ALUMNI STRATEGY
2014–16

DIVISION OF
ALUMNI AND
DEVELOPMENT

THE UNIVERSITY OF
SYDNEY
“I support the University because I believe world-leading universities will be mission-critical for prosperous societies in the 21st century. In many ways, today’s challenges for businesses are magnified for universities, in particular the disruption of the digital revolution will blow apart centuries of teaching practice in universities. At the same time, the government purse will be increasingly constrained. If there was ever a time for our alumni to stand up and support the University – whether in cash or in kind – this is it.”

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR HUGH HARLEY
BEc ’84, LLB ’86
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY BUSINESS ALUMNI NETWORK INSPIRED CAMPAIGN BOARD MEMBER AND DONOR
STRENGTHENING THE ENGAGEMENT OF OUR ALUMNI COMMUNITY

The University of Sydney is a large and diverse institution with a broad range of disciplines. We thrive on the strong shared identity that binds us together as a community, and it is this identity that shapes our strategic vision.

At the heart of our strategy lies a shared common purpose: To create and sustain a university in which the brightest researchers and the most promising students, whatever their social or cultural background, can thrive and realise their full potential for the benefit of Australia and the wider world.

Our alumni form an essential component of our identity, carrying the history and achievements of our past, present and future. Since the 1980s, alumni relations has been an ongoing program run within the University’s professional staff structure, recognising the important role it plays within the University community.

Recent reviews of the alumni relations program signal an exciting opportunity to refresh, strengthen and nurture the relationship between the University and its alumni. The University’s 2011–2015 Strategic Plan has identified the value of a successful alumni relations program that will be mutually beneficial to the University and our alumni community:

Strategy Fifteen: Deepen our engagement with a supportive network of alumni and friends:

- 15(a) Develop a University-wide volunteer program including recruitment management training and recognition for volunteers.
- 15(b) Develop further an alumni loyalty program to provide recognition and benefit.
- 15(c) Ensure alignment of our international and alumni strategies to maximise the benefit of our relationships with alumni groups, and galvanise the growing worldwide network of supporters.
Our mission is to create a mutually beneficial alumni relations program that will strengthen and engage the alumni community and support the University’s vision for years to come.
CREATING THE STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2012, the University of Sydney signaled its commitment to strengthening alumni relations by initiating research projects to help form and support Strategy Fifteen of its overall strategic plan. The purpose of the research was to capture the current sentiment of our alumni and supporters towards the University and gauge their involvement and ongoing interest.

To further support and direct our vision, the Vice-Chancellor commissioned two reports on the alumni relations function in 2013, exploring the existing activities and structures within the University, and identifying areas of opportunity.

REMMINGTON AND SCHREUDER REPORTS
The Remington and Schreuder Reports assessed the overall alumni relations program and the structure and effectiveness of the Alumni Council respectively. Both articulated the need to align alumni relations with the University Strategic Plan in order to keep it relevant to the wider campus community.

Also identified was the need to activate a refined and focused volunteer program with defined expectations and goals.

A small volunteer leadership structure, an externally facing advocacy role for volunteers, and the involvement of volunteers in donation and fundraising functions were recommended to ensure a best practice volunteer program.

THE ALUMNI CENSUS RESULTS
The Alumni Census was designed and distributed to a large cohort of our alumni and supporter base throughout August and September in 2012. A total of 19,444 completed responses were received, representing a highly favourable overall response rate of 16 percent.

Alumni advocacy census insights
Source: Alumni Census Report 2012

- Sending children to study: 24%
- Academic excellence: 25%
- Alumni events: 9%
- Quality of the faculties at the University: 12%
- Public events and lectures: 11%
- Attending the University themselves: 22%
- Making a charitable donation: 1%
ALUMNI ARE OUR GREATEST ADVOCATES

Unequivocally, the census highlighted the potential of the alumni community to act as advocates on the University’s behalf: 98 percent of all respondents had recommended the University to family or friends in some way. Alumni younger than 50 were the most active in recommending the University to others.

Particularly encouraging was the informal role alumni played in recommending the University as a place to study: 71 percent of respondents recommended the University of Sydney as a great place to learn. Further, 55 percent of respondents recommended sending their children here to study.

These results show that alumni are already voluntarily taking on the role of ambassadors for the University and there is a great opportunity to formalise this through a volunteer program.

ALUMNI ARE ENGAGED AND READY TO BE INVOLVED

One third of the census participants indicated they were likely to attend lectures and seminars over the next 12 months, and one quarter said they would be interested in attending a class or faculty reunion. There was further interest in attending professional networking, cultural activities and general social events.

ALUMNI SEE THE VALUE OF INVESTING IN THE UNIVERSITY

The census also provided encouraging data on those alumni who are considering philanthropic giving. Alumni are already thinking about the University when making philanthropic investments, while others are considering doing so in the future.

