



WPI Alumni Networking Program

A Major Qualifying Project submitted to the Faculty of
WORCESTER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Bachelor of Science

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Abstract

Working in collaboration with the Worcester Polytechnic Institutes Alumni Office, it was our goal to effectively increase alumni engagement for the current alumni base. Through interviews with universities, and survey responses from the WPI alumni base we designed an optimal online connections platform. Through out the development process the team took preventative measures and added detailed steps to minimize any potential risks associated with the development. Ultimately, this project resulted in two options: an optimal, and a secondary solution.

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Emily Williams: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, *Assistant Director of Alumni Relations*

Francesca Barbato: Boston University, *Alumni Relations Associate*

Jon Sisk: Baylor University, *Assistant Director - Baylor Business and Professional Network*

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Executive Summary

We are a team of Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) students working in collaboration with the WPI Alumni Office to determine the optimal way to engage alumni regardless of their location. The goal of our project is to develop a multipurpose program that will enhance the WPI alumni experience with the intent of connecting them in a professional manner. To accomplish this task we formulated the following objectives:

1. Develop connections amongst alumni to foster affinity for WPI.
2. Engage alumni located outside of the New England region.
3. Appeal to the diversity of WPI alumni through the creation of a connections platform.

We conducted interviews with universities that had either a successful alumni program or specialized in engineering and science. These interviews allowed us to understand the common pitfalls and successes that other universities experience. In addition to the data collected from the interviews, we surveyed a random sample of WPI alumni to gauge their needs and interests as it pertains to a professional connection program. After cross referencing the successes of other universities with the needs of the WPI alumni base, we developed two solutions for the Alumni Office to consider.

Findings & Recommendations

Our recommendations are presented through two options: an optimal and a secondary solution. The optimal solution serves as the ideal method to eliminate geographic barriers. The secondary solution serves as a backup if the optimal plan cannot be fully implemented. The differentiating factor between the two solutions is the cost for implementation.

Optimal Implementation Plan

We recommend that the WPI Alumni Office hosts online events for the WPI Alumni to differentiate from existing social media platforms and to satisfy their diverse needs. Through our research the optimal software solution to host these online events is Brazen, which is a software that helps organizations create better engagement through chat based online events. Using this software would help to differentiate the program from other social networks such as LinkedIn

and Facebook. Brazen allows the host to set up unique “classrooms” or segments, so that once registered for the event the user can identify their areas of interest. This format allows for easy mobile participation and facilitates connections in an efficient manner. Having an online event would allow for alumni to participate regardless of their geographic location.

After analyzing our survey results we discovered that alumni are looking for a program that can satisfy multiple interests. To gain the support of our targeted audience we determined that utilizing online events will allow this program to better align with the needs of the alumni. To access these events a link should be provided on the AlumniConnect website. This link will immediately bring the user to an events page where they can see scheduled events with brief descriptions. Based on those descriptions and the preference of the alumni, they can then decide to proceed further and register if they choose to do so.

To mitigate the risk associated with purchasing a new software outright; we suggest utilizing a phased approach. Brazen does not offer a pilot program, however they would be willing to have an introductory six month trial period. If WPI chose the six month trial period, which we recommend, WPI would be required to host a minimum of three events to ensure the lessons learned from each event can be applied to make the introductory period successful.

Secondary Implementation Plan

We recommend that the WPI Alumni Office develops online groups and webinars for the alumni to connect based upon similar interests. To develop the online groups the WPI Alumni Office should use iModules; a software that WPI currently has a contract with. iModules is an online Engagement Management provider for educational institutions such as WPI. It assists in creating relevant experiences and achieve fundraising success through web content management, marketing communications, online giving, event management, ecommerce, and social media integration. iModules has the capability to create groups where alumni are free to join based on interest. Within these groups, the members would have the ability to chat with one another, post articles or documents, initiate forum style conversations, and create RSVP’s for events. In addition to the online group creation, the Alumni Office should host webinars via Adobe Connect, and they can be marketed to the appropriate audiences through the iModules groups. These capabilities would enrich the overall alumni experience.

To effectively communicate the benefits and capabilities of the iModules online groups, WPI Alumni Office should develop a training video and self-promote through the WPI website, as well as LinkedIn. In order to mirror the proficiencies of online events, we determined that utilizing webinars via Adobe Connect would be a comparable substitute.

To ensure that the program is successful we suggest that the Alumni Office develops a pilot program with twenty WPI alumni for roughly six months. This group should be segmented to focus on a specific audience, such as a Programming Skill Enhancement group. During the pilot program the Alumni Office should host at least two webinars relevant to the group being piloted, to test the Adobe Connect functionality. Throughout the program WPI should be reaching out to the pilot group members and adjust based on their feedback.

1.0 Introduction

Networking is beneficial for exploring professional opportunities, enhancing self-reflection, adjusting career paths, reducing anxiety and increasing confidence (Byrne, Drummond-Young, Harmer, & Rush, 2002). When done correctly networking gives alumni an elevated sense of altruism, but if the match fails the participant can develop a negative perception of the organizing entity (Pennington, Leon E). This can ultimately detract from the brand and the image of the university. This issue can lead to the participant speaking poorly of the organization to others, which could taint their perception. The WPI Alumni Office is responsible for maintaining and strengthening the relationships with alumni. The Alumni Office would like to improve these relationships by developing a web based connection program to eliminate geographic barriers, and to strengthen alumni affinity for WPI.

Initially, we were focused on developing a networking program that would allow alumni to connect with one another. Our research was heavily focused on mentoring, coaching, and networking which enlightened us to the high probability of failure that is associated with these programs. Through our findings we ultimately strayed from our initial goal and adjusted to maximize success. The adjusted goal of our project is to develop a multipurpose program that will enhance the WPI alumni experience with the intent of connecting them in a professional manner. To meet this goal we conducted interviews with other universities that either had a successful alumni networking program or had a specialty in sciences and engineering. To mitigate the risk associated with starting a new program, we benchmarked ourselves against these other universities by collecting best practices. In addition to this we surveyed the needs of our targeted audience, WPI alumni, to understand their interest or disinterest of an online networking program. Finally, we compiled our findings into two potential implementation plans, an optimal solution and a secondary solution, which outline the logistics of the program's creation.

2.0 Background

2.1 Professional Pairing Connotations

Words are complex by nature. Each word can have its own connotation separate from the actual definition. Titles associated with pairing such as: advising, mentoring, or coaching, induce strong feelings that alter the perception of their true definition. This can affect the way an event, program, or organization is viewed by others. If negatively viewed, it can affect someone's level of participation and interest. This is why analyzing these terms can be helpful when making a final decision on what to name a pairing program.

2.1.1 Advising

Advising refers to a relationship that aids in the professional development of an advisee. Advising relationships are commonly found within the education system, specifically to aid in the educational development of the student. Other times it can be used as a remedial activity to ensure student success. Studies have found that students identify “advising” as a common obstacle to academic adjustment (Eggleston, Laanan, & Starobin, 2010). This finding is consistent with national surveys that have identified academic advising as one of the services that students are least satisfied with (Keup & Stolzenberg, 2004). Due to past experiences, students associate the word “advising” with a negative meaning, which ultimately detracts from the actual goal.

2.1.2 Mentoring

Mentoring is defined as a positive relationship in which the protégé learns professional skills. The mentor is typically someone with more experience in the field or study that the mentee is looking to improve upon (M. University, 2015). Mentors are expected to provide guidance and facilitate the program. The term “mentor” is used widely throughout education and business, so much so that we as a society have come to disregard the true meaning and value of this kind of relationship. Historically, mentorship has been seen as a flexible relationship, where the mentors freely initiate contact with a mentee of their choosing. Mentors are meant to be more experienced and have more knowledge to which they can pass down to the mentee (M. University, 2015). This difference in experience may result in a one-sided relationship, where the mentor feels and acts superior to the mentee, and therefore can cause the mentee to feel inadequate. Between the combinations of the word “mentoring” being an overused term, and

mentorships being a one-sided relationship, mentoring is generally seen as having a negative connotation.

2.1.3 Coaching

Coaching can be defined as a person extending their traditional training methods to focus on (1) an individual's needs and accomplishments, (2) close observation of that individual, and (3) impartial and non-judgmental feedback on their performance (BusinessDictionary.com, 2015). What sets coaching apart from the other terms, is that it requires the coach to offer the coachee a support system that allows them to manage situations themselves (Fick, 2001). This support system would require the coach to fully understand the coachee's ambitions and motives to help reach their goals. Coaching relationships are focused on collaborative development and do not serve as a remedial activity. Therefore, the term "coaching" is readily accepted by many.

2.2 Formal Certification Process

Including a formal certification process is something that can be considered when implementing a mentor or networking program. Before a program can begin this process, enough attention must be drawn to the program from the alumni. If there is a lack of interest in becoming a mentor, the program will have to consider all mentor volunteers without being able to determine if they are qualified or not. However, if there is an influx in participants having a certification process can be beneficial in determining who will be qualified to fill the role.

2.2.1 Mentor Qualifications

Being a mentor requires the person to have a specific set of skills and a background that allows the individual to be helpful towards the person they are paired with. The National Career Development Association (NCDA) is an organization that offers professional mentor certification. The NCDA trains the user in a series of six steps. These steps work to develop the following skills: Career Development Expertise, Training Expertise, eLearning Skills and Experience, Credentials/Memberships, Professional Contributions, and Commitments.

In addition to these six steps, once certified the mentor must fill out applications for the program in order for them to be considered for the position. The application process takes some time and requires the participant to pay a fee for the required training. Once selected for the position, they must abide by the code of ethics. A code of ethics for mentoring is necessary,

because it allows the relationship to be guided by a set of standards or rules. If they do not abide by these rules, then they can be removed from their position. This method ensures that the mentors will follow those rules as well as allow for the mentors to have clear cut professional objectives that they need to meet.

2.2.2 Mentee Requirements

As discussed earlier, for a successful mentorship to exist, each member needs to follow guidelines and do their part to equally contribute. The mentee has different responsibilities than the mentor. Because they are the ones looking for assistance, the mentee should be the one who initiates the contact and sets up regular meeting times (S. University, 2015). This shows the mentor that the mentee is dedicated to expanding their knowledge and listening to advice.

Once paired, the mentee should clearly explain their goals and discuss their experience in school with their mentor. This will allow the mentor to understand the type of student they are, the knowledge they currently have, and how they can assist in helping them to reach their goals.

2.2.3 Written Agreement

For this to be effective, mentors and mentees should have to sign a written agreement that clearly outlines the goals and rules of the relationship. The written agreement should be the same for all of the relationships. It will prove to be important as the relationship develops because it will allow everyone to remember the purpose of mentoring. In the agreement there should be a section that describes how each member needs to live up to their responsibilities.

2.3 Downfalls of Professional Relationships

Although mentorships come with many benefits, drawbacks may tend to arise within these kinds of professional relationships. Some concerns regarding mentoring include lack of time between the pair, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching, and a lack of understanding for the linkage or connection process.

Under various conditions, the professional relationship can be detrimental to the participants. For the mentor, they may not have the time to provide the mentee with the quality feedback or advice that they are in need of. The lack of time can force the relationship to form improperly, or not at all. Mentors may also lack the skills needed to successfully assist the mentee to meet their goal. Without proper training the mentor may not be able to provide their mentee with the assistance they need to further develop. In some situations, the mentor may

become so wrapped up and involved within the mentee's life that they can end up losing perspective of their own role. Occasionally, a mentor may fall into a pairing that they do not like and/or do not feel comfortable in. For example, a mentee may be too insecure to take criticism from the mentor, or a mentee may be too demanding of time and too dependent on the mentor.

For the mentee, they may have a negative experience versus a positive one if they are involved in a poorly planned and implemented program. Therefore, they both do not get what they initially desired out of the relationship. In some cases, if not well matched, mentors can prevent mentee's development versus support it.

2.3.1 Cultural Awareness

Diversity takes into consideration multiple factors including race, ethnicity, sex, culture, age, life experiences, religion, and beliefs. These different perspectives are linked to a social or cultural norm which define how we live our lives.

Differences in culture, specifically within a professional relationship, may present obstacles that can be difficult for mentors to overcome if they are not properly informed of them. Due to the increase of minority groups in the United States and their growing presence in higher education, being culturally aware has become more important (Johnson, Kim, Lyons, Schlosser, & Talleyrand, 2011). In the 2012 US Census, it has been observed that minority students are more successful when their mentor shares the same ethnic background (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). It is imperative to ensure that both parties involved in the professional relationship are comfortable. This can be accomplished by properly training and informing mentors of different cultural norms. The need to engage in culturally conscious mentoring relationships is crucial and this is what makes the interaction between mentor and mentees stronger.

