongoing programs are solid and effective.

- An alumni magazine is the most highly valued MIT alumni service.
- The service most in demand is directory services; alumni want to know how to find another.
- Services most important to alumni are those that have content that only MIT can offer.
- Service development opportunities include online services, career and professional development and lifelong learning opportunities.

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48 Idem
g. Benchmark with excellent organizations

Graduates and other clients come to an alumni office with certain expectations. A School or college can generate strong satisfaction by meeting these expectations. But to continue to improve, the institution may have to look beyond its current operating assumptions and the expectations of current customers, to identify better policies and practices, and even to raise its sights and/or broaden its scope. (Kotler, 1999)⁴⁹

Benchmarking in this context refers to measuring an institution’s processes and performance by comparing them with the processes and performance of other institutions or businesses known for being “the best” on some attribute. Many of the world’s most successful companies have turned to benchmarking to enhance their improvement efforts.

The goal of benchmarking is to identify promising new practices for the institution to implement.

IV. UNIBE’S Alumni Association (CIRCULO DE EGRESADOS DE UNIBE)

Alumni associations are not common among Dominicans higher education institutions: out of 33 universities nationwide, 8 have alumni associations and not all are incorporated. Since 2001, Universidad Iberoamericana – UNIBE-, located in Santo Domingo, has been investing efforts and resources in order to create a well-conceived alumni association, which in the long term would be a role model for the others higher education institutions in the country.

⁴⁹ Kotler 1999.Page 54
Considering that having graduates-university relationship is very valuable effort for every educational institution, the establishment of the alumni association would be an important resource for UNIBE’s present and future.

At the beginning, the priority was to establish its mission statement, which acknowledged: “to improve alumni relations and keep in touch the University with graduates and their classmates.” Also, an important goal was to reach most of the graduates through different strategies as advertisements, phone calls, pamphlets, among others tools.

The Circulo de Egresados de UNIBE-CEU- (which in English means UNIBE’s Alumni Association), which is totally financially dependent from UNIBE, in a way developed its philosophy base on the following three questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Why developing an alumni association?</th>
<th>2. Why it is important to maintain contact with former classmates?</th>
<th>3. Which services or benefits are going to be offered?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- To maintain the link with the university</td>
<td>- Possible business opportunities</td>
<td>- Alumni Directory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To promote the institution’s corporate identity</td>
<td>- To be informed about advancements in each area of interest</td>
<td>- Information Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To encourage the ‘sense of belonging’ among graduates.</td>
<td>- To consult job concerns or issues</td>
<td>- Career Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To maintain the professional contact among graduates.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- CEU’s Newsletter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To exchange ideas and experiences in common areas of interests in order to find possible solutions to their needs and concerns.</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Usage of university facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- To project the University image to</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Information about national and international scholarships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Community service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Annual alumni meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the community through its graduates.

The documents that supported the alumni association, considered the quality of CEU’s professionals as well as Cultural and Social Projection of Graduates as major assets of the association.

**CEU Professionals**

One of CEU’s main attraction is the quality of its members; distinguished professionals who have succeeded in different areas of expertise and who wish to continue succeeding.

**Social and Cultural Projection**

CEU offers different social and cultural activities for its members. In addition to benefiting from their own attraction, members will have an opportunity to project themselves in the academic community and in society in general through the repercussion of said activities in the different media.

At the beginning, the benefits and services were narrowed. They included the usage of campus facilities as Library, Gym, computer labs, parking lot through the alumni ID. But the main attractiveness was the “alumni networking” as well as “to keep in touch the University with former students and their classmates”.

During the first homecoming meeting were stated the purpose of the Board of Directors, Alumni Follow Up Committee and the Action and Planning Committee. Information about alumni ID also was presented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Board of Directors</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Is CEU's highest authority, - Formulating agreements that will affect its life and general function..</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Later the University thought of taking advantage of those graduates who expressed their interested in the university by inviting them to a workshop for alumni involvement. Inviting those who were very interested in collaborating in the project was the most important step to demonstrate university’s interest in maintaining the relationship “alumni-university”.

The goal of the workshop was to provide information about the first alumni elections for the positions of the president, vice president and secretary of the board of directors; and also the elections of the positions available of the two committees: directors and secretaries.

A couple of months after the workshop, the university sent out the ‘Elections Forms’ to the graduates so far contacted. Within the form, graduates were informed about the professional and academic profile of each candidate. Having graduates elected,
UNIBE decided to include a representative of the University –also a graduate- in the board of directors and in each committee.

ii.. Alumni Office

The office opened its doors on 2002 and its main task is to keep alumni better informed about its services and benefits. CEU’s office has been working with Dominican students. At this time, the 2,252 graduates overseas are not reached yet.

