

Bridging the Gap: New Graduates to Engaged Young Alumni

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Your Presenters

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Who We Are

- ✧ The University of Saskatchewan was established in 1907
- ✧ We offer 58 undergraduate and graduate degrees, certificates and diplomas in over 100 disciplines
- ✧ 2008-2009- 14,586 full time students and 3,832 part time students (undergraduate)
- ✧ Over 130,000 alumni living world wide

Overview

- ✧ Why & How
- ✧ The Process / Methodology
- ✧ Survey Results
- ✧ Young Alumni Interviews
- ✧ Lessons Learned
- ✧ Final Recommendations
- ✧ Next Steps & Measures of Success
- ✧ Questions and Discussion

Why This Project

- ✧ University Advancement's Integrated Plan
- ✧ A gap in programming was identified
- ✧ Lack of engagement with students
- ✧ Potential loss in Annual Giving

How Did We Tackle It

- ✧ An integration team was picked to include representation from across University Advancement
 - Jennifer Molloy, Project Lead, VP Advancement Office
 - Andrea Eccleston, Alumni Relations
 - Mark Ferguson, Communications
 - Eric Daro, Development
 - Huzefa Rashid, Research
 - Dean Hall, Research

How Did We Tackle It

- ✧ Used all in-house resources
 - PAWS Survey Tool
 - Staff-conducted interviews
 - Internal research department completed the data analysis
- ✧ Costs
 - Approximately \$3,900 plus staff time
 - Majority of the costs were travel for the interviews

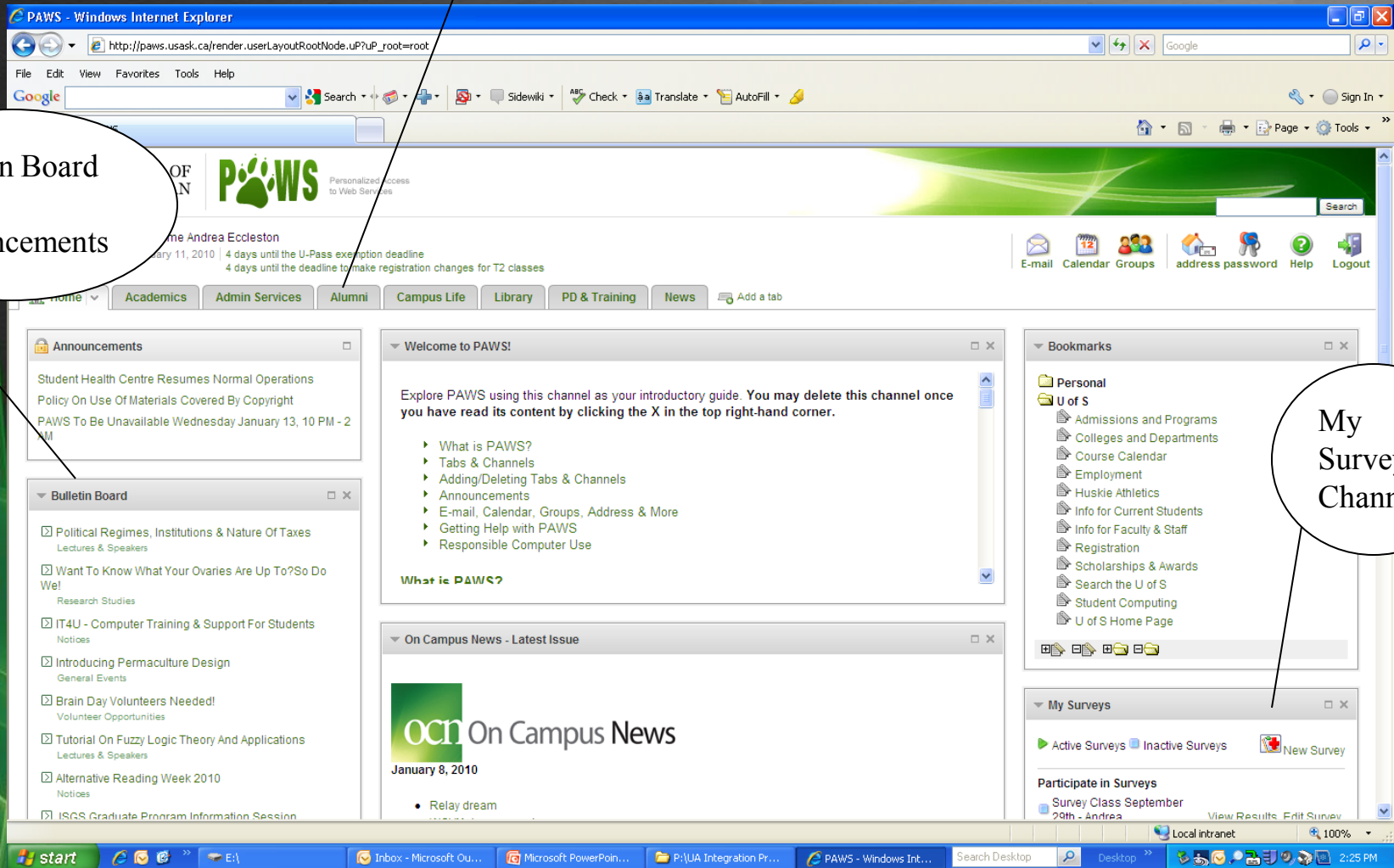
The Process / Methodology

- ✧ Best Practices Research
- ✧ Campus Consultation
- ✧ Two Surveys – both launched in September 2008 and created with the PAWS Survey Tool