2.4 Benefits of Professional Relationships

Professional relationships are focused on sharing and nurturing to promote personal and professional growth. Mentoring has been historically proven to foster numerous benefits: (1) successful career development, (2) professional socialization, (3) increase confidence and competence, and (4) job satisfaction (Fick, S., 2001). In addition to the many social benefits, there is also a strong correlation between mentorship and the strength of the connection between the participants and the organizing entity. According to Cropanzano and Mitchell, the social exchange theory includes the interdependent relationships between individuals and groups that

incorporate the principle of reciprocity as one of its tenets. A study of 317 professors of military science from U.S. Army ROTC battalions, found an elevated sense of altruism amongst the alumni involved (Pennington, Leon E). The key to building a successful professional relationship is ensuring that the matched participants are going to fit well together.

2.4.1 Networking Events

Networking among alumni has proven to be beneficial for all parties involved and helps to develop professional relationships. Several schools have set up various events to allow alumni to branch out and network with people who have similar qualifications or interests. These networking events can provide people with positive experiences as well as some negative.

Positives (JobBankUSA, 2015):

- Receiving an opportunity that would not have been found without engaging with new people.
- Jobs can be specifically created from networking based on an employee's requirements.
- Provides social contact with others
- It is a two way process that can help both parties involved
- Allows for the person involved to control their own pace and plans in regards to the networking process.

Negatives (JobBankUSA, 2015):

- Requires patience to find the right opportunity or right contact
- There is a possibility of indiscretion, which means it is important to choose your contacts wisely

After listing the positives and negatives of networking, it is clear that that participants are more likely to experience a positive outcome. Having networking events will allow for everyone involved to expand their network and can eventually lead to higher participation for future events. Networking events require less time than a coaching or mentoring program. Attending networking events are not mandatory, but mentoring requires your full participation. Also, participants of the networking events can exchange contact information for future conversations if they feel that they want to further contact someone.

The networking events will allow for people to choose what areas they want to network in. Web technologies, such as online community portals, are valuable when it comes to supporting and facilitating alumni networking by information sharing and management (Grunig, 2000). Because visitors are able to share information sources/feeds, they make it a more flexible channel to provide relevant information for the diverse user. These community portals can provide document sharing and chat rooms to network with others; also giving the visitor the opportunity to set up online classes which help alumni take a refresher class. These dynamic portals can be ever changing depending on what the audience (visitors) wants to see or post.

2.5 Identifying Ideal Matches

Formal matches are comparable to blind dates with only a small percentage of them working out. There are numerous factors that contribute to a successful pairing including: (1) providing training for the coaches, (2) ensuring that the participants are conversing on a regular basis, (3) identifying what the participants want out of the program, and (4) matching users based on their interests, needs and personalities. A large component of what drives a successful relationship is guaranteeing that the participants have personalities that will complement one another. This will help program coordinators effectively facilitate lasting professional connections.

2.5.1 Myers Briggs Personality Test

The Myers Briggs test, or MBTI, is a quiz that consists of 41 questions which identify your personality type based on how you react to situations, make decisions, and prefer to spend your time. There are four different groupings in which you can fall:

1. Extrovert vs. Introvert: *The direction we focus our attention and energy.*

Extroverts tend to focus their attention outwardly on people or events. People who are extroverted tend to have a natural ability to converse with others. Introverts are typically internally focused, and prefer to think and work alone. They find themselves to have a much higher productivity level while doing so.

2. Sensing vs. Intuition: *The way we take in information and the kind of information we trust.*

If a person has a sensing personality, they prefer to take in information using their five senses. They are the realists and like to live in the present. Sensing personalities typically find themselves making decisions based off of facts. Intuition personalities define what is possible, not on the facts but based on the trends. Intuition people prefer focus on developing meaningful relationships. They live in the future, and prefer to be more optimistic and imaginative.

3. Thinking vs. Feeling: *The way we make decisions.*

People are “thinkers” when they are more inclined to analyze the pros and cons of situations and then solve a problem if it is presented. Thinkers will naturally notice logical inconsistencies, and may overlook the personal impacts of some decisions. Feelers make decisions based on their personal values and may overlook logical consequences of individual actions. These personalities have the ability to quickly build meaningful relationships and are persuasive.

4. Judging vs. Perceiving: *Our attitude to the external world and how we orient ourselves to it.*

The “judgers” have personalities that need to organize and plan out their daily activities. These people are highly reliable, and have a greater appreciation of organization and efficiency. “Perceivers” tend to go with the flow and are flexible and adaptable. These personalities’ desire new information and long for spontaneity and exploration.

Studies have been performed to identify how different personalities interact together. The goal of these studies is to identify which personality types work best when paired. There are certain aspects of a person's personality that will be enhanced by traits within other personalities. The following results are based on a [study conducted by Tieger and Barron-Tieger\(site\)](#). Both sensors and judgers tend to have traditionalist views in honoring their commitments ([ESTJ](#), [ESFJ](#), [ISTJ](#), [ISFJ](#)), and Intuitive Feelers tend to have a high value on relationships as they are most likely to devote themselves to open communication ([ENFP](#), [INFP](#), [ENFJ](#), [INFJ](#)). Therefore, these groups have a satisfaction rate of 73% when paired with others of the same type. Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceiving types (INFP and ENFP) had a satisfaction rate of only 42% when they

were paired with Sensing, Thinking, and Judging types (ESTJ and ISTJ). Although, this was one of the more common pairings among the couples studied. The NFP partner often feels that their partner is too reserved, while the STJ partner finds that their partner is unpredictable and unreliable. When partners have a Feeling preference in common, this can compensate for differences in other areas, perhaps due to Feelers' inclination to spend more time and energy on their relationships in general. Specifically, Sensing, Feeling, and Judgers (ESFJ and ISFJ) reported an 86% satisfaction rate when paired with Intuitive, Feeling, and Perceivers (ENFP and INFP). They had a 67% satisfaction rate when coupled with Intuitive, Feeling, and Judgers (ENFJ and INFJ).

In some cases, having similar type preferences did not mean higher satisfaction. Sensing, Thinking and Perceiving types ([ISTP](#) and [ESTP](#)) had only a 33% satisfaction rate when paired with other STPs. The researchers theorized that this is due to the fact that ESTPs and ISTPs are the least concerned of all the types with the quality of their relationships. Similarly, Intuitive and Thinking types ([ENTP](#), [INTP](#), [ENTJ](#), [INTJ](#)) have only a 59% satisfaction rate when paired with another Intuitive Thinker. These types tend to be among the most critical of their partners and may be harder to please in general.

2.5.2 Informal vs. Formal Pairing

When it comes to the art of creating well balanced and healthy professional relationships, there are two different ways to set up these connections: informally and formally. Developing an informal connection is a way of allowing two people to connect in a naturally occurring way. In this case the relationship will be viewed as voluntary rather than forced. Formal pairing occurs when two people are matched together based on similar backgrounds, skills, and interests by a program coordinator, or a computerized matching system. Both methods of pairing present their own sets of successes, as well as failures.

In a study performed by two researchers, Belle Rose Ragins and John L. Cotton, they compared formal and informal mentoring organizations. They surveyed both men and women in different fields including engineering, social work, and journalism, and observed the experiences and outcomes. They found that informal mentoring relationships were more beneficial to the mentees, and this was due to the fact that the two separate groups of mentors (informal and formal) offered different levels of career guidance and support. Informal mentors were also seen as more likely to participate in psychosocial activities such as counseling, facilitating social

interactions, role modeling, or providing friendship. The differences in these informal and formal relationships can be because of the differing underlying structure or base of them. It is typically found that formal relationships focus more on short term goals versus long term. Informal pairing tends to be more successful because the mentors and mentees readily identify with one another. Within a formal pairing, because it may feel forced, both the mentor and the mentee will not receive what they want out of the relationship because of the lack of desire or motivation to participate within it.

3.0 Methodology:

The goal of our project is to develop a multipurpose program that will enhance the WPI Alumni experience with the intent of connecting them in a professional manner. We segmented this goal into three objectives we would like to be able to reach which are as followed:

1. Develop connections amongst alumni to foster affinity for WPI.
2. Engage alumni located outside of the New England region.
3. Appeal to the diversity of WPI alumni through the creation of a connections platform.

In order to accomplish the goal and our objectives we developed four tasks to complete:

1. To identify common successes as well as risks experienced by other university alumni programs
2. To survey the needs of the WPI alumni to gain a deeper understanding of their areas of interest
3. To cross reference the needs identified in objective 2 with the best practices in objective 1 and determine how to fulfill both
4. Compile our results into two potential implementation solutions.

This chapter outlines the specific methodological strategies we will employ in order to accomplish our objectives.

Task 1: Alumni Program Foundation

In order to effectively increase alumni engagement we interviewed other universities to determine best practices and identify common pitfalls. For our selection process we utilized news articles that highlighted ideal networking programs, consulted various online search engines, and finally chose other technical universities. We identified a list of fifteen universities, and of those we interviewed seven. Refer to *Table 1: List of University Interview Contacts* for specific information.

University	Contact Information	Status
Baylor University	Jon Sisk; Jon_Sisk@baylor.edu	Interviewed
Boston University	Francesca Barbato; fbarbato@bu.edu	Interviewed
Brown University	Alumni Office; alumni@brown.edu	-
Dayton University	Ashley Kessler-Palmer; akessler1@udayton.edu	-
George Washington University	Michael Steelman; steelman@gwu.edu	-
Georgetown University	Rebecca Cassidy; Rebecca.Cassidy@georgetown.edu	Interviewed
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	Emily Williams; emwilli@mit.edu	Interviewed
NC State University	Anya Reid; Anya_Reid@ncsu.edu	-
Pennsylvania State University	Arden Sonnenberg; asonnenberg@wpi.edu	Interviewed
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Kailah Borchers; borchk2@rpi.edu	Interviewed
Rochester Institute of Technology	Alumni Office; ritalum@rit.edu	-
University of Colorado	Samantha Wood; swood2@uccs.edu	-
University of Michigan	Amy Homkes-Hayes; ahomkes@umich.edu	Interviewed

Table 1: List of University Interview Contacts

We asked university representatives questions that focused on their common downfalls, marketing strategies, mentor matching methods, and program organization. This provided us insight on what we were capable of implementing for our project. For the specific interview questions please refer to *Appendix B: College Interview Questions*.

To establish these interviews we reached out to the corresponding universities' Alumni Offices, and scheduled interview times. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes; the interviews began with a brief description of our project, and wrapped up with an open discussion. During the interviews we designated one interviewer and two note takers to ensure that the interview was completed in an organized fashion. At the conclusion of each interview we reconvened and discussed the takeaways.

Task 2: Addressing WPI Alumni Needs

In order to obtain a proper sampling of the alumni's needs we determined that it would be most effective to develop a survey. The survey allowed us to obtain a total of 76 alumni responses. The purpose of the survey was to understand the needs of the alumni to identify how to effectively meet them through the creation of an online program. We utilized WPI's Qualtrics Research Suite to develop our questionnaire. Qualtrics Research Suite is an online survey software solution for WPI students, faculty, and staff that allows users to collect, analyze and act on relevant data. This tool is necessary as it provides us with the resources we need to analyze our data.

The questions for the alumni survey consisted of two parts that were generated to meet our goal: (1) their involvement as alumni and (2) their perspective on the development of an online networking program. Initially, we needed to understand how involved the alumni were currently with WPI. This allowed us to see what the WPI Alumni Office offers that was of interest to the alumni. Another area of focus was to ask the alumni what value they see in developing an online networking program, if any. If the alumni scored the program poorly we prompted them to explain in further detail their disinterest. For those who were willing to provide further feedback they could select to do so within the survey. For specific questions please refer to *Appendix A: Alumni Survey Questions* to see the survey.

After generating a list of questions we then contacted the appropriate audiences. For the surveys the WPI Alumni Office provided us with a list of contacts from their database. Originally, a concern of ours was the possible variance of needs based on major. To validate this concern we focused only on alumni who graduated with a degree from the school of business or a degree in mechanical engineering. This was vital to the success of this study because it operated as a control and allowed us to identify if the needs differed based on major. We also wanted to normalize across three defined age groups: 0-10, 10-20, and 20 plus years out. Once we received the names, we sent out our surveys.

Task 3: Identify Best Practices

Once we completed the university interviews and gathered the survey results, we analyzed them to determine the optimal practices. To easily assess and compare our university interviews, we compiled the responses into a matrix. We segmented the matrix into four topics: Marketing, Registration, Program Logistics, and Success Metrics/Risk Prevention. These four topics outline the layout of our deliverable, therefore easing the transition from data to recommendation. For specific information on the chart please refer to *Appendix C: Data Matrix of Interviews*.

