

NEAT Institution: Ohio University – Alumni Association

Project Title: Bobcat Network x College of Business Student Organization Competition

Project Dates: August 2025-December 2025

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Executive Summary:

The **Bobcat Network x College of Business Student Organization Competition** was designed to strengthen connections between College of Business (COB) students and Ohio University alumni by integrating student organizations into the Bobcat Network. Through a *two-phase* competition model, the project aimed to increase student adoption of the Bobcat Network platform, encourage alumni engagement at the student organization level, and establish sustainable practices for ongoing alumni-student interaction.

This initiative aligned closely with NEAT Grant priorities by piloting a scalable engagement strategy that leveraged existing student organizations to foster early, meaningful alumni connections and build professional networking habits among undergraduate students and their organizations.

Overview:

Project Goals and Objectives

The primary goals of this project were to:

- Increase Bobcat Network awareness and usage among College of Business student organizations and their members
- Encourage student organizations to actively engage alumni through intentional programming
- Strengthening collaboration between the Ohio University Alumni Association and student organization leadership
- Test a repeatable engagement model that could be expanded beyond the College of Business

Project Scope and Activities

At the outset of the competition, interest was expressed by a wide range of College of Business-affiliated and interdisciplinary student organizations. Organizations that initially showed interest included:

- Information Systems and Analytics Professionals (ISAP)*
- OHIO AI*
- Association of Women in Finance*
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)*
- Collegiate Entrepreneurs' Organization
- Kappa Alpha Zeta



- Ohio Digital Marketing Agency
- Sport Business Association (SBA)
- Center for Consumer Research and Analytics
- Ohio Sports Analytics Team
- AIESEC
- American Marketing Association
- OHIO Women in Business
- Sigma Alpha Sigma Mu

Completed Phase 1 and 2

While not all interested organizations ultimately completed both phases of the competition, this initial outreach demonstrated strong college-wide interest and validated the competition model as an effective engagement strategy. Organizations that moved forward into active participation and completion represented a range of academic and professional focus areas, allowing the Alumni Association to pilot the model with groups that varied in size, capacity, and alumni reach.

This distinction between initial interest and completed participation provided valuable insight into organizational readiness and capacity, helping inform future refinements to recruitment, communication, and support strategies for subsequent iterations of the competition.

Phase 1: Member Drive and Platform Adoption

Phase 1 focused on onboarding student organizations and their members to the Bobcat Network platform. Student organizations were asked to:

- Register 100% of their current members on the Bobcat Network
- Participate in Bobcat Network training sessions hosted by Alumni Association staff

Training sessions were offered both in person and virtually to maximize accessibility. Organizations submitted a membership verification form to confirm completion. All organizations that successfully completed Phase 1 received a \$100 incentive.

In September 2025 we launched Phase 1 and saw 305 new students on the platform.

