



**NEAT Institution:** SUNY Oswego / Oswego Alumni Association, Inc.

**Project Title:** All-Alumni Postcard Campaign

**Project Dates:** July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026

**Contact information:** Laura Kelly - 315-312-3003; laura.kelly@oswego.edu

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

### Purpose

SUNY Oswego's Alumni Engagement Team, Communication Team and Advancement Operations Team collaborated to execute a highly-targeted, segmented direct mail postcard campaign aimed at re-engaging alumni who had either opted out of digital communications, lacked a current email address on file, or needed to provide professional and personal updates for our University Advancement CRM. By leveraging nostalgic university themes and unique QR codes, the campaign successfully drove significant alumni traffic back to our database update page, netting hundreds of clean email addresses, digital magazine preferences and valuable life updates – as well as thousands of address updates, which will help the entire division and university effectively utilize print resources moving forward. The response page featured an entry into a swag drawing totaling over \$1,000 to incentivize form completion.

### Summary of Findings

The campaign generated significant overall data clean-up and engagement markers:

- 1,863 total alumni filled out the landing page form – nearly doubling the submission indicator we had noted as demonstrating success for this project.
- 1,734 alumni successfully updated their information and explicitly chose to stay connected.
- 538 alumni opted out of receiving the printed OSWEGO Alumni Magazine, creating long-term print and postage cost savings by switching to digital delivery.
- 306 retirees identified themselves, with 26 providing their former employers—giving our corporate relations team excellent new data points.
- Data Health: Approximately 7,000 cards were returned due to bad addresses, which we would not have learned otherwise, as we don't pay for the "Returned Mail" postal feature on regular mailings. We now have fresher, more accurate information for future mailings.

This was a one-time mailing campaign, as it was a significant budgetary investment. While it will not be repeated next year, or in the near future, we will aim to continue to maintain the data updates we accrued, and will also utilize the audience of those who responded positively in any way as a segment to target for future, relevant engagement and philanthropic opportunities.

### Description of Institution

Founded in 1861, SUNY Oswego is a premier public university in Central New York. With a 700-acre lakeside campus, a growing Syracuse location, and flexible online programs, we offer high-impact learning for a diverse, driven community. Nearly \$1 billion in campus investments has created inspiring spaces to live, learn, and lead.

The Oswego Alumni Association, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation, which exists to inform and interest a diverse constituency in the life of the university to create a partnership that encourages involvement, enhances loyalty and serves the current and future needs of SUNY Oswego and our alumni.

**OVERVIEW:**Project Scope

With rising costs of print marketing, limited resources and an increased need to reach people promptly and frequently, SUNY Oswego – both the Oswego Alumni Association, as well as across the university – relies on the ability to communicate electronically with its alumni. In the early 2000s, when mass email communication was initially growing in use, alumni had the ability (as they still do) to opt out of receiving our email messages. However, due to the sophistication of University Advancement’s software and technology at the time, there were only two options to classify our alumni communication exclusion codes – receive all emails from us or receive none. Therefore, many of our alumni who have a “No Email” exclusion code on their record may have not intended, in that early 2000s opt-out moment, to completely cut-off all communication – but perhaps only certain types of messages they didn’t care to see.

In the early 2010s, University Advancement upgraded our mass-emailing software and technology, and also began segmenting our email messages by a handful of relevant categories – to allow recipients the option to only opt-out of each message *type* (i.e. Reunion emails; solicitation emails; regional events; etc.), rather than all emails at once. However, this didn’t allow the opportunity for those alumni we had previously lost to full opt-outs to opt back in, unless they contacted us directly to do so. Furthermore, there are many alumni for whom we no longer have (or have never had) any valid email address on file – who may want to hear from us in that way.

Additionally, we know that the printed *OSWEGO* Alumni Magazine has a significant printing and postage budget, and have, especially in the last handful of years, regularly reviewed ways of strategically condensing our circulation list to combat rising costs – while also maintaining this long-standing traditional and beloved alumni communication, which is the only print publication that nearly all alumni receive a copy of twice a year (as all other print marketing and solicitations are segmented by populations). However, we learned in March 2025 that we would need to find significant cost savings in the magazine budget in Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026).

Therefore, the Oswego Alumni Association worked with staff members within SUNY Oswego’s Office of University Advancement for full preparation and execution to launch an all-alumni postcard campaign – sent to approx. 96,000 Oswego alumni – in the first quarter of our Fiscal Year 2026 with the goals of:

1. Collecting updated email contact information (*specifically for those whom we don’t have one on file*)
2. Encouraging alumni to opt back in to our emails/categories (*specifically for those who are opted out*)
3. Allowing alumni to opt out of the print magazine
4. Collecting updated employment information (*specifically employer and job title*)

Process and Methodology

To maximize resonance, the campaign broke the target audience into three distinct buckets, each receiving a uniquely customized visual layout and messaging strategy:

**Segment 1: "Sun in February" (Email Opt-Back-In)**

- Target Audience: Alumni who previously opted out of university emails.



- Creative Theme: Nostalgic imagery of a classic Oswego winter day with the copy: *"We miss you like Oswego misses the sun in February!"*
- Call to Action: Encouraged recipients to "let a little Laker light back in" by resubscribing to emails.