To dissect the feedback from our alumni survey we manipulated the data within Microsoft Excel to identify any recurring patterns or trends. We cross-referenced our data based on different categories such as: age, gender, location etc. This allowed us to identify any correlation that may have existed within these categories.

To determine which practices align with the needs of the WPI Alumni base, we utilized the Attitude Towards an Object (ATO) model. This model, commonly used by consumer behavior analysts, is ideal for measuring attitudes towards a product/service category or specific brand. The ATO model takes the needs of the alumni, determined from our survey responses, and assigns each need a value based on our perceived importance of the item. We then listed out alternative program solutions and assigned a rank based on the programs ability to meet the needs of the alumni. Programs with higher scores are the ones that will effectively meet those needs.

Task 4: Develop the Implementation Plan

Once the data was collected, and analyzed we developed two possible implementation solutions. The optimal solution serves as the ideal method to eliminate geographic barriers. The secondary solution serves as a backup if the optimal plan cannot be fully implemented. The differentiating factor between the two solutions is the cost for implementation. The structure of both implementation plans will follow three segments as follows: marketing, logistics, success metrics/risk.

4.0 Data Analysis

We completed seven interviews with other universities and received 76 survey responses from WPI alumni. From both the interviews and surveys we were able to generate four takeaways. These four trends are as followed:

1. **Demographics of the Data:** The demographics of the survey respondents give foresight into the future demographics of the program participants.
2. **Differentiate from Different Platforms:** Multiple social media platforms currently exist that allow members to network together, so there is a need to differentiate from these existing platforms.
3. **Program Naming:** A common barrier to program success was program titling to encompass the programs capabilities and goals.
4. **Multipurpose Program:** Respondents of the survey have a diverse set of needs that they would like the program to satisfy.

Each of these trends were pivotal in the creation of our optimal and secondary solution, which will be described in depth in chapter 5.0.

4.1 Demographics of the Data

“The demographics of the survey respondents give foresight into the future demographics of the program participants.”

After completing the data collection from the survey, we were pleased to report that we had 76 survey respondents. The demographics of the respondents was essential in categorizing this data which provided us with insight into the future participants of the program. These demographics have been categorized into three sections:

1. **Age of the Respondents:** 63% of respondents graduated prior to 1993.
2. **Gender of the Respondents:** 9% of the respondents were female.
3. **Geographic Locations of Respondents:** 62% of respondents are located in the New England region.

It is vital to understand the needs of the respondents in order to please our target market.

Age of the Respondents

The number of respondents per graduation year favored the graduates who graduated prior to 1993, even though each group was reached out to equally. Of the respondents 63% had graduated prior to 1993. We hypothesize that these graduates are largely in the retirement age group, and have more time to respond to our survey requests. This is evident by our qualitative analysis of our data. Many of the retired respondents who ranked the program low explained that they are no longer looking for career advice. Refer to *Figure 2: Program usefulness for Graduates Prior to 1993* for information on the ranking distributions among graduates prior to 1993.

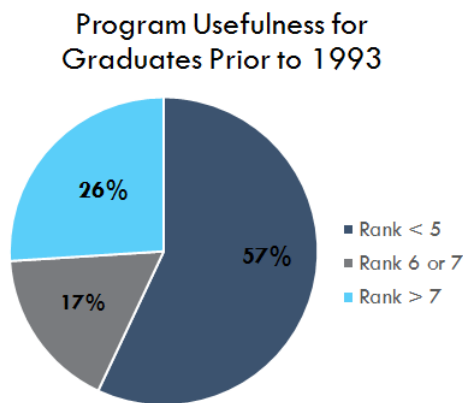


Figure 1: Program Usefulness for Graduates Prior to 1993

Of the respondents who graduated prior to 1993, 57% of them ranked the usefulness of the program less than 5 on a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being the most useful, and 1 being the least). The majority of the rationale for the low ranking stemmed from the participant being retired, and not needing a career-based program. This information brings us to conclude that for these respondents, the term “networking” has a connotation that led them to believe that this program was for graduates that are currently in the working field. Although the retirees are not looking for career advice they could provide it since they have more experience; yet many of the respondents did not discuss this possibility. The mentality was generally “what can I get out of this program” versus “what can I provide for this program”. Knowing that this is the general mindset of the survey respondents it is imperative that the program provides something to the customer rather than requesting assistance from them. The graduates prior to 1993 are going to be vital to the success of this program due to their increased availability.

Gender of Respondents

Our data revealed that of the survey respondents only 9% were female, leaving 81% of the data collected focused on men. This is an important statistic to highlight, but due to WPI's female population, it is not unexpected. Refer to *Figure 2: Gender Enrollment Statistics Worcester Polytechnic Institute* to see how the gender enrollment has evolved since 2008 at WPI.

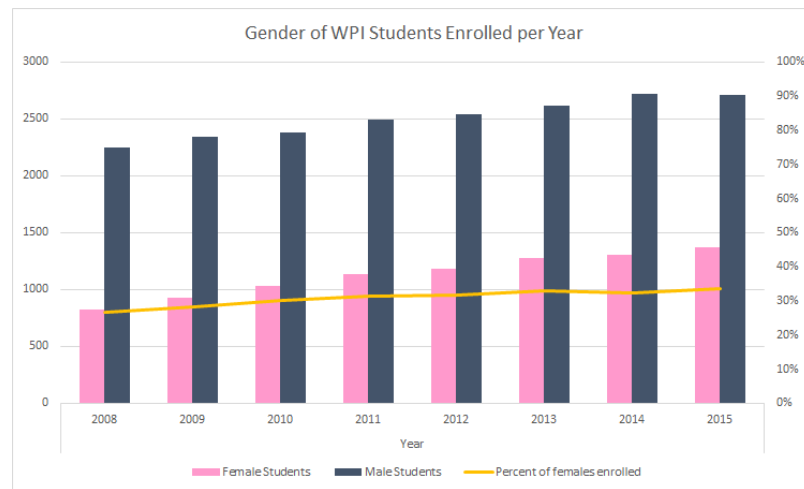


Figure 2: Gender Enrollment Statistics Worcester Polytechnic Institute (Insitute, 2015)

Based on the steady growth of incoming WPI females, it can be expected that the female population enrolled in our program will increase over time as well. Understanding the needs of the growing female population is imperative for maintaining program success. Referring to *Figure 3: Program Usefulness Rankings* it is significant to note the variance in program ranking. Women, depicted by the outer circle have a higher concentration in the higher rankings. Whereas the men, shown by the inner circle, ranked the program much lower than that of the female population.

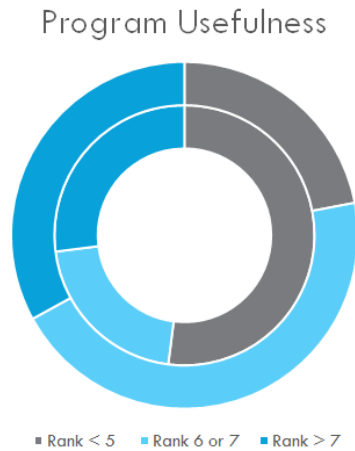


Figure 3: Program Usefulness Rankings

Of the female respondents, 75% of them ranked the program as a 6 or higher on the scale that determines the value they would receive out of the program. This statistic identifies the female population's desire to become involved. We determined that 85% of females are looking to utilize job searching, 71% skill enhancement, and only 42% were looking for assistance with a career change.

In contrast to the female population, only 22% of the male demographics were looking for skill enhancement, 49% of the male population selected “other”. Of the responses in the other category, most of them revolved around personal connections, or utilizing it for business contacts. Roughly 54% of the male respondents ranked the programs value as less than 5. Of that 54%, 74% of those respondents had graduated prior to 1993. As discussed in the previous section, the graduates prior to 1993 did not see value in the program because its intent was not clearly communicated.

Geographic Location of Respondents

Our target audience for this program is for those outside of the New England area. The area of improvement for the WPI Alumni Office is regional presence. Through a web based program, the WPI Alumni Office will be able to accommodate the needs of all alumni, regardless of their location. Looking at the geographic distribution of our survey respondents, 62% were located in the New England area. Distribution can be seen in *Figure 4: Survey Respondents per Location*.

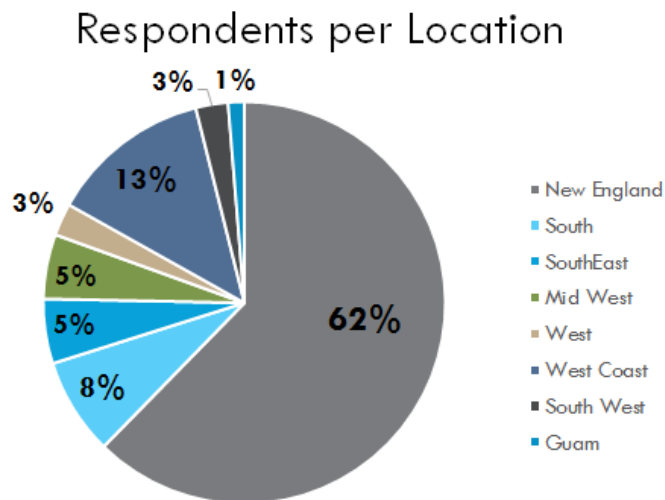


Figure 4: Survey Respondents per Location

Of the respondents located outside of New England, 52% ranked the program as greater than 7 on the program value scale. These respondents were most interested in utilizing this program for job searching, finding job candidates, and obtaining job intel. WPI offers an abundance of informal networking opportunities for New England locals, and occasionally for others outside of the New England area. Due to the minimal attention on the other regions, the respondents indicated the importance of developing more career centric programs. Developing an online program that includes a focus on job development will attract the users regardless of their geographic location.

4.2 Differentiate From Existing Platforms

“Multiple social media platforms currently exist that allow members to network together, there is a need to differentiate from these existing platforms.”

50% of the survey respondents who ranked the program less than five, said that they believed it would not be useful because LinkedIn already exists. They considered this program to be too similar and suggested that we find a way to differentiate it from other social media platforms. Because we want to gain the interest of those survey respondents, we determined that our program should provide some unique qualities that you cannot get out of a LinkedIn membership.

While we were conducting interviews with other universities that currently have successful alumni programs, we were drawn towards an online event platform, Brazen, used by Pennsylvania State University. Following our interview with a contact from Penn State, we set up a meeting with a representative from Brazen. During the meeting we found that schools that have used the program in the past were successful when it came to getting the alumni to participate. Online events is something that LinkedIn does not offer to its members so we decided that this could be our differentiating factor. Using a program such as Brazen helps to draw together global communities. This has helped other schools using the program to increase engagement with the alumni, collect various alumni data, and assist in generating more revenue with increased alumni giving.

4.3 Program Naming

“A common barrier to program success was program titling to encompass the programs capabilities and goals.”

University	Barrier	Solution
Baylor University	Misinterpretations of the word "mentor".	Clearly defining what mentorship means.
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	Career services meant job placement to the more experience alumni, whereas the newer alumni saw it as networking.	Clearly defining Career Services.
University of Michigan	Misconception around the goals, or intent of the program based on the title choice.	Renamed the program from "30 Minute Mentor" to "Face-to-Face".

Table 2: Program Barriers and Solutions Identified

A common barrier experienced by the majority of the universities interviewed was their inability to correctly define the intent of their program through their program title. When speaking with the University of Michigan they originally titled their program as “30 Minute Mentors.” The responses they had gotten were negative which created confusion amongst the participants, where it lead them to question the university as to how someone could possibly mentor another person in only 30 minutes. To their targeted audience the term “mentor” meant something that is long term and requires a person’s complete attention. This is not something that

could be performed within a 30 minute time span. The University of Michigan's intent was to make a quick meet and greet type of setting, with the purpose of having the pair develop into a mentoring type relationship. Since there was confusion around the "30 Minute Mentor" program title, they decided to adjust the title to "Face-to-Face", and have been receiving more positive feedback. Similar to the University of Michigan, a common barrier in naming the program arose for Baylor University and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The program title led the participants to falsely believe what the real intentions of the program were.

In addition to our interviews with universities, we observed this trend among the older survey respondents as well. In our survey we defined the program as web-based, which would allow alumni to connect to other alumni based on their information and specific career interests. The responses that ranked this program less than 5, conveyed that they would prefer to utilize this program as something that could allow them to make personal connections and network. Although the description identified that the intent was to make connections, it was not clear what the program was meant for. To the alumni who were retired, the term "mentor" indicated that it would be career focused (career placement or career changes). Therefore, they felt that it was not a program that would be useful for their purposes.

