

# 2008 GTAA YOUNG ALUMNI HANDBOOK

*A Best Practices Guide for Young Alumni Representatives*



**December 2008**

**Georgia Tech Alumni Association  
Young Alumni Council**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

December 2008

Dear Georgia Tech Young Alumni Representatives,

Congratulations on your role as Young Alumni Rep for your club or affinity group! We are extremely excited about the upcoming year and look forward to working with all of you in the months ahead.

As the first of many projects, this Young Alumni Handbook is a resource to help you manage your young alumni responsibilities. We hope that you find it useful and that it assists you on your way to many successful young alumni events and general young alumni participation in your club or affinity group.

We have assigned a Young Alumni Council member to each Young Alumni Representative nationwide to help communicate GTAA and Council events.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the Young Alumni Council! We are here to serve you!

I look forward to seeing you all at the Young Alumni Reunion Weekend next Summer and many other events throughout the year. Go Jackets!

Sincerely,

Cayman James  
President, Young Alumni Council 2008-2009

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### **ABOUT THE YOUNG ALUMNI COUNCIL**

#### **Mission of the Council**

The Georgia Tech Young Alumni Council (Council) represents an elected body which acts like a steering committee that assists the Georgia Tech Alumni Association (GTAA) in better engaging and fostering participation of alumni having attended or graduated from Georgia Tech within a span of 10 years. These recent graduates are referred to as “young alumni” and represent a demographic of alumni typically between the ages of 22 and 35. It is the mission of the Council to support relevant and meaningful programs and services for current and future young alumni and to foster lifelong participation and philanthropic support of the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech).

It is the vision of the Council to create a community without walls or campus boundaries, which will help recent graduates connect with fellow young alumni, realize the full value of their Georgia Tech education, and embrace the idea of a Georgia Tech philanthropic spirit outside of the walls of the Institute. In becoming a resource for young alumni, the Council can help extend the many services of the GTAA to Georgia Tech alumni across the nation.

#### **Purpose of the Council**

##### A Resource for Young Alumni

Created by the GTAA in 2002, the Young Alumni Council has already established itself as a valuable resource for young alumni and supports various initiatives and programming on behalf of the GTAA, specifically tailored towards recent graduates. With the support of the GTAA, the Young Alumni Council promotes, plans, and/or executes various functions such as reunions, receptions, functions, travel expeditions, speaker events, and retreats.

Example programs include:

- Young Alumni Reunion Weekend
- Young Alumni Golf Tournament
- Young Alumni Tent at Buzz Bash
- Young Alumni Homecoming Tailgate
- Georgia Tech Night at Six Flags
- Team Buzz Activities

The Council and GTAA are also paving the way in making more tools and resources available for recent graduates in the areas of career services, financial planning, work/life balance, continued education, and networking to ensure their success following graduation from Georgia Tech. These resources may be in the form of tutorial events and/or online services. Strategic partnerships are also an area of focus to make discounts and special offers available for services

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such as insurance coverage and travel fare. The utilization of the technology and the internet is a special focus of the Council to better promote its services.

### Keeping Young Alumni Informed About Georgia Tech

The Council understands the importance of educating recent graduates on the goals, purpose, programs, and services of the GTAA and teaching the importance of a philanthropic spirit amongst Georgia Tech alumni. It keeps young alumni informed on GTAA services and ways to get involved with Georgia Tech. The Council also serves as a source of information on Georgia Tech current events and topics for young alumni.

### Advising Georgia Tech Clubs and Affinity Groups

In addition to establishing a forum with Georgia Tech young alumni across the country, the Council also keeps in close contact with the appointed Young Alumni Representatives for Alumni Association clubs and affinity groups. Through these liaisons, information on Georgia Tech events and programs can be better advertised amongst the alumni base across the country. The Council can also support these representatives in providing valuable insight on best practices and resources for promoting a local young alumni following.

## **Membership of the Council**

As a charter group under the Georgia Tech Board of Trustees, the Young Alumni Council has established bylaws (Refer to *Appendix A*). The Council shall consist of no more than 40 members and shall be governed by a Leadership Board.

In June of each year, the Council elects the Leadership Board which consists of the following officers to guide the organization:

- President
- Outreach Chair
- Campus Relations Chair
- Events Chair
- Marketing & Public Relations Chair
- Recruitment Chair
- Immediate Past President

Each officer may preside in their elected position for one year and may not hold the same office for more than two consecutive years.

Members of the Council are appointed in June of each year via a Selection Committee to fill any vacancies on the Council. Once elected, Council Members are encouraged to remain on the Council until they are no longer able to participate or a time period of more than 10 years has elapsed since they attended or graduated from Georgia Tech.

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Alumni outside of the Council may also participate with the Young Alumni Council. The Council has established a group of ad-hoc members or Friends of the Council (FOTC) which enables alumni who are not currently members to attend meetings, to contribute ideas, and to volunteer at events. This is a great way to get involved with the Council either as a precursory to a Council appointment or on a temporary basis to make an impact in the Georgia Tech young alumni community.

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For more information on the Young Alumni Council, contact:

Ashley Coker  
*Outreach Committee Chair*  
E-mail/ [aecoker@gmail.com](mailto:aecoker@gmail.com)

Please also visit the Council website at <http://gtalumni.org/pages/youngalumni>.

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### **ROLE OF A YOUNG ALUMNI REPRESENTATIVE**

Georgia Tech Alumni Association clubs and affinity groups represent Georgia Tech alumni with various affiliations or in varying locations across the country. Each group may desire to create a specific young alumni community within their club or following. Typically, one chairperson or a committee of individuals will help guide the young alumni community and its functions.

#### **Young Alumni Representative for Georgia Tech Alumni Association**

Regardless of the individual structures of young alumni communities within alumni clubs and affinity groups, each group is likely to have an appointed Young Alumni Representative who helps promote young alumni programming and reports back to the GTAA. These appointed representatives keep young alumni informed on Georgia Tech topics and current events and assist in executing young alumni events within their respective club or affinity group. They may interact directly with appointed liaisons on the Young Alumni Council. For a list of current Council Outreach Committee Members and 2008-2009 Young Alumni Representatives, refer to *Appendices B and C*.

#### **Participation in Young Alumni Council “Friends of the Council”**

Young Alumni Representatives are encouraged join the GTAA Young Alumni Council (YAC) as a Friend of the Council (FOTC). This readily provides the means to better stay informed on upcoming programs, news, and national events. It’s also a great way to get involved with crafting young alumni event ideas, studying changing alumni demographics, and being on the cutting edge of new developments. Throughout the year, interested alumni may apply at the following location: <https://gtalumni.org/site/MailForm/YACouncilNom>.

### UNDERSTANDING ALUMNI DEMOGRAPHICS

An important key to success with marketing and providing a service is understanding the demographics of your target audience. Embarking on creating a young alumni community, you will need to understand the demographics of your alumni, as well as the circumstances and surroundings of those alumni.

#### Location

It can be a daunting task to create a Georgia Tech alumni community outside of Georgia Tech. With young alumni, it is no different. In some ways, it may be easier to create a young alumni community due to the ever continuing presence of the internet and the idea of an online community without borders or boundaries. Under more practical circumstances, young alumni communities which want to congregate face to face, will encounter varying challenges depending on where they live.

In general, it is recognized that the farther you remove yourself from the larger metropolitan areas of the United States, the fewer young alumni you will find. In addition, the farther you are removed from the State of Georgia, the less prevalent Georgia Tech alumni will be.

Alumni clubs and affinity groups located within Atlanta and the State of Georgia are likely to find more young alumni due to the high number of graduates still residing within the region. Therefore, for these areas, more focus may be placed on the types of programs or methods of outreach rather than physical recruitment and attraction of alumni. In areas outside the State of Georgia and larger metropolitan areas, more focus may be required for alumni attraction. It is said that the farther an alumnus is removed from Atlanta, the more easily he or she may lose his bonds with Georgia Tech.

Understanding the characteristics and traits of an area is also important in understanding young alumni and where they may be found. Here are some example questions one might ask:

- Does the area in question have a known affiliation in specific field or industry such as Aerospace or Manufacturing?
- How is the economy of the area?
- What are the political issues of the area?
- How large is the area? Are residents spread out in the area?
- Is transportation readily available for residents?

Understanding the characteristics of the area surrounding young alumni will assist in effective communication and programming of events.

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### **Life Stages of Young Alumni**

Georgia Tech defines young alumni as students who have attended or graduated within a period of ten years or less. While this historically means alumni who are 22-35 years of age, today the term young alumni may more accurately be described as “recent graduates” in consideration that people are choosing to attend university and college at later ages for both bachelor and graduate degrees.

There are many life stages that may accurately describe alumni under the age of 35. These stages define the needs, motivations, and barriers of young alumni to participate within a Georgia Tech community.

Example life stage of young alumni may include:

- Starting a New Career
- Employed on Career Path
- Employed outside Career Path
- Unemployed and Financially Strained
- Pursuing Graduate or Doctorate Degree
- Enrolled in the Military
- Buying a First House
- Living in an Apartment or Condominium
- Living with Family
- Single, Engaged, Married, or Divorced
- Married or Unmarried with Children
- Highly Mobile from City to City
- Frequently Travel for Work
- Active with Political or Religious Organizations
- Recently Independent
- New to Area

These life stages are important to recognize when appropriately assessing the characteristics of the young alumni in any given area and creating valuable programming which better addresses and complements the interest of the alumni. They also play a role in the potential barriers for participation with the young alumni community.

In order to assist in the creation of a stronger young alumni community amongst Georgia Tech graduates, the Georgia Tech Alumni Association conducted focus research in 2008 which evaluated trends and characteristics of young alumni demographics. For your convenience, this research is provided in the Appendix. Refer to *Appendix D*.

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### **FINDING YOUNG ALUMNI**

Getting started with founding a young alumni community, one must establish where to find young alumni within the area of the club or affinity group. Young alumni may already be present within the area or they may arrive at a later date either through relocation or graduation. The point is to identify sources on where to reach out for the particular age demographic.

#### **Locating Young Alumni within the Club Area or Affinity Group**

There are numerous resources to get to know the young alumni in the area. It may be as simple as wearing a Georgia Tech shirt to a local trendy sandwich shop or sporting a GT car flag during football or basketball game days. Start off by requesting an address list from the GTAA. The Alumni Association strives to keep the most up-to-date data base as possible to help serve you in creating a Georgia Tech community. Take advantage of this resource.

However, over time it is still difficult to keep up with all Georgia Tech alumni both in the United States and overseas. It is especially difficult with young alumni who are the most transient of all alumni age groups.

Therefore, here are a few other helpful ways to find Georgia Tech young alumni in the area:

- Contact the GTAA for an address list
- Contact a representative or contact with your local military branch to request a list of enlisted/commissioned Georgia Tech graduates
- Contact Greek alumni chapters and seek chapter members from Georgia Tech
- Contact corporations which may employ Georgia Tech graduates
- Search Facebook for Georgia Tech Alumni
- Review Contacts on LinkedIn
- Don't Underestimate Word of Mouth

#### **Keeping Track of Young Alumni within the Club Area or Affinity Group**

Almost as important as locating young alumni in the area is keeping an accurate log and record of those alumni. It's suggested to keep a comprehensive spreadsheet or database to log and keep track of the young alumni. Keeping current contact information is critical in getting to know the young alumni and in facilitating communications with the group. Collect and maintain contact information throughout the year including the following:

- First and Last Name (Nickname, if any)
- Major and Graduating Class Year(s)
- Telephone Numbers (Home and Work)
- Mailing Address
- E-mail Addresses

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- IM Names
- Employer and Position
- Marital Status

If the list is informal enough, consider adding additional notes and comments on interests, extracurricular activities, and community involvement. It may be good to note any young alumni activities, programming, or leadership positions in which the young alumnus may be interested.

The contact information may be used for purposes of tracking and communicating with the alumni. However, under no circumstances shall the information be released to third parties outside of the Alumni Association or used for commercial purposes. If any information varies from the contact list provided by the Alumni Association, be sure to recommend that the alumni update their alumni records or ask if the information may be forwarded to the Alumni-Faculty House.

### **COMMUNICATING & CONNECTING WITH YOUNG ALUMNI**

Communicating and establishing a connection with young alumni in the area shall be one of the more important tasks in creating a young alumni community. Understanding effective means of communication is critical for promoting and recruiting a young alumni community. Equally important is finding a connection between and amongst alumni that will create a draw to the young alumni community.

#### **Communicating with Young Alumni**

With the understanding of where to find young alumni and access to contact information comes the ability to communicate to those young alumni. Both the means and method of communicating with prospective members, as well as the topic of communication, will affect the outcome of marketing of the young alumni community.

To start, one should have an idea of purpose for the communication. Is it to relay an idea, to inform on a subject, or to persuade on an issue? Whatever the purpose, remember to properly communicate it. One should always strive to communicate in a professional manner with a positive and courteous nature. This will have repercussions in terms of stereotypes and poor perceptions of the organization one is representing. Poor communication can lead to a failure in representing and promoting a vision or relaying the importance of information to another individual.

It is important to recognize that there are many means of communication and that individual preference of which type of communication will vary across each young alumni. It may take communication in several forms to relay an idea or attract participation. It is also important to note that young alumni are renown for being on cutting edge of technology and new forms of communication with access to laptops, PDA's, and interactive internet sites and webpages. Today, many young alumni may not even have a land line as a home telephone number. A side effect of the tremendous access to technology is the incessant need of Generation Y ("Millenniums") to provide or receive communication which is followed by immediate response.