CEU has been organizing different kind of strategies and activities in order to involve graduates from different programs, interests and ages. Some of these activities and strategies are:

- Through the office, graduates can have information about continuing education programs through letters sent to their houses.
- Information about alumni ID and services on Campus obtained by using it.
- Answering emails about academic, cultural events or other matters.
- UNIBE’s newsletter has been distributed among graduates in order to grab their attention and interest in the University’s activities.
- Successful alumni involvement. UNIBE considers all its graduates as leaders. So, CEU leaders considered that “real world role models” will benefit current students expectations. Those graduates invited are role model in their specific areas and are invited as motivational speakers to encourage students to contemplate, clarify and elaborate their own educational and career goals and conceptions of success.
• The Second Job Fair on campus was organized by CEU and was taking place on July 2003, where more than 35 businesses of different areas were recruiting students and alumni for full-time and internship opportunities in a variety of industries and occupations. Graduates placed 30% of the resumés.

• Considering the success of the Second Job Fair, CEU started developing the Career Network Program. Through the program, businesses that are willing to share information about your career fields, positions and employers can access the CEU’s database of students and graduates. Not all graduates and students are part of the program, just those filled out the form.

• Agreements with professional associations. CEU signed an agreement with the prestigious professional association called Asociacion Nacional de Jovenes Empresarios (ANJE) – National Society of Entrepreneurs. Through the agreement both institutions engaged to promote academic and professional activities such as conferences, seminars, lectures in benefit of graduates and students.

h. Resources

The alumni office is located on Campus and has a permanent secretary, who serves under the advised of the President of the Board of Directors and of the 3 representatives of UNIBE. The office is complemented by a Database with emails address and personal data about 2,371 graduates so far contacted. Also, CEU has a database of those current students interested in being part of Career Network Program.
The secretary receives and answers emails through egresados@unibe.edu.do; the office works from 8:00 a.m. through 4:00 p.m.

**v. Summary**

After analysing and evaluating data about many alumni associations all over the world, we understand that each has its own characteristics, yet we also found they all share several common factors. The most important is that each alumni share the common purpose of involving graduates in the life of the university.

As we stated earlier in this chapter, since the foundation of the first alumni association in the Dominican Republic, the benefits and services offered have been a hook to grab the attention of graduates; since CEU’s establishment, the association has been working on developing attractive strategies in order to maintain the involvement of the graduates interested in having continuous contact with UNIBE and establishing strategies to attract those who have for years forgotten about their alma mater.

The next chapter explains the methodology used in this study and how the sample was selected from the population.
Missing Page
CHAPTER 3

Methodology

"The mission of alumni associations is to provide its members with individual development of the highest educational, moral, intellectual and social excellence"

The handbook of alumni associations

i. Introduction

This chapter will cover the methodology used in the project. The chapter also discusses the use of Quantitative Method in research and the importance of time; what criteria was used in choosing the sample from the population, that is, using as a sampling frame the alumni database. Additionally, questionnaires were used as a survey instrument. The advantages of using such questionnaires are discussed and a description of how the questionnaire had been developed is provided. The relationship of the independent and dependent variables with research questions, and with questionnaire’s items are also specified. Benchmark with international alumni associations was also part of the methodology used.

ii. Methodology

The purpose of the study is to be able to measure graduates’ satisfaction regarding services delivered by UNIBE’s alumni office, how responsive the office has been since it was opened in 2002, and to identify whether service’s tools, which the University is currently using, are achieving expected goals.
We may measure aspects of alumni perceptions toward the alumni office through *Quantitative Method*. Utilizing this method allows the researcher to understand the reality that exists while keeping that 'reality' disconnected from the researcher's beliefs. A quantitative method uses interviews and *questionnaires* to collect data. Creswell (1994)\(^1\) believes the purpose of quantitative method is to generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude, and behavior of the population to be studied.

This research is considered a *causal* project, that will study whether one or more variables affects one or more outcomes. The study will determine whether the alumni customer service UNIBE is delivering (cause) is changing alumni interest and involvement with the university (effect).

Benchmarking with the most important alumni associations in places such as the United States and Europe was another methodology used to conduct this study. Some of the universities studied were Harvard, Boston University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, University of Oxford, City University, Birbeck University, Rutgers University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Stanford University, University of Los Angeles, Arizona University, Ohio State University among others.

### iii. Survey design

The instrument used in this study is a *questionnaire*. Questionnaires enable a rapid turnaround of data, and the ability to identify attributes of a population from a small group of individuals.

\(^1\) Creswell (1994) Page 118.
Creswell (1994)\textsuperscript{2} states that surveys design provides a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population - the sample - through the data collection process of asking questions of people. This data collection, in turn, enables a researcher to generalize the findings from a sample of responses of the population.