### **Segment 2: "Digging Out" (Missing Email Acquisition)**

- Target Audience: Alumni with valid physical mailing addresses but no email address on file.
- Creative Theme: Vintage snowstorm imagery paired with the relatable hook: *"Finding your email address is harder than digging out in an Oswego snowstorm."*
- Call to Action: Prompted them to provide an email address to receive university news without needing "snow boots or frostbite."

### **Segment 3: "Sound the Trumpets" (Alumni Updates & Engagement)**

- Target Audience: General alumni database segment focused on capturing updated life milestones (employment, retirement, etc.).
- Creative Theme: Celebration-oriented creative featuring the headline *"Sound the Trumpets!"* and variable text personalizing the card (e.g., *"LAURA is kind of a big deal!"*).
- Call to Action: Prompted alumni to share what they are up to, update their communication preferences, and choose whether to receive the OSWEGO Alumni Magazine digitally or continue to opt-in for print.

QR code results by postcard mailing segment:

- **Segment 3** ("Trumpets"): 819 scans – The personalized, celebratory approach proved most effective at driving physical-to-digital action.
- **Segment 2** ("Greetings from/Winter"): 567 scans – Nostalgic weather references drove solid engagement among those missing email records.
- **Segment 1** ("Misses the Sun"): 193 scans – Lower scan volume, which was expected due to the highly-specific, historically-disengaged "opted-out" audience baseline.

The response page featured an entry into a swag drawing totaling over \$1,000 to incentivize form completion.

#### Timeline

**July 1 - Sept. 30:** Design postcard segments; confirm segmented audiences; build response form

**Oct. 1 - Oct. 31:** Print and mail all postcard segments

**Nov. 1 - June 30:** Collect responses via form submissions; update CRM with all necessary updates

**Dec. 1 - Dec. 20:** Draw names of ten swag winners; notify winners; mail swag packages out

## **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS:**

### Results, Impact and Recommendations

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### **APPENDIX:**

- Budget (see *NEAT Grant Program Reimbursement Form*)
- Postcard Segment Samples
- Swag Winner Photos

# APPENDIX

*Jenny,  
We miss you like*

**OSWEGO**

*misses the sun in February!*



*Jenny,*



You opted out of our emails,  
and we totally respect that.

But we've got updates, throwbacks, alumni events  
(with actual sunshine) and stories you'd probably love.

Ready to let a little Laker light back in?

Visit [alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025](https://alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025) by  
**Nov. 15** to resubscribe and be entered to win one of  
many Oswego swag prizes totaling over \$1,000.



SCAN ME

Prefer people over QR codes, or does this person no  
longer live here? Drop us a line at [alumni@oswego.edu](mailto:alumni@oswego.edu)  
or call **315-312-3003**.



King Alumni Hall  
300 Washington Blvd.  
Oswego, N.Y. 13126

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Oswego, NY

*Greetings from*



*Margaret!*

Finding your email address is harder  
than digging out in an Oswego snowstorm.

# Jenny,



Remember those Oswego lake-effect storms? Without your email address, it feels like we're stuck in one trying to reach you!

We'd love to send you Oswego news, alumni updates, and event invitations – digitally, and without snowboots or frostbite.

Warm up your connection. Visit [alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025](https://alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025) by **Nov. 15** to resubscribe and be entered to win one of many Oswego swag prizes totaling over \$1,000.



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**LAURA** is kind of a big deal!



*Sound  
the  
Trumpets!*

# JENNY,

Whether you're running a company,  
making art, enjoying retirement, teaching kids,  
or raising them — *we want to celebrate you!*

Tell us what you're up to, where you are, and how you  
want to hear from us.

Oh, and if you'd rather get the *OSWEGO* Alumni  
Magazine digitally, just check the box.

Visit [alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025](https://alumni.oswego.edu/stayconnected2025) by  
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## Quotes from swag recipients:

*I am just thrilled with my prize! The magnet is on my fridge and will constantly remind me of my hometown. I love the tote bag. I will probably fill it with my quilt projects when I get back to quilting. And the blanket is so soft and warm. I'm sure it will be put to good use as I continue to recover from my broken knee cap. My thanks go out to the Alumni Association for this wonderful gift. I will cherish it forever.*

*-- Emilie Manning '69 [via email]*

*Dear Laura,*

*The package arrived and "kudos" to whoever picked out the prize items. They are wonderful! Useful, pretty and a great reminder of my/our years at Oswego. I had no idea what to expect but the "prize" far exceeded any expectations I had. I can understand your desire to have a photo and I will do so. To be honest I'm just not sure when but sometime in the next week or two.*

*My "Thanks!" to all who anything to do with this. I am certainly surprised and appreciative.*

*Merry Christmas to all and a very, Happy, Healthy New Year.*

*Carolyn Hawks Gerdin '58 [via email]*

*Hi Laura,*

*I received the Oswego swag on Friday, and it's really, really nice stuff. It's a beautiful blanket, and that tote – it's big enough that if I loaded it all up I probably wouldn't be able to carry it! Ha! But it's very well made and I'm impressed!*

*Don Snyder '71 [via voicemail]*

*Hey Laura!*

*Thanks again, the blanket and bag are so wonderful and I love to show off my Oswego pride :)*

*Christine Ripple Adams '12 [via email]*