Here are a few means in which to communicate with young alumni:

- E-mail Announcements / Updates via List Serv
- Calling Post with Automated Messages
- Text Messaging
- Website Announcements
- Interactive Online Forum
- Daily Calendar Updates
- Facebook
- Personal Telephone Calls
- E-Newsletters

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### **Connecting with Young Alumni**

Connection occurs when an individual notes a common bond or feels a personal interest to be affiliated to another. Being honest and forthright in communicating with one helps create a connection on a personal level. Understanding the needs and motivations of an individual will help create lines of mutual interest. Recognizing the various characteristics and demographics of the young alumni in the area will also assist in finding effective means of communication and in creating a lasting bond between alumni.

Here are a few ways of establishing a personal connection with fellow alumni:

- Send personal handwritten notes to new young alumni to the area
- At each event, have a personal greeter who is exceptional at making conversation
- Introduce new young alumni to existing young alumni in the area
- Send a personal e-mail follow-up to each new attendee
- Remember the names and interests of returning participants
- Provide ample volunteer and leadership opportunities
- Establish club benefits and rewards for participation
- Get constant feedback on programming and interests
- Strive to meet a new young alumnus at each event or activity
- Promote events and activities which meet the needs of all alumni
- Allow alumni to provide feedback and make recommendations on event ideas
- Ensure committees remain open for others to join or participate

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### **BUILDING A YOUNG ALUMNI COMMUNITY**

The ultimate goal for a young alumni representative is to establish a thriving young alumni community within its club or affinity club area. In order to do so, the young alumni community must have a bond and identity to link the young alumni together. Be prepared with a good volunteer base and the proper organizational infrastructure to foster the young alumni community. In addition, it must be recognized that many communities are established over time and can have many failures before achieving success. Once established, good, thoughtful programming can ensure that the community continues to grow and build upon its successes.

#### **Creating a Bond and Identity**

Once the feat of finding alumni has been met, one can initiate communication with the alumni in efforts to establish a bond and to connect with them on a personal level. Creating an identity for the community doesn't necessarily require the literal creation of a logo for a young alumni club. However, a webpage or online forum helps create a face for the young alumni group and will encourage communication amongst the club. Regular announcements and quarterly updates to the young alumni on group events, meetings, available services, and forums help perpetuate the understanding of an established group identity within the area. By conversing with fellow young alumni on a personal level and creating relationships based common interests and mutually enjoyable events and activities, bonds develop within the community. Be sure to move beyond the simple common bond of affinity to Georgia Tech and explore the specific demographics of the alumni to strengthen the common threads of the community.

#### **Creating the Infrastructure**

Similar to any social or professional organization, some level of infrastructure is required to sustain communication and participation. In many instances, there will be established infrastructure amongst alumni clubs and affinity groups. This may especially be the case in terms of the establishment of a non-profit tax ID, bank account, officers, bylaws, newsletter, alumni contact lists, and a working relationship with Georgia Tech.

Here are some basic infrastructure elements which are important to help operate and maintain your community:

- Communications (E-mail List Serv, Monthly Newsletter or E-mail Announcements, Mailings, Website, Facebook page, etc.)
- Georgia Tech Area Young Alumni Contact List
- Ongoing Contact List for Participating Young Alumni
- Event Coordinator
- Webmaster
- E-mail List Moderator

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### **Establishing a Volunteer Base**

Remember that the young alumni community being created is essentially a volunteer organization where alumni voluntarily gather, communicate, and associate with one another. The success of the organization will depend on the ability to motivate others to participate, whether by sharing ideas and contributing to the group, attending events and activities, or assisting in planning and executing in the function of the community. There will also come a time when volunteers are needed to help plan and execute activities and follow-up on initiatives. The more volunteers there are in an organization, the broader its reach in terms of relationships and abilities to perform.

Here is a simple formula for fostering a thriving volunteer organization:

**SHARE IN THE VISION...**  
**SHARE IN THE WORK...**  
**SHARE IN THE SUCCESS...**

#### Share in the Vision

It is vital to communicate the purpose of the young alumni community to its members, whether it is to establish friendships outside of work, to create a social environment conducive to networking, or to promote philanthropy in the surrounding community. By creating a common goal, the collective can better work together to achieve the goal. In addition, by establishing a set goal or desired outcome, the hard work of the collective can be better measured or refined in pursuit of the goal.

#### Share in the Work

During the course of maintaining and operating the community, distribute the work evenly so that no one person carries the burden of maintaining the community. Remember that many individuals respond well to the idea of accepting a role, responsibility, or title in a volunteer organization.

#### Share in the Success

Be sure that when the community does well, everyone knows and gets to revel in the success. Always remember the team attitude in that, "Together we either all succeed or we all fail".

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### **Building the Community**

Once the origins of a community are established through an established bond and identity, clubs often find themselves in a stagnant period of growth. This may be perplexing as the community has members, a real established presence, and hosts many events and activities. Remember the basics of how to find young alumni in the club or group area and the importance of understanding alumni demographics. Organizations must constantly grow and evolve in order to keep up with a changing environment. Obtain feedback from alumni on their perception of the community and the services and activities being promoted. Does the programming interest and engage the alumni within the club or affinity group area? Verify that everyone understands the vision of the community and feels as if they can participate.

Here are some helpful ideas to help build the community and grow membership:

- Bring a Friend Drive
- Send a Follow-up E-mail Summary After Events Sharing the Success
- Specific Recruiting Event (Students, Recent Graduates, Sports Fans)
- Initiate a Marketing Campaign via Post Card Mailings and E-Newsletters
- Promote Profession Development Opportunities and/or Job Networking
- Create Hype via an Online Forum
- Partner with other Alumni Clubs, Academic Societies, or Professional Associations
- Conduct a Survey to Identify Areas of Improvements
- Partner with Companies Known to have Georgia Tech Graduates and Co-ops
- Incorporate Philanthropy and Community Service into Events and Functions

### **Stages of a Young Alumni Community**

When building a young alumni community, there are typically three different development stages of growth seen: Emerging, Established, and Evolving. During each stage, there may be specific goals or focuses that are important to pursue as the club grows.

Here are the typical stages of a young alumni community:

>>**Emerging**

>>**Established**

>>**Evolving**

#### Emerging Young Alumni Communities

An emerging young alumni community is one that is in the beginning of formation. There may be minimal or no young alumni oriented activities for the alumni club or affinity group. With a Young Alumni Representative at the helm and enough support from a peer group and/or consortium of advisors in the executive committee, steering committee, and/or board of directors

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of the alumni club or affinity group, a young alumni community can be started. Activities surrounding the start-up of a young alumni community will focus around the need to establish a membership base. Careful recruiting and tracking of alumni, along with the solicitation for involvement, are important focuses. Events which may occur will be largely benefited through the partnership with the greater alumni club or affinity group. In some instances, smaller events are more successful in establishing the “die-hard” members who will become the biggest proponents of the young alumni community. Ideal goals in this stage include to create a working, up-to-date database of young alumni in the area and to create a young alumni steering committee or group of volunteers to assist in the marketing and planning of future activities.

#### Established Young Alumni Communities

An established young alumni community is one that has a solid following and continues to grow in size. The young alumni community may have established a solid reputation for successful events and includes a roster of volunteers and participants. Continued tracking of young alumni demographics and fostering of skilled event planning will enable the continued success and growth of the community. Events in this stage will start to digress from the typical partnership events and may become more specific to specific demographics of the young alumni community. A well-established identity should be developed with the young alumni community, branding a reputation of fun and success in regards to the overall vision of the community. Ideal goals in this stage include to create a calendar or program for the year and to continue to grow the community membership.

#### Evolving Young Alumni Communities

An evolving young alumni community is one that has enjoyed a large following, consistent growth, and a vast communications network enabling it to offer many services and events. The young alumni community may have established itself as an independent entity of the alumni club or affinity group. It will include a strong leadership structure, volunteer base, and list of resources. Continued exploration of events and services that will benefit the community is an important focus. Keeping up with the inevitable evolution of the membership and its interests is critical. Ideal goals in this stage include the understanding of young alumni interests and how to better provide benefits which compliment the membership a community without boundaries.

Regardless of the stage of growth for the community, it’s important to stay patient. It may take 6 months or as much as few years to grow a young alumni community. Growth depends on the number of alumni in any given club or group area and the level of interaction appreciated between young alumni in the community. The demographics of the young alumni and characteristics of the location also play important roles in establishing a group. With steadfast commitment and support from peers and the support staff in the GTAA, one can achieve the goal of creating a thriving young alumni community. For example life stages of a young alumni community and their activities refer to *Appendix E*.

### **PLANNING SUCCESSFUL YOUNG ALUMNI EVENTS**

There are many different ideas for events and programs which may be successful for young alumni groups within the various alumni clubs and affinity groups across the country. Understanding the fundamentals of alumni demographics, where to find alumni, how to effectively communicate with young alumni, and how to establish a connection with young alumni will assist one in creating effective programming. As many event planners would say, the proper amount of planning is vital before attempting to execute an event or activity. Be sure to divide up the workload amongst a team of volunteers, as not to leave any element of the event under prepared.

#### **Recognizing Typical Barriers for Alumni Participation**

The first challenge for hosting an event is to recognize and overcome the typical barriers that prevent alumni from participating in events. While not all barriers can be negotiated collectively, thoughtful consideration of these barriers will dramatically increase the odds of a successful event.

Typical barriers for alumni participation include:

- Time
- Cost
- Family/Job Conflicts
- Distance from Tech
- Perception
- Number of Acquaintances at Event

In planning many events, one can assess how much time and at what cost participation would be required. To deal with family and job conflicts, remember to plan events at available hours and to include family-oriented activities when possible. As previously mentioned, the farther the away from Georgia Tech a club or group is located, the more difficult it will be to rekindle the Georgia Tech spirit amongst the young alumni. Recognizing this as a factor may induce one to host more Georgia Tech events to instill the good 'ole GT spirit and cheer back.

Perception of the alumni club or affinity group is critical. A poor perception based on who is involved, what the mission is, and how the club or group communicates can kill participation before it even begins. Carefully protect the reputation of the group and constantly assess how each alumnus perceives it. Work to keep the alumni thinking about a positive and exciting perception about the young community and its events and programs. Recognize the varying social skills of the young alumni. While some may be outgoing and be willing to attend an event without knowing anyone, remember some prefer to know another. Be sure to partner up new attendees with a veteran member to help in meeting and introducing new people.

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### **Quick Tips for Holding a Successful Young Alumni Event**

Events should be carefully planned around the demographics and characteristics of the attendees. With understanding of the young alumni in the area and appreciation of their interests and motivating factors, look for an event that best matches them. Don't be afraid to vary event types and locations to test out different activities and to ensure that all interests are met. In all cases, be sure to answer the question on how the event or activity will overcome the typical alumni barriers for participation.

Here are some example tips for successful event planning:

- Co-sponsor Events with Alumni Club or Affinity Group
- Advertise Event for “Young at Heart” not just “Young Alumni”
- Get Help / Build a Team
- Host Quarterly or Seasonal Events which Grow on Each Occurrence
- Use Consistent and Convenient Locations
- Consider Using Online Payment with Registration Incentives
- Offer Free Food
- Partner with a Georgia Tech Company or Business
- Ensure Events are Cheap and Fun
- Incorporate Philanthropy into the Event
- Negotiate a Deal with the Venue or Location
- Conduct Online Survey for Event Ideas
- Send Thank You Notes
- Communicate Event Details in Consistent Manner or Format
- Use “Pay as You Go” and “Participate as You Choose” Formats
- Partner with other Alumni Clubs, Academic Societies, or Professional Associations
- Provide a Learning or Cultural Experience with Event

Refer to *Appendix F* for a helpful guide of specific event ideas.

## **RESOURCES AND TOOLS**

### **Georgia Tech Alumni Association**

#### Alumni Clubs and Groups

Jane Stoner  
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#### Alumni Travel

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#### Campus Relations

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### **Georgia Tech Young Alumni Council**

#### Leadership Board

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## **2008 GTAA Young Alumni Handbook**

*A Best Practices Guide for Young Alumni Representatives*

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### **Additional Resources**

- Utilize Steering Committee, Executive Board, and/or Directors of Alumni Club/Groups
- Consult a Group of Young Alumni Peers
- Contact other Young Alumni Representatives
- GT Young Alumni Facebook Webpage

## **2008 GTAA Young Alumni Handbook**

*A Best Practices Guide for Young Alumni Representatives*

### **APPENDIX**

- A. Young Alumni Council Bylaws (*Modified June 2008*)
- B. 2008-2009 Young Alumni Council Outreach Committee Contact List
- C. 2008-2009 Young Alumni Representatives List
- D. GTAA Young Alumni Focus Group Research (*May 2008*)
- E. Typical Stages of a Young Alumni Community
- F. A to Z Guide of Helpful Event Ideas



## **Bylaws**

### **Mission:**

The Young Alumni Council strives to promote the Institution and serve our young alumni. We will work in partnership with the Alumni Association to support relevant and meaningful programs and services for current and future young alumni and to foster lifelong participation and philanthropic support.