Questionnaires were sent through emails contained in UNIBE’s alumni database to guarantee fast response. In the article “Use of Internet as Data Collector” (2002), the author states that email could generate high response as similar as those generated by postal surveys. They also contend that this email system significantly reduces time spent waiting for responses. The study found that the average response time for postal surveys is 10 days and emailed surveys 4 days. Significantly higher levels of response completeness were also noted on email surveys. This again provides evidence of higher quality for Internet surveys.

For mailed surveys, Creswell (1994)\textsuperscript{3} suggested a 3 steps procedure: 1. An initial mailing; 2. A second mailing of the complete instrument after two weeks; and 3. A third mailing as a reminder to complete and send in the questionnaire. This process can be used also in email surveys in order to have more accurate response rate.

Constructing a survey instrument is an art in itself. One must take numerous of small decisions about content, wording, format, and placement that can have consequences for the entire study.

\textsuperscript{2} Idem. Page 116
\textsuperscript{3} Idem
The questionnaire used in this research is self-designed, compiled after having studied all documents about the alumni association philosophy and office workflow. Throughout the questionnaire, respondents will be able to answer questions, for example, about their perceptions and concerns when having contact with alumni office (emailing, calling or visiting).

The questionnaire is designed in three parts:

1. **Personal Data**, where respondents state their age, gender, and year of graduation. Through personal data, researchers would determine the involvement of graduates with alumni office according with age or gender.

2. **Likert Scale**. From question number IV through XI, respondents will be able to state their agreement or disagreement with the statement regarding services or responsiveness of the alumni office.

3. **Multiple-choice questions**. From question number XII through XVI, graduates would be able to state the involvement they have had with CEU activities and the effectiveness of different sources of information so far used.

Research needs to relate the variables to the survey instrument. At this stage in a research plan a useful technique is to relate the variables, the research questions and items on the survey instrument. By doing so, the reader can easily determine with no trouble how questionnaire items will be used in the study. An example of how this was accomplished is to be found in the chart below.
Variables, research questions and items on Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Item on Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Question #1  Is the alumni office focused on customer satisfaction?</td>
<td>Questions IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, XI, X, XI.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependant</td>
<td>Question #2  Is CEU using the right tools to involve graduates?</td>
<td>Questions VII (b), IX, X, XII, XIII, XIV, XV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer service alumni office</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td>Table 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

iv. The population and the sample

The sample is the group of people you select to be in your study. For instance, even if one is able to identify perfectly the population of interest, one may not have access to all of it.

This study will be accessing data through questionnaires implemented among Dominican graduates of 15 different undergraduate programs, and using Stratified Random Sampling is the most accurate way to assure that careers with very few graduates are represented.

The population is the group that is going to be generalized. For this research the population is 3,648 Dominican graduates from different undergraduates programs. The listing of the accessible population from which the sample will be drawing is the sampling frame, which consists in 2,319 graduates so far reached.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Careers</th>
<th>Graduates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION</td>
<td>405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBERAL ARTS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECTURE</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RELIGION STUDIES</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DESIGN</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alumni graduated from November 1987 to October 2003, both male and female, from different ages. Questionnaires were sent through emails mainly because of the following three reasons: a) can be sent at the same time; b) our constrain in time; and c) because of the fast response anticipated. Also the research is going to be single-stage sample procedure, which is when one has access to the names in the population and can sample the people directly.
Stratified Random Sampling is obtained by first separating the population elements into non-overlapping groups which are called *strata* and then take simple random sampling from the population elements within each *strata*. Those *strata* are the different undergraduate programs that are going to be surveyed.

To select a sample from the *Stratified Random Sampling* one must divide the population into non-overlapping groups (strata) \( N_1 + N_2 + N_3 + N_4 \) … and then do a simple random sample of:

\[
\mathbf{f} = \frac{n}{N}
\]

for each *strata*, where:

- \( N \): is the number of cases in the sampling frame
- \( n \): is the number of cases in the sample
- \( Ncn \): is the number of combinations of \( n \) from \( N \)
- \( f: n/N \): is the sampling fraction

\( n \): is 20 percent, which is a representative sample of the population. Total of 464 surveys

\( N \): number of cases in the sampling frame, which is 2319 graduates

\( n: N \times 0.10\% = 2319 \times 0.1: = 231 \)

The number of units in the population is 15, the undergraduate programs, so:
Through this chapter, the sample was divided in different strata according to the quantity of graduates each career contained. In order to complete the process, questionnaires were emailed to 1228 graduates contained in the database, the results were as follows: 178 answered, 12 replied empty emails and 7 questionnaires were incomplete. A bias found from received questionnaires was that some questions were not completed and couldn’t be tabulated for the purpose of the findings.
v. Summary

The quantitative method used in this study provided the insights required to measure the alumni satisfaction regarding the service delivered through the alumni office and also through the questionnaires used could be known if the tools the University is currently using to involve alumni are achieving the expected goals.