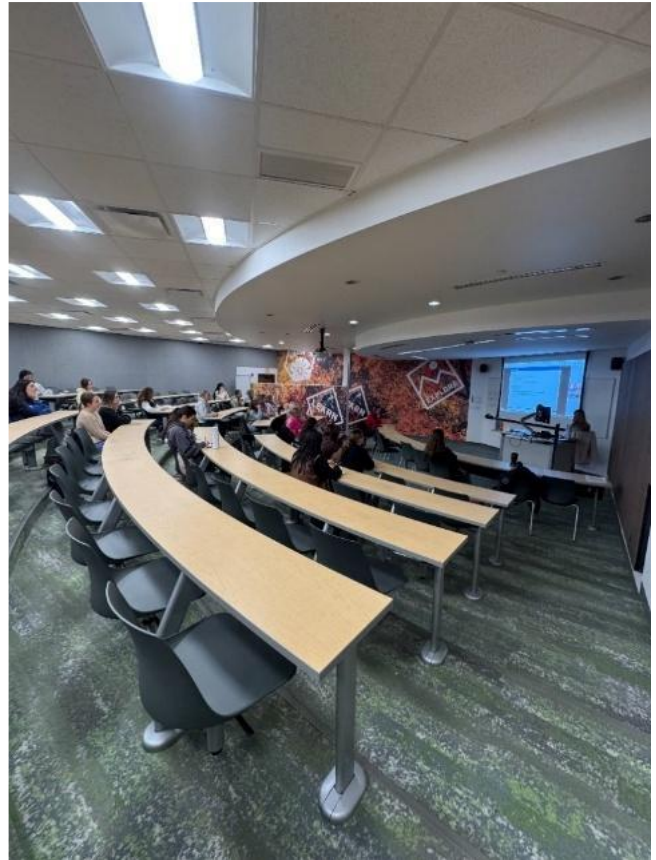
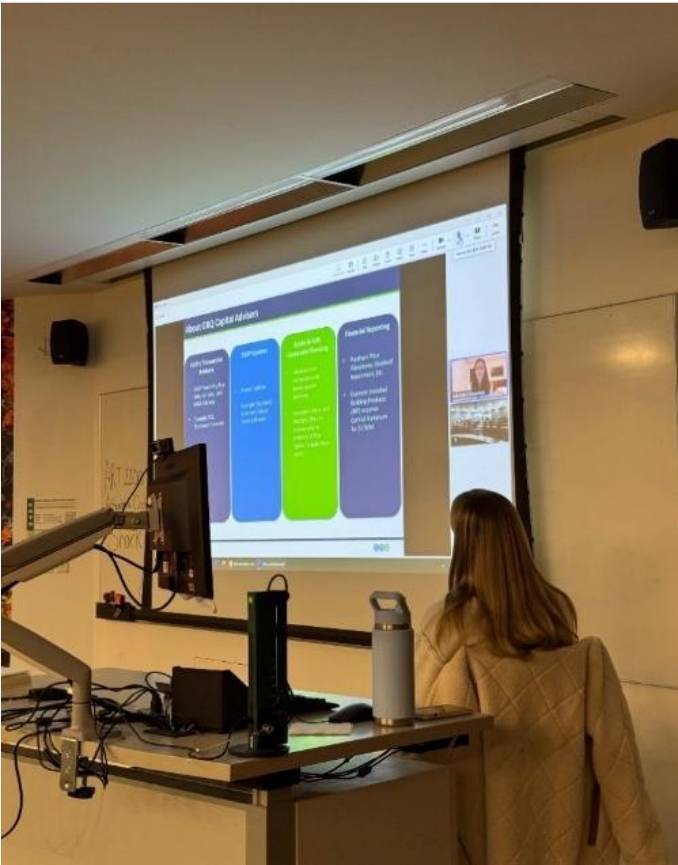
Phase 2: Alumni Engagement Event

Phase 2 challenged participating organizations to plan and host an alumni engagement experience. Events could take place in various formats, including virtual events, in-person gatherings, panels, or speaker programs. There were no minimum attendance requirements, allowing organizations flexibility based on their size and alumni reach.

Organizations were required to promote their events on the Bobcat Network and tag the Ohio University Alumni Association to increase visibility and cross-promotion. Based on the quality, creativity, and execution of the events, organizations were awarded the following prizes:

- 1st Place: \$1,000 - Association of Women in Finance
- 2nd Place: \$500- ISAP

- 3rd Place: \$250- OHIO AI

Phase 2 Submission Example (1st Place):



Hello!

We would like to share a bit about the Virtual Alumni Speaker Series that Women in Finance hosted this Fall semester. At our weekly Monday meetings held on October 27, November 3, and November 10, we spoke with OU alums Julie Mann Keppner ('02), Kassandra Saridakis ('01), and Kelly Curtin Noll ('05), respectively. Each woman discussed her time at OU, the organizations and programs in which she was involved, and how her experience shaped her future career. They also walked us through their career paths, from their first full-time roles to where they are now. Connecting with these three impressive women allowed members to not only form lasting connections with alumni but learn more about the types of jobs that are available in both finance and the broader business field.

We asked a couple of current members to write a few words about their key takeaways from the Virtual Alumni Speaker Series:

Paige Boehm (Current Vice President):

During the Speaker Series, I learned that my career is never going to be linear; it might look like a game of chutes and ladders. When switching positions, taking a role that is a step below my current level may be necessary to form a well-rounded understanding of that new department or team before moving up. I also loved hearing about how each woman learns outside of her 9-5, whether from books, podcasts, or quick LinkedIn stories.

Anna-Carolina Knapp (Current Member, Spring 2026 Head of Communications):

These networking calls really opened my eyes to the niche areas that finance has to offer, some that I never knew existed. Learning about the diverse career path that led each woman to where she is today showed me that making changes to my own career may lead to growth and valuable experiences.