4.3 Multipurpose Program

"Respondents of the survey have a diverse set of needs that they would like the program to satisfy."

The fourth and final trend within the data, was that the alumni wanted to have a multipurpose program to address multiple needs. When analyzing the survey data, the majority of the survey respondents checked off more than one requirement that they would like to get out of the program. The options listed were: career change, skill enhancement, job searching, and other (where they would then be able to provide their own response that was not listed). A large percentage of the participants selected two, if not three of the options provided. So it was clear to us that they did not want it to be strictly focused in one area.

Although not all of their alumni programs were strictly online, we found that the majority of the universities we interviewed offered multiple types of events for the alumni. *Table 3: Programs Offered at Universities* below lists the types of programs that are offered to the alumni by four of the schools we interviewed. Using an online event program will allow for WPI to

provide various types of events. Some can be similar to the ones listed below, but rather than having it be in person, it could be web-based. This can assist in removing some of the geographical barriers and with these online events we would be able to customize them to meet everyone's needs.

University	Programs Offered
Baylor University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forbes networking event ● Football watching parties ● Business networking events ● Women's networking events
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Homecoming events ● Career services ● Regional chapters
Boston University	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Monthly alumni webinars ● Sporting events ● Volunteering for alumni
University of Michigan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regional clubs ● Community service ● Online networking

Table 3: Programs Offered at Universities

5.0 Recommendations

One of the biggest takeaways from the data, was that roughly 50% of the survey respondents were not interested in a networking program. The rationale ranged from currently having this capability via social media to general disinterest. To combat this negative perception of the program our team believes that there needs to be a differentiating factor. Through this chapter we will outline our two identified solutions: optimal and secondary. Although these are our recommendations, they can be altered based on the Alumni Office's preferences.

5.1 Implementation Plan

5.1.1 Marketing

Based on our survey and interview responses we have identified three outlets to utilize for marketing our program. We believe that by using the suggested outlets, the program will have higher involvement and success. The outlets identified were determined based on external web sources, the opinions of our survey respondents, and the practices of other universities.

1. Marketing to the existing WPI student base.
2. Developing an email campaign.
3. Creating a social media campaign.

This section will outline the three outlets in further detail.

Marketing to the Existing Student Base

In order to optimize our current marketing processes to ensure that alumni are aware of the offerings, we suggest that WPI enhances their marketing efforts towards the current student base. We believe that this will be successful based on our interviews with Penn State, MIT, and Boston University. All of these schools capitalize on their current student base to ensure that they are aware of what is available to them after graduation. Penn State houses a robust alumni office. Marketing to the existing student base allowed our interviewee from Penn State to sign up for the alumni programs early and promoted overall awareness of what is available after graduation.

We recommend that the WPI Alumni Office invest in at least two of the following outlets in addition to current Senior Week practices in order to promote this program, as well as other alumni offerings to the Senior Class: WPI Senior Class Committee, WPI Student Government Association, WPI Career Fairs, or WPI Project Presentation Day.

1. Senior Class Board: This committee is comprised of graduating seniors that will ensure that the graduating class will leave their mark on WPI (Class, 2013). This would be a great resource to extend additional information to the Senior Class via emails or events. To utilize the Senior Class Board:
 - a. Contact sboard@wpi.edu
 - b. Relay an email with information about the benefits of the program. Highlight the registration process. Include a one-click registration option that will redirect to the registration portal.
 - c. Discuss the possibility of working with the board to give out additional information at the 100th day and 50th day celebration for seniors.
2. Career Fairs (Center, 2015): Each year the WPI Career Development Center hosts three Career Fairs for WPI students and alumni to learn about full time, part time, summer internship, and co-op opportunities. These three fairs are conducted every year: Fall Career Fair, Spring Career Fair, and the Life Sciences and Bioengineering Fair. Over roughly 180 employees and more than 2,000 students attend each event every year. This would be a great resource to extend additional information during Career Fairs via emails or events. To utilize the career fairs:
 - a. Contact: cdc@wpi.edu
 - b. Relay an email with information about the benefits of the program. Highlight the registration process. Include a one-click registration option that will redirect to the registration portal.
 - c. Discuss the possibility of having a table set-up discussing this program for every career fair.
3. Project Presentation Day (WPI, 2015b): This is a mandatory event that all seniors are required to attend in order to showcase their Major Qualifying Project, identified as their senior capstone project. Since all those participating are seniors, it is a great opportunity to market to the class. To utilize Project Presentation Day:
 - a. Contact Eileen Brangan Mellin, Director of Public Relations (ebmell@wpi.edu) in order to set up an informational booth or time to relay information about the program during these events.

Email Campaigns

It is recommended that the WPI Alumni Office utilize email campaigns in order to raise program awareness. Of the survey respondents, 94% of them prefer to be marketed to via email. This is regardless of their current age. Email is a powerful tool that all age groups utilize on a daily basis. In order to make the marketing more successful, the information given has to be carefully thought out because emails can be easily deleted as spam if the reader does not know the sender. Things to consider: day of week, time, subject line, email sender, and the actual content of the email.

Email Timing

The day of the week plays a huge role in ensuring that the message is of top priority. As illustrated by *Figure 5: Daily Email Effectiveness*, email effectiveness is highest on Tuesdays through Thursdays, and significantly drops off on weekends.

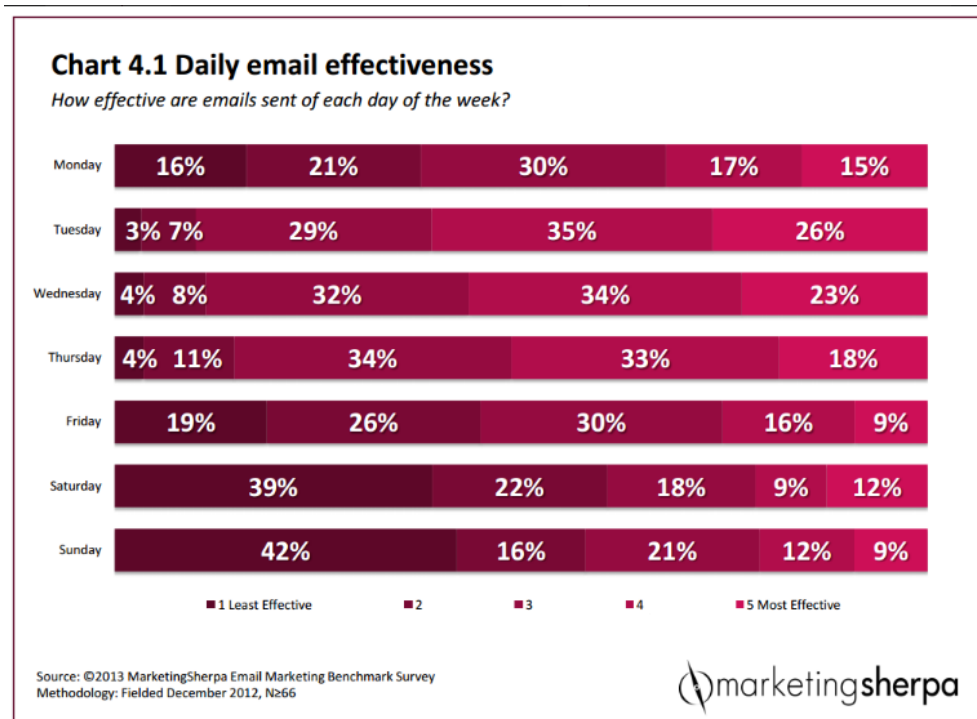


Figure 5: Daily Email Effectiveness (Kirkpatrick, 2014)

It is important to note that marketing is subjective to your targeted audience, and there is not a clear answer to “which day is the best to send emails”. However, according to the MarketingSherpa Email Marketing Benchmark Survey and other sources, you will experience the highest amount of open rates on weekdays. Mondays are typically days where working men

and women are reacquainting themselves with their tasks and cleaning out their email inboxes,

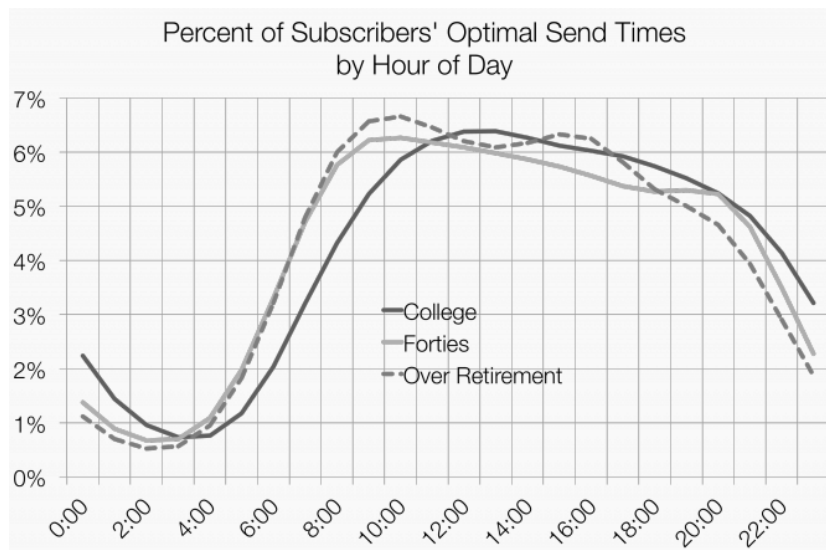


Figure 6: Optimal Email Send Time (Andrzejewska, 2012)

so if the email is not pertaining to their daily task it will likely be dismissed.

In addition to concerns of the optimal day to send emails, the time of which emails are sent can have a significant impact on whether the content will be read, or if it will be lost in the flood of other incoming mail that takes priority. Referring to *Figure 6: Optimal Email Send Time*, it shows that peak time for emails occurs during the working period with a lull during lunchtime.

“Almost 40% of all messages are sent between 6 a.m. and noon. This can result in inbox clutter, and significantly decrease results for these emails” (Andrzejewska, 2012). The common issue with morning marketing is that most times people are only cleaning out their emails; so many of them are left unread. In order to allow for higher probability of the email being opened, the message should be sent between the times of 1:00pm and 4:00pm. This time is beneficial for 2 reasons: (1) it avoids the morning clean out of emails, and (2) it will grab people's attention during the working hours while most people will be near a computer. It is also important to note that 23.63% of all email openings happen within the first hour of its delivery (Andrzejewska, 2012). After the first hour of delivery the likelihood that the email will be opened decreases significantly. So, by engaging our target audience between 1:00 pm and 4:00 pm the audience will have ample time to open the email.

Email Sender

Another important focus of email marketing is ensuring that the email sender uses a personal email, rather than a generic alias email address. The email address is of importance because it builds trust with the reader and ensures that this is an email from a human rather than just a computer program (Goliger, 2013). We suggest that the email is sent from the person in charge of maintaining the program rather than an anonymous email alias to optimize the number of email hits.

Email Body

Ensure that the body of the email provides the user with something actionable. Each email should contain the following:

- Benefits of participating in the program.
- Past success stories - if applicable.
- Program information: when, where, and how.
- A registration link to allow the user to sign up immediately.
- A photo next to the email signature of the sender.

By including the above features the user will be able to clearly understand (1) why they are receiving an email, (2) what the program does, and (3) how to register for the program.

Social Media Campaigns

According to our survey responses 38% of respondents who graduated between the years of 2004-2014 would like to be engaged via social media. Each form of social media has a purpose. For the purpose of an online networking program, WPI Alumni Office should utilize LinkedIn marketing campaigns. For this program we recommend weekly posts containing information similar to the email campaign:

- Benefits of participating in the program.
- Past success stories - if applicable. This will allow the reader to see that involvement in this program has been beneficial for others.
- Program information: when, where, and how.
- A registration link to allow the user to sign up immediately. This will eliminate any confusion around how to register.
- How many people are currently signed up. By including the number of participants it will peak further interest.

5.1.2 The Optimal Solution

Online Event Software

A common issue that arose throughout our MQP process, was the concern that networking platforms already exist and are being utilized such as: Facebook or LinkedIn. As a society that revolves around convenience and efficiency, we needed to differentiate from these existing platforms to develop a program that would address the needs of all the alumni. We concluded after consulting various software sites, and evaluating offerings, that the optimal solution would be for the WPI Alumni Office to implement online events through Brazen.

Brazen is a software that helps organizations, such as universities, create better engagement through chat based online events. On LinkedIn, you can connect with someone and send a message to them, however, you are not guaranteed an immediate response. Depending on how urgently you need them to get back to you, this could be inconvenient especially if you are looking for feedback on a resume or advice prior to interviewing. This software allows connections to be completely automated. The software will automatically connect alumni based on similar interests. Social media sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn are not built for true engagement or the development of meaningful connections. With social media there is an inability to segment our audience by their interests which is key to helping alumni feel valued. In contrast to social media, Brazen allows the host to set up unique “classrooms” or segments so that once registered for the event the user can identify their specific areas of interest. For a visual representation of the classroom segments please refer to *Figure 7: Brazen Event Software Classrooms*.

