

# 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.

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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.

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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.