Cedar Crest College: Young Alumnae/i Council Expansion

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Abstract

The proposal outlines creating a new Young Alumnae/i Council to enhance Cedar Crest College's connection with its recent graduates. This initiative involves hiring a student worker in the Alumnae/i Affairs Office to support the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator. The primary goal is to increase engagement among younger alumnae/i, particularly those who graduated between 2013 and 2023, fostering stronger ties with the college and potentially boosting philanthropic support for current and future students. The program's effectiveness will be evaluated through a Likert scale survey and an overall alumnae/i engagement score.

Keywords: young alumnae/i, Young Alumnae/i Council, Alumnae/i Affairs, engagement, participation, philanthropy

Organization Introduction and Overview

Since 1867, Cedar Crest College, a private institution focused on empowering women through higher education, has provided opportunities for women to excel academically. The college is committed to nurturing the next generation of female leaders (College Tuition Compare, 2023). Cedar Crest had a student body of 1,324 undergraduates for the 2022-2023 academic year (College Tuition Compare, 2023). Upon graduation, these students join the alumnae/i community, which includes over 13,000 individuals (Cedar Crest College, 2024). Alumnae/i is an inclusive term for all graduates, regardless of gender. The Alumnae/i Affairs Office at Cedar Crest College aims to maintain strong connections with recent graduates to support them as they transition into the alumnae/i community.

Being Cedar Crest alumnae/i is a distinction the college's students carry with them proudly after graduation. However, there may be greater difficulty in engaging younger alumnae/i due to limited giving capacity, early career and financial priorities, and unique communication preferences. The College's Institutional Advancement (IA) Office is responsible for fundraising activities, donor relations, and campaign management (Manashi, 2023). The IA office space is home to the Alumnae/i Affairs Department, composed of the Director of Alumnae/i Affairs and the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator. To engage newer graduates, a Young Alumnae/i Council will be established, providing them a platform for discussions tailored to young alumnae/i. Introducing this council with a dedicated student worker would strengthen Cedar Crest College's connection with its alumnae/i network.

Operations Expansion Overview

Introducing a Young Alumnae/i Council would benefit from a student worker in the Alumnae/i Affairs Office. By having Cedar Crest students as student workers, there is a higher

likelihood of them staying connected to the college by being directly involved in Alumnae/i Affairs. They would have an easier time building connections with alumnae/i as current students. This paid work-study role requires the student to serve as the Assistant to the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator by engaging younger alumnae/i and encouraging them to participate in the council. The student would be tasked with researching this group of alumnae/i and identifying candidates for council positions. They would have a designated workspace within the IA and Alumnae/i Affairs Offices. This initiative aims to rekindle relationships with alumnae/i after graduation. The goal is to fill all council positions within the first year and engage more young alumnae/i with the college. By nurturing these ties, Cedar Crest College emphasizes the value it places on alumnae/i relationships, fostering a lasting impact for generations to come.

Startup Requirements Overview

Within the IA and Alumnae/i Affairs office space, there is a spare room to use as an area for the Young Alumnae/i Council's student worker. The student worker would need a new computer, desk chair, and office supplies for this paid position. No licensing is required. The worker must be able to work full fall and spring semesters in the department, possess efficient writing and communication skills, and preferably major in business or communication studies. Advertising costs for the Young Alumnae/i Council would be minimal, focusing on personalized recruitment conversations led by the student worker and the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator to gauge interest. The alumnae/i website will feature a new program section added by the Communications Coordinator. Social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, will be utilized, along with digital ads on Facebook and Instagram for outreach to engage young alumnae/i interest.

Operations Plan

Cedar Crest College plans to establish a new Young Alumnae/i Council and recruit a student assistant to support this initiative. According to research, “90% of alumni professionals admit they do ‘a poor job’ or ‘need to do more’ to attract and engage their young alumni” (Toyn, 2020). Thus, highlighting the importance of creating this council. The student worker will collaborate with the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator to develop the program and ensure its success. They will reach out to 2013-2023 graduates, organizing elections for council positions, and fostering alumnae/i involvement. The student worker will be selected by the coordinator.

