



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

2023-2024

NEAT Grant Program - Final Report



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Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to help the K-State Alumni Association identify ways to elevate engagement among our multicultural and diverse alumni, with a focus to increase participation with not just racially diverse individuals, but also with the LGBTQ+, International, and First-Generation communities, as well as affinity groups.

For 30+ years, the K-State Alumni Association has held a dedicated position for diverse alumni engagement and programming, especially through the creation of the Assistant Director of Alumni and Diversity Programs position. The main responsibility of the position is to create multicultural and international programming and inspire engagement among students and alumni. Through this grant, the K-State Alumni Association sought to hire a Student Worker who is passionate about engagement in advancement with a focus on diverse communities. This student would be working with the Assistant Director of Alumni and Diversity Programs to search for ways to better include and engage our alumni in our Advisory Council and in our current and prospective events.

Multicultural Alumni Council – Rebrand

In March of 1992, the K-State Alumni Association started the Multicultural Constituent Program, to create and support a variety of programs and activities for over 5,000, now 11,000, multicultural alumni and students of color. The program's main goal was to build and maintain a strong relationship between the university, alumni, friends, and students. Later in 1993, the Multicultural Alumni Council (MAC) was formed to serve as an advisory committee to the Alumni Association's multicultural constituent program. Throughout the years, the multicultural constituent program evolved into the position of Assistant Director of Alumni and Diversity Programs (ADADP), this position now handles the Black Alumni Reunion, builds partnerships with multicultural and international groups, sponsors events for both the LGBT Resource Center and the First-Gen office, and collaborates with the diversity and multicultural campus leadership.

As our "multicultural constituent" program evolved to "diversity" programs, it grew the number of groups who identified under that term. The term "Diversity" grew participation in our events and programming from different walks of life. That is when we found out, certain diverse populations were not associating themselves with the term "multicultural." Hence, MAC will now be going through a rebranding. The name as well as our by-laws will all be changing. We have seen a decrease in participation throughout the years before covid hit, and the pandemic did not boost our numbers. Therefore, MAC's name, by-laws, and terms of membership, will all have to change to align with our diverse alumni's interests. With the knowledge that we find, we will be able to increase our engagement with our diverse populations to not just MAC, but with the activities and programs that the K-State Alumni Association hosts.

Alumni Reunions

Currently, the K-State Alumni Association hosts a biennial Black Alumni Reunion, which has not seen a constant increase in participation for a while. We realize the importance of this event, which is why we are looking at ways to better reach and strengthen our connection to our Black alumni. Our determination does not stop here, we are also in the works to create a Hispanic Alumni Reunion. When we spoke with some partners about a potential Hispanic reunion, they questioned if the word “reunion” was appropriate for this community. That allowed us to reflect on the amount of research that will need to occur for us to produce an event that truly connects with our Hispanic alumni.

Scope of the Project

Our project consisted of research into multiple areas to discover how other associations were naming their councils and affinity groups, as well as ideas for diverse alumni reunion programming. We also looked at what other activities and/or programs alumni associations are doing to engage with their diverse alums. The K-State Alumni Association, for example, has alumni identified in seven self-reporting ethnic categories: African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Mexican American, Multiracial, Native American, and Pacific Islander. However, during our project we focused mainly on bringing back both the Black Alumni Reunion and the Hispanic/LatinX Alumni reunion, which had not been happening in the past years, especially after the Covid-19 pandemic.

Council Naming

First, we found that it was important to strive to change the name of our council, in order to better fit the current diverse populations and guarantee that multiple identities would feel included and represented under a new name. Through extensive research, the student intern and their supervisor, the Assistant Director of Alumni and Diversity Programs, aimed to discover how other associations are being intentional with their affinity group naming,

During a Multicultural Alumni Council meeting, the name change was suggested and members of the council were able to brainstorm ideas. The council agreed it was best to stay in line with the university’s verbage and embrace the feeling we want to create within our students and alumni: belonging. It is also important to note, we wanted to stay away from “trigger words” in today’s climate: such as “diversty” and “equity”. This comes from the recent anti-DEI legislation we seen across the country. At the end, multiple names were suggested and a form was sent out for members to vote:

- Council for Alumni Belonging (CAB)
- Belonging, Inclusion, and Excellence Council
- Inclusive, Leadership, Equity, Amplify, Diversity (ILEAD)
- Alumni Council for Belonging and Inclusion (ACBI)
- Alumni Council for belonging and Inclusion Excellence. (CBIE)

Ultimately, “Council for alumni Belonging (CAB)” was selected as the new name and the logo as well as the website were updated accordingly.



Black Alumni Reunion

From Sept. 29 to Oct. 1, 2023, we hosted our K-State Black Alumni Reunion, which is a biennial event the K-State Alumni Association has hosted since 1984. This reunion is a weekend filled with fellowship centered around the myriad of experiences within the Black community at K-State. Some of the highlights included an evening social at the Shamrock Zone (Bill Snyder Family Stadium) where alumni got to dance, take pictures in a photo booth, and enjoy a meal together; campus tours to explore and discover the new additions to K-State's campus and compare it to how it looked like during their time at the University; a Brown vs. Board of Education lecture; a Town Hall hosted by the Black Student Union and a tour of the new Multicultural Student Center.

The Black Alumni Reunion gathered 72 alumni for a weekend of many activities and allowed current and former students to share ideas, experiences and build friendships across generations of K-Staters.