Overall, the 2012 Alumni Census provided a promising insight into the alumni community’s positive attitude towards the University, and the willingness of alumni to be supportive of the University in a number of different ways.
These priorities provide a roadmap for the University’s alumni relations activities over the next two years:

- Alumni and future students
- Alumni and the student experience
- Alumni and their interactions with each other
- Alumni and their support of the University.

As a result of the insights gained from the Remington and Schreuder Reports and our Alumni Census data, four strategic priorities emerged for the University’s alumni relations program.

ANNIE CORLETT
BEC ’80
PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ALUMNI COUNCIL

“My involvement with, and commitment to, the University of Sydney over a number of years has given me the opportunity to understand and actively support the University’s stakeholders and, in particular, its alumni. My aspiration as Alumni Council President is to increase the engagement of alumni with our University by facilitating opportunities for alumni to connect, not only with each other, but with the University’s students and academic staff.

“I believe that alumni relationships and engagement with our University can be intellectually stimulating, provide effective networking opportunities and enrich our lives in so many ways, so I encourage all alumni to become and stay connected.”

STRAategic OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

6 Alumni Relations Strategic Plan 2014-2016
THE WAY FORWARD
BRINGING THE VISION TO LIFE

STRATEGY 1
ALUMNI AND FUTURE STUDENTS

STRATEGY 2
ALUMNI AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

STRATEGY 3
ALUMNI AND THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH EACH OTHER

STRATEGY 4
ALUMNI AND THEIR SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY
There is an opportunity for alumni to act as ambassadors for the University, using their experience, knowledge and leadership skills to assist student recruitment goals. The alumni relations team is collaborating with the University’s student recruitment unit and faculties in two key areas to support its recruitment strategies, both here and overseas.

Firstly, through the provision of postgraduate alumni insights, we can better target and cross-promote relevant postgraduate courses and enrolment opportunities in our alumni channels.

In addition, we are strengthening opportunities for our alumni to take an active role in promoting the University, offering volunteering opportunities to represent the University to potential future students. Fully trained by the University, our goal is to empower alumni to become confident ambassadors when attending and presenting at student recruitment events.

In the longer term, ambassadors who have already received extensive training and experience in the field will have an exciting opportunity to act independently on our behalf.

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INSPIRING TOMORROW'S LEADERS
PAULA CAFFREY
BAppSc (SpeechPath) ’87
MENTOR FOR THE FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES

Paula Caffrey is the Chief Allied Health Officer at the Ministry of Health and Director of Allied Health for Sydney Local Health District. Caffrey was one of the first mentors to participate in the Faculty of Health Sciences’ inaugural Leadership Mentoring Program in 2013, and found the experience to be very rewarding. “It was an opportunity to work with a young person and to help them think about where they are now and where they want to go in the short and long term,” she says. “It gave me an opportunity to reflect on my journey too. This is the future workforce and it’s really important that we invest in the careers of young people for the future of health care in Australia.”

Paula Caffrey (right) pictured with her mentee Alison Grech.
Mentoring programs
Mentoring programs provide a significant opportunity for alumni to contribute positively and stay connected to the University while at the same time enhancing the student experience. At present, mentoring programs exist across a number of faculties and vary widely in their scope. Some encourage alumni as mentors for students or other alumni, while others seek leaders in business to act as mentors, whether they are alumni or not.

As part of our strategic plan, the University will take the lead from best practice models around the world and implement an institution-wide mentoring/internship program. Faculties will continue to tailor programs to their needs, using the support of the alumni relations team to identify leading alumni who have the potential to act as mentors within each faculty.

Making international students feel at home
Alumni are encouraged to host a Welcome to Sydney event with a select group of international students. The Welcome to Sydney program is our way of introducing international students to some of the people and places that make Sydney one of the best cities in the world.

Gatherings hosted and sponsored by alumni provide an opportunity for students to meet and engage with their fellow students and alumni families, enabling all to share academic, professional and social experiences and foster new friendships.

Longer term opportunities
We hope to expand our alumni volunteer opportunities in the future and welcome suggestions for what this program should include. Please email your feedback to: alumni.office@sydney.edu.au

As part of our strategic plan, the University will take the lead from best practice models around the world and implement an institution-wide mentoring/internship program.
The Alumni Council, identified as the University’s ‘peak alumni body’, is currently in its 75th year.

In addition, there are more than 40 alumni chapters located around the world and across the institution. These groups have varying levels of independence and activity. Some are entirely social in nature, while others are focused on networking, fundraising or staging events.

