



## **N.E.A.T. Grant Project Final Report 2018-19**

### **Project Title: Young Alumni Event Series**

Thanks to the generosity of the National Educational Alumni Trust, we were able to host a series of young alumni events. We had a promising response from the young alumni we were able to engage and have thus been able to secure additional funding to support young alumni programming from a current sponsor and will continue to program for this target audience this year. We plan to program beyond past the four events we were able to orchestrate this year and have identified a Young Alumni Series (YAS!) of events for next year.

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this grant project was to encourage young alumni, aged 32 or younger, of Northern Illinois University (NIU), a population currently in the minority at our events, to attend more events by hosting and advertising targeted events meant to appeal to them. We sought NEAT Grant Program funding because it enabled us to provide free or discounted admission for young alumni to events we would otherwise have to charge them to attend.

### **SCOPE OF GRANT PROJECT**

Our goal was to market a series of events to young alumni in the Chicagoland area, then evaluate the impact of their participation in these events on their engagement in other program offerings against those from the same population who did not attend. We chose this project after an analysis of FY17 event attendance highlighted the fact that 83% of our event attendees were 40 or older. Engaging alumni as soon as they graduate is important to keeping them engaged throughout lifecycle programming, and this series will help connect young alumni as soon as they graduate. Although we are in the processing of tabulating our numbers for the fiscal year in order to identify how many young alumni attended events this year, survey data showed that programming had a positive impact on their experience. We were also able to learn through our successes and failures along the way.

### **TIMELINE OF PROCESS AND GRANT PROJECT**

Our original proposal was adapted to meet the allocation from the NEAT grant and was also impacted by changes in the structure of our organization and key vacancies in our communications and events teams. We were able to execute as intended in Fall 2018, but took time to regroup and plan for FY20 in Spring 2019.

Event Name	Event Date	Description
Beer Tasting and Karaoke at Pollyanna Brewing Company (Roselle, IL)	August	Evening of entertainment with live DJ for karaoke, and tasting of local beer at brewery owned by alumnus.
Oktoberfest Style Beer Garden (On-Campus)	September	During one of our three home football games, the NIU Alumni Association will host a beer garden in the alumni tailgating area.
Young Alumni Trivia Night	November	We intended to host an event for young alumni, which would be modeled after the traditional trivia night. We saw very low sign-up for this event and think it is likely due to the fact that it was on the same night as elections in Illinois.
Cap & Gown Pickup (On-Campus)	May	The NIU Alumni Association registered new albums and gave out license plate inserts.
Fatty's Grad Bash (Fatty's Pub and Grille in DeKalb, IL)	May	An evening of celebration. The NIU Alumni Association passed out glasses commemorating 2019 graduates and gave out drink tickets.
Esports Cafe (Naperville, IL)	May	Young alumni were invited to join the NIU Alumni Association at the ESports Cafe. The café featured 12 gaming PC stations with mechanical keyboards, gaming mice, gaming headsets and cameras for streaming.

## SURVEY QUESTIONS

The NIUAA staff sent out an experience survey after almost every event. This survey was unable to be distributed to our Oktoberfest event attendees due to lack of ability to track of who

attended the free-flow style of the event. This survey included general questions that we used to compare the events as well as event specific questions we used to evaluate the effectiveness of that specific event.

### **Survey Questions:**

- Please rate the organization and preparation of NIUAA staff.
- Please rate your interaction with NIUAA staff.
- Please rate the experience at the NIUAA event you attended.
- How likely are you to attend another NIUAA event?
- How likely are you to purchase an NIUAA Membership?
- How likely are you to volunteer with NIU
- How many NIUAA events, including this event have you attended?
- How did you find out about this event?

## **SURVEY RESULTS**

A survey was created through the university's survey program and sent out to young alumni that attended any of our young alumni event series via e-mail. After the surveys were completed and a report of the results compiled we were able to analyze the data. Here are our results:

### **NIUAA Events Alumni Experience Survey**

- The survey included 40 responses.
  - **Organization, Preparation, and Interaction**
    - Majority of alumni that were surveyed indicated that they thought the Young Alumni Event Series was very well organized and that staff seemed prepared.
      - 95 percent rated the organization and preparation of NIUAA staff as satisfactory or very satisfactory.
      - 95 percent of young alums said the interaction with staff at events was satisfactory or very satisfactory.
  - **Event Attraction and Experience**
    - Majority of alumni that were surveyed indicated that they attend our events as a networking opportunity and as a way to catch up with old friends and the university.
      - 67 percent of young alums found out about our events through NIUAA social media
      - 92 percent rated their experience at the events as satisfactory or very satisfactory.