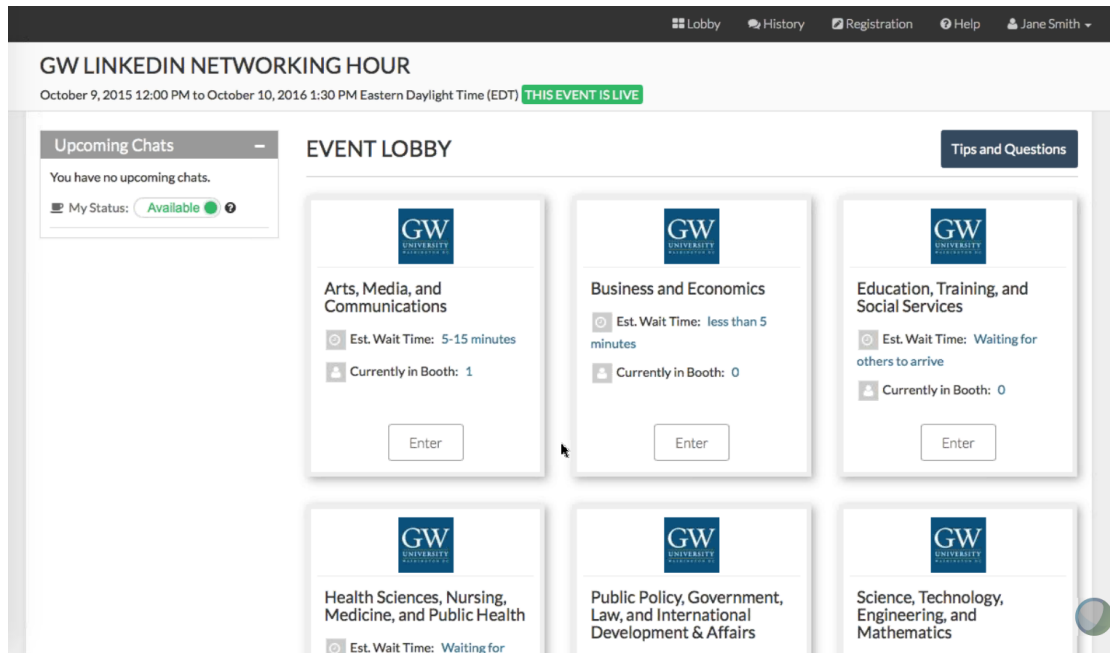


Figure 7: Brazen Event Software Classrooms

These rooms can be segmented based on shared interests, such as industry, geography, discussion topics, and more. The classrooms work similar to a career fair, where the participant can enter into a queue to wait to speak to a person. This operates as a Lean process because you can enter into multiple queues at once to optimize your time; in contrast to an in-person career fair where you have to wait in line to speak to a representative. This is depicted in *Figure 8: Brazen Event Page Sample*. Once it is the participant's turn, they are connected in a one-on-one chat window with another alumnus. This window will show you the other person's profile, and you will be allotted a set amount of time to connect with this person. Once this time is up, you move on to the next person. You will later be able to rank your connections and determine if you

would like to network with

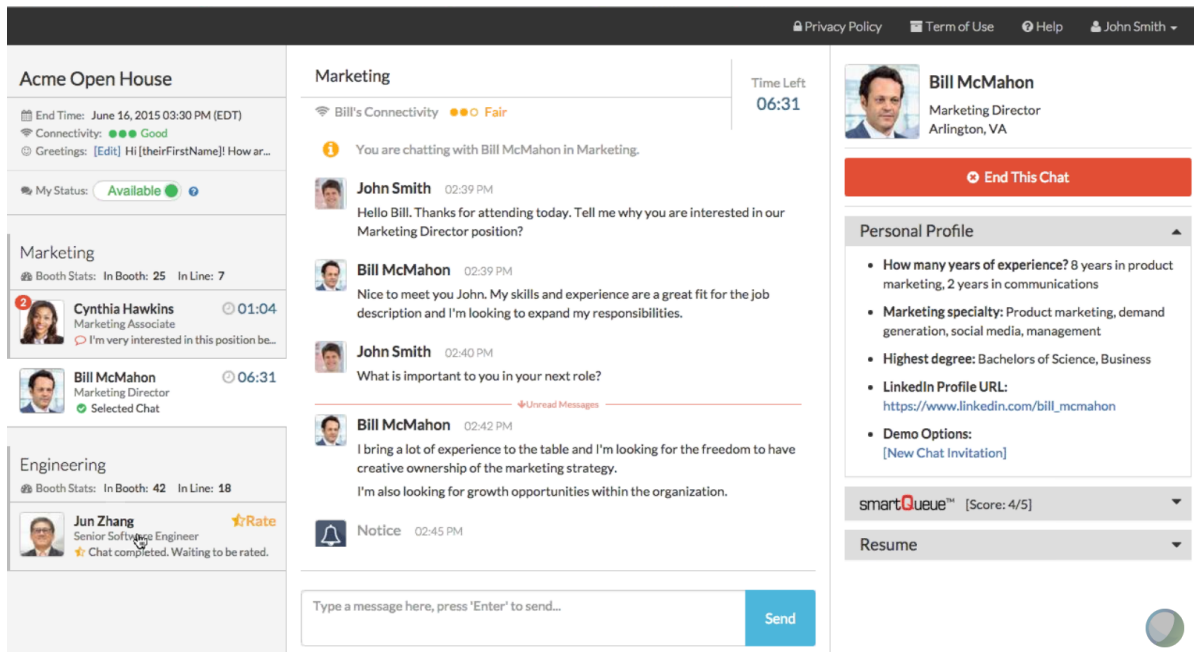


Figure 8: Brazen Event Page Sample

them further.

The paired connections allows for easy mobile participation and facilitates connections in an efficient manner. Brazen supports all devices, so whether at work or at home, the user will be able to participate in the online event from any geographic location at their leisure. Online events eliminate the awkward initial conversation because people are in an environment in which they feel comfortable.

Online Event Themes

Analyzing our survey results, discussed in Chapter 4.0: Data Analysis, we gained further insight into why our respondents were interested or not interested in participating in a networking program. To gain the support of the uninterested survey respondents we attempted to design events that aligned with their needs. In order to determine the types of events that would be successful we utilized the Attitude Towards an Object (ATO) model. This model, illustrated in *Table 4: Attitude Towards an Object Model - Event Theme Optimization*, is designed to work in 4 steps to determine your optimal option:

1. List out the needs of your targeted audience.
2. Rank each of these needs with a value of -3 to +3 based on your perceived importance of each item.

3. Under each program type rank each of the needs on a scale of 1 to 10 based on the programs ability to meet this need.
4. To determine which program will provide the most value to your targeted audience, multiply the rank column with the value column and sum up the values. The program with the highest number is optimal.

Areas Alumni of Alumni Interest	Value	Online Class Reunion		General Networking		Career Switch Advice		Women in the Tech Field	
	-3 to +3	Rank 1 -10	Value	Rank 1 -10	Value	Rank 1 -10	Value	Rank 1 -10	Value
Personal Connections	2	10	20	8	16	5	10	10	20
Job Searching	1	4	4	6	6	4	4	6	6
Job Placement	-3	1	-3	3	-9	2	-6	2	-6
Technical Skill Enhancement	-2	1	-2	2	-4	1	-2	3	-6
Business Connections	1	8	8	10	10	7	7	10	10
Career Advice	2	5	10	7	14	10	20	8	16
Management Skill Enhancement	3	1	3	2	6	1	3	1	3
Reconnecting	3	10	30	5	15	4	12	1	3
*Based on survey responses		Total	70	Total	54	Total	48	Total	46
		Skill Enhancement		Networking with Entrepreneur		Career Fair			
		Rank 1 -10	Value	Rank 1 -10	Value	Rank 1 -10	Value		
		4	8	6	12	1	2		
		1	1	5	5	10	10		
		1	-3	2	-6	7	-21		
		10	-20	1	-2	2	-4		
		5	5	10	10	6	6		
		6	12	6	12	1	2		
		10	30	1	3	1	3		
		4	12	2	6	1	3		
		Total	45	Total	40	Total	1		

Table 4: Attitude Towards an Object Model - Event Theme Optimization

*Disclaimer: Please note that all rankings are subjective based on our opinion of each need.

Identified in Table 4: Attitude Towards an Object Model - Event Theme Optimization, we brainstormed seven possible solutions to begin hosting online events: Online Class Reunion, General Networking, Career Switch Advice, Women in the Tech Field, Skill Enhancement, Networking with Entrepreneurs, and a Career Fair. The events are organized in ranking order. Based upon the needs identified by our alumni, we recommend that the first event WPI hosts would be one of the top three options: (1) Online Class Reunion, (2) General Networking, and (3) Career Switch Advice.

1. Online Class Reunion:
 - a. **Goal:** To reconnect alumni with the classmates they graduated from WPI with.
 - b. **Classroom Segment Options:** Separate by graduation years.
2. General Networking:

- a. **Goal:** To engage alumni, regardless of geographic location, in a networking environment.
 - b. **Classroom Segment Options:** Separate by industry or interest to have people discuss the industry they are currently in or why they are interested in getting involved with that industry, by major to have the participants discuss their career paths - how did they get from point a to point b.
3. Career Switch Advice:
- a. **Goal:** To help alumni on how to transition careers.
 - b. **Classroom Segment Options:** Separate by years of experience with different numbers of companies.

The benefit of utilizing Brazen is that there is a large range of flexibility in the types of events WPI can offer. Other departments could utilize this for a variety of other offerings. We believe that this program would be a value add for WPI.

Online Event Registration


In order for the alumni to easily access these events there should be a link on the AlumniConnect, the main web page. With this link, they would be able to click it and be immediately brought to an events page where they can see what events are currently being held, and what events will be coming up. Brazen has a user friendly built in registration process that has to be completed before joining an event. *Figure 9: Brazen Registration Sample* illustrates this process. The customized event registration forms make it easy to collect key alumni data points that can be utilized to continually improve this process.

GW LINKEDIN NETWORKING HOUR
 October 9, 2015 12:00 PM to October 10, 2016 1:30 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) **THIS EVENT IS LIVE**

Graduation year

Current Industry

Years of Experience

Profile Picture 

LinkedIn Profile URL
Be sure to include the "https://" as part of your link. Not sure how to find your public profile? Learn how: https://help.linkedin.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/85/~/-/promoting-your-public-profile

Resume
Please upload your resume, CV, or transcript.

Why are you networking today?

Figure 9: Brazen Registration Sample

Program Naming

The naming behind a program such as the one that the WPI Alumni Office would like to implement, is an important factor in how it will be viewed by the potential users. Depending on how the name of the program is received, it can either draw people’s interest into the program or push them away. Right now, the name that is currently used for the alumni page, “AlumniConnect”, is a safe and conservative name that is straightforward about what its main goals are. We wanted to come up with a name for the actual connection program that is creative and sparks the interest of the alumni.

We recommend going with “GoatConnect” as seen in *Figure: 10 Proposed Program Name* as the program name because it is an innovative way to incorporate the school’s mascot. One of the main reasons we recommended associating the program name with the school mascot is because it resonates well with the alumni. In 2013-2014, three WPI students launched “Gompei’s Goat Cheese” as part of their MQP (WPI, 2015a). As said by the project advisor, Professor Sharon Wulf, “their tagline, ‘Made by the Smartest Goats in the World’, is a humorous tribute to the kind of people that WPI attracts. It definitely puts a smile on the face of WPI alumni.” (WPI, 2015a). Within the first month of starting up, the business sold more than \$2,000

worth of Gompei's Goat Cheese. The WPI mascot, Gompei, resonates with the community due to its history with the university. Associating a familiar face with an Alumni program is one way to market towards the alumni. However, the final decision for the naming of the program is up to the WPI Alumni Office.



Figure 10: Proposed Program Name

One concern about naming the program “GoatConnect” is that it might not come off as being serious enough for a connection program. The people who we intend to utilize the program are within the professional world and may take the play on words as not being serious enough to be successful. The naming of the program is essential to the marketing aspect of the program. Successfully marketing it with a clever name will help draw the interest of more alumni.

Optimal Solution Cost Analysis

In order to roughly identify what the cost of the optimal solution will be for the WPI Alumni Office we performed a cost analysis. As a disclaimer, some of the numbers utilized are based on assumption and subject to change.