COMMUNICATING OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPECTATIONS
Over the years, there have been many different approaches to engaging with and resourcing alumni communities across faculties and with groups around the world. As a result, there is an imbalance in the support received by our alumni groups.

Current alumni volunteers including Alumni Council members, chapter and association presidents and ex-graduate Fellows of Senate have also expressed their views regarding the communication of expectations and offerings available to engaged alumni. Some are interested in volunteering, but they are unaware of or not attracted to the University’s current programs, while others have expectations that are not aligned with what the University requires or can give.

Such imbalance is not unique to the University of Sydney, and this strategy addresses the need to provide the right level of support, enabling chapters to communicate opportunities and expectations more clearly to our engaged alumni volunteers.

REVIEWING RESOURCING REQUIREMENTS
The key to addressing this challenge is to understand the points of misalignment. One particular issue we have identified is the level of support provided to associations/chapters in relation to their strategic contribution. There is a wide variation in resourcing from the University to individual chapters and associations. Some are virtually self-sufficient, some look for logistical support intermittently, particularly when organising large events, while others look for logistical and administrative support on an ongoing basis for meetings, events, and communications (both within the chapter and to the wider alumni community).
PRIORITISING ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

EFFORTS IN CHINA

TIM DOLAN
VICE-PRINCIPAL (ADVANCEMENT)

“We have a tremendously diverse international alumni community which spans more than 130 countries and a multitude of industries. One of our key priorities is to stay in touch with all of our international alumni, wherever they may be in the world.

“Currently the largest contingent of our international alumni is based in China and we have unfortunately lost touch with a large proportion of this community. An ongoing and important project for us will be to reconnect with our China-based alumni and keep them engaged in the University community.”

INITIATIVES

Standardising infrastructure to allow deeper, consistent engagement

The alumni relations team will implement a more standardised and sustainable infrastructure for chapter and association support. The items proposed reflect our philosophy of the University’s role as facilitator but not manager of opportunities for alumni to engage with each other. Furthermore, they ensure consistency across the groups that are a key and loyal part of the University community.

During the course of our two-year strategic plan, we will be rolling out changes to our infrastructure to achieve this consistency. These include increased use of online forms and automated software through which chapters and associations can make requests of the alumni relations office, and standardisation of all chapter websites.

We will also implement a ‘mutual expectations agreement’ for volunteers to ensure a ‘meeting of the minds’ between University and volunteer, and develop a suite of ‘off-the-shelf volunteer kits’ to help our active volunteers in areas such as organising a reunion, finding lost alumni, and fundraising. Meeting agenda and minute templates, together with online election software, will also be provided.

Creating an Alumni Charter

We hope that once rolled out, the whole University alumni relations program will create a framework that is compelling and responsive to the alumni community’s interests; one based on reciprocity and mutual benefit for both the University and alumni community.

As with all partnerships, openness and transparency between the University and its volunteer community will be a vital ingredient to success. We propose to clearly define and publicly articulate this value proposition by developing an Alumni Charter to be published on the University’s website. This charter will be instrumental in underlining the reason alumni should engage with the University and the basis upon which that engagement is predicated.

Decisions regarding the alumni community are made according to delegations of authority listed under section 5.4 of the University of Sydney (Delegations of Authority – Administrative Functions) Rule 2010 (as amended), which can be found on the policies website.

sydney.edu.au/policies
STRATEGY 4
ALUMNI AND THEIR SUPPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY

We propose to implement a more consistent, systematic and institution-wide approach to increasing the number of supporters joining the University.

INITIATIVES
Engaging alumni in philanthropy
A growing number of alumni are giving back to the University either as volunteers or as donors; in fact more than 40 percent of our donors are alumni. Alumni are increasingly giving to areas of the University that they are passionate about, not necessarily to their own areas of study, and we plan to identify and build on these affinities.

DR BARRY CATCHLOVE
MBBS ’66
PATRON OF THE 1850 SOCIETY
SYDNEY-BASED DIRECTOR OF SYDNEY UNIVERSITY GRADUATES’ UNION OF NORTH AMERICA (SUGUNA)
“Over my 15 years of active alumni involvement with the University I have seen a growing awareness of the importance of engaging with our alumni. As alumni we are the community face of the University. By strengthening the relationship we ensure through our advocacy and our philanthropic support that our University remains a premier institution and a stronghold of research, innovative thinking and teaching.”
“Our University makes things happen, and as alumni, we can take great pride in the achievements of our alma mater. As Chancellor, I assure you on behalf of the Senate that we can look forward to an exciting future. As we move beyond the midpoint of the University’s 2011–15 Strategic Plan, we will start to see some of the hard work of recent years have a very visible impact. I can say with confidence that there’s never been a better time to get involved.”

BELINDA HUTCHINSON AM
BEc ’76
CHANCELLOR