Although the ratio of emails sent versus the emails returned is relatively low, the results obtained from our questionnaires are significant because were obtained the perceptions of who have interacted constantly with the office. The next chapter describe the findings and the results of the study, which constituted the base on which we draw some of our key conclusions from this project.
Missing Page
CHAPTER 4

Analysis and Findings

"We needed to know more about our alumni so we could know how we might better serve and involve them, and, indeed, better understand how they both think about and feel about their alma mater”

Bill Fox

i. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to measure the satisfaction of graduates regarding services offered by UNIBE’s alumni office; how staff handled requests through phone calls, emails or visits; the knowledge and willingness of the staff to help graduates in every concern and to evaluate if the tools the university is using to deliver information are achieving the intended objective.

Through this chapter, the reader will be able to find graphs and tables containing the findings and analysis of the study. Using the questionnaires, respondents were able to indicate how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements regarding the services they received at the time they interact with the alumni office via calls, emails or visit to our offices.

The questionnaires were emailed to the entire alumni database. The experience of sending questionnaires through emails has been satisfactory regarding the rapid turnaround of questionnaires; however we encounter some unexpected difficulty, namely, that the questionnaires were sent just before Christmas Eve, a reasonable cause of why graduates didn’t answered as expected. Of all questionnaires sent, 178 answered, from which 12 questionnaires were returned empty and 7 were returned incomplete. Of all respondents,
57% were female and 43% male. Emails were sent 3 times as reminders and the average of the rate of response was 4 days.

Emails were sent to the complete alumni database, including graduates from 1987 to 2003. The first part of the questionnaire was about Personal Data. Graduates from 21 to 27 years of age represented the majority of the respondents (46%), respondents from 28 to 34 years accounted for 38% and respondents from 35 to 43 years of age accounted for 13%. The balance (3%) of respondents didn’t state their age.

The second part of the questionnaire had 7 items divided into 3 to 5 sub-items, where respondents stated their agreement or disagreement with the situations when visiting, emailing or calling the alumni office.

Below we have presented the different sections according to the items of the questionnaire that were part of the survey. The sections are as follows: *About the courtesy*, *About time*, *About information* and *About feedback received*.

**ii. About courtesy,**

*a. Was the Staff helpful and courteous?* According to Graph #1, 60% of respondents totally agree when were asked if staff members were helpful and courteous when visiting the alumni office; 22% are satisfied with the treatment received. 8% strongly disagree and 3% disagree. Also, staff has been answering phone calls in courteous way, according to 55% of respondents as shown on Graph #2.
When visiting the alumni office, staff were helpful and courteous

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item IV a</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Staff answered the phone in a courteous way

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item VIII b</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Persons who actually work as staff in the alumni office has been courteous and helpful when graduates visit or call the office, demonstrating good human relations and kindness attitude to handled concerns, as was stated by 60% of graduates on item Va and 55% on item IXb. Also, as stated in item XI b staff has been helpful when they call graduates and ask for any information. The interaction with the personnel that has interest in resolve issues would be ‘a hook’ to grab the attention of those who have had interacted with the office, because it’s not just about delivering the information or a newsletter; is about keeping them ‘coming back’, ‘getting them comfortable’, and ‘spread positive word of mouth’.

b. If you received a call from the alumni office, the staff clearly explained the purpose of the call?. To this question, 46% of graduates strongly agree with the situation, where the staff clearly stated the purpose of the call; 14% strongly disagree, indicating that staff has
reached graduates and asked personal information and didn't receive an explanation about the cause of the call.

![Graphic # 3]

- For different purposes, the staff has called graduates to ask for any kind of information and the attitude demonstrated by the employees is very important in customer service. 46% stated that the **staff explained the purpose of the call**. On the other hand, 30% disagree with the statement. If someone is calling to any graduate's home or cell phone it's important to clarify the intention of the call, it would increase the confidence between both parts. The disagreement is high if we add the 14%, which strongly disagree.
c. When visiting alumni office, questions and concerns were handled in a considerable timeline? To this question 47% strongly agree that their questions and concerns were answered as soon as they expected and 30% disagree 7% of visitors strongly disagree with the statement and 10% disagree.

![Bar chart showing responses to questions answered in a considered timeline.]

### Graphic #4

d. If you emailed the office, was the feedback received fast? 52% of respondents strongly agree that staff responded emails rapidly and 14% were neutral. Having the majority of graduates satisfied with the feedback they received means that staff has the willingness to be responsive. 8% strongly disagree and 5% disagree.
e. If you called the office, was your call answered in a considerable timeline (3 rings)?