The Alumnae/i Affairs and IA Offices are located on the second level of Blaney Hall on Cedar Crest’s campus. There are 12 full-time staff members and two student workers in total. Most full-time employees have their own offices. There is extra office space that can be converted into a smaller office for the new Assistant to the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator. The total office space is about 1,450 square feet, with each office averaging around 100 square feet. The Vice President for Institutional Advancement's office is approximately 200 square feet. The offices of the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator and student workers are towards the back for privacy and collaboration. The new student worker's area is about 60 square feet.

Due to the office’s limited capacity, the Young Alumnae/i Council will conduct its meetings using the conference facilities in the Tompkins College Center on campus. There are four spacious conference rooms available for use. A system called Astra, already in place at Cedar Crest, will indicate which rooms are free based on the date and time, but one can be reserved in advance. This arrangement will be especially beneficial for local alumnae/i who can attend in person. Alternatively, the group can convene virtually via Zoom or Teams using the technology available in the conference rooms, creating hybrid meetings. These meetings are scheduled for the first week of each month and will last for approximately an hour.

During the past decade, there have been approximately 2,760 young alumnae/i graduates from the classes of 2013-2023, according to data from our Alumnae/i Affairs Office. The positions the student worker will identify include the president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. They will perform the outreach on behalf of the Alumnae/i Affairs Department. Further, one class representative for each class within the last decade will need to be appointed, and they will identify potential prospects. The Council's board will consist of 15 people. As a Young Alumnae/i Council, it will be dedicated to forming activities focusing on alumnae/i engagement that will go beyond asking for donations. As not all young alums can give monetary contributions, volunteering and other ways of giving back will be identified once the initial board foundation of the Young Alumnae/i Council is created.

The student worker is limited to a maximum of 20 hours per week at a rate of $10 per hour. The Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator will adjust the student's schedule to accommodate their availability. The schedule provided is subject to change once the program is underway. The tentative 20-hour weekly schedule includes four-hour shifts, five days a week from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Each day, the student should research a minimum of three alumnae/i to contact regarding the council. Approval from the coordinator is required before outreach begins. For further details on the student worker's potential schedule, it is outlined here:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
8:30 AM	Meet with Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator to plan tasks for the week	Check in with the coordinator on their progress and	Check in with the coordinator on their progress and receive additional tasks	Check in with the coordinator on their progress and	Check in with the coordinator on their progress and

		receive additional tasks		receive additional tasks	receive additional tasks
9:30 AM	Perform research on prospective alumnae/i for council	Perform research on prospective alumnae/i for council	Perform research on prospective alumnae/i for council	Perform research on prospective alumnae/i for council	Perform research on prospective alumnae/i for council
10:30 AM	Identify 3 well-suited individuals for one class	Identify 3 well-suited individuals for one class	Identify 3 well-suited individuals for one class	Identify 3 well-suited individuals for one class	Identify 3 well-suited individuals for one class
11:30 AM	Prepare to contact alums through either email or by phone	Prepare to contact alums through either email or by phone	Prepare to contact alums through either email or by phone	Prepare to contact alums through either email or by phone	Prepare to contact alums through either email or by phone
12:30 PM	Reach out to prospective alums	Reach out to prospective alums	Reach out to prospective alums	Reach out to prospective alums	Reach out to prospective alums
1:30 PM	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF
2:30 PM	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF

3:30 PM	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF
4:30 PM	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF	OFF

Certainly, some of these duties may shift once the council board is established. These responsibilities focus on the early stages of planning to find candidates to then hold an election for the Young Alumnae/i Council's board.

Personnel Plans and Policies

Hiring Policies

Cedar Crest College is dedicated to being a diverse and inclusive workplace. Having diverse employees is crucial to its success, as it educates the next generation of leaders on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Within Cedar Crest's IA and Alumnae/i Affairs Offices, we aim to recruit and hire qualified student workers from a diverse candidate pool.

When hiring within the IA Department, we list student worker postings on third-party websites, including the Handshake job board through Cedar Crest's Career Development Office. By using this website, we can attract a diverse group of Cedar Crest students. Recruiting students on Handshake will be beneficial, as we want to hire any student interested in alumnae/i affairs and looking to be involved with the Cedar Crest alumnae/i community once they become an alumna. Within Cedar Crest's Career Development Office, Cedar Crest students are encouraged to create an account on Handshake to find on-campus jobs or internships, making it easy to apply.