- 78 percent said they are somewhat or very likely to attend another NIUAA event
- 67 percent said they were somewhat or very likely to purchase an NIUAA membership
- 71 percent said they attended 4 or more NIUAA events
- 53 percent they were somewhat or very likely to volunteer with NIU

## **FINDINGS AND SUMMARY**

The support provided by the NEAT grant encouraged the NIUAA to continue to think about the best way to engage young alumni, even as staffing setbacks occurred. So, while increase in the number of young alumni engaging in events for the NIUAA was the goal, staff was actually able to analyze the impact of the Fall events and use that information to plan for the future. The overall satisfactory rating and indication that they would attend another event was encouraging for the events they did attend. This indicated that the NIUAA does a good job of providing quality service and experience while young alumni are at an event. As such, continuous staffing and focus paid to this particular segment of the NIUAA's alumni population would help to further increase engagement.

In Fall 2018, NIUAA undoubtedly saw success events as stated above, but experienced some failures with the young alumni trivia night and attendance of young alumni at our very popular holiday reception. This hit-and-miss experience, inspired the creation of an ad-hoc young alumni advisory council, from which YAS! was born. This group of young alumni spent the Spring semester advising NIUAA staff as to which events would consistently appeal to young alumni. This focus led to NIUAA staff to focus on supporting or executing events that connected with Spring 2019 graduating seniors, who also expressed that they enjoyed the activities we provided. Based on best practices and surveys we conducted with current students this year, this will make them much more likely to volunteer or attend other events supported by NIU.

In regard to the impact that attending these events will have on our young alumni's desire to purchase a membership, volunteer, or attend another event, it seems that their experience at the event was enough to bring them back with 95% satisfied with their overall experience and 78% saying they would attend another event. 50% said they would come back to volunteer their time, while over 65% indicated that they would purchase a membership to the NIUAA. However, it is difficult to know what the cause of their decisions were. If this survey were to be replicated, further probing into why a person would or would not volunteer, attend another event, or volunteer would be helpful for future planning.

## FINAL EVENT BUDGET

Graduation Bash @ Fatty's Pub			
ACTIVITY	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Grad Bash Mugs	1	600	600
Tax on Mugs	1	60	60
Assorted Beverages	1	1071.25	1071.25
18% Gratuity	-	192.83	192.83
Tax on Beverages	-	107.13	107.13
			<b>2031.21</b>

NIU ESports Cafe			
ACTIVITY	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Pizza Buffet	15	14	210
Extra Pizza	1	16.75	16.75
Catering Tax	-	17.57	17.57
			<b>244.32</b>

Oktoberfest			
ACTIVITY	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
Tent Rental	1	\$889.50	\$889.50
Tasting Cups	15	\$4.26 +tax	\$46.00
Red Solo Cups	500	\$56.25	\$56.25
U HAUL Rental for Keg Pickup	1	\$121.94	\$121.94
LaGunitas Brewing Company	1	\$92.02	<b>92.02*</b>
Additional Beer- LaGunitas	1	\$88.00	\$88.00
Church Street Brewing Company	1	\$195.00	\$195.00
Banner	1	\$165.00	\$165.00

Facebook Campaign	1	\$51.38	\$51.38
*Remainder of Lagunitas beer was donated			<b>\$1,613.07</b>

Cap & Gown Event			
ACTIVITY	QTY	RATE	AMOUNT
License Plate	\$3,000.00	\$0.20	\$600.00
Grad Bash Quarter Sheets	\$250.00	\$0.12	\$28.75
			<b>\$628.75</b>

## APPENDIX

### A.) MARKETING MATERIALS

# NIU

## NEXUS

ALUMNI VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY

Volunteer with NIU,  
on-campus,  
off-campus or  
online!