To this question, 40% of graduates strongly agree and 24% agree with the fast response they had when calling the office; while 25% strongly disagree with the statement.

- Professionals are always on rush, so fast response to their requests when visiting or emailing the office would be very valuable for them. Staff members have the technology, knowledge and willingness to avoid slow, confusing and unpleasant
processes when handling concerns according to 47% of respondents on item Vb and 52% on item VIIa, where respondents strongly agree. When alumni send an email to the university, they expect an immediate response, increasing the burden of alumni-office staff. Answering phone calls in a maximum of three rings is part of having fast response to alumni, 40% of graduates strongly agree and 24% agree with the speed their call was answered; 4% strongly disagree and 25% disagree.

iv. About information,

f. When visiting the alumni office, were staffs able to respond your concerns accurately? In assessing this question and considering that 44% (strongly agree) and 21% (agree) stated that staff were able to respond accurately to concerns, it can be concluded that the staff has knowledge that allow them to respond questions accurately. Only 13% disagree with the statement and 9% strongly disagree.

![Graphic # 7](image)

Staff seemed to be able to respond your concerns accurately

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

g. If you emailed the office, was the answer received accurate? To this question, 37% considered that the response received was accurate and 20% strongly disagree. Having fast response doesn’t mean having accurate response. Spending time to respond each graduate’s
concern or look for other sources to complete their request is an important part of the customer service system.

Item VI b

The answer was accurate as you expected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic # 8

h. If you called the office, was the feedback as you expected, was accurate and to the point? To this question, 42% strongly agree in the accuracy of the responses received. 21% strongly disagree, which is a high percentage if we add 14% of disagreement.

Item VIII c

The feedback was as you expected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Strongly agree</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic # 9

i. If you visited the office and the staffs weren't able to handle the issue, were they able to refer you to another department? To this question, 54% of
graduates strongly agree and 7% disagree. If staff wasn’t able to request an academic transcript or has an answer about continuing education program, or about library concerns they were able to refer to the person or department competent to handle the issue, instead of having “I do not know” as an answer.

**Item IV d**

If staff wasn’t able to handle the issue, they were able to refer you to another department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graphic #10

- Having fast response visiting or emailing the alumni office is not enough when we talk about customer service; services must be designed to provide the outcome customers value. 44% of respondents (Vc), 37% (VIIb) and 42% (IXc) totally agree on items where they were asked if staff were able to respond the concerns accurately. Staff is familiar about academic processes, about continuing education programs, CEU general information. But it’s important to consider the disagreement on the items Vc (22%), VIIb (29%) and IXc (35%) which is high, meaning that both management and staff need to be aware of the importance of having accurate responses to those graduates who contact the office.
To be a high responsive office, it's needed to be familiar with all processes, departments, programs, activities that the university has throughout the year; but in the case of being unfamiliar with the matter, the office should offer a semblance of openness and interest to help graduates in their concerns and refer the visitor to another department related to the concern. 54 % (item Vd) of respondents considered that staffs were able to refer the graduate to another department.

j. Have you ever called, emailed or visited the alumni office requesting information about one of the following issues: The majority of respondents haven't request information from the alumni office (40%); 33% ask information about alumni ID. General information about CEU (6%) and Career Network Program (12%) are the topics that are less requested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item XV</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Issues (transcripts, records)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Network Program</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni ID</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General information</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I haven’t request information</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8

- A significant task of alumni office is to determine which are most frequent alumni's concerns in order to have well-trained staff and well-design process to handle the situations more quickly and accurately. 33% of respondents have requested information about alumni ID and general information about CEU is not very popular among alumni (6%).
k. If you ask for the alumni ID, were benefits and limitations clearly explained? Handing out alumni ID on time is not enough; its use has to be clearly explained to graduates to avoid confusions and disappointments. 42% of graduates considered that benefits and limitations of the alumni ID were clearly explained when it was requested, 15% strongly disagreed and 18% stated the answer as neutral.