Hispanic/LatinX Alumni Reunion

The first K-State Hispanic Alumni Reunion happened in 1999, with other Hispanic reunions happening until 2012. Ever since then, we haven't had one and we believe that it is important to bring these reunions back and build deeper connections with diverse alumni. We found this to be especially important because we have a total of 5,568 K-State Alumni who identify as either Hispanic, Multiracial or Mexican American.

The Hispanic/LatinX Alumni Reunion preparations began with research into other similar celebrations around the country as well as what names were being used. Another important aspect was to make sure that the name we would choose was appealing, inclusive to multiple Hispanic and Latin identities and to avoid the name "reunion" as it brings a more serious and formal connotation in Spanish and Portuguese, which is not what we intended to portray.

Our next step was to form a committee to help plan the event. We invited faculty, staff, alumni, and current students to join the committee, with our first meeting occurring in October. During the meeting, many important aspects of the event were discussed: explanation of the time commitment to help plan it, a possible theme, and timeline and duration. Different subcommittees were also created, allowing committee members to choose a section of the event they liked most: Food, T-shirt Design, Activities, and Entertainment. Lastly, we discussed some name ideas as well as a slogan/verbiage, with "Wildcats: Juntos Otra Vez" being ultimately selected.



Survey Methodology

In order to better understand our Alumni's desires and feedback we conducted surveys for both the Black Alumni Reunion and our Hispanic Alumni Reunion. We believe that we had to reach out to the ones who our events cater to and try to understand what their wants and needs are, as well as constantly gather feedback.

After the Black Alumni Reunion, a survey was sent out to the participants to gather thoughts, perceptions, and ideas and to understand what went well and what can be improved for the next reunion. Some of the questions and responses included:

1. *What was the main reason for attending the Black Alumni Reunion?*
 - a. *Some of the main responses include:*
 - i. Wanted to show family members where they went to school.
 - ii. Wanted to see old friends.
 - iii. Get updates on current projects involving Black students, faculty, and staff.
 - iv. To reconnect with the school and the community.

2. *What has been your favorite venue or activity during the reunion?*
 - a. *Some of the main responses included:*
 - i. Campus tour/updates
 - ii. The block party: had Black vendors, food, and good music outside of the multicultural student center.
 - iii. Greek Step Show
 - iv. Mixers and Dinners
3. *What would you like to see at the Black Alumni Reunion?*
 - a. *Some of the main responses included:*
 - i. Social Events
 - ii. Mixers with current students
 - iii. Tours of campus buildings
 - iv. Socials
4. *Would you be willing to be contacted for further questions or be asked to join the planning committee?*
 - a. Yes: 62%
 - b. No: 38%

For the Hispanic Alumni Reunion, we sent out a survey asking the following questions:

1. *How likely would you join us for the Hispanic Alumni Reunion?*
 - a. Likely: 70%
 - b. Undecided: 19%
 - c. Not Likely: 6%
2. *If we were to provide childcare, would you utilize it?*
 - a. Yes: 42.6%
 - b. No: 57.4%
3. *What activities would you like to see at this event?*
 - a. *Some of the main responses included:*
 - i. Story telling from alumni.
 - ii. Campus tours
 - iii. Social hour/Hispanic dinner
 - iv. Showcase current Hispanic groups' successes.
 - v. Lotería and other games
 - vi. Opportunities for current students to network with alumni.
4. *Any other comments or suggestions*

With such detailed responses and suggestions given by our alumni, we discussed them with the committee and began brainstorming ideas.

Summary of Survey Findings

Through the surveys we were able to gather ideas and truly understand what our target groups want to see and experience at our events. The importance of their culture being represented through music, dance and food was by far the most talked about in both surveys.

With the Black Alumni Reunion, for example, we understood that alumni really look forward to connecting with their black fraternities and sororities to maintain the intergenerational bond, as well as giving feedback and ideas to the current members of the Black Student Union on campus. And for the Hispanic Alumni Reunion we are realizing that having authentic food, music, opportunities to dance, and activities for the rest of their families is truly important. For both communities, alumni look forward to forming connections with current students and are willing to hear what they are going through and offer support, through scholarships or mentorships, for example.

Summary of Project Impact

It was clear that working in diversity and multicultural affairs was going to be fulfilling and an amazing learning experience. However, getting to see first-hand the impact that events tailored to alumni have, especially diverse alumni, is very touching. We were able to hear from alumni who had not been on campus ever since their graduation and loved seeing the additions to campus. Black alumni shared multiple stories and pictures of their meeting spots and their tight-knit community on the K-State campus back in the day; and even more special were their reactions to the new Multicultural Student Center, a place they could have only dreamed of and that is now home to many multicultural and diverse organizations at our university.

During and after Covid, many events had to be changed, have gotten smaller or have even ceased to happen. We realized the impact that community has and bringing back alumni reunions to our campus has brought back an even stronger K-State pride and allowed for deeper connections to form between students and alumni. Alumni are able to relive their college days, meet with old friends and share their experiences with their loved ones. So far, we have gotten countless feedback and messages about how excited our alumni are to return and celebrate their Wildcat days, and that is what has made this project even more special and meaningful.

Working with and planning events for people of different backgrounds always brings excitement and so much learning. We were able to see how important it is to include the people of the target group in the planning process, by creating diverse and inclusive committees. Sending out surveys to possible participants has also proved to be extremely helpful when gathering ideas for the events and understanding how we can improve our approaches and methods.