**Get connected.**  
Visit [myniu.com/niunexus](http://myniu.com/niunexus)  
815-753-7400  
[alums@niu.edu](mailto:alums@niu.edu)

**Join the NIU Alumni Association for these exciting Young Alumni events!**

**June 21:** *Young Alumni Night at Pinstripes, Oak Brook*

**July 28:** *Odyssey Glass Boat River Cruise, Chicago*

**August 11:** *Oakland Athletics at Chicago White Sox (NIU Day)*

**August 31:** *NIU vs. Illinois State University – Season Opener*

**September 16:** *Cincinnati Reds at Chicago Cubs (NIU Night)*

**October 26:** *NIU vs. University of Akron – Homecoming*

**For more information or registration, visit [myniu.com](http://myniu.com)**

**Travel the world with the NIU Alumni Travel Program! Visit [myniu.com/travel](http://myniu.com/travel)**

**Got a new job or a promotion?**  
**Heading to graduate school? Celebrating a birth or marriage?**  
**Tell us more at [myniu.com/classnotes](http://myniu.com/classnotes).**

 /niualumni  /niu\_alumni  /niu\_alumni

### BRAG

Show your Huskie pride by hanging your diploma in your office and wearing your NIU gear.

### VOLUNTEER

Get involved with your alma mater. Speak to a classroom, volunteer as a mentor or network in the community as part of our Social Media Ambassador Program.

### CHEER

Reconnect with old friends, faculty and staff and come back for NIU Homecoming each fall. You could attend or host a football watch party in your area and cheer on our Huskies.

### GROW

Help us grow the pack. Refer a potential NIU student and we will waive their application fee.

### JOIN

Become a dues-paying member of the NIU Alumni Association and learn about the additional benefits of being an NIU graduate.

### VISIT

Take advantage of what your alma mater has to offer and come back to campus to enjoy the arts, experience educational lectures and reconnect with the community.



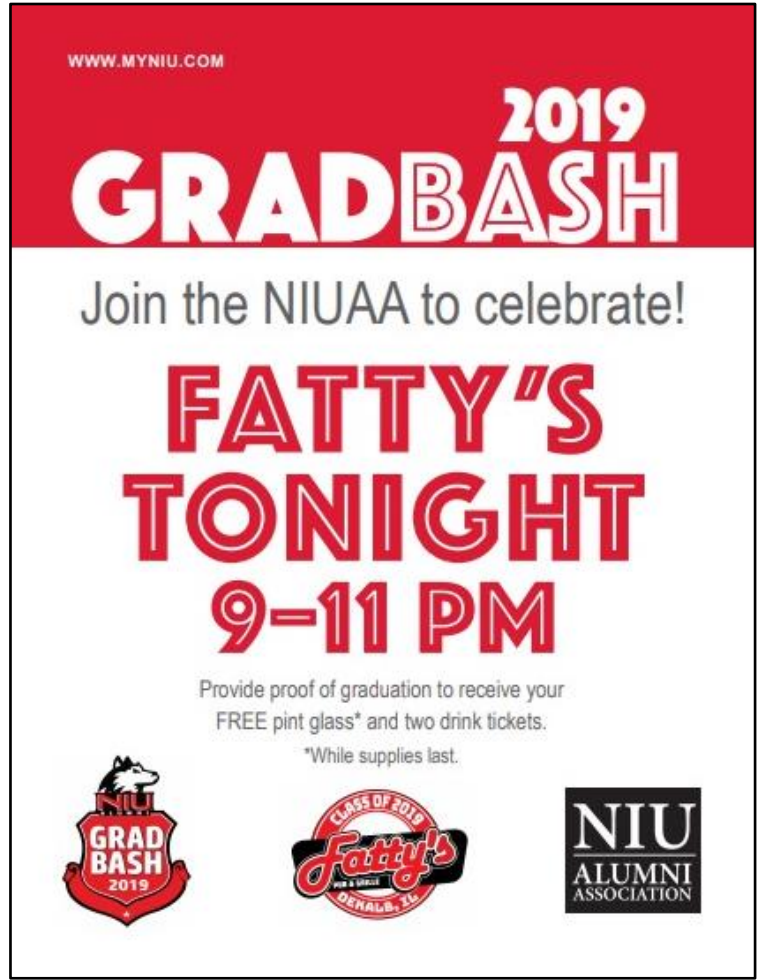
**NIU**  
ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION

#### License Plate Insert Sheets





Mission, NIU's Mascot with License Plate Insert



Fatty's Grad Bash Quarter Sheet



Front and Back of Fatty's Grad Bash Glasses

## B.) INVOICES