![Bar chart showing responses to Item Vc](graphic11)

- **Institutions not only need to offer quality and value, they need to communicate it. Services through alumni ID need to be clearly explained in order to inform the benefits and limitations inside and outside the campus.** 42% of respondents stated that they were informed about which facilities they are allow using. 15% strongly disagree and 10% disagree on the statement, meaning that staff have the knowledge but there’s a slightly flaw in the consistency in the communication when ID it’s delivered.
1. If you visited UNIBE's website looking for alumni information, did you find information required? Having an update website where graduates could find information about CEU activities, news and past events would be a tool to maintain their involvement; also information about continuing education programs and news of former classmates or professors. 38% of graduates surveyed, strongly agree when were asked about if found information required through the website; 29% strongly disagree.
• UNIBE's website has an Alumni Link where graduates and visitors are able to find general information about CEU; alumni perspectives about the website would improve or maintain the structure of the site. 38% of graduates strongly agree that the found information needed, but 29% strongly disagree.

m. If you received printed materials, was the content written from alumni perspective? Materials sent to alumni must be written to grab alumni interest; 57% of graduates strongly agreed about the content of newsletters, magazines and letters. 16% strongly disagree and 9% stated the answer as Neutral.
Sending out information to graduates can be 'double jeopardy': first, can grab graduates' attention and secondly can disappoint them, because the content is not attractive enough to read it. So far, printed materials as brochures, magazines or letters sent to alumni have been writing from alumni's perspective according to 57% of respondents.

v. About feedback received,

n. If you emailed the office, was your personal data updated immediately, if necessary? To this question, 55% of graduates strongly agree with the statement, and 7% stated that strongly disagree. This can imply that staff has the necessary tools and the willingness to have an updated database;
• *When alumni update their personal data they expect to receive information on time and to the right address, email, fax or phone number. To be a responsive office, the process of updating information need to be well designed to avoid confusions and disappointments to both staff and graduates. 55% of respondents strongly agree when were asked about the situation. Can be considered that*

o. *If you emailed the office, were your suggestions taken in consideration, if not received and explanation?* Contacting the alumni office to make suggestions is very important for their involvement; which make the graduates feel that their thoughts are taken in consideration - or having an simple explanation of why is not possible- will increase their confidence in the university. 37% strongly agree with the statement and 23% of respondents strongly disagree and 12% disagree.*
- It's possible that alumni office may need to make significant changes and graduates' suggestions can help identify important areas of attention. 37% considered that their suggestions have been taken in consideration and if not received a well conceived explanation; on the other hand, 23% disagree in the situation. Not all suggestions can be taken into consideration, but receiving a feedback about the reason it can't be implemented will increase their confidence and involvement within the university.

p. If you requested Alumni ID, was it handed out in a reasonable time (2 or 3 days)? To this question, 47% strongly agree that it was handed out during the period of time that allow the staff to process the ID. The University has the technology and resources to have an efficient process; but it is possible that many times the delay of the delivery was due others reasons which made 19% of respondents strongly disagreed and 12% disagree.
When alumni ID is requested has to be handed out immediately it’s printed, not more than 3 days (maximum time for the process, including possible delays). 47% of graduates strongly agreed that ID was handed out in the time estimated. On the other hand, 19% graduates strongly disagree and 12% disagree. A possible delay delivering the ID it’s that the technology required for taking digital pictures and printing is not physically in the alumni office.

q. In which format would you prefer to receive update and communications from CEU? To this question, 92% of respondents preferred email as the best format to receive information, mail is the second option (40%) and fax (6%) as the least favorite option. Having graduates receiving information from the best suitable format, they will feel comfortable and will be more able to read it.
Item XIV

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web posting</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9

**In this item, graduates were allowed to mark one or more options**

- As stated above, CEU has been using different tools to maintain alumni informed and email is the most preferred one among graduates (92%). Sending emails is one of the most ‘quick delivery’ tools that can reach dozens of graduates within seconds. Having detected which is the preferred format among alumni, the office can spend much more efforts on reaching alumni “the way they want” and avoid other formats of contact.

r. If you requested the alumni ID, do you consider the services offered an asset?

Having explained services offered, 47% of respondents considered those services important and an asset for alumni. Through this questions the intention is to know if the services offered are attractive enough from alumni perspective. 25% of graduates stated as Neutral the situation, possibly meaning they don’t even know the services and benefits of the alumni office nor the alumni ID.
Item Vd

You considered services offered an asset

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Graph #17

- Alumni want services and there are sorts of ways in which they expect to received it; having graduates' opinion about services they receive would be very valuable for the university. 47% of respondents considered the services offered through alumni office as an asset for graduates, while 5% strongly disagree and 25% has neutral opinion.

s. From which sources you receive frequent information about CEU activities? To this question, 87% of graduates received information directly from tools used by CEU as letters, newsletters, emails, phone calls. 23% receive information from the media and 16% from relatives.

Item XIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CEU</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends and family</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

**In this item, graduates were allowed to mark one or more options.
• Graduates can be informed about activities of alumni association through different sources, but the most effective source so far is from CEU itself as was stated by 87% of graduates. The media is the second most important source of information (23%). Emails, fax, phone calls, newsletters, letters are the tools which CEU has been using to reach alumni.