Brazen Software Costs:

Trial Phase 6 months		Option 2: Standard 2 year Agreement	
Number of Classrooms	6	Number of Classrooms	6
Total Cost	\$2,372.50	Total Cost	\$7,500.00
Registered Users	750	Registered Users	1500
Total Cost per user	\$3.16	Total Cost per user	\$5.00

To mitigate the risk associated with purchasing a new software outright, we suggest utilizing a phased approach. Brazen does not offer a pilot program however, they would be willing to have an introductory period for six months. If WPI chose the six month trial period, which we recommend, they would be required to host a minimum of three events to ensure the lessons learned from each event can be applied to make the introductory period successful.

Optimal Solution: Phased Approach

Utilizing a pilot program will let the WPI Alumni Office see how successful the program will be. Testing something in a controlled manner allows for the project team members to take a close look at the results and discover any unexpected outcomes. With those results as well as feedback from the user's adjustments can be made. The WPI Alumni Office will also be able to test certain event themes. Testing events and using Brazen's data analytics will allow for them to see which ones were more popular than others. Then based on those results they can alter any events as well as regularly host the most popular ones. *Figure 11: Optimal Solution Phased Approach* below is a Gantt chart that represents how we recommend the first year should be implemented.

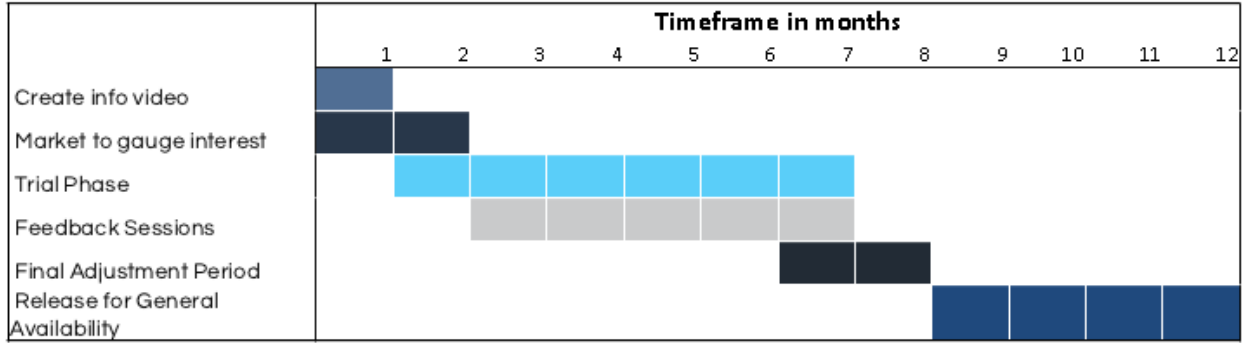


Figure 11: Optimal Solution Phased Approach

Administrative Costs:

Working with the Brazen account manager, we approximated that each event requires roughly 25 hours of prep time, marketing, and administrative responsibilities. We estimated that the employee in charge of maintaining the software would want to allocate no more than 15% of their time to Brazen due to other responsibilities.

Full-Time Employee		
Hours per Week	Weeks per Year	Hours per Year
40	50	2,000

Table 5: Full-Time Employee

Assuming that the employee wants to only dedicate a maximum of 15% of their time to Brazen we calculated that once the hours exceed 300, which is 15% of 2,000 hours outlined in *Table 5: Full-Time Employee*, the WPI Alumni Office should hire a marketing intern to disperse the workload. We researched average marketing intern salaries to conduct our analysis. For our calculations we used the “average” hourly wage, found in *Table 6: Marketing Hourly Wage*.

Marketing Intern Hourly Wage		
High	Average	Low
\$17.00	\$12.00	\$8.00

Table 6: Marketing Intern Hourly Wage (Payscale.com, 2015)

Optimizing Event Frequency:

Hours per Event	Frequency per year	Alumni Participants per Event				
		10	25	50	100	200
150	6	\$79.08	\$31.63	\$15.82	\$7.91	\$3.95
300	12	\$39.54	\$15.82	\$7.91	\$3.95	\$1.98
600	24	\$49.77	\$19.91	\$9.95	\$4.98	\$2.49
1,200	48	\$39.89	\$15.95	\$7.98	\$3.99	\$1.99

Table 7: Event Frequency Optimization

With the above calculations in mind, we wanted to determine what the optimal number of events hosted would be with a goal of minimizing cost per participant. The hours per event were calculated under the assumption that each event will require 25 hours of prep time. The red line in *Table 7: Event Frequency Optimization* depicts the threshold where the need for a marketing intern is justified. The cost per participant was calculated using the yearly cost of Brazen: \$4,745. We then took the yearly program cost divided by the frequency per year and the number of alumni participants. Once the hours surpassed 300 we added the cost of hiring a marketing intern at \$12 an hour for the number of hours needed.

$$\text{Example: } (\$4,745 + (\$12.00 * 600 \text{ hours})) / (24 \text{ events} * 10 \text{ alumni}) = \$49.77$$

Through this analysis it has been determined that the optimal frequency of events is one per month or 12 per year. We recommend that the WPI Alumni Office hosts twelve events per year to minimize their costs.

Looking at the cost of implementing a new software can be overwhelming, but looking at the cost to host an in-person networking event the cost is justified. Referencing Chartwells catering website, we used the “short plates and tapas” catering menu. This menu includes the cost of table settings, chairs, and wait service in addition to the food costs. According to Chartwells this makes the average cost per person roughly \$28. This cost is depicted by a straight line because the cost per person is the same regardless of how many people participate. These costs outline the fixed cost of hosting an on-campus event. For hosting an off-campus event we received a quote from the WPI Alumni Office which is about \$50 per person. Contrary to those events, the cost of hosting an online event decreases as more participants attend. Using this number, depicted in *Figure 12: Cost per Person per Event* the break-even point for hosting the optimal 12 events a year is roughly 20 alumni.

Cost per Person per Event

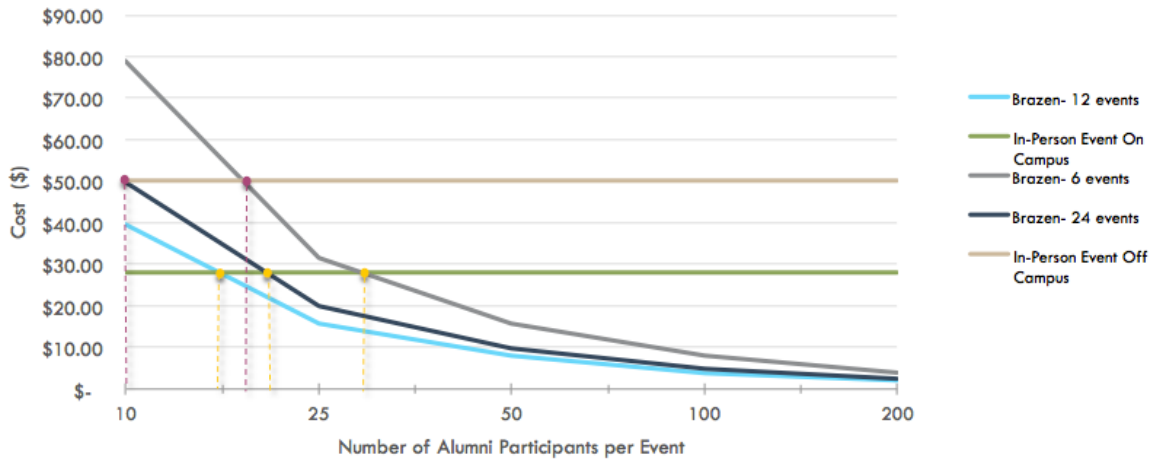


Figure 12: Cost per Person per Event

The analysis shows that if the Alumni Office hosts 12 events per year, with an average of 20 alumni per event the cost will be lower than that of an in-person networking event.

5.1.3 Secondary Option

Online Community Software

Once we analyzed the survey respondent's needs, we found that roughly 51% of them were not interested in a networking or mentoring program. The reasons ranged from already having networking capability through other social media outlets, to having little need for mentoring functionality. A secondary option to creating online events would be utilizing IModules. This program would allow for the Alumni Office to develop online groups that would function as forums focused on skill enhancement. iModules is a platform currently utilized to host the AlumniConnect page. It is an online engagement management provider for educational institutions such as WPI. iModules assists in creating relevant experiences and achieve fundraising success through web content management, marketing communications, online giving, event management, ecommerce, and social media integration. Within this software users are able to create online groups to chat amongst, share files and documents with, and make comments within.

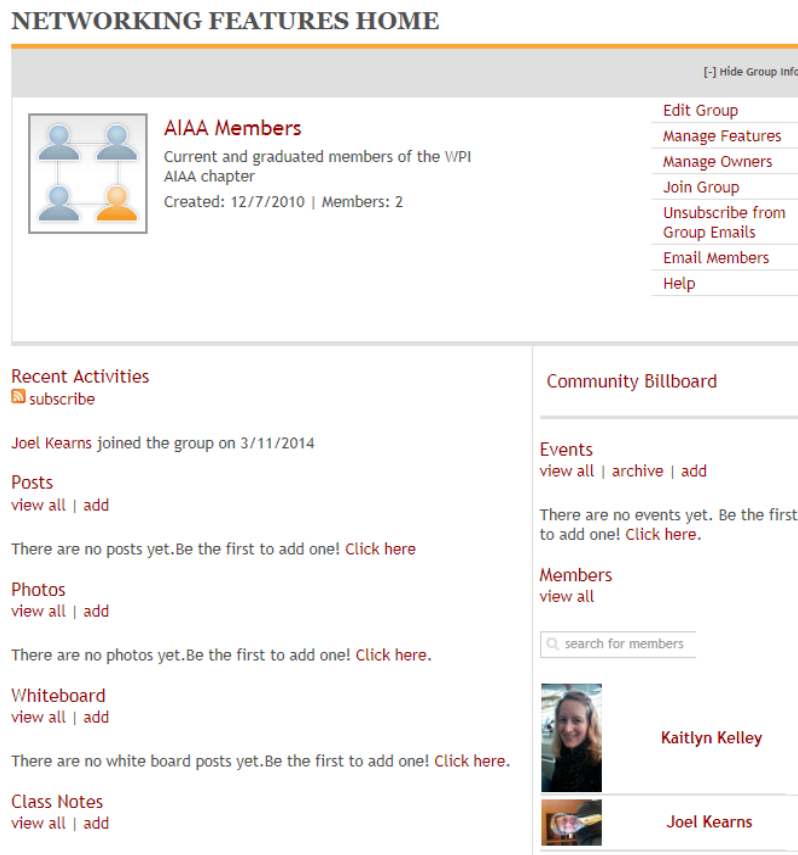


Figure 13: Imodules Group Functionality

Similar to Brazen’s ability to segment per event, iModules can segment by group. Members can join multiple groups that are of interest to them. These groups can be segmented in numerous different ways, but in the interest of keeping our focus narrow we suggest starting with skill enhancement and growing from there based on success or failures. Refer to *Figure 13: iModules Group functionality for* a visual representation of the group functionality. Within these groups, members have the ability to chat with one another, post articles or documents, create forums, and post information about events.

If any of the members within the group are logged into Connect the users have the ability to directly chat with them. This allows members to have the opportunity to network online, and receive immediate responses. When no one is available online the members still have the option to start a “whiteboard” or a forum type of feed, or to comment in the “posts” section of iModules. All notifications for the groups are sent to the members via email. These capabilities will enhance the overall alumni experience. Through marketing, the WPI Alumni Office could sell these as huge value adds, which in turn would enhance an alumni’s altruistic feelings. To effectively communicate the benefits and capabilities of the iModules Online Groups, the WPI Alumni Office should develop a training video. This training video should highlight the capabilities of the groups as well as provide them with instructions on how to sign up. Ensuring that the maximum amount of alumni see these tutorials we recommend that the Alumni Office utilizes LinkedIn and the WPI alumni page as outlets. In addition to these suggestions look back to *Chapter 5.1.1: Marketing* for more specifics on marketing recommendations.

Online Community Webinars

In efforts to gain the support of the uninterested survey respondents, we attempted to focus on and address their needs. To have something comparable to the online events using Brazen we determined that utilizing webinars in a similar fashion would be ideal. Although the webinars would not have the exact same capabilities as the Brazen software, we would still be able to use them to host events. With iModules’ online groups, the members will be able to access the webinar registration through the “Events” section. There, the webinar events will be listed with the event title, the date and time, and a brief description. *Figure 14: Webinar Event Sample* displays an example of a webinar event when viewed by the member.