Alumni Tab – shows up
after graduation

PAWS Web Portal

Bulletin Board
– post
announcements



The screenshot shows the PAWS Web Portal in a Windows Internet Explorer browser window. The address bar displays the URL: http://paws.usask.ca/render.userLayoutRootNode.uP?uP_root=root. The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, and Help. The toolbar contains various utility icons like Google, Search, Sidewiki, Check, Translate, and AutoFill. The page header features the PAWS logo and a search bar. Below the header, there are navigation tabs for Home, Academics, Admin Services, Alumni, Campus Life, Library, PD & Training, and News. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'Announcements' with a list of recent updates; 'Welcome to PAWS!' with a list of links for navigation; 'On Campus News - Latest Issue' featuring a news item from January 8, 2010; 'Bookmarks' with a list of personal and university-related links; and 'My Surveys' with options for active and inactive surveys. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the Start button, several open applications, and the system tray with the time 2:25 PM.

My
Surveys
Channel

The Process / Methodology

- ❖ Interviews – 35 personal interviews conducted in 5 cities across Canada
- ❖ Data Analysis – done in-house by our research team (industry average response rate for electronic surveys is 15%)
- ❖ Recommendations – report presented to VP Magotiaux and her Executive Team in June, 2009
- ❖ 5,040 addresses were updated in our alumni/donor database due to this project!

Student Survey Results

- ✧ The survey was marketed through various communication tools (most successful tool was free)
- ✧ Of 19,394 graduate and undergraduate students 3,472 responded to the survey. The student survey response average was 17.9%
- ✧ There were 16 questions (3 short answer)
- ✧ The survey was evaluated and deemed to meet the criteria of “face validity”

Young Alumni Survey Results

- ✧ Our main method of marketing the young alumni survey was with email (free)
- ✧ Of 41,147 alumni under the age of forty, 20,771 email addresses were available to us
- ✧ 4,328 young alumni answered the survey (20.8% response rate)
- ✧ There were 18 questions (4 short answer)
- ✧ The survey was evaluated and deemed to meet the criteria of “face validity”

Young Alumni Interviews

- ✧ Personal interviews were conducted with randomly chosen alumni to supplement the data from the surveys
- ✧ These interviews were conducted in Toronto, Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Vancouver
- ✧ A total of 35 interviews were conducted (the majority in person with a few via telephone)

Young Alumni Interview Questions

- ✧ Why did you choose the U of S for your post secondary education?
- ✧ How was your experience while you were on campus? Both academically and socially.
- ✧ Did you attend convocation?
- ✧ What were your expectations of the U of S after you graduated?
- ✧ Have you had any contact with the U of S after graduation? If so, what?
- ✧ What is the best method of communication to use for us to keep in contact with you? How often would you like to hear from us?
- ✧ Have you attended any U of S events? What types of events would you like to see offered?
- ✧ What programs or benefits would be helpful?
- ✧ Do you receive/read the G&W? What do you think of it? What can we do to make it appeal more to you?
- ✧ Have you visited the website? What would you like to see on it?
- ✧ How do you feel about being asked for money?
- ✧ How do we keep you engaged with the U of S?

Our Biggest Surprises

- ✧ The term “young alumni” does not resonate with our alumni 40 and under.
- ✧ Young alumni are willing to donate but would like to have a couple of years to get settled after graduation before they are asked.
- ✧ Alumni 40 and under would like to see professional development and career development type activities from their alma mater as opposed to just “party type” events.

Our Biggest Surprises

- ✧ Alumni are willing to pay for events if they are of interest to them.
- ✧ Alumni in our own back yard (Saskatoon) had the lowest response rate when trying to arrange in-person interviews.
- ✧ We underestimated the response rates and feedback we would receive.

Lessons Learned

- ✧ A pilot project should be executed to pre-test surveys to ensure the survey design meets all necessary requirements.
- ✧ With the alumni survey a major bias was that only the respondents who had valid email addresses received a direct invite to participate in the survey. In the future, surveys should be attached to our alumni magazine as well as sent by email.

Lessons Learned

- ❖ With future surveys, we need to program the survey so that respondents can only enter once.
- ❖ We underestimated the amount of time and resources required to complete this project.
- ❖ Ensure you know all the steps required by your institution's Ethics Board before beginning.
- ❖ Be careful how you choose your answer types: open-ended vs. multiple choice, etc.

Recommendations

- ✧ Follow a three-year plan of engagement with recent graduates prior to their first solicitation from the annual giving program
- ✧ Communication with alumni take place in a timely and consistent manner
- ✧ Create methods of receiving regular feedback from students and young alumni
- ✧ Establish annual events to recognize and