**t. How often you have used alumni ID to use facilities on campus?** To this question, 40% of graduates surveyed stated that don’t have alumni ID; 31% never have used their ID and 9% use it frequently.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item XVI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have alumni ID</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 11

• **Alumni ID** is one of the benefits offered and the majority of respondents stated “I don’t have alumni ID” (40%). In the same section, can be determine the involvement of graduates in the frequency of the use of facilities located on campus (gym, library, computes labs), where 9% has used it frequently, 31% stated that never have use it.

**u. After graduating, in which activities have you participated in? (can select more than one activity).** In this multiple-choice item, respondents could choose more than one answer, because activities are celebrated throughout the year and graduates can participate in more than one. Alumni annual meeting is the most popular activity among graduates
(64%), Job fairs are second more important activity (43%) and the least more important the continuing education programs (12%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item XII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni annual meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecadexpo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conferences or lectures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Fairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuing Education Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12

**In this item, graduates were allowed to mark one or more options**

- Graduates participation in different activities means their involvement in the university. Alumni annual meeting is the most popular activity among graduates where as 64% of respondents have participated and where alumni come back to campus and help reconnect with the institution and with one another. Secondly, Job Fairs have a high percentage (43%), which is an activity where graduates are able to interact with different kind of businesses regarding vacancies and job concerns. UNIBE’s continuing education programs are very limited therefore graduates have very little involvement in the programs. (12%).

In summary, we were able to access alumni’s responses and true position on several important issues related to the alumni office services. The results and findings for example on what is the exact perception of such service by alumni, among other key issues, enable us to better diagnose and understand the problems the alumni office may face in its future development. Likewise, we determine some of the key activities that need improvement, as they are perceived by alumni not to be optimal. The results also showed the issues the
office is successfully presenting to its alumni as well as the value that alumni give to this
services and benefits they received from UNIBE.
Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

As stated in chapter 1, the purpose of the study is to be able to measure alumni satisfaction and to identify whether tools the University is currently using are achieving the expected goals. After analysing the alumni’s perspectives and perceptions through questionnaires emailed to the alumni database, the intention is, through the recommendations, to be able to improve service systems.

This chapter covers the main conclusions of the research as well as the recommendations. The conclusions are directly related to research questions as they related to both, the dependent and the independent variables.

In a broad sense, this study is based on two research questions: Are efforts directed at alumni based on customer satisfaction? and Is CEU using the right tools to involve graduates? As we take away from this study, these questions are directly related to our findings.

A key finding was that graduates tend to participate significantly in Alumni Annual Meeting (64%) and Job Fairs (43%); activities in which graduates can interact directly with classmates are highly attractive as well as those which offer a direct benefit, such as Job Fairs.

Considering that questionnaires were sent to personal electronic mails, hence providing an ‘option-like’ sort of reply by the targeted audience, it could be argue that younger graduates, that is graduates within 21 to 27 years of age, proved to be the most interested in having involvement with the university.

The experience sending questionnaires through emails has been satisfactory as per the turnaround data, however they also presented some challenges. For example, some questionnaires were returned incomplete creating difficulties when analyzing the data. Additionally, true perceptions through neutral answers were difficult to identify objectively.
i. QUESTION #1

*Are efforts directed at alumni based on customer satisfaction?*

The challenge of the alumni office is to keep in touch with graduates, treat them well and provide to them the service they require. Customers have ideas about how they want to feel when they complete the interaction with an office and while they are using or experiencing the product or service.

Customer service is about understanding their requests, being courteous and helpful when interacting with them and providing effective feedback. It is much more than receiving information, is about creating *meaning* in people’s lives as much as is about touching them at an emotional level.

The majority of the respondents stated that staff in the alumni office has been *courteous and helpful* when graduates visit or call the office. Furthermore, respondents considered the attitude demonstrated by the staff when they call graduates as affable and polite.

Staffs have handled concerns in a proper manner and within the expected timeframe. *Fast response* in resolving issues when visiting or emailing, answering phone calls or handing out alumni ID on time, has been a key finding from our research as this represent a valuable (by the alumni) performance measure, one that is objective and easy to measure.

Provide *outcome customers value*. The answers received in this regards were as expected. Graduates value valuable, concrete and measurable outcomes from their interactions with the alumni office.
ii. QUESTION #2

The company that invests in satisfying its customers will realize gains through the long-term relationship. Alumni need to have a connection with their alma mater, hence the university needs to create strategies to maintain their involvement.

Is CEU is using the right tools to involve graduates?

The services offered by the alumni office are beneficial to graduates. The majority of respondents considered that the resources used by the CEU's management are in fact valuable asset for all graduates.

Graduates can be informed about activities of alumni association through different sources, but the most effective source so far is CEU itself, as was stated by 87% of graduates. The media is the second most important source of information (23%).