Employee Training Policies

At Cedar Crest, we prioritize the well-being and success of our employees, including student workers. New hires go through an orientation program covering company culture and OSHA regulations. Student workers do not receive college benefits, which are for full-time faculty and staff. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion is strong, with comprehensive training on sexual, racial, and disability diversity. Face-to-face sessions promote engagement and discussion, creating a respectful, bias-free work environment. Employees in the Alumnae/i Affairs and IA Departments undergo a separate orientation on job expectations, requirements, culture, and hierarchy.

Performance Expectations

The role of a part-time paid student worker requires a commitment of at least 20 hours per week. Working alongside the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator, the student worker will collaborate to define their duties and establish a work schedule. As student workers are concurrently students, adaptability is often required. Initially, the student worker will spend 15 hours per week researching and pinpointing potential candidates for the Young Alumnae/i Council. The remaining 5 hours will be dedicated to assisting the coordinator in planning and executing programs. The student worker is accountable for logging their hours on ADP by clocking in and out of the system and will be compensated at $10 per hour. Time logs will be verified by the coordinator, who serves as their supervisor. Following approval, the Finance Office will process their payments accordingly. After the spring term, the student worker will receive an evaluation from the Alumnae/i Engagement Coordinator.

Public Health Issues with Virus Outbreak

The global shift to online learning and remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic will advance the Young Alumnae/i Council program. Offering virtual work-study positions provides

students with enhanced comfort and flexibility. By adapting to online services, we can better support students in balancing their challenging schedules, from classes to extracurricular activities. This hybrid approach caters to individual student preferences, allowing them to work virtually and in person. In case of future health crises, online work-study roles can be seamlessly accommodated to prioritize student safety. Microsoft Teams provided Cedar Crest College with online support during the pandemic and continues to be an integral component of student, staff, and faculty communication methods.

Conflict and Incident Management Policies

At Cedar Crest, student workers are required to log any time off in the ADP system for approval by the coordinator. No payment is provided for sick days, vacations, or any other absences. Any student worker disputes will be escalated to Human Resources and the Career Development Office. The Career Development Office serves as the liaison between student workers and various departments on campus. In cases of severe conflicts, termination discussions may arise. Discrimination or bias incidents are considered grounds for immediate dismissal.

Emerging Technology Potential Impact

With today's current technology, it will greatly improve the communication capabilities of the Young Alumnae/i Council. This advancement will facilitate hybrid meetings for alumnae/i residing farther away who wish to participate in council activities. The college's conference areas are equipped with flat-screen TVs and projectors that can be linked to laptops, enabling remote participants to be displayed on a larger screen. This flexibility will benefit student workers, allowing them to work either in-person or online.

Insightful investigation can be conducted on Young Alumnae/i Council members using cutting-edge technology. This can involve platforms like Jenzabar, a specialized higher-education

database that maintains updated background information on alumnae/i (Riaz, 2023). By leveraging data analytics provided by Jenzabar, potential candidates for the Young Alumnae/i Council can be chosen and help to make informed, data-driven decisions. Moreover, Jenzabar's capabilities extend to evaluating student or alumnae/i engagement, offering crucial insights for determining an overall engagement score for each alum.

Further, once the Young Alumnae/i Council is established, they can use artificial intelligence (AI). Other promotions, such as leveraging social media platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, offer various opportunities. These options include running digital ads or creating dedicated Facebook and LinkedIn groups, which are cost-effective ways to build the foundation of the council's outreach and attract new members. Additionally, since the council targets alumnae/i from the past decade, digital strategies will better resonate with individuals from these generations. They could also explore mass email marketing through the Cedar Crest IA Office. AI technology can assist in crafting compelling and clear communication for these promotions, enhancing the program's marketing efforts. For instance, Chat GPT is an AI marketing tool that can assist with copywriting and create language geared toward the council.

Operational Benchmarking Excellence – Standards and Metrics

To evaluate the overall quality of the Young Alumnae/i Council and the level of involvement it promotes among young alumnae/i, a survey will be administered using a Likert scale. This survey will be distributed annually at the end of the school year. The Likert scale, which assumes a linear progression of attitudes from strongly agree to strongly disagree, will provide a numerical scale for each response, facilitating data collection and analysis. The survey will cover various aspects of the program, including the effectiveness of the Young Alumnae/i Council in engaging young alumnae/i, the performance of council members, and the level of

involvement of the Alumnae/i Affairs Office. This feedback will enable the Alumnae/i Affairs Office to identify areas for improvement, whether they involve major changes such as staff replacements or minor adjustments like focusing on specific council activities.