We also asked Julie, Kassi, and Kelly about how they have navigated any challenges they have faced as women working in finance, which is a male dominated field. They were able to share insights that helped familiarize AWIF members with strategies for approaching such challenges. It was especially inspiring to hear Kelly's response to this question. She mentioned that she has not faced many challenges as a woman in this field as she has been surrounded by inclusive and supportive colleagues throughout her career thus far. This made members aware that women do not always face adversity in finance and reminded us that working with people who treat everyone equally is important.

Overall, the Virtual Alumni Speaker Series was a great way to expose members of Women in Finance to the countless career opportunities available in finance, as well as broaden our network of successful OU alumni. Thank you to Julie, Kassi, and Kelly for their time and invaluable insights!

APPENDIX:

Outcomes and Impact

In addition to observed engagement outcomes, post-competition survey feedback from participating student organizations reinforced the effectiveness of the initiative.

Survey responses indicated strong increases in Bobcat Network adoption, with participating organizations reporting that between **51-100% of their members** joined the platform as a direct result of the competition. The respondents indicated they would participate in a similar competition in the future, signaling satisfaction with the structure and value of the program.

Qualitative feedback highlighted that the competition helped organizations better understand how to leverage the Bobcat Network as a tool for alumni engagement. One organization noted that increased visibility and promotion of the competition would further strengthen participation, while another emphasized the value of additional virtual or in-person alumni engagement opportunities to support future programming.

Overall, the survey responses suggest that the competition successfully introduced student leaders to alumni engagement best practices while identifying clear opportunities for growth and refinement in future iterations.

Challenges and Adjustments

One challenge identified was centered on participation and completion rates. Not all anticipated incentive funds were ultimately distributed. Rather than reallocating unused funds in a way that fell outside the original scope of the project, we chose to spend conservatively and only distribute awards tied directly to completed deliverables. This resulted in a portion of the grant remaining unused. This experience highlighted the difficulty of forecasting engagement in incentive-based programming and will inform future planning by incorporating more flexible budget structures and contingency strategies tied to participation outcomes. Another challenge involved ensuring accurate verification of student membership and platform registration. This was mitigated by standardized membership forms and direct communication with organization leaders.

Budget Summary

NEAT Grant funds were used exclusively to support student organization incentives and prizes, ensuring that grant dollars directly enhanced engagement and participation. Expenses included:

- Phase 1 completion incentives for four student organizations
- Phase 2 prize funding for first, second, and third place organizations



Date	Description of Expense	Amount
11/24/25	Phase 1 - Prize Money to <i>Women in Finance</i>	\$100
11/24/25	Phase 1 - Prize Money to <i>Information Systems and Analytics Professionals</i>	\$100
11/24/25	Phase 1 - Prize Money to <i>OHIO AI</i>	\$100
11/24/25	Phase 1 - Prize Money to <i>Society of Human Resources</i>	\$100
12/2/25	Phase 2 - 1 st Place Prize Money to <i>Women in Finance</i>	\$1,000
12/2/25	Phase 2 - 2 nd Place Prize Money to <i>Information Systems and Analytics / Professionals</i>	\$500
12/2/25	Phase 2 - 3 rd Place Prize Money to <i>OHIO AI</i>	\$250
Total		\$2,150

The total amount expended for this project was **\$2,150**, aligning with the approved grant budget.

Lessons Learned and Future Application

This project demonstrated that student organizations are effective entry points for introducing students to alumni engagement and professional networking. Incentive-based participation, paired with training and clear expectations, proved successful in driving platform adoption.

Moving forward, the Ohio University Alumni Association plans to refine this model by:

- Expanding the competition to additional colleges
- Incorporating more structured alumni mentorship components
- Continuing to use student organizations as ambassadors for the Bobcat Network

The Bobcat Network x College of Business Student Organization Competition serves as a scalable and sustainable framework for enhancing alumni engagement with current students across campus.

Conclusion

Support from the NEAT Grant Program made it possible to pilot an innovative, student-centered alumni engagement initiative at Ohio University. The Bobcat Network automatically populates

current and future platform alumni back into their former student organization communities, reinforcing key affinity connections that are central to the platform's mission. The outcomes of this project provide valuable insights and a strong foundation for future programming that connects students and alumni in meaningful and lasting ways.