Graduates are generally not involved in the university via its facilities on campus (gym, library, computer labs). These facilities are used frequently only by 9% of alumni, in fact, 31% of alumni stated that they have never used them.

Alumni stated that information in the website is easy to find (38% of alumni). Additionally, printed materials as brochures, magazines or letters sent to alumni have been written from alumni’s perspective according to 57% of respondents.

Alumni annual meeting is the most popular activity among graduates as 64% of respondents indicate. In second place in the alumni preferences was the Job Fairs with a high percentage (43%) of approvals. However, low involvement in Continuing Education
Programs (12%) reflect this very important issue for the university is not as important for the alumni network.

After analyzing the main results of the study and considering the weaknesses and strengths of the alumni association, we recommend the following strategies in order to improve the relationship with graduates. Said strategies are attached to CEU's beliefs and philosophy. Below is a summary description on the strategies, in no particular order of importance:

- Evaluate the numbers of phone calls received per day and provide staff members with more lines to be able to respond phone calls more rapidly.

- Develop a Frequently Asked Questions Sheet with the most commons questions and concerns. Plan meetings where among the participants, will be the heads of the departments involved in the FAQ, for example, these meetings should be attended by a Registrar Office, Financial Aid, Continuing Education Programs personnel, Gym staff, Computers Labs staff, Library personnel, the Deans of schools that has graduate degrees and so on. In the meetings, questions about admissions process, discounts, loans, transcripts and record copies, payments, and tuitions among other topics should be ask and addressed. Also, involving those managers in the alumni association is key. This managers should be responsive and explain their subordinates how important is for UNIBE having graduates satisfied.

- The database need to be updated daily. Providing a form online connected with alumni database, which allow graduates to update their information directly to the database to avoid confusions would be of outmost importance. Is important to bear in mind that the current form doesn't update the information immediately.

- Implement a 'suggestion' sort of system that will provide much valuable information at improving the office's performance. For example, the use of
comment cards inserted in the newsletter, suggestion form online, and suggestion boxes in the office will certainly help to achieve this goal.

- As email is the preferred format of receiving information, it's important to use and relay heavily on this tool; however given some typical limitations of the email, such as the problems arising from ‘full inbox’ or ‘wrong emails address’, it make sense to send in addition to the electronic mail, a regular mail so as to ensure the graduate will receive the information, specially when this information is key (ie. Not daily or recurrent information).

- Develop well-designed and aggressive strategies to deliver information for example by establishing a PR committee. More media involvement for those living out-of-town is required. News releases, feature articles, special events, and social contacts to help spirit alive are also important. Consistency in sending newsletter and other information, giving alumni something to look at or read every moth, will also prove to be a key feature.

- Develop new services through alumni ID given that the use and the facilities on campus is not enough to attract alumni. Discounts on different services as bookstores, travel agencies, car rentals, and resorts are strategies that would engage graduates. Also, discounts on continuing education programs targeting at alumni will prove to be a successful way by which alumni will be more interesting in keeping contact with the university.

- WebPages are one of the most important strategies for deployment of information to the alumni network. Having attractive information about alumni and classmates will increase online visitors. Online graduates directory, class notes, pictures of commencements, articles written by graduates, entrepreneurs and professors directories are all important and valued issues to the alumni network.
- Establish a publishing committee integrated of graduates from different careers, which would determine what to publish and what not is also important. The committee should make research on different topics that would be of interest to graduates, such as: business, health sciences, job posting, business solutions, etc.

In order to implement the above recommendations, the office should evaluate the availability of financial and technological resources accordingly. Hence a potential further studies that would of great importance and most beneficial for the alumni office, would be one that is based on and address in detail at a very minimum all of the following questions:

- Are young alumni more interested in interact with the office than the older ones?
- Among the facilities that graduates are allowed to use, which one is the most demanded?
- Considering that UNIBE has more than 2000 international graduates, how we can involve the in the alumni association?
- How graduates would feel about fundraising?

iii. Summary

UNIBE’s alumni association, as a new organization, has many positive attributes as well as some weaknesses in its functions. Throughout this project, we were able to study key elements on the perceptions and attitudes of graduates toward the services offered by CEU. These findings enabled us to have a better understanding of the following key issues: Firstly, what do alumni care about. Secondly what is the alumni office doing, how is being perceived by the alumni network, and what sort of thing need to be improve or incorporated on the daily activities of the offices so as to improve and expand the level of service we offer, and finally, we have a clearly vision on the importance for the university of having and investing resources into the alumni office. With this study, we would be able to present the needs, identify the benefits and measure the success of the issues as they relate to the university, its alumni and the alumni office.
References


- The use of Internet as a data collector. 1996. ESOMAR/EMAC Symposium
