



ENGAGEMENT CAMPAIGN REPORT



REACHING ALUMNI DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a significant challenge for institutions that relied on in-person engagement, and Washburn University School of Law was no exception. With stay-at-home orders in place, traditional alumni engagement strategies, such as regional receptions and reunions, were no longer feasible. Additionally, the law school was in the midst of a building campaign, making alumni engagement more critical than ever. Rather than seeing this as a setback, the alumni team seized the opportunity to expand outreach to alumni who had previously been out of reach due to geographical limitations while maintaining strong relationships with existing supporters.

Objective

The primary objective of the initiative was to maintain and grow alumni engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the goals included:

- Keeping alumni connected despite physical distancing.
- Expanding engagement to alumni who had not previously participated due to geographic constraints.
- Encouraging alumni support for students affected by the pandemic.
- Ensuring continued donor engagement to support the building campaign.

Research

To develop an effective engagement strategy, the alumni team conducted thorough research, including:

- Analyzing past alumni event data, including attendance at events, as well as engagement with the alumni magazine and newsletters.
- Surveying alumni to understand their well-being during the pandemic, their willingness to engage online, and how they wanted to help.
- Consulting with colleagues from other universities to explore successful virtual engagement tactics.

STRATEGY & EXECUTION

Based on the research findings, Washburn Law implemented a series of targeted engagement initiatives:

Bi-weekly Online Meetups:

- Alternating between virtual cocktail hours featuring a Washburn-themed cocktail recipe and interactive game events, including scavenger hunts, murder mysteries, escape rooms, and Wheel of Fortune.
- Game events were tested on students before launching, which also served to engage students and combat isolation.

Specialized Social Groups:

- Traditional reunions were replaced with virtual alternatives, enabling participation from alumni worldwide.
- A new women's attorney group was established, honoring Jessie Nye, the school's first female graduate in 1912.

Student Support Initiatives:

- An Internet Access Fund was launched, helping students in need secure home internet access.
- A Summer Externship Program was developed for students whose job opportunities had been canceled due to the pandemic.

Targeted Communications:

A greater emphasis was placed on e-newsletters and personalized messages from the dean to ensure alumni remained informed and engaged.



Even in isolation, we are connected by a shared experience.

RESULTS & CONCLUSION

The engagement initiative yielded outstanding results:

- Alumni from **49 states and five continents** participated in online events.
- Overall engagement rates remained consistent with previous years, with an **18% increase in new alumni engagement.**
- The Internet Access Fund successfully supported the **5% of students** requiring assistance with home internet access.
- The Summer Externship Program provided placement opportunities for **10% of the first-year law class.**
- The campaign secured a **naming-level donation** from an alumnus previously not considered a donor prospect due to geographic distance.

Washburn Law's innovative approach to alumni engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that geographic barriers could be overcome through strategic virtual initiatives. By leveraging data-driven decision-making, alumni insights, and creative engagement strategies, the law school not only maintained but expanded its alumni network, strengthened student support, and advanced its fundraising goals.