### **Article I**

#### **Organization**

**Section 1.** The name of this organization shall be "Young Alumni Council."

**Section 2.** The Young Alumni Council is organized as part of the Georgia Tech Alumni Association and shall be operated in accordance with the laws governing the Alumni Association.

### **Article II**

#### **Membership**

##### **Section 1.** Selection:

- (a) Applications will be accepted in May and June of each year and members will be selected by July 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
- (b) Selection criteria will be based upon past leadership roles, past involvement as a Georgia Tech student and/or alumni and enthusiasm for the Council.
- (c) Each elected member of the Young Alumni Council shall have graduated with their first degree within the past ten years.
- (d) Membership shall not exceed 40 Council members per fiscal year (including Leadership Board members) and can be less than the maximum at any point.
- (e) The selection committee shall be made up of the current Leadership Board President, the Leadership Board Selection Chair, the Council Advisor and at least one member-at-large from the Alumni Association.
  - a. The inaugural year of the selection committee, the committee shall be made up of the Alumni Association President, the Young Alumni Council Advisor, two Alumni Association staff members and the current Council Chair.

##### **Section 2.** Candidacy:

- (a) All candidates will be required to follow the Meeting Attendance Policy as stated in section 3.

- (b) The president and Council Advisor will review all candidates in April of each year based on their contribution to the Council and will review their continued eligibility for the organization.

### **Section 3. Terms of Membership**

- (a) Council members shall contribute a minimum gift or pledge of \$125\* per fiscal year to Roll Call and will promote to their fellow young alumni the importance of Roll Call and giving back to Tech.
  - a. \*Council members who have graduated within the past two years will be eligible for membership with a gift or pledge of \$50 per fiscal year to Roll Call.
- (b) Council members are required to attend at least 2/3 of the scheduled Council meetings (by phone or in person) and all functions for which they have committed.
- (c) If a Council member is unable to participate in a meeting, he/she will notify the Council Advisor at least 3 days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- (d) A minimum of two non-athletic events are required for each member. Club meetings will be included as events.
- (e) Each Council member shall serve on one of the Council committees.
- (f) Should a member not meet the minimum requirements during their term, they will forfeit their membership.
- (g) All members are allowed to remain active until their graduation date has fallen out of the 10 year maximum time period, considering they fulfill membership requirements.
- (h) All Council members will be asked to recommit their membership on an annual basis by filling out a Renewal Form.

## **Article III**

### **Leadership Board**

#### **Section 1. Membership**

- (a) The Leadership Board will consist of the following officers: President, Outreach Chair, Campus Relations Chair, Events Chair, Selection Chair and Recruitment Chair. One person may hold only one office.
- (b) All Council Chairs will elect committee members to serve under their office and will be responsible for the marketing of their committee events.
- (c) All Council officers will be elected by the selection committee as stated in Article II, Section 1, at the end of the fiscal year and will take office the first day of the fiscal year (July 1).
- (d) No member of the Leadership Board, either in such capacity or in any other capacity, shall be paid any salary or any other remuneration for his or her services, but he or she may be reimbursed for any expense to which he or she has paid while about the business of the Young Alumni Council, provided such expense is approved by the Georgia Tech Alumni Association Council Advisor and Vice President of Constituent Services.
- (e) The Leadership Board has the right to appoint vacant positions at any time.

#### **Section 2. Duties**

- (a) President: The President is responsible for the smooth administration of the Council and holds final responsibility for the program, policies and procedures, appearances and

- members. The President presides over all Council general meetings and Leadership Board meetings and is responsible for communication with the Alumni Association.
- (b) Outreach Chair: The Outreach Chair acts as the official Council representative to the Alumni Clubs, specifically in the coordination of Club communications and events. The responsibility of the Outreach Chair will be to help increase young alumni participation at Club events and meetings.
  - (c) Campus Relations Chair: The Campus Relations Chair is responsible for young alumni participation on the Georgia Tech campus, including, but not limited to, the Gettin' Out Party, Tech Beautification Day, Buzz Bash and the Senior Success Series.
  - (d) Events Chair: The Events Chair is responsible for young alumni programming ideas and organizes events with the Georgia Tech Alumni Association staff. TEAM Buzz and Toast to Tech are under the Events Chair.
  - (e) Recruitment Chair: The Recruitment Chair will be responsible for recruiting new members each year. This will include communication with the Alumni Clubs Young Alumni Reps, Tech Topics, Buzz Words, word of mouth and any other communication method deemed appropriate.
  - (f) Selection Chair: The Selection Chair serves as a member of the selection committee for selecting new members and the Leadership Board each year.

### **Section 3. Term of Office**

- (a) Term of office will be for one calendar year. No officer shall serve more than two consecutive terms in the same office.

### **Section 4. Dismissal**

- (a) In the case that an officer's duties are not fulfilled the Council President will consult with the Advisor to consider removal of the officer from office.
- (b) Any officer being considered for removal from office will be notified in writing.
- (c) That officer will then apply to the Council President and the Advisor for reinstatement of office.

## **Article IV.**

### **Committees**

#### **Section 1. Committee Members**

- (a) Each Council Chair shall form a committee of Council members each fiscal year, from every member of the Council. Such committees shall be charged with the responsibility of coordinating the plans and efforts of all committees of the Council during the ensuing fiscal year.
- (b) All Council members must serve as an officer or be on a committee.
- (c) An **Outreach Committee**, composed of no less than two (2) members of the Council, in addition to the President and Outreach Chair, shall have responsibility of communication with the Alumni Clubs and of increasing young alumni participation at Club events and meetings as deemed necessary.
- (d) A **Campus Relations Committee**, composed of no less than two (2) members of the Council, in addition to the President and the Campus Relations Chair, shall have responsibility for increasing young alumni participation on the Georgia Tech campus,

including, but not limited to, the Gettin' Out Party, Tech Beautification Day, Buzz Bash and the Senior Success Series through marketing efforts.

- (e) An **Events Committee**, composed of no less than two (2) members of the Council, in addition to the President and Events Chair, shall have the responsibility of planning young alumni events and organizing events with the Georgia Tech Alumni Association staff. TEAM Buzz and Toast to Tech are under the Events Committee.
- (f) A **Recruitment Committee**, composed of no less than one (1) member of the Council, in addition to the President and the Recruitment Chair, shall have responsibility of recruiting new Council members each year. This will include communication with the Alumni Clubs Young Alumni Reps, Tech Topics, Buzz Words, word of mouth and any other communication method deemed appropriate.

**Section 2.** Each committee chair shall be responsible with coordinating the plans and efforts of their respective committees of the Council during the ensuing fiscal year. Each committee chair shall be responsible for ensuring that his or her committee follows the bylaws, and shall report to the President and to the Leadership Board any deviation from established policies and procedures during the committee's activity.

**Section 3.** Ad hoc committees may be appointed by the President or from a majority of members of the Leadership Board for special purposes that may be deemed appropriate. The formation of an ad hoc committee and the appointment of an ad hoc committee's chair must be approved by majority vote of the Leadership Board and by the Young Alumni Council Advisor. An ad hoc committee may be dissolved by the President with majority approval of the Board, or by a majority vote of the Board.

- (a) The following ad hoc committees have been added by the Lead Team as of January 2008:
  - 1. Technology Liaison
  - 2. Scholarship Liaison

## **Article V. Meetings**

**Section 1.** Meetings of the Council members shall be held on the second Monday of each month. At such meetings, officers shall report to the Council the current and planned activity of their committee.

**Section 2.** Meetings for the Leadership Board will be held on the fourth Monday of each month.

**Section 3.** The President shall preside over the meetings of the Board and at the general meetings. The President shall keep the minutes of all meetings. The President will e-mail the minutes to the Council by the Friday following the meeting.

**Section 5.** The Council can vote to change the day and time of the meetings with a 2/3 majority vote.

## **Article VI. Miscellaneous**

**Section 1.** The Fiscal Year of the Council shall begin on July 1 and end June 30.

**Section 2.** Council members will set annual and long-term goals each year and the goals will be reviewed bi-annually, according to the success metrics determined by the Council members.

**Section 3.** Council members must support Alumni Association activities and programs and must shed a positive light on the Georgia Tech Alumni Association.

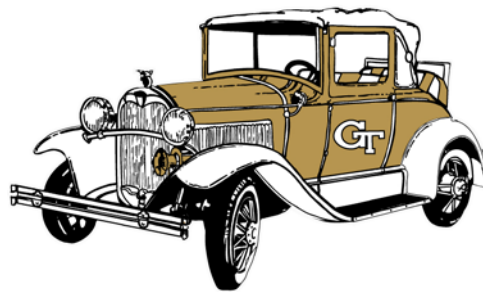
**Section 4.** These Bylaws and any adjoining written Policies and Procedures may be altered, amended, or repealed by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members of the Council present at any of the Council retreats, but not regular meeting of the Council, with approval from the Advisor. This may only take place after the bylaws have been in place for one year.

Adopted: March 21, 2007

Most Recent Revision: June 5, 2008

# Georgia Tech Alumni Association

## YOUNG ALUMNI FOCUS GROUP RESEARCH 2008 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS REPORT



Marketing Services  
Derek Lee, Alumni Research

May 2008

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# INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Georgia Tech Alumni Association considers those in the previous ten graduating classes as “young alumni” of the Institute. This fast-growing demographic of Generation Xers and Millennials currently makes up roughly 30% of all Tech alumni and will exceed 40% in the coming years. While the Association’s fundraising and programming efforts have been largely successful with the older alumni base, young alumni have proven much more difficult to engage. Both anecdotal and quantitative evidence indicates this key group is far less likely to open Georgia Tech emails, read alumni publications, or donate to Roll Call than older alumni. In response to this growing disconnect, the Alumni Association has initiated a new young alumni strategy that emphasizes early education, targeted programming, and mentorships to engage current students and recent graduates alike.

The 2008 Young Alumni Focus Group Research was designed to increase understanding of current young alumni expectations and needs. The research study is comprised of two phases, including the initial qualitative research for which this report provides findings. The second phase will consist of a quantitative survey of the national young alumni base. Together, the results of these studies will inform and guide much of the Association’s overall strategic plan.

The specific goals for the exploratory qualitative research were as follows:

1. Identify the services young alumni consider most important as recent graduates of Tech;
2. Determine how the Alumni Association should deliver these services.

## Methodology

Four focus groups were conducted with undergraduate seniors and young alumni ages 22-28 living in the Atlanta, GA area. Participants were randomly selected from the alumni database, screening for both donors and non-donors to the 60<sup>th</sup> Roll Call. Specific efforts were made to exclude club leaders from consideration in order to better evaluate the experience of the “average” young alumnus. Invitations were emailed to 1,038 alumni and 115 students with instructions to contact the Alumni Association if interested. Participants were placed into one of 4 focus groups based on the criteria below:

<b>Group</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	Undergraduate Seniors	9	4/16/08
2	Non Donors	11	4/23/08
3	Donors	11	4/29/08
4	Donors & Non-Donors	12 (6 Donors, 6 Non-Donors)	5/1/08

The focus groups were conducted in the Guthridge Room at the Faculty Alumni House. All sessions were audio and video-taped for reporting purposes. Student received a \$25 co-op fee and alumni received a \$40 co-op fee for their time.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Focus group participants identified four umbrella categories of services they expected from the Georgia Tech Alumni Association: career services, communications, philanthropy, and social programming. Of these, career services was considered the most important with a score of 4.9 on a five-point scale, followed by social programming (3.6), communications (3.0), and philanthropy (1.9).
2. Participants believed the Association should begin educating students while they are on campus. By familiarizing undergraduates with Roll Call and its alumni services, the Association can aid their overall transition into young alumni early and often. They also felt student programs like alumni mentorships and life-skills seminars could generate significant goodwill to the Association prior to graduation.
3. Young alumni expect many alumni services to be delivered in some part via the Internet. Participants strongly desired a cutting-edge website that acts as an information hub for all alumni events, campus news, and sporting venues. They also wanted to network on searchable alumni databases, see real-time attendance lists for social events, make Roll Call donations online, and customize their email and news delivery. In other words, Association services must be immediate, accessible, and user-friendly.
4. A common theme among participants was an emphasis on a low “admission price” for both events and philanthropy. Young alumni want every dollar to count, hence they expect alumni functions to be either inexpensive or elaborate enough to justify the cost. From their perspective, the Association’s emphasis should be on generating long-term goodwill instead of short-term dollars. In a similar vein, they want Roll Call to explicitly ask young alumni for small donations – roughly \$10 to \$20 – to encourage high overall participation. This low “admission” into Roll Call can then translate into larger giving in the future.
5. Among the career services concepts discussed, alumni mentorships proved the most popular with the focus groups. Participants cited it as immediately sustainable and helpful to students and young alumni alike. Their overall vision of alumni career services was technology-driven, with searchable databases for mentors and networking, as well as online forums for asking career questions. Participants were also enthusiastic about career seminars followed by networking mixers.
6. For social programming, the focus groups were most excited about young alumni reunions, quarterly mixers, and life skills seminars. Young alumni travel packages and intramural leagues also raised some interest as long as prices were low. They believed young alumni tailgates at football games would be difficult to execute well.
7. Young alumni had very strong opinions on communications; the consensus was Georgia Tech and the Alumni Association sent far too much and that it could be handled more efficiently. Participants desired a “smart” mail system they could tailor to their interests, thereby limiting the amount received. They wanted to see fewer emails, greater use of the website, and younger content/graphics in alumni publications. Text messages and a young alumni e-newsletter were rejected as new avenues of communication. Facebook was seen as a smart medium to use, as long as it did not replace print mail or emails.
8. Focus groups participants were remarkably uniform in their opinions on philanthropy. They felt Roll Call should educate students on financial giving before graduation, and after graduation only ask for small amounts to achieve high participation. Young alumni felt partial designation would convince more recent graduates to donate. Participants thought Roll brochures could use bolder colors and less text. Lastly, they were interested in ways to serve Tech in non-financial ways, such as community service or mentorships.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## SECTION I: Identification of Key Services

When asked to identify the services expected as recent graduates of Tech, focus group participants created the following list:

- Alumni clubs
- Alumni database updates/maintenance
- Career services
- Communications/News
- Continuing education (seminars)
- Early education to students
- Online tool to help alumni moving to new areas
- Philanthropy
- Service to Tech/Community Service
- Social programming

Upon deeper discussion, four stood out from the others in terms of frequency and significance: career services, social programming, communications, and philanthropy. When asked to rank the importance of these services on a 1-5 scale (1 = not important; 5 = very important), young alumni rated them as follows:

- Career services 4.9 (Range: 5.0-4.5)
- Social programming 3.6 (Range: 4.5-2.0)
- Communications 3.0 (Range: 3.0-3.0)
- Philanthropy/Service 1.9 (Range: 3.0-1.0)

### Career Services

All 4 focus groups considered career services the most important service the Alumni Association could provide, and they asked for opportunities in networking, mentorships, job fairs, job sites, continuing education classes, and seminars.