NETWORKING FEATURES EVENT LIST

 Class of 1976 Thirty-fifth Reunion [+] Show Group Info

Events

[back to home](#) | [view all](#) | [add](#)

35th Reunion Banquet

Event added by: **Mary Sherman**

Event Date: 2/24/2011 to 6/4/2011

Number of attendees: 1

The reunion Banquet will be held Saturday evening June 4,2011 at a location (TBD) on campus. The evening will include a cocktail reception with light appetizers, cash bar, a sit-down dinner, music from an IPOD set-up, a video slide-show, possible guest speaker, door prizes and dancing.

[Send this page to a Friend](#)

Figure 14: Webinar Event Sample

The alumni can then add the event to their calendar and register from there. Other members of their group will then be able to see when they have registered and how many people will be a part of the webinar session. The theme of the events can be similar if not exactly the same as the ones recommended within the Optimal Implementation plan. Refer to *Table 4: Attitude Towards an Object Model - Event Theme Optimization* to see how we ranked the types of events based on importance and the need of the alumni. The webinars can be based off of these suggestions. For example, skill enhancement is highly ranked so having a series of webinars that address specific skill sets such as computer programming can be useful to the alumni who have the need.

Currently WPI uses Adobe Connect for their webinar platform. This platform offers multimedia and video conferencing for each session where participants are able to view a speaker. They also have the ability to either privately or publicly chat with others and share screens within the webinar. Adobe Connect has a user friendly design that is easy to customize. It is also simple to manage the registration for the programs with pre-designed templates and content for reuse. The registration forms are customizable so you can ask for specific information from the participant based on the content of the webinar. Once a participant is registered for the event, the manager of the account has the ability to set up reminder, confirmation, and ad-hoc e-mails. Another important feature of Adobe Connect is the built in and

easy to use analytics, webinar engagement monitoring tools, and visual interpretation of data. With this capability, the host is able to see information about the participants as they join. Using this information you can determine if that specific type of event was successful with the alumni or not. If not then it is easy enough to stop putting on that type of webinar and replace it with a new, more popular one.

Both WPI's Alumni Office and the Career Development Center (CDC) currently utilizes webinars. After meeting with Maggie Becker, a member of the CDC, we discovered that WPI's Academic Technology Center assisted in setting up the webinars for the different departments. When asked how many hours of preparation time would be needed she informed us that they would typically take 16 to 20 hours. This includes marketing to the WPI community, organizing the event, working with the Adobe Connect software, and performing test runs.

Online Community Phased Approach

To ensure that this program is successful, we recommend that the WPI Alumni Office begins by creating one online group. Initially, they can gather a beta group of alumni willing to test out the group's functionality and provide feedback. We recommend testing a Programming Skill Enhancement group with roughly 20 alumni that will serve as beta. You should ensure that the alumni vary in age, and will agree to dedicate time to utilize the AlumniConnect group and provide the Alumni Office with feedback. The WPI Alumni Office should provide the group with some training documents, or videos related to programming to facilitate the transition into using the program. In addition, the WPI Alumni Office should plan on hosting a minimum of two webinars focused on programming languages to test out the events functionality within iModules.

5.1.4 Risk Analysis & Prevention

This section outlines the risk associated with beginning a new program, where you can find those risks, and how you can identify the steps to mitigate them. Addressing those risks quickly and effectively will ensure a successful program and as well as encourage future participation and growth.

Program Failure

Introducing a new program requires a lot of time, money, and attention. Some of the more concerning and problematic possibilities for the risk associated with this project would be it completely failing, the alumni not seeing the value of it, the program being too expensive to maintain, and more. To ensure success we recommend two things for the Alumni Office to implement: (1) initially engage in some form of a pilot program, and (2) follow up regularly with surveys or phone calls asking how the program went. These will allow for a better understanding of the program's successes and failures.

1. Pilot Program:

- a. If you were to choose the optimal program we recommend you opt into the six month trial period for the Brazen software. During this time period you are allotted up to 750 registered users, up to six segmented classrooms per event, and one administrative seat. WPI would be required to engage in a minimum of three events during this trial period. This would allow for the WPI Alumni Office to address any major problems and make any minor changes before introducing it to the entire alumni base.
- b. To ensure that the secondary program is successful, we recommend that the WPI Alumni Office begins by creating one online group. They should then gather a beta group of alumni willing to test out the group's functionality and provide feedback. For the initial Beta test we recommend having a focus on Programming Skill Enhancement and including roughly 20 alumni to start.

2. Follow Up Surveys:

- a. If WPI is working with the Brazen software there is a built in capability for the users to rate their connections and experiences, so it would not be necessary to have any further surveys or questions for the alumni.

- b. If the secondary option is chosen you can set up bi-annual phone calls, and/or survey requests for the alumni to participate in where they can provide feedback.

While collecting feedback throughout either option's process, it is imperative that WPI adjusts the program as they receive it. This will ensure that WPI remains risk averse and successful.

Inappropriate Behavior

Another risk that WPI needs to be aware of is the possibility of running into inappropriate behavior issues. This can create a bad image for WPI and for everyone involved in the program. Measures can be taken to prevent this type of problem. First off, clearly defining inappropriate behavior is important so everyone participating understands what it is. Putting it clearly in a contract during registration will allow for the participant to immediately see it, be aware of it, and understand that it will not be tolerated. There are five steps that can be taken to prevent inappropriate behavior and will limit WPI's liability with the program participants: (1) create a clear, concise policy, (2) train the participants about what is considered as inappropriate behavior, (3) monitor the program and talk to the people involved, (4) encourage participants to speak up and come forward, and (5) take complaints very seriously and investigate (Weist, 2). It is necessary to take the precautionary steps to ensure the program will launch successfully and be continued.

Diversity

Background and diversity differences can pose another problem when pairing people together to discuss various topics within a connection program. Adding a section during the initial sign up process that discusses original birthplaces and ethnic background may help in recommending people with others. People who are from the same area tend to relate, which can eliminate the chances of a problem occurring in the relationship. Problems that some pairs may incur is not being aware of gender, race, and religion discrimination. Some may need to take into account how sensitive these topics are. When deemed appropriate for both users it can be discussed.

Poor Connections

When pairing two people together you run the risk of that match potentially failing or not working out. This failed connection can lead the participant to think poorly of WPI. By implementing online events with Brazen the risk is reduced. The participants are partaking in five to seven minute conversations, and then get to choose if they would like to communicate with the other person further. The participants are not automatically matched with someone, and can choose who they would like to speak with. Utilizing iModules within the secondary option requires no matching, therefore participants will not run into any failed connections.

6.0 Conclusion

We identified two solutions: an optimal and a secondary implementation plan. Providing the WPI Alumni Office with these two options, would allow for them to be able to make the final decision of what they feel is right for the program. The solutions developed were driven by our alumni survey results as well as our interviews conducted with other universities. A common issue that arose throughout our MQP process, was the concern that networking programs already exist and are being utilized such as: Facebook or LinkedIn. To mitigate this issue, we concluded that providing an online event would be what differentiates our program from others. We also noted that our alumni would like a program that fits more than just one of their needs. So rather than simply having a mentorship program, we determined that it should be more focused on various types of connections instead. For our optimal solution, we recommend utilizing online events to differentiate from existing platforms and satisfy the alumni's diverse needs. Our secondary solution recommends developing online groups for the alumni to connect based on similar interests. By providing these two solutions we are allowing the WPI Alumni Office to implement and adjust based on their preferences.

7.0 Appendix

Appendix A: Alumni Survey Questions

PART 1: BASIC INFORMATION

Thank you for participating in our survey. Your feedback is important.

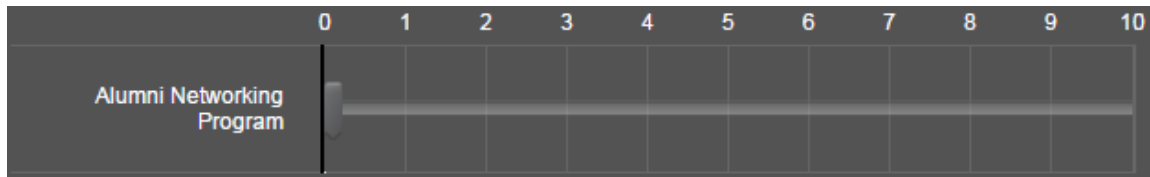
We are a team of WPI students working in collaboration with the WPI Alumni Association to understand the needs of our current alumni base, and how we can best address those needs. The goal of this project is to create an online program that will allow Alumni to connect with one another virtually to eliminate any geographic barriers that would prevent connections, and enrich the WPI Alumni experience.

1. What is your email? (Open Response Section)
2. What year did you graduate from WPI?
 - 2004 - 2014
 - 1994 – 2003
 - Prior 1993
3. What WPI Alumni benefits have you utilized?
 - WPI Events (Homecoming, Tech Old Timers)
 - WPI Committees (Class Reunion, Alumni Association, etc.)
 - AlumniConnect Website
 - GOLD Programs (Graduates of the Last Decade)
 - WPI Volunteer (Alumni Ambassadors, Alumni Admissions, etc.)
 - None of the above
4. What other opportunities should WPI offer to Alumni? (Open Response Section)
5. What is the best way to inform you about WPI's Alumni offerings?
 - Emails
 - Snail Mail
 - Social Media
 - Alumni Newsletter
 - AlumniConnect Website

PART 2: ALUMNI NETWORKING PROGRAM

A web-based program that would allow you to connect to other Alumni based in your information and specific career interests.

1. Based on the above description how likely would you utilize an Alumni Networking Program? (0 being not likely at all; 10 being highly likely)



Why would you utilize an Alumni Networking Program?

- Career changes
 - Skill enhancement
 - Job searching
 - Other
2. What information or skills would you want to gain from participating in an Alumni Networking Program? (Open Response Section)
 3. How involved would you want the WPI Alumni Association to be in the networking process? (To assist with the form of matching: Mentor to Mentee)
 - Not at all. I don't want this to be a formal process.
 - A little bit. I would like help to initially get started.
 - Very involved. I want this to be formalized process.
 4. How much of a time commitment would you be interested in dedicating?
 - Weekly
 - Monthly
 - Bi-Annually
 - Other
 5. What about the Alumni Networking Program is not useful to you? (Open Response Section)
 6. Would you be interested in participating in a follow up interview?
 - Yes
 - No
 7. Any addition comments? (Open Response Section)

Appendix B1: Interview with University of Michigan

This college were a highly decentralized college when the alumni center is central entity and they fund themselves through development and fundraising methods. They have multiple ways of engaging their alumni, but it confuses alumni about where they can actually help out. With the use of technology and relationships, helps in creating better engagement among the alumni. These engagement include regional clubs across the world. Also alumni are able to give back through donations and community service. Their main goals they have are: how to keep them connected, how to engage wherever they live. And how to stay part of Michigan. The goal of their networking program was to create a virtual face to face engagement for recent grads and older alumni. This also included the need for a networking workshop on how to network. They have a regional option for older alums and younger alums where these regional clubs network with each major, ex. marketing in Chicago

They title the program use to be “30 Minute Mentor.” The program was not as time consuming and takes mentor labor out. However, matches weren’t successful as alumni were frustrated and disappointed, and how narrow the definition of the program was towards the students, even though they students chose their mentors. Therefore, they changed the name to “Face to Face”. The program was set up to create events for these alum, who can meet with one or two students or grads but sending a link. The program emails the alumni and the student when they have been matched. The student may be able to contact the alumni through any of the online methods, making the process informal in create a potential mentoring in experience (but not expected). The mentoring for alumni to alumni has its benefits in true matching, creating a stronger relationship to create a type of deep mentoring experience. However, it does take up a lot of time and they have to rely on volunteers on matching. Matching is according to professional criteria.

The Face to Face Program has been in existence for years compare to the alumni program 6 months. It took around 6 months to establish through monthly emails. The program is open to any alumni and student from the school. The success rate of the program isn’t 100% as some relationships doesn’t works as planned, but great intent. Some improvements they would like to make would be getting a clear language for describing the goal and to obtain technical solutions faster and more efficiently.

One of the greatest takeaways was naming of the program. They use to have the program named as “30 Minute Mentor”. However, because there has been a misunderstanding in understanding the program they needed to change the name so they can get a bigger audience. Therefore, for our project we need to make sure that our program title is clear and everyone is one the same page when marketing it to the alumni.

Appendix B2: Interview with Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

The interview with RPI allowed us to take away many different factors that we implemented in our plans. Their program has been in existence for around a year and took a year to create. The program was established to define what career services is, help with job placement, and allow alumni to connect with current students as well as other alumni. The goal of the program is to enrich the RPI alumnus' career experience by using the dynamic support platform.