In addition to the survey, alumnae/i engagement will be assessed using key performance indicators such as participation rate, giving rate, engagement score, net promoter score, and social media metrics. The participation rate will consider alumnae/i attendance at meetings and events, while the giving rate will evaluate donations to the college in terms of frequency and amount. The net promoter score will indicate how likely alumnae/i are to recommend the Young Alumnae/i Council to others, reflecting their overall satisfaction with the program. Social media metrics, derived from interactions on social platforms, will gauge alumnae/i's engagement with the council's online presence. These metrics, each weighted at 20 points, will contribute to an alumnae/i engagement score out of 100 points, providing a comprehensive assessment of the council's impact and effectiveness.

Future Project Expansion

Young Alumnae/i Events

With the formation of the Young Alumnae./i Council, it will launch new events to inspire young alumnae/i engagement. The new student worker in the IA Office will aid the Alumnae/i Affairs and IA Departments by initiating two young alumnae/i events (Coherendz India Private Limited, 2024). One of them is a Graduates of the Last Decade (GOLD) Champagne Toast to be held before graduation weekend. This GOLD Champagne Toast will welcome back alums who have graduated within the past decade while celebrating and welcoming the newest set of Cedar Crest graduates into the alumnae/i community. This event will be tracked through the registration form of those who sign up, which includes the graduating class, alums with the last ten years,

and Young Alumnae/i Council members. This listing will also be present at the event to check guests off at registration and see who attends. This will all count toward the young alumnae/i participation score. At this event, the graduating class will be gifted with their own Cedar Crest GOLD car decals and a champagne glass to keep.

Another new event to develop would be to welcome young alumnae/i back during Homecoming Weekend in the fall. This would take collaboration across different Cedar Crest departments, extending outside of the Alumnae/i Affairs and IA Offices, including Student Engagement, Admissions, Athletics, and Facilities. The young alumnae/i event scavenger hunt would take place on the Friday night of Homecoming to encourage them to stay all weekend for other alumnae/i events. It would include iconic campus destinations and make the alums take photos of them at the location. They would then have to come to the alumnae/i tailgate the next day during the athletics games to receive prizes for participating. The new student worker could help to choose the scavenger hunt locations that would be most familiar to these young alumnae/i and select prizes that would be appealing to them. Again, the tracking would be similar to the GOLD event, monitoring who signs up and also who attends. This information will be useful in keeping up-to-date records on the alumnae/i and creating new profiles for the young alumnae/i with their latest contact information. Establishing events for the Young Alumnae/i Council after its foundation will increase participation among this demographic and find candidates willing to represent their class in the council if they are engaged with the Alumnae/i Affairs Office (Coherendz India Private Limited, 2024).

Career Mentoring

Having career mentoring services within the Young Alumnae'i Council for recent graduates opens up opportunities for them and adds value to being a part of the council.

Partnering with the Career Services Office to offer workshops, job prospects, mentorships, social networking events, and support to address the concerns and needs of young alums. This provides chances for them to seek career advice and job support when they are first starting their careers or during times of uncertainty. Inviting alums to such events encourages network and community building, and engaged alumnae/i mentors within their desired industry can help to provide further guidance and reach out to younger alumnae/i (Gravyty, 2024). This can lead to the creation of affinity groups by major and industry to best meet the needs of Cedar Crest's alumnae/i. Participation in these events will count toward the alum's engagement score. For instance, a professional mix and mingle could be held within particular academic departments. Outreach could be performed not just from the alumnae/i affairs and Young Alumnae/i Council but from faculty within these departments who are well-connected with their past students.

Conclusion

Overall, the development of the Young Alumnae/i Council aims to recruit more active young alumnae/i, increasing participation and engagement. Focusing on this demographic will cultivate a new generation of young alumnae/i donors, strengthening the bond with their alma mater. The addition of a new student worker will be crucial for the Alumnae/i Affairs Office's efforts. Ultimately, while the program requires time to come to fruition, its ambitions will reinforce Cedar Crest's young alumnae/i community and create an everlasting impact on their connection to the college.

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