- *“Programs that help alumni careers. Different certifications. Networking. Classes.”*
- *“Networking Events, both in-person and online.”*
- *“Mentorships, where you could log on and see alumni in your industry who live in your state.”*

### Social Programming

As a group, undergraduate seniors did not believe social events were an important service, most likely since they still have friends on campus. However, the three other alumni groups felt social programs were crucial to maintaining ties to Tech.

- *“Fun stuff. Social networking, athletics, whatever is going on campus.”*
- *“Quarterly events to meet in person.”*

### Communications

Young alumni had mixed opinions about communications. On one hand, they felt it was integral for keeping them informed about school news and alumni events. On the other hand, participants felt inundated by the volume of emails and letters they receive from various parts of the Institute.

- *“Newsletters, events and sports that are going on.”*
- *“What’s going on campus. What building is being built.”*

- *“I get four to five emails from the Alumni Association a month and I delete all of them before I even open them. You get Buzzwords, athletics, college emails, and you think ‘How do I get off these lists?’”*

#### Philanthropy/Service

Participants recognized philanthropy as important to the Institute, but as recent graduates with smaller incomes, they felt it was not an integral “service” at this point in their lives. The donor group was an exception to this mentality. Many wanted the Association to offer non-financial ways to contribute to Tech.

- *“Coordinate class gifts to Institute.”*
- *“Ways to give back that don't involve money.”*

## SECTION II: Discussion of Key Services

### A. Career Services

#### 1. Alumni Mentorships

The concept of mentorship cycles (older alumni mentor young alumni, young alumni mentor upperclassmen, upperclassmen mentor freshmen) was embraced by nearly all participants of the focus groups. They felt this program would be greatly beneficial to their careers and would also bolster the Alumni Association's visibility.

- *"Mentoring sound great."*
- *"That's a sustainable model. It's a cycle. You get help, someone helps you."*
- *"I think it's a great idea. From what I remember all the advice I ever got was in FASET. And that was such a rush. You're picking out classes and you don't even know how to pick classes. You need someone you can talk to over the summer, a senior, someone who can help you out."*
- *"Yeah, get real-world advice. Your whole network grows. That person can connect with seven other people."*
- *"It's so important to have that industry specific mentor."*
- *"I'd love to mentor juniors or seniors."*
- *"It depends on the time commitment. If it means going out to dinner with them every weekend, then no. If it means answering a question, sure, why not."*

When asked how they would like the Alumni Association to facilitate such a relationship, participants envisioned a database where one could search for students/alumni who have volunteered to be mentors. This could take the form of a new website or build upon the functionality of Jacket Community. After finding potential matches, either they or the Alumni Association would contact the mentors, who could accept or decline the match. Participants stressed the importance of flexibility, both in choosing their mentor(s) and in determining how long the relationship would last. The following list represents some of the lengthy brainstorming around this concept:

- *"Have all the people willing to mentor fill out a short profile about themselves, and then I can go in and type "Mechanical Engineering" and it would keyword search and pop up 20 people."*
- *"Could you fill out a survey when you graduate so you can match people up by major or industry?"*
- *"Have a website where you put up your name, your company, maybe a picture, and then students can search through that and be able to contact you."*
- *"It could be on your alumni profile. You already have that [on Jacket Community], why not include job, business interests, type of area, so you can ask questions."*
- *"Maybe have a field where you can check a box and it says I am willing to answer questions, or mentor. And they could turn it on and off whenever they want."*
- *"I personally don't want to have a mentorship online. I'd want to meet the person, or do a panel, or one-on-one. I don't see myself going to a website."*
- *"I think the website would be a precursor to getting a mentorship. You go to the website, you see the people who are 5-10 years ahead of you and you see what's out there, what interests you."*
- *"Give young alumni flexibility so he can pick this or this or this person. At least this way you can find the right fit."*
- *"You need a moderation system so that the successful alum who earns \$300 K doesn't get everyone's email."*

- *“The Alumni Association needs to moderate. You would hurt someone's feelings if you say no. The Association wouldn't tell someone they weren't matched, they would just fine the next match.”*
- *“A mentor system where they meet 4 times, a finite number. Then it doesn't have to last forever.”*
- *“You need both one-time and long-term relationships. Sometimes after one meeting you know you're not going to hit it off. Other times you hit it off. You need both.”*
- *“We do group mentoring at work. Email whenever, but once a month, once a quarter, we meet and all talk over dinner.”*
- *“Have more than one mentor, so you can balance one person's advice with another.”*
- *“I'd rather be informally paired with 20 different people I could shoot an email to than be stuck with someone just because we're both mechanical engineers.”*
- *“Make sure you catch [students] when they really need these programs. If you talk to someone in Year 2, 3 they're in swing of things. Too early about jobs, they're not paying attention. Talk right before graduation, they already have jobs.”*
- *“You need young alumni volunteers for all this. That's the hard part, getting volunteers.”*
- *“A lot of older people, mentors, won't be online.”*
- *“How many alums who graduated in '65 are Linked in? Zero.”*
- *“I firmly believe it's not a take relationship. It's a give and take relationship. You get mentored by an older alum and at the same time you mentor a student. Otherwise you're getting and you're not giving back.”*

## **2. Career Networking Database**

Focus group participants extended the concept of a searchable alumni database towards career networking. They liked the idea of searching for older alumni in their geographic area or field who could assist them with job leads or career networking. Once again, they felt offering this resource would bring good will to the Association.

- *“What about a database where you type in you live in Cleveland and you're into Chemical Engineering and you hit Search, and you see the alumni who fit that criteria?”*
- *“Have alumni say ‘I work at Alcoa’ and then we can email them. So if I'm looking for a job at Alcoa, I can just email an alumnae and say ‘Hey, do you have any job openings?’”*
- *“If you make people aware before they graduate that's it's important to keep up updated info because you get this service out of it, then you're much more likely to come back after graduation”.*

## **3. Online Career Forum**

Three out of four focus groups separately mentioned online forums as a useful tool for young alumni to introduce themselves to a new city or to ask questions about a particular industry. Though they acknowledged difficulties in moderating such forums, most thought it would be a useful resource.

- *“The forum would be great for little questions here and there.”*
- *“A major or industry specific message board. It would tough to moderate, but it would be awesome to have.”*
- *“Virtual conversation is important. To be able to say, ‘I'm in the chemical industry, and I'm in the Chicago area, and I'm looking for a job, or I'm looking to hire someone.’”*
- *“I have several forums I go to. They're easy to set up. Have a GT forum where people can post things, where you can find out about financial planning, careers, social aspects, networking events, and put calendars there, that way everyone can see and search.”*

## **4. Networking Events**

All participants identified networking as important for career building, but many were not sure if they would actually attend a stand-alone networking event. Several alumni felt it would be a waste of time if poorly-executed or poorly-attended. The overall consensus was to attach a networking mixer to the tail-end of a seminar or speaker panel so that attendees would get something definitive out of it.

- *“Absolutely, more career networking events.”*
- *“I would only go if there were people there who could really help me out with my career.”*
- *“It might not have great attendance b/c most attendees don't have jobs, so they either haven't graduated or are just out, so it'll be a very young crowd. So 40 people show up and no one has a job.”*
- *“[You need] a reason to bring people together. A speaker or showcase work.”*
- *“Industry specific networking events. I worked in civil engineering, so maybe green engineering projects.”*
- *“Our industry does a lot of them, and I've stopped going because you go after work and you sit for 2 more hours on industry stuff. If you could mix it up, so you can do something fun after work, or may be something in the afternoon that's a lecture, and then a happy hour afterwards.”*

## **5. Career Seminars**

Most focus group participants liked the idea of career seminars, though there was a wide range of opinions on actual formats and topics. The student group was very interested in seminars on how to network effectively; they felt such seminars would be useful to juniors and seniors. Some young alumni requested broad seminar topics like graduate school Q+A sessions. Others said they would only attend narrow topics focused on their industry. All participants, however, agreed seminars should be cheap, if not free.

- *“This would be big. I think it's a great idea.”*
- *“There are so many GT business people, they would love to come in and talk.”*
- *“Salary negotiation, interviewing skills ... it's not that interesting at this point in my career. I'd rather hear about it from a mentor.”*
- *“I want something informal, I don't want to wear a suit, I want to talk and ask questions.”*
- *“I went to a good session about MBAs, so that should continue.”*
- *“I could use resume help. I've been out for a year now, and I still don't what I should put on it. Do I keep my school organizations on my resume?”*
- *“Maybe a professional group networking fair where you can learn about industry groups in Atlanta.”*
- *“I would love to listen to a professor if he could step back from his research and explain what's going on to someone who hasn't been in that industry.”*
- *“There are very few GT professors I would ever want to hear again.”*
- *“Some of those sessions cost hundreds of dollars. There was one where I planned to go and then I saw it was \$150. If it were free, or if it had a smaller donation, I would have gone.”*
- *“I'd only go if it were free.”*
- *“For a seminar and networking ... \$20, maybe \$25”*
- *“If it's going to be \$50, it better be good. I'd better leave with contacts.”*

## **B. Social Programming**

### **1. Reunions**

Participants were asked to discuss their interest in young alumni reunions, which many other large public universities have initiated in the past few years. The Young Alumni Council has already planned the first young alumni reunion (last ten graduating classes) for June 2008, but the information gleaned from this study can be used for future reunions.

### Format and timing

The student focus group was not excited about reunions and seemed more eager to leave Tech than to return, as seen from the following comments:

- *“I wouldn't come back in the next 1-2 years.”*
- *“I don't even know if I'd come back in 10 years.”*

However, there is a distinct change in mentality once young alumni have graduated. All three subsequent young alumni groups thought reunions were an excellent way of bringing friends back together and renewing ties to Tech. A rolling multi-year block of classes – those who graduated 1-5 years ago – was considered the best format since friends often graduate in different years.

- *“Half of my friends graduated in May, half in December, some even did it in three years. I need that group reunion.”*
- *“Have a rolling five-year period, that way you can encourage the people from the years above and the years below to attend.”*
- *“You can't do class of 2006, class of 2007. Five years is a good time frame for a block. I don't know if you want to stretch it out to ten years.”*
- *“It's a good idea to have it the first year. It ensures relationships stay strong.”*
- *“My group of friends would want to come back immediately. I had a large group, about 60 of us, and we'd come back.”*
- *“I've only been gone one year, and if I lived outside Atlanta, I would want to come back since I haven't seen any of my friends. But since I live here and all my friends still live here, I wouldn't come back.”*
- *“I would be much more interested now rather than first year out because back then we kept seeing each other. It's different now.”*

### Attendance

All participants agreed that the best way to guarantee their attendance at reunions was ensuring their friends were attending too. To this end, young alumni wanted to see online attendance lists or Evites so they could see who was invited and who had signed up, as well as a means to contact them. One alumnus suggested using campus organizations like Greeks or CCF as partners to recruit alumni to return.

- *“Attendance list is crucial.”*
- *“Knowing far enough in advance people you know will be there.”*
- *“Getting an email [from a friend] ...if someone you know is going, you'll go.”*
- *“You could set up Facebook invites. Evites. See who is attending.”*
- *“That's why I love Evites. You see who's invited and who's coming.”*
- *“Mailers are a good idea. I hate junk mail, but you do notice it.”*
- *“Have alumni chairs of existing organizations help, like CCF. These orgs have a lot of power. They can get you on lists you don't normally have access to.”*

### Events

Young alumni participants had many event suggestions for a Young Alumni Reunion. Nearly everyone agreed it should take place over a weekend (Friday night-Sunday) with a variety of events to pick and choose from. A sports centerpiece was seen as a strong draw. Alumni seemed excited about having both high-end (formal gala) and low-key (kickball games on SAC fields) events to attend.