RPI offers programs through the career services that offer programs within a year; this program extends events past a year to allow alumni to plan further ahead. While it offers on campus events, there are regional events that are conducted by that region's president who has help from two members from RPI who attend the event as well.

RPI is where the phased approach was discovered; learning how to phase in different areas of the program allowed us to determine what plan would be the most successful for WPI to follow. RPI uses two different phases: phase one creates awareness for the alumni and phase two looks for services and skill enhancement which gives access to platforms that brushes on topics they learned in school.

The program is exclusive to RPI alumni and does not require any specific qualifications to join. There are greater than 1,500 people who are involved in the program of which 90% of those people are willing to help others.

The webinars involved in the program are free, but if the alumni want, they are able to pay a small fee for educational access and use the virtual classrooms. They use www.lynda.com that allows for you learn skills online that are applicable to work.

They also emphasized how important utilizing social media is. Their program markets through Snapchat, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Alumni newsletters. The accessibility in today's social media allows for the alumni to connect easily when they are unable to make it to campus.

While keeping in mind the different phases and marketing techniques, they explained to us certain barriers that we might come across. These barriers included: setting goals and expectations for the program, defining what exactly the program is for and making the program accessible to all the different age groups that could potentially be involved in the program for WPI.

Program Registration was an area where linking with another program could potentially increase participation. They recommended giving the user an option of syncing their profile with LinkedIn or giving them the option to start from scratch.

There are no user agreements other than traditional citations when joining the program. The member's initial goal is to build relationships rather than immediately ask for career help. This helps with teaching younger alumni how to properly network.

The program uses direct matching, which they refer to as "loose matching". The program is looking to grow the population to allow alumni to be aware of the opportunity to connect to others to express their experiences.

To determine if the relationship was successful or not, they use surveys to discuss success stories, suggestions etc. For future programs, they want to make sure that networking is properly defined and want to figure out what else is tied in with networking.

Appendix B3: Interview in Describing Penn State Interview

To market their program, Penn State was constantly communicating with their participants. The Alumni Association is responsible for ensuring the communication gets to all the participants. The registration process is simplified and digital, meaning there is no need for personal contact to allow someone to join. It asks for basic information to allow the participant to be contacted in the future.

The program is set up online with a virtual networking solutions application, which allows the participant to register for events. The events are a virtual meet and greet that is cut off after ten minutes, but allows for future contact if they pairing finds that they want to stay in touch or continue networking. The chat window also displays the participants' resumes to show past experiences.

Barriers: When implementing the program, they did not know how exactly the program worked. They took a risk by doing so, but the Brazen software has been successful for them. When paired in an event, it can be awkward to reach out to someone when you have a time constraint. This is something they are working on to improve the event's overall success.

Along with the Brazen offering, the Alumni Career Center offers free services for the alumni, their version of job finder is free for their lives. The Alumni and students have control over when they want to communicate as well.

Penn State's Monthly Networking Event is an online-based "career fair" type of event for people to meet for a designated amount of time and decide if they would like to continue their contact in the future. This allows for everyone to have time to participate because the event is usually held for 12 hours. The online "career fair" eliminates any geographical barrier that may be involved in events such as this.

Appendix B4: Interview of Baylor University

Baylor University uses its successful football program to attract alumni and students to events. When the head coach speaks at events, which is when they get the most attendance due to sports being such a significant part of their university. Their program includes football watching parties, business networking (where alumni discuss certain topics), and women's network (where there are monthly engagements and dinners).

The formation of Baylor's program was based on best practices of other universities that are private universities and are similar sizes. The goal of it was to allow the alumni to engage with each other and the school during events. There is no price for the participants, but they do charge for meals during events if they are held off campus.

There is no online aspect of their program, which made comparing this the other schools a little different. Baylor also has many different programs, but we asked our questions specifically about the formal matching process. Their program is not online and has been in existence for approximately eight months.

To market their events and plans, they use email and social media. There are many regional events where Baylor alumni meet up, for example they have football-viewing parties in Texas cities that are away from campus.

The amount of people that participate depends on the event, when the head coach of the football team speaks at a dinner, there are between 500 and 700 people who attend. For football watch parties, there are around 15.

For the networking program, there is no prior experience necessary involved in becoming a mentor. Three to four people look at the applications before the applicant can be a mentor. The time commitment is the minimum of one semester, but can go longer depending on the relationship. They use formal matching depending on the degrees and business experiences. The matchings' can be Student to Alumni or Alumni to Alumni.

Barriers: The definition of the word mentorship has been a struggle because it has problems with the mentor and mentee understanding what will come of this relationship. The time commitment involved in the relationship is another area that Baylor struggles in. And finding the relationship that works with everyone is important.

After the semester ends and the relationship is over. The mentor and mentee are surveyed to determine the success of the relationship. The Baylor program is looking to expand in the future by automating the matching process and using available software.

Appendix B5: Interview with Boston University

This college uses social media as their greatest form in contacting their alumni. They have an Alumni Directory App which is way in which the alumni get received updated information about the school. The app also contain the Every True App which searches for alumni in a 1 mile radius for any job advice or just to look for any connections with BU graduates. It provides them with informal linkages and their information is synced with LinkedIn and Facebook. Therefore, they have no formalized system for mentoring.

The program has been in existence for one year and conducted a pilot program for a year. The marketed to the alumni through email and social media but mailing the noticed was not that popular. The have conducted follow-up surveys in order to determine their success rates and how much have participated; this included interactions with the volunteers. What was the goal of this program?

The overall takeaways from the BU interview was their alumni directory app. It was interesting to see that through an app alumni were able to connect with other alumni within a one mile radius. They had the opportunity to meet with a Bu alumni for career advice or even just to connect. It was interesting to see the loyalty of the alumni in keeping in touch through this app and social media.

Appendix B6: Interview with Massachusetts Institute of Technology

The types of programs MIT offered to their alumni from the school of management was through the online alumni directory. Current students and alumni were able to search on any criteria so students may look for an alumni for mentoring. It has been very popular for the past 4-5 years. This opportunity allowed them to be part of online portal for an infinite connection. Also they used surveys as checkpoint throughout the process of the program to determine their success.

They had around 400 mentors who were interested after the pilot stage was finished. This program was marketed through email, personal interactions, and social media. The requirements they had in order to participate was to respond to the mentor/mentee within 48 hours. The mentors were expected to participate for a duration of 6 months and the mentee checked off different tasks that are expected. These tasks were conducted through checkpoints every 2, 6, 10, and 20 weeks. Their relationship was done offline as they are required to meet every month.

One of the issues they faced a communication. Usually a mentor or mentee does not respond to their email or follow-up. If communication is not professional they typically received feedback. This is usually because of their busy schedules. They differentiate from LinkedIn because of its educational piece. Their applications process is structured the same way as a LinkedIn account. Their online program had dating website similarities in matching mentors and used an algorithm for that.

There were a couple of takeaways we have determined. First their top matches were based on profile matches. Their online structure was similar to a dating site or LinkedIn page which made matching easier. They also conducted checkpoints throughout the process which helped in checking in on the relationships and the program success. This also included the requirement to respond within 48 hours and that the matching was an informal process. It was nice to see that to sign up for the program they can upload their LinkedIn info, and biggest part was to differentiate their program from LinkedIn.

Appendix B7: Interview with Georgetown University

The school offers a mentoring program for their undergraduate. Students are matched up with business alumni from the DC area and meet up 3 times a semester for one year on career related topics. Alumni are usually involved during homecoming, leadership weekend, and the alumni engagement dinner.

Their program uses the Hoya Gateway software that is a combination of LinkedIn and eHarmony. They use the software for matching the mentors and mentees. They both put in their information, what they want from the program or what topics they want to engage in. The software actually matches the students according to their topic interests. Their alumni involvement is pretty high. They prefer to offer more alumni activities that require little time, since alumni want to be involved but they have busy schedules. So a small task like taking the time to have coffee with a student is a good example. They marketed the program through emails to those who graduated the past 15 years, flyers, and office workers forward email to their friends. However, what is different at Georgetown is that alumni are loyal. Alumni are loyal. They start off with a networking dinner for both the mentee and mentor they meet two times in person per semester. There is a recruiting dinner and student outreach in order to get student engagement as well.

They have loyal mentors that the program people personally know. Anyone who is a bit sketchy doesn't let them in the program. It goes off who knows who. They train alumni for ½ hour during the networking dinner. Describing the expectations and explaining that their role is to guide the students through the job searching process, not to get them jobs. Mentors are recent 3-5 year alumni who are very excited. Those alumni 20+ years tend to be a big part since they have their kids going off to college and want to be involved again. But they have that awkward gap from 5-20 years who don't want to be involved. They conduct a survey at the end of the year (the program is only one year). It is based off 5 questions describing their experience and what they suggest for future mentees and mentors. The successfulness of the interaction is based off the established goals the student was committed to when they met with their mentors for the first time. Attendance is taken at all events, just to keep in track if the mentors and mentees are attending the events. Then they inform both the mentee and mentor of their involvement.

It was interesting to see that they used a software to perform the matches and had a set criteria in mentoring. However, the biggest impact the interviewer said was to give alumni different opportunities to be involved which require little time. Like an alumni panel or having coffee with a student, being involved in a career fair, informational students, etc. She emphasized the phrase, "more frequent and less time." Also she stated that students apparently love to go to NY. So because of that, they set up a student and alumni base for school involvement.

Appendix C: Data Matrix of Interviews

Segments		Categories	BU	RPI	MIT	Georgetown	Penn State	Baylor	Michigan
Marketing	Client Base	Alumni	X	x	x	X	x	X	x
		Undergraduate	X	-	x	X	X	X	-
		Graduate	X	X	x	X	X	-	X
		Professors	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Outreach	Social Media	X	x	x	X	X	X	-
		Email	X	X	x	X	X	X	X
		Newsletter	X	x	x	X	-	-	X
		Website	X	x	x	X	-	-	X
		Mail	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
		Face To Face	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
Networking Program Logistics	Type of Match	Informal	X	-	x	-	X	-	X
		Formal	-	x	-	X	X	X	-
	Majors	Business	X	X	x	X	X	X	X
		Engineering	-	X	-	-	-	-	x
		Science	-	X	-	-	-	-	X
		Humanities	-	-	-	X	-	-	X
	Miscellaneous	Online	X	X	x	X	x	-	X
		Training Session	X	-	-	X	-	-	-
		Review Survey	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
		Cost of Program	-	x	-	-	-	-	-
		Mentor Certification	-	-	x	X	-	-	-
	Timeline	<2 months	-	-	x	-	-	-	-
		2-6 months	-	-	x	-	-	-	X
6+ months		X	-	x	X	-	-	X	
Random		-	-	-	X	-	-	X	
Risk	Matching	Personality Issues	-	-	-	-	-	-	X
		Sexual Harassment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
		Contact - for issues	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
	Communications	Individual fails to respond	-	-	x	X	-	-	X
	Time	Scheduling Conflicts	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
		Time difference	X	-	x	X	-	-	X
Success Metrics	Measurements	Number of Participants	X	x	x	X	-	X	X
		Survey Responses	X	x	x	X	-	X	X
		Qualitative Data	X	x	x	X	-	X	x

Appendix D: List of Survey Respondents Who Requested a Follow-Up Interview

REQUESTED A FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW	
	Graduated Prior to 1993
1	amvale@gmail.com
2	bob.zawistowski@psaengineering.com
3	decio@deciomendes.com
4	dhjohnson@islc.net
5	dsieber@haartz.com
6	dwys08@gmail.com
7	er.bell@comcast.net
8	gduplessie@gmail.com
9	gvmoeller@gmail.com
10	howiewhittle@gmail.com
11	jack.parker@me.com
12	jhsemmel@bellsouth.net
13	John@mpay.com
14	Markhamsr@corning.com
15	michael.maguire@sap.com
16	michelle1560@yahoo.com
17	msklar@ablacor.com
18	paul.d.eichamer@cebridge.net
19	pete.lozis@gmail.com
20	pmg455@msn.com
21	scotter@decorativeinteriors.net
22	twperkins@ne.rr.com
23	we16@andrew.cmu.edu

2	Zwells@charter.net
4	
	Graduated between 1994-2003
2	bubblehead93@gmail.com
5	
2	doug.davis@ge.com
6	
2	ericrdetmer@yahoo.com
7	
2	flannery13@yahoo.com
8	
2	Mgreg@alum.wpi.edu
9	
3	netesh.gohil@gmail.com
0	
3	Slade_brockett@alum.wpi.edu
1	
	Graduated between 2004-2014
3	ctang@wpi.edu
2	
3	Loricorpuz@gmail.com
3	
3	luis@alum.wpi.edu
4	
3	topher@alum.wpi.edu
5	

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