- *“Sports is a necessary centerpiece.”*
- *“After the game there could be a party, a postgame party. People are pumped up, excited. Traffic is bad, so they can stay and hang out and talk about the game.”*
- *“My dad went to a small college in Ohio, and it was a family thing. Everyone stayed in the dorms, there was a big dance on Saturday, all sorts of events, the alumni kids were babysat by*

*students, who were counselors. It was SO much fun. It was during the summer and it had nothing to do with sports.”*

- *“It would nice to do it in spring or summer when weather is nice. Put some tables out and have people meet.”*
- *“Having it on a weekend with a sporting event is fine, as long as there are other activities too.”*
- *“[Have] something smaller ... a baseball game, meet and greet, rapelling, something to talk about while you're there.”*
- *“Why watch a sport? Let's play a sport. Fun games, kickball, wiffleball, frisbee. Make your own teams and just show up. Don't make it formal. Give out a prize, like t-shirts.”*
- *“Open up SAC for the weekend, and alumni can play basketball 3 on 3, kickball tournament. Sororities could get a team together, they can start calling and get a team together. That will force everyone to come.”*
- *“Allow us to pick and choose events.”*
- *“I'd only come back if it were one-night thing.”*
- *“The caveat to that is that it needs to be compelling for those coming from outside Atlanta. If I lived in Virginia, I wouldn't come to a reunion for a one-night thing.”*
- *“Have a main event Saturday night, so maybe if you live in town that's all you have to do.”*
- *“I would make it less formal than the 40 or 50 year reunion.”*
- *“Bring Atlanta into the picture somehow. Maybe a Braves game. Hawks. The Aquarium, world of Coke. Use the city to your advantage.”*
- *“For me, it's knowing there are going to be things I couldn't plan on my own, something you might never have the chance to do.”*
- *“For those living in Atlanta, it's got to be something big they couldn't do themselves, like a gala at the aquarium. I don't think I would show up for something at the Student Center.”*
- *“Having a nice, dressy cocktail event is really nice, it's a draw. Especially if it's at a nice location. Have it on Saturday and have a low-key event on Friday night when people are coming in. A low-key brunch on Sunday.”*

#### Time of year

There was little consensus among young alumni on the time of year to hold a reunion. The fall was repeatedly mentioned since football already attracts a large number of alumni, though most participants felt Homecoming was a bad weekend since it was already so busy. Young alumni wanted a dedicated weekend where they received Tech's undivided attention. Spring and summer were also considered viable options.

- *“I saw [this year's young alumni reunion] was in June, and I'm already taking off for vacation. Why couldn't it be around Homecoming?”*
- *“You don't have to do it on Homecoming since so much else is going on.”*
- *“It should be separate from football and Homecoming because everyone already comes back for those.”*
- *“It would nice to do it in spring or summer when weather is nice. Put some tables out and have people meet.”*

#### Price

Young alumni wanted the low-key gatherings to be free or cheap, but said they'd be willing to pay more for nicer events.

- *“If you keep it free, you'll get more people.”*
- *“You'd get a lot of good will this way.”*
- *“More than \$30, you start thinking, “There are lots of things I could do for \$30.””*
- *“Have each event broken out individually. Low key events are free, but a gala would be \$50.”*
- *“Or a package price. If you're going to do it all, it'll be cheaper.”*

- *“Anything over \$100 people will start backing away. The ideal price is between \$50 and \$75/person.”*
- *“I would pay \$100 for a gala in the Botanical Gardens.”*
- *“Package it so a certain amount is a Roll Call donation.”*

## **2. Young Alumni Tailgate/Post-game party at home games**

Young alumni tailgates received a mixed reception. Several participants already tailgate with a specific group of friends, so they didn't see the need for an additional young alumni tailgate. Others said it was a good option, but it would not be their main meeting area. The post-game party was better received since there was less competition, but several participants admitted after several hours of tailgating and game-watching they might not have the energy to attend a second party.

- *“I already have my tailgate crew.”*
- *“Eh.”*
- *“It's good to have a common area, so if my buddies aren't around, I can always go to the young alumni area.”*
- *“I have my own tailgate, but I would stop by. I go to three to four anyway.”*
- *“If there is free beer I will definitely go.”*
- *“I think young alumni tend to go tailgate hopping, it's just one more place to go and spend 3 hours before the game. It would be fun to see who shows up.”*
- *“Afterwards is kind of loose. You don't have to eat. You can bounce around.”*
- *“If I had a dollar for every time I said, 'I'll meet you after the game...' It never happens. Some games are so hot and you've been tailgating all day. Afterwards you're going home.”*
- *“I'd be more enticed to go to [a young alumni tailgate] at an away game. At home games I've got friends already, my family has tickets. Game day is for us getting together. But I'd go to that if I were going to Clemson.”*

## **3. Young Alumni Mixers**

Participants were strongly in favor of young alumni mixers held every few months. Young alumni said events should be inexpensive, centrally-located, and elaborate enough so they could not be organized on their own. They also wanted to receive Evites or see attendance lists to make sure their friends were coming. Every event needed a clearly demarcated Tech area. Several participants had poor experiences at previous GT mixers, thus the need for high organization and consistency are mission-critical.

- *“It could work if you could do GT night at a bar, \$2 beers or free food. You have to market it right.”*
- *“Maybe if the first drink is free, or the first \$200 is free, something to get people in there. Nothing to blow the budget.”*
- *“Have an incentive to go. My apartment building partners with a bunch of bars to have cheap drinks and free appetizers, and people go.”*
- *“If the team goes far, like the Final Four, why don't we have a Final Four bash?”*
- *“If there's an activity going on, you'll get more people there. Tech people, they're not social people. But if you're doing something, playing pool, bowling, you can do that and talk. It's a natural ice-breaker.”*
- *“Make sure you can bring friends.”*
- *“I've been on Evites with 600 people and it's kinda cool. People can see who's going. And you can forward it on, so I can send it to all my friends, people I graduated with.”*
- *“The most important thing is to know people you know will be there.”*
- *“Frequency is difficult ... if you do it too much, it loses value and no one is going to come.”*
- *“Not every month, maybe every 4 months.”*
- *“I've been to Wind Down Wednesdays and it's really poorly organized. When I got there I expected a meet and greet table with name tag, but there was nothing like that. It was*

*awkward and I kind of recognized people from Tech but I didn't talk to them because I didn't know if they were here for this, or they were just there. So me and my girlfriend just got a drink and left. I was disappointed."*

- *"I went to the one at Gordon Biersh and there were only 4 people there. I'm not going to hang out with 4 random people."*
- *"Have something there, a table, name tags, that shows it's a Tech event"*
- *"At the DC club, at every event there's always a Tech flag. You know the three people organizing it will be wearing gold, you see the Tech flag, and you're not going to wander around like an idiot."*
- *"Whenever you go to Virginia Highlands or Buckhead, you run into tons of GT kids anyway, but there's never any way to meet up with anyone. If you had a starting point, you could meet GT alums at 7:30 in the Highlands and hang out with people the rest of the night."*

#### **4. Intramural Sports Teams**

Some students did not like the idea of intramural sports teams, stating that playing with strangers would be weird. But the three young alumni groups thought kickball or softball teams were a great way to meet new people.

- *"I don't see this happening."*
- *"Need to know the people. Otherwise it would be weird."*
- *"I think the cool part about it is meeting new people."*
- *"I'd definitely play a flag football team if it were available."*
- *"There's a GT kickball team, and that's successful."*
- *"Location is important. Not too much time commitment."*
- *"The problem is location. I live in Conyers. She lives in Sandy Springs. It would probably only work for those who live right in Atlanta. It would be hard to have it centralized."*
- *"Form a team by club and then the clubs play each other."*
- *"Create a league with other schools in the area. Games against Clemson young alumni or Emory young alumni. That would be more fun than playing 60-year old guys."*

#### **5. Young Alumni Sports Seating**

Several participants wondered if the Alumni Association could organize young alumni seating areas at home football games. They also wanted group seating/discounts to Braves games.

- *"A young alumni group at football games. So you spend less per ticket and you sit together."*
- *"I would enjoy a young alumni area in the stadium."*
- *"Someplace where people won't say be quiet. Sometimes you want to say "To Hell With Georgia" but you can't because all the kids are around."*
- *"I used to be in Swarm, and now I'm sitting in the old alum section and everyone is sitting on their hands."*
- *"Braves games tickets, all you can eat, all you can drink. You pay \$60, you get the ticket, all you eat, you can drink, it's well worth the investment."*

#### **6. Seminars on Life Skills**

Students loved the idea of life skills seminars hosted by the Alumni Association, saying it filled a gap in their Tech education. They said holding seminars for undergraduates before graduation would help the transition into the real world and bolster the Association's visibility. Young alumni were equally excited about seminars around investing, taxes, cooking, and beer/wine. Most participants wanted the sessions to be cheap, at least \$25 or less.

- *"This is a great way to capture freshman, sophomores, and juniors."*
- *"Do it before we graduate."*

- *“Investing outside of 401 K. Mutual funds, stocks, IRAs.”*
- *“It would have to be positive. I wouldn't attend ‘How to pay off debt.’ Call it ‘How to Manage your money,’ or ‘How to invest your money.’”*
- *“Information about taxes. Tax rules, how to get around them. Old people know this stuff but we don't.”*
- *“We talk a lot about financial planning. Maybe a mini-series around finance 101. Tonight, How to Buy a House, next, How to get a Car Loan, How to pay off loans, Understand the stock market...”*
- *“A demonstration how to make sushi, or how to taste wine, or explain what scotch is.”*
- *“Cooking class, wine tastings, beer tastings.”*
- *“Mixology was great. You paid \$10, you got two drinks, and you learned how to make drinks. And there was food there. It was well worth the money.”*
- *“I know a lot of young alumni look into homes, so that's a good session.”*
- *“A year ago I went to a cooking class and it was awful, horribly organized. It scares you off from attending future events.”*
- *“I'd pay more than \$25 for tax information. I'd do \$35.”*

## **7. Young Alumni Travel and Sports Packages**

Focus group participants were open to the idea of young alumni travel packages, but getting a good bargain was of paramount importance. Alumni Association package deals must be able to match or beat the value found on Internet travel sites, otherwise they will plan trips on their own. Young alumni also desire shorter weekend trips since they do not have much vacation time.

- *“I sometimes get emails saying ‘Come to Hawaii!’ and I think ‘Yeah, maybe in 12 years when I have enough money.’ You need more fun events for those priced for those right out of college.”*
- *“A lot of these trips you hear about are ‘Come drink the finest wines and eat the most expensive steaks.’ Or ‘Come to Scotland and play the golf courses of olde. And then you look at the price tag and you can't even afford to play one hole of golf.”*
- *“And then you look at pictures from the last trip and it's everyone's grandparents that went.”*
- *“Those vacations are all over \$5000. Young alumni can't afford that. But if you do a weekend trip to the Caribbean and it's under \$1000, people would totally do it.”*
- *“Do smaller weekend trips instead of flying to Europe. Like going to Savannah for St. Patrick's Day.”*
- *“In undergrad we flew to Steamboat Springs, CO, skied for 4 days, flew back. And the trip included the bus from the airport to Steamboat Springs. Something like that was a great value.”*
- *“The trouble with vacations packages is you can go to Orbitz or Hotels.com and get a cheap deal. So what the Alumni Association offers has to be comparable or cheaper.”*
- *“Think of shorter term stuff like whitewater rafting, biking, kayaking, hiking, climbing.”*
- *“If I'm doing an activity like whitewater rafting, I'm willing to pay \$50, \$100 dollars, because it feels like a day.”*
- *“I would go to New Orleans for a weekend b/c GT is offering a \$50 bus ride and \$50 hotel, but if it's not a big discount, then I'll keep my money and do something with the friends I do have.”*
- *“If you start doing sporting packages in the fall, that's a good trial period. A bus ride to Clemson would be cheap and you'd get people, and you could start finding people to go on longer trips with.”*
- *“I'd pay \$300 to \$500 for a trip to BC” ... flight, hotel, ticket.”*
- *“I just don't know if this would be popular with young alumni population in general. The vacation time I do get, I go with my husband somewhere. I don't know how many people would take a week out to vacation with people they don't know.”*

## C. Communications

The feeling among all four focus groups is that the Alumni Association – and Tech in general – bombards their online mailboxes, which leads them to disregard most GT mail altogether. Young alumni want to be informed about Institute events, but they want their communications to be “smart”: limited in frequency and relevant to their interests.

### 1. Types of Communication

#### Print Magazines

The focus groups liked print magazines as a means of keeping touch with Tech, but unanimously felt the content and graphics of existing alumni publications are aimed at a much older demographic. Everyone agreed the publications needed “younger” content and graphics. (For more details, see Tech Topics, p. 18)

- *“I actually like [getting] the magazine. I can read it when I want to read it”*
- *“All the big pictures are people who have given lots of money, but I'm not interested in that. Maybe in the magazine itself, focus on young alumni or feature one young alumnus instead of people who are 50 years old.”*
- *“The magazines are catered to older alums. I want to stay informed with what's going on, things in my age range.”*

#### Young Alumni E-Newsletter

Participants were also asked if they would like to receive, in addition to *Buzzwords*, an additional young alumni e-newsletter dedicated to events and issues relevant to recent graduates. Reception to this idea was lukewarm, with alumni indicating they did not want to read a second newsletter. The majority preferred to simply make the existing *Buzzwords* content more youth-friendly. A third option was to send recent graduates a “young alumni” version of *Buzzwords* and send the standard version to everyone else.

- *“I'd rather just get the one email instead of a second young alumni one.”*
- *“It depends on how different it is. If it's all major news in both, why bother?”*
- *“Maybe have a young alumni section in the newsletter.”*
- *“I think it would be better if it were integrated into the existing magazines. I think the older generation would benefit seeing what young alumni are doing. I'd prefer not having a separate magazine, just better integrate it. If there were just a greater young alumni focus from the writers or editors, that could help.”*
- *“Maybe young alumni get the young alumni newsletter. Then you hit a certain age bracket and then you get the regular newsletter.”*

#### Mailers

Young alumni believe a postcard or brochure is an excellent way to promote a large-scale event like Homecoming or a reunion. Some participants also recommended sending a mailer that lists all events at Tech over a 3-6 month period.

- *“I like a mailer to put on my fridge with all the events for a semester.”*
- *“If there's an annual event, I like to get something by snail mail. College of Computing has an annual party, and they send a postcard that says we'd really like you to come. We had 75 people come, so it's nice to get that for major events.”*
- *“I think snail mail is a good idea for big events.”*

#### Email

When asked for their feedback on email, most participants said they received so much from Tech they deleted most messages without ever opening it. Young alumni want a system to tailor their news (eg. receive only sports news, opt out of WOW updates) so that the messages they do get are relevant. They

also want emails to amalgamate information so they do not receive four messages about four events. Participants had a strong preference for simple email design: short descriptions with links.

- *“Tailoring your news. I want to customize about green spaces, architecture things. That's it, nothing else.”*
- *“A ‘smart’ opt out system.”*
- *“Coming from a design background, you can tell if it's young or old design. When it comes to email news, I prefer 5 bullet points and nothing else.”*
- *“Just send out a link with a description. That's it.”*

#### Text Messages

The four focus groups unanimously rejected text messages as a medium for communication. Participants felt text messages should be personal messages from friends rather than news updates from Tech.

- *“No to text messages.”*
- *“When you get a text message, you could be doing any number of things. You're not going to put that [event] on your calendar.”*
- *“I just like texts from my friends. No advertisements.”*

#### Website

Several participants stated the Alumni Association website should be used more effectively as an information hub where events and updates from all across campus are collected. All the focus groups liked the idea of a powerful calendar that efficiently displayed this merged data.

- *“I'd like the Alumni Association to use the website more. If you could just post 10 events on our website, then I don't have to subscribe to the emails, I could just check the website.”*
- *“It's great we get the occasional email saying “This is what's going on,” but it would be really great nice if there was one webpage, a master calendar, that says this is what's going on in Architecture, in Music, because everything is partitioned right now. You may or may not hear about a great lecture. Consolidate all the news.”*
- *“I'd like a calendar with events that are color coded by sports or lecture, because to read through all the emails with the links is so time consuming. If I could just get a visual, it would condense everything. Right now the visuals and text of the emails is overload.”*
- *“I like the idea of calendar on email one time a month.”*

#### Web 2.0/Facebook

In order to gain a better understanding of social and professional networking use among young alumni, participants were asked about various Web 2.0 sites. Over three-quarters of participants belonged to Facebook. Less than a quarter belonged to MySpace or LinkedIn. When asked if the Alumni Association should use Facebook as an additional communication channel, most considered it a smart way to reach young alumni if used correctly. Participants felt it was a good way to build word-of-mouth buzz for events, but it should not replace actual event websites or emails. They also cautioned that Facebook could be abandoned as quickly as it was adopted, so Tech should be vigilant to what network alumni actually used. They advised against building a GT-only social site.

- *“This could be a good vehicle. With every new class, they will be more tech-savvy.”*
- *“It's great for young alumni for Homecoming and events.”*
- *“It's okay for Tech to be on Facebook. Other companies are on Facebook.”*
- *“I don't like the idea at all. I've already got too much going on Facebook. I disregard a lot of it if it's not from my friends. It's like what we were saying about text-messaging, it's too much of a toy that's getting too crazy.”*
- *“For a social site, no I wouldn't take the time. For a professional site, I would take the time.”*
- *“Facebook took off in 2004. You won't reach alumni who graduated before then.”*
- *“It's fine if you sign up for it, but don't force anyone to do it. Put it out there and have people sign up for the group. If they want to leave the group, that's fine.”*

- *“Have a Facebook application that shows all the upcoming alumni events, and right there you can say I’m attending, and then it’ll automatically show which of your friends are attending too.”*
- *“What we do for College of Computing is we’ll have a Facebook event. But from there it takes you to a website where you register. We use it as a distribution channel.”*
- *“Just stick with Facebook. Don’t go into trouble of building your own site and getting people to join.”*

## 2. Content

Focus group participants wanted a greater emphasis on campus news, sports, and young alumni. Since they still feel close to students life, young alumni want news similar to what can be found in the *Technique*: Greek Week updates, building openings, and even street closures.

- *“Customize the news ... check boxes so you can select the type of news you want to receive.”*
- *“Buildings being torn down, buildings built up. Big news, like President Clough leaving. Something like the Technique so you feel connected to campus.”*
- *“Updates on campus news. Homecoming. Greek week. Major awards. New buildings. What street is closed.”*
- *“Sports. A team winning the playoffs. Or hockey, the lacrosse team having a good season. That’s the stuff you don’t usually hear about.”*
- *“I would like something by young alumni for young alumni. I wouldn’t mind writing about something I’m interested in. Maybe people can submit stories or editorials.”*
- *“I’d like to see a young alumni feature. Someone who started a new business.”*
- *“How well Tech ranks. For the rest of your life, people want to see how Tech is doing.”*

When asked what kind of news they did not want to see, participants cited obscure research and long articles.

- *“Stuff that’s about a guy in a lab you don’t know. It’s too technical and it’s 3-5 pages long. You lose interest. I’ve got five minutes with the magazine.”*
- *“Sometimes the news I get is nonsense... like what’s going on in some research lab. I mean, seriously.”*
- *“We need pictures. We need shorter articles. I don’t care if you discovered this microorganism. Condense it.”*

## 3. Frequency

All four focus groups agreed that getting one email a month from the Alumni Association was ideal, especially if that message contained a complete list of events for the next few weeks. During busy periods at Tech, like the fall, every two weeks was deemed acceptable. Any greater frequency was considered irritating.

- *“Once a month, send a 1 page newsletter saying these are the events that are going on.”*
- *“In fall lots is happening, so it’s okay to get more mail.”*
- *“Too frequent and it’s just tiresome.”*

## 4. Early Communication

The student focus group strongly suggested the Alumni Association start communicating its services and events while they are in school. They stated early contact would breed familiarity with the Association, help them understand available services, and train them on their future roles as alumni.

- *“We’re not aware of Alumni Association services. Where do we go so we know all this stuff exists?”*

- *“I see three steps to the process. Before graduation, upon graduation, and then after graduation.”*
- *“How about getting a newsletter or email during senior year saying 'Here are the alumni services.'”*
- *“I think it's a good idea to get in touch while we're still students. When you fill you out your degree petition, you can start hearing about alumni events. That way you can grab three friends and go to a Happy Hour. That way it's an easier transition into the club after graduating vs. getting emails and you don't know if anyone else is going.”*
- *“Timing is important. Senior year you're worried about jobs, graduating. I'm not going to some meet and greet event where I'll never see the people again. I'm going to go out with my friends because we're all going to different places next year.”*

## 5. Tech Topics

In order to receive in-depth feedback on alumni publications, focus group participants were asked to review a print copy of the Spring 2008 *Tech Topics* (see Appendix A) and provide their initial impressions. Alumni found the layout/graphics unappealing and thought the content focused too much on older alumni. The consensus was *Tech Topics* needed a major overhaul to freshen its appeal to a younger audience.

- *“It could use a complete overhaul of graphics and layout. I subscribe to a lot of modern architecture magazines, and you look at this and it's from 50 years ago.”*
- *“I like the content, but the way it's presented, it's not appealing.”*
- *“Size is big. You can't throw it in your bag. Make it regular magazine size.”*
- *“I like the Rambling Roll. I go to the 2000's and look for people I know.”*
- *“I like football. We had several guys who were drafted in the NFL draft. Cover that.”*
- *“I want to read what my college is doing.”*
- *“I love when you open it and the first thing you see is this old guy [GT Founder's Council advertisement]. You need a young alumni section.”*
- *“Maybe this sounds lazy, but there's too much text. I want to see more pictures.”*
- *“This Real World section, maybe have a financial topic or real estate topic to educate us.”*

## D. Philanthropy/Service

### 1. Roll Call

#### Low Asking Amount

When asking about financial contributions to Tech, all four focus groups said the Alumni Association should emphasize high participation and small donations from young alumni. Young alumni traditionally perceive donations to Tech as large financial gifts, which they are unable to give. In order to modify this preconception, participants felt Roll Call should explicitly ask for small donations to get alumni accustomed to giving.

- *“You definitely can't ask for much money, at least the first couple of years. You need to make clear we don't expect more than \$20 from you, but if we get \$20 from X number, then we can do programs X, Y, and Z. After 10, 15 years, go for the larger amounts. You need to make sure to ask for small little things just to get you into the habit of it.”*
- *“Educate people. When I hear donation, I think \$200, \$500. But when I hear \$25, I can do that right now. Educate the young alumni on how much you can give. There are certain levels.”*
- *“Advertise a lower entry point. Sometimes when you think about donating you think of the guy who donates a library or a bench. But you look at the Presidential Campaign, they've had a lot of success saying "Donate \$25." They hit often, but psychologically speaking it works. I don't think I've seen that with too many of the Roll Call things.”*

- *“Get people involved with Roll Call as a student. \$5-10 bucks. Once you do it as a student, establish a giving habit, then you can give \$100, \$500 whatever. But if you're already a young alumnus and you're pissed at Tech, you're not going to start giving.”*

### Designation

Three of four focus groups mentioned the lack of Roll Call designation as a reason for not financially contributing to Tech. Non-donors felt it was important to know where their money was going, and they felt the unrestricted nature of the general fund did not provide the transparency they were seeking. Participants suggested capped designations (eg. 75% of gift to general fund, 25% to designated area) and explaining how Roll Call money is spent (at least generically).

- *“The less money you have in the bank, the more you care what it's going to go to. It has to be something you're connected to.”*
- *“If I could help my department, I would be more inclined [to give].”*
- *“I'd give to a specific group on campus. I wouldn't necessarily give to Roll Call because it's unrestricted.”*
- *“There are websites where you can contribute to inner-city teachers, and you can see how much money is going to books, for example. So a bunch of small donors can reach a fundraising goal. So if Tech could do the same thing, a bunch of small donors giving \$5-\$10, that would be interesting because you see where it's going, you can see the progress [online]. It's not a blank check.”*
- *“I understand the need for unrestricted funds ... you need half a million to lure a professor, and you've got half a million. But for someone giving a \$10 gift, give \$5 to your college and \$5 to Roll Call, that's 50% of my money going to my college.”*
- *“Maybe put a cap on designations. Designate only 25% of your gift.”*
- *“I like the percentage designation so I have some influence on where it goes.”*
- *“Maybe you need an annual report. At least generically say where the money is going.”*

### Roll Call Message

Participants offered several ideas for Roll Call messaging. Several liked the free \$25 first-year donation and thought it should be emphasized. Many thought Roll Call should highlight the campus improvements paid for by donations. Others felt the alumni association should organize young alumni matching gifts or class gifts for undergraduates.

- *“Tell them you can give a small amount, tell them how it creates Tech Square, buildings ...”*
- *“When I got out, I wasn't giving money to the Alumni Association. What did they do for me? When I was here [as a student] I saw no benefit. But the more events I go to, if I got a mentor through this program, if I got a job through this program, then I want to support it because it's doing good things.”*
- *“I got a letter saying the Alumni Association donated \$25 in my name. That's really nice. And I saw I don't have to give a big donation, I saw what it meant, they spent \$20 on me. That's really nice. I think you should do that again.”*
- *“What I don't like about Roll Call ads is that it shows a student, and he's studying this and he's dreaming of doing this. But it's never [how] Roll Call is going to all these other things. The focus is so narrow. Maybe older alumni like that, but younger alumni want to see what else is does.”*
- *“Do matching. If young alumni raise X amount, then an older alum will double it.”*
- *“I've seen it where everyone in the same class donates a thing, like a bench. A class gift.”*

### Solicitation

In general, focus group participants did not like receiving phone call solicitations, which annoyed them and created a negative impression of the entire Alumni Association. If calls were necessary, they should be limited. Young alumni responded more favorably to emails, mailers, merchandise catalogs, and sports tie-ins. A few alumni also said the Alumni Association should not ask for donations at graduation.

- *“Send me email once a month instead of a student calling once a week.”*
- *“We’re a young alumni focus group, and I can imagine a call is good if you graduated in 1955. But people here on out, I don’t know anyone who would appreciate a phone call. They’re busy at night. It takes them time. And what are you going to do, give out a credit card number over the phone?”*
- *“I think letters are important. I see emails as cheap marketing. If someone wants my money, they need to send me a letter. I expect paper. That’s the difference between sending an Evite and someone mailing you an invitation.”*
- *“A phone call is fine. Three times a week is not fine.”*
- *“I don’t want to feel like I’ve been beaten into it. I get annoyed, and then I don’t want to go to young alumni events.”*
- *“We never get catalogs with Alumni Association gear. If they sent out a mailer once a year, a lot of people are going to want a mousepad or paraphernalia.”*
- *“That’s something the Arkansas Alumni Association did. Darren McFadden just got drafted, and the next day they emailed out and said ‘Buy his jersey!’”*
- *“At a football game, work with concessions to buy a 100th Anniversary Cup, and it costs .50 cents more, but you’ve got 50,000 people buying Cokes. You pitch in a few extra quarters and you’re getting something out of it.”*
- *“Some central login where you can see where you’ve donated your money historically. AT. Roll Call.”*
- *At graduation, there was a Roll Call talk. People couldn’t believe they were talking about this. I just got out, why ask for money?”*

#### Brochure

The donor focus group was asked for their feedback on 61<sup>st</sup> Roll Call brochures as well as brochures produced by other colleges. Participants described the Roll Call brochures as conservative and text-heavy. They liked certain elements of the MIT and Binghamton brochures, citing the youthful feel, bold use of color, and explanatory charts. In their opinion, Roll Call mailers could take three forms: 1) An eye-catching brochure, 2) A personalized letter with giving history on it, or 3) a postcard reminding them to donate online.

#### Georgia Tech Brochure (see Appendix B)

- *“It’s normal, conservative GT stuff.”*
- *“GT mail looks credit card solicitations. I’m going to throw that away.”*
- *“Way too much information.”*
- *“Text-heavy, too many pictures in the background. It’s a busy brochure.”*
- *“It’s the difference between Tech Tower vs. Buzz. It’s all prestigious vs. young and hip.”*
- *“Put Buzz on it, Buzz sells.”*
- *“Use gold and white. If I see those colors, I know it’s GT.”*
- *“Send a history of donations. It’s already customized with the name, why not show ten years of giving history?”*
- *“Show history, show how much I’m donating. You can see I donated this in the past, I can give more this year.”*
- *“For young alumni, how about a postcard? ‘Please donate. Www.gtalumni.com.’ Leave it at that.”*

#### Binghamton University Brochure (see Appendix C)

- *“It has a younger vibe.”*
- *“It’s simple and not text heavy.”*

#### MIT Brochure (see Appendix D)

- *“I like the orange. We should do neon yellow.”*
- *“You notice it. It’s not a plain white letter.”*
- *“I like the graph showing where your funds went to. It’s appealing to the eye.”*

Northwestern Brochure (see Appendix E)

- *“I like the message, you don't have to give too much.”*
- *“I like the built in mailer.”*

Oglethorpe University Letter (see Appendix F)

- *“I don't like the letter form”*
- *“I don't like the girl's picture.”*

## **2. Early Education on Philanthropy**

Donors, non-donors, and seniors all agreed the Alumni Association should start educating students about Roll Call while they are on campus.

- *“A lot of people say ‘Roll Call? I've never heard of this. I don't want to do anything about this on the phone.’ If they heard about it before graduation, they wouldn't be so hostile.”*
- *“People might be interested to know that the money they give is going into the networking program that helps them.”*
- *“Before graduation, have a pledge donation and explain it.”*
- *“My husband went to Emory, and months before graduating they made everyone pledge to give. Get GT seniors to pledge, give one Starbucks coffee, you know ...”*
- *“As an undergrad you need to know what all the different [funds] are before you graduate.”*
- *“Some pamphlet that says AT fund, your money goes to this and this and this. Roll Call, your money goes to this and this and this.”*

## **3. Community Service**

Focus group participants thought service to Tech was a good way to “give back” to Tech in a non-financial way. Most wanted the service to center around the Tech campus and to be pre-planned so they could quickly drop in at a scheduled time.

- *“I'd like to do Tech beautification day.”*
- *“Philanthropy centered around GT is important to me. I can do community service with any other group. From the Alumni Association I expect something around campus or the neighborhood around campus. Young alumni don't have money to give, but I could give a couple hours to help Tech.”*
- *“Keep it quick, pre-planned.”*
- *“I need to find something that fits into my time schedule and is convenient so that I don't have to plan it all myself.”*
- *“Flexibility on when it is and flexibility on what you do. I don't want to pick up garbage on the highway, but I'll build a house or paint a mural in a school.”*
- *“Shifts are important. I may not want to be up at 8AM. But 11AM, I'm there.”*
- *“Everyone likes the idea of community service but not everyone actually does it.”*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The student to alumnus transition: Making inroads into campus life is an important aspect of the Alumni Association's strategic plan; at the same time, the Association cannot be all things to all students. Based on focus group feedback, the Association's core function on campus should be to aid students' transition into the real world as informed alumni. Three concepts that fit into this role are mentorships, Roll Call education, and life-skills seminars. Development and marketing of these programs should therefore be given very high priority.
2. Investment in online technologies: The use of the internet to deliver Alumni Association services will grow in the coming years. The Alumni Association must make short-term and long-term investments to meet the needs of alumni online expectations. In the near term, the Association can build a new website that serves as an information hub, increase employers and users on JacknetJobs, build automated attendance lists for events, and show giving histories to logged-in members. For the long term, the Association should add to its website a searchable alumni database to facilitate mentorships/networking and a communications dashboard to personalize the information received.
3. Career Services:
  - a. Mentorships: (*High Priority*). The ideal system would allow participants to search an alumni database for mentors based on criteria such as industry, location, or major; the ensuing mentorships could exist online or offline according to individual preferences. The Association will obviously need to develop guidelines and a robust database technology to support this program, but overall enthusiasm for this service is very high.
  - b. Online Career Networking: (*High Priority*). The same system that supports mentorships could also facilitate online career networking among Tech alumni. LinkedIn represents a fine stopgap solution, though a searchable database of all alumni is ultimately more useful.
  - c. Seminars & Mixers: (*High Priority*). Merging career seminars with networking mixers is recommended for students and young alumni, though further research is needed to determine the actual list of session topics. Low event price and strong organization are integral to this program's success.
  - d. Online Career Forums: (*Low Priority*). The viability of this idea requires further research. Though interest exists, monitoring forums and building an active membership remain two large obstacles. Previous young alumni research indicated a message board did not fit the "official" feel of gtalumni.org.
4. Social Programming:
  - a. Young Alumni Reunions: (*High Priority*). Reunions should be held annually in either spring or fall for the 5 previous graduating classes. Real-time attendance lists, a variety of athletic and social events, a sports centerpiece, reasonable à la carte prices, and the aid of campus organizations will drive overall attendance.
  - b. Young Alumni Mixers: (*High Priority*). Quarterly mixers should be held on Friday nights in parts of town where young alumni already frequent. They should be inexpensive, open to non-Tech friends, and have real-time attendance lists. In the Atlanta Metro area, the Alumni Association may want to assist or take ownership of such mixers in order to ensure a high level of organization.

- c. Life-Skills Seminars: (*High Priority*). Seminars should be open to both students and young alumni. Financial topics and fun skill-building sessions appear popular; they must be informative, informal, and cheap.
- d. Travel/Sports Packages: (*Medium Priority*). In order to work, travel tours must be bargain-priced, short, and catered to young alumni interests like Mardi Gras weekends or snowboarding trips. Sports packages to nearby games at Georgia and Clemson may prove popular with members of Swarm or Greek houses if marketed correctly.
- e. Intramural Sports: (*Medium Priority*). Intramural teams should focus on casual sports like kickball or softball. Participants would ideally play other young alumni or club teams. This could be organized via alumni clubs with Association management.
- f. Block Seating at Games: (*Low Priority*). This suggestion resides beyond the Alumni Association's jurisdiction, though it could be suggested to Athletics. Block seating could be a strong selling point for sports package away games.
- g. Young Alumni Tailgates: (*Low Priority*). Enthusiasm for tailgates and post-game parties was relatively weak compared to other ideas. A young alumni tailgate must offer something new or different to attract a large following.

5. Communications:

- a. Website as information hub: (*High priority*). The Alumni Association website should collect event information from across campus and display them in a smart, graphical calendar. The upcoming website redesign should aid in this endeavor.
- b. Send fewer emails in a smarter fashion: (*High priority*). The Alumni Association hurts itself by sending out mass emails because it trains young alumni to ignore its news. The Association must set limits on mass communications, with departments abiding to a pre-planned calendar. Emails should be consolidated, with minimal reminders. For events, a notice for planning followed by one reminder right before the event should prove effective. Ideally an alumnus would hear from the Association 1-2 times per month, excluding publications.
- c. Develop customizable communications: (*High Priority*). The Association should develop or license a system whereby alumni can set preferences and choose to receive/opt out of specific email types.
- d. Update Tech Topics and Buzzwords: (*High Priority*). As the two publications that reach the most young alumni, *Tech Topics* and *Buzzwords* must update their content and design. Both publications should shift away from articles on older alumni and research to emphasize campus news, sports, and an events calendar. In accordance with previous readership feedback, *Tech Topics* should embrace cleaner, modern graphic design; *Buzzwords* should adopt a simple headline and link format.
- e. Web 2.0 networking sites: (*High Priority*). Developing a Web 2.0 presence such as Facebook or LinkedIn is recommended. Sending text messages are not advised at this time.

6. Philanthropy/Service:

- a. Early Education: (*High Priority*) The Alumni Association should develop an overarching print, email, and campus campaign that reaches students before, during, and after graduation. Materials should explain the different Tech funds and how Roll Call affects the campus. Consider organizing class gifts or pledges before senior year.

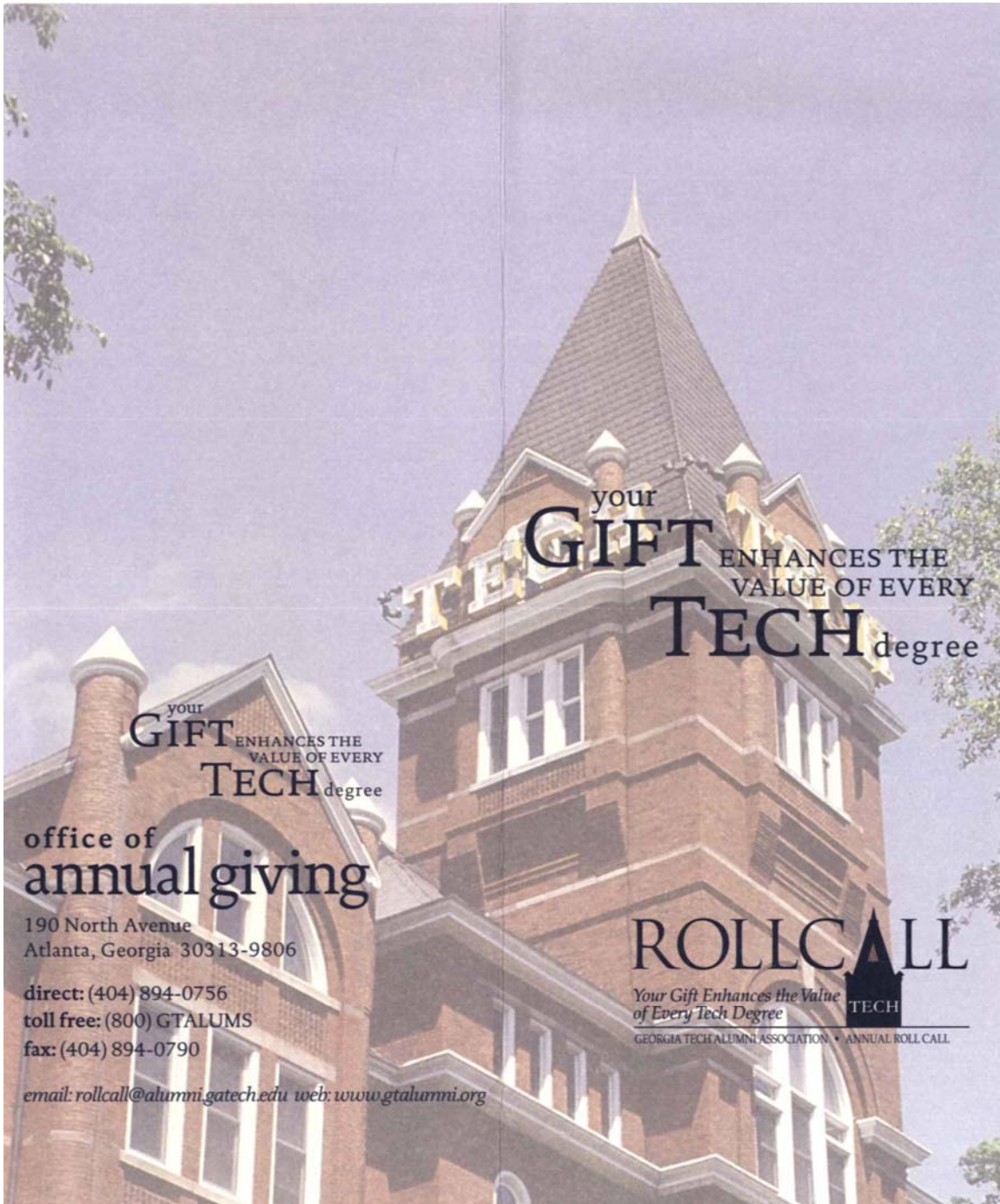
- b. Roll Call: (*High Priority*). Roll Call should emphasize low donation, high participation giving among students and recent graduates. Explore partial designations as a means to accommodate the need for unrestricted funds and alumni desires. Emphasize electronic marketing and mailers over phone calls for young alumni. Brochures to recent graduates should use bold colors, less text, and clearly explain the myriad use of Roll Call funds.
- c. Service: (*High Priority*). In addition to mentorships, the Association should develop other programs that allow alumni to “give back” to Tech. A popular idea was community service around campus.

## Appendices

Appendix A (*Tech Topics* Spring 2008)



**Appendix B (Georgia Tech Roll Call Brochure)**

The image is a brochure for the Georgia Tech Roll Call. It features a background photograph of a brick building with a prominent tower and a pointed roof. The text is overlaid on the image. At the top, it says "your GIFT ENHANCES THE VALUE OF EVERY TECH degree". Below this, on the left, is the "office of annual giving" with contact information: "190 North Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30313-9806", "direct: (404) 894-0756", "toll free: (800) GTALUMS", "fax: (404) 894-0790", and "email: rollcall@alumni.gatech.edu web: www.gtalumni.org". On the right, the "ROLL CALL" logo is displayed, with "Your Gift Enhances the Value of Every Tech Degree" and "GEORGIA TECH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION • ANNUAL ROLL CALL" below it.

your  
**GIFT** ENHANCES THE  
VALUE OF EVERY  
**TECH** degree

your  
**GIFT** ENHANCES THE  
VALUE OF EVERY  
**TECH** degree

office of  
**annual giving**

190 North Avenue  
Atlanta, Georgia 30313-9806

direct: (404) 894-0756  
toll free: (800) GTALUMS  
fax: (404) 894-0790

*email: rollcall@alumni.gatech.edu web: www.gtalumni.org*

**ROLL CALL**

*Your Gift Enhances the Value  
of Every Tech Degree*

TECH

GEORGIA TECH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION • ANNUAL ROLL CALL

**Appendix C (Binghamton brochure)**



# Appendix D (MIT brochure)



scholarship recipient

theater group

student research

they all received funding from alumni

**PARTICIPATE FOR A LIFETIME** – Your donation to the Institute is a statement, a declaration that you care about the future of MIT. No matter its size, your gift makes you a shareholder in the MIT community of alumni, students and faculty that is changing our world.

**DESIGNATE YOUR GIFT** – To ensure your gift makes a difference, you can designate it for whatever program or student activity on campus you support, from the crew team to concert band, from your class project to the UROP program.

**MAKE A DIFFERENCE** – As a recent graduate, just starting out, you may wonder if small gifts matter. Big gifts may get the occasional headline, but the thousands of annual smaller gifts young alumni make personally touch the lives of MIT students every day, year after year.

## MESSAGE FROM THE YAC COMMITTEE

Last year we told you what your \$100 donation to MIT could do, and the response to the opening salvo of our Young Alumni Campaign (YAC) was impressive. From LSC films to pizza breaks for students, and from Safe Rides to athletic equipment — *your donations make a difference in the lives of current students. Just take a look at how your past contributions stacked up in the chart below. Thank you!*

Read on to learn about three specific projects that impact the MIT student experience today, helping to build a stronger MIT community. A new generation of undergraduates is counting on us to make an investment every year in the future. Please join us and **Participate. Designate** your gift and **Make a Difference** as part of the Young Alumni Campaign. **Every individual contribution adds up to collectively make a big difference!**

— Sang Y. Han '93 and Annalisa L. Weigel '94  
co-chairs, young alumni campaign committee

### Where Young Alumni Designated their 2,449 gifts

20%	Athletics
17%	Class Projects
17%	Unrestricted
12%	Student Aid
12%	UROP
8%	Student Life & Activities
6%	Departments & Undergraduate Education
5%	Housing
2%	Other

## Appendix E (Northwestern brochure)



**Every gift counts.**  
*Even a \$10 gift can make a big difference. When you give through the Annual Fund, your gift is combined with those of more than 35,000 alumni and friends to meet the most pressing needs on campus. Last year these gifts totaled more than \$15 million and were used to benefit students and faculty.*

*Northwestern Annual Fund*  
**GIVE EVERY YEAR. MAKE A DIFFERENCE EVERY DAY.**

Northwestern University  
Office of Annual Giving  
2020 Ridge Avenue  
Evanston, IL 60208-4312



**Does a \$10 gift to the Northwestern Annual Fund really count?**

## Appendix F (Oglethorpe brochure)



OGLETHORPE  
UNIVERSITY

April 10, 2006

Dear Dianne,



*Courtney Roberts is a senior communications major from Loganville, GA. She is the president of the senior class, chair of the '06 for OU campaign, and member of the varsity soccer team and Chi Omega.*

As a senior, I am midway through my final semester here at Oglethorpe. It is hard to believe this time has finally come! Between meetings with my sorority sisters, the senior class gift committee and OSA, I have found myself reminiscing about the journey I've taken and the experiences I've had over the past four years. Soon, my classmates and I will leave this campus and move into the real world. It's exciting, if not a bit scary!

My Oglethorpe experience wouldn't have been the same without annual contributions from alumni, parents and other friends of the university. I am so appreciative of this generosity. As you know, gifts to the Oglethorpe Fund help support student programs, financial aid and scholarships, the upkeep of this beautiful campus, faculty and staff salaries and much more. *Every gift to the Oglethorpe Fund benefits a student like me.*

This year, as chair of the '06 for OU campaign, I have learned so much about the importance of giving back to my alma mater. This unique opportunity really allowed me to understand just what the Oglethorpe Fund is all about and I'm very grateful for that. Even though I am graduating in May, my time at Oglethorpe is not really ending. I look forward to helping out in any way I can-as a class agent, an alumni volunteer and a donor.

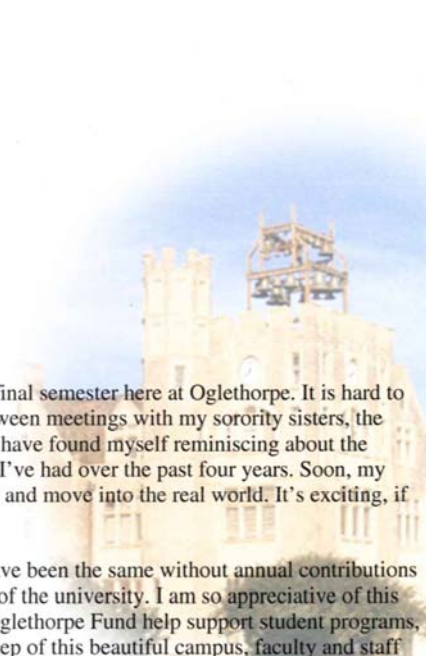
Please join me in giving back to the Oglethorpe Fund. Like I said before, each gift matters! I have already made my pledge to the '06 for OU campaign, which is part of the Oglethorpe Fund. The senior class gift is an excellent tradition, and it really helps prepare students to be volunteers and donors once they leave the gates of Oglethorpe's campus.

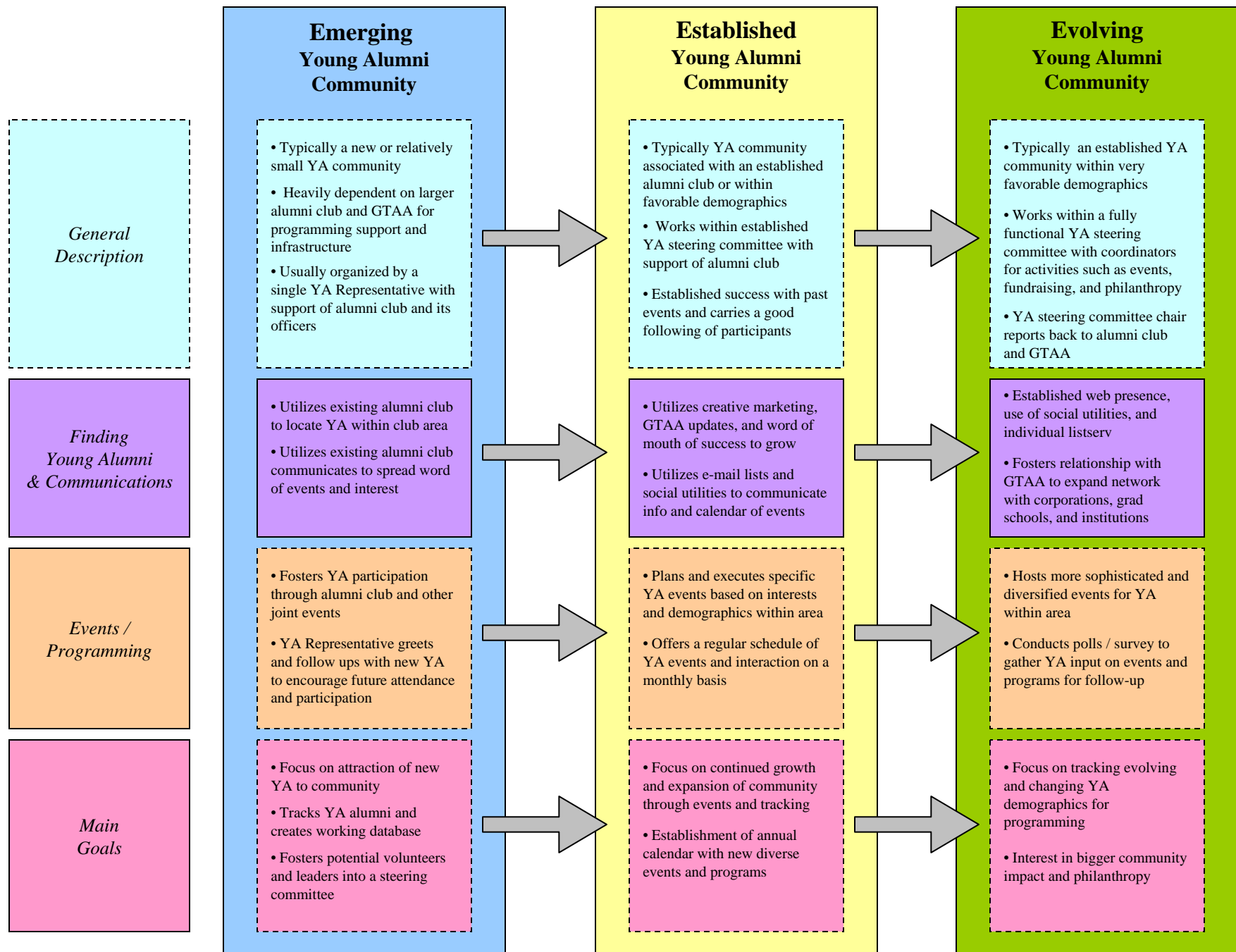
Your participation is important to me and all of my classmates. Thanks in advance for considering a gift to Oglethorpe!

Sincerely,

*Courtney Roberts*

Courtney Roberts '06  
Senior Class President  
Chair, '06 for OU Campaign





**Appendix E: Typical Life Stages of a Young Alumni Community**

# GT Young Alumni Council Handbook

## A-Z Guide of Helpful Event Ideas

[A](#) • [B](#) • [C](#) • [D](#) • [E](#) • [F](#) • [G](#) • [H](#) • [I](#) • [J](#) • [K](#) • [L](#) • [M](#) • [N](#) • [O](#) • [P](#) • [Q](#) • [R](#) • [S](#) • [T](#) • [U](#) • [V](#) • [W](#) • [X](#) • [Y](#) • [Z](#)

- 80's Band Night
- 70's Roller Derby-Rama
- 100 Red Balloon Party

### A

- Academic /Athletic Speakers
- ACC Joint Events
- Arbor Day "Plant a Tree" Event
- Art Gallery Reception

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### B

- Bake Sale
- Bike Rides
- Boating Trips
- Brewery Tours

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### C

- Canoe Trips
- Career Networking Events
- Casino Night
- Charity Walks
- Cornhole Tournament

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### D

- Dog Play Dates
- Designated Driver Volunteer Party

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### E

- Existing Alumni Club or Affinity Group Events
- Exercise Groups (speed walking, mountain climbing, jogging buddies, etc.)

## F

- Financial Planning Seminars
- First Friday Event

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## G

- Georgia Tech Game Watching Event
- Ghost Tours

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## H

- Happy Hours
- Holiday Party

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## I

- Intramurals / Sports Leagues

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## J

- James Bond Night
- Jogging Groups / Marathon Training

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## K

- Kickball Teams / Tournament

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## L

- Lake Events and Boating Trips

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## M

- Monday Night Football
- Mountain Climbing
- Museum Visit

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## N

- New (Recent) Young Alumni Events

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## O

- Olympics Game Watching Parties

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## P

- Picnics

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## Q

- Quarterly All-ACC Events

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## R

- Rafting / Tubing Excursions
- Rock Climbing Gym

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## S

- Senior Home Prom
- Silent Auction
- Singles Night
- Star Watching
- Student Send-off

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## T

- TEAM Buzz Event
- Third Thursday Events
- Trivia Night

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## U

- Ultimate Frisbee Team / Charity Tournament

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## V

- Volunteer Parties

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## W

- Wine Tasting
- Welcome to the GTAA Events
- Whirly Ball

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## X

- Xylophone (Because X stands for Xylophone)

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## Y

- Young Alumni ONLY Events

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## Z

- Zoo Trips for Young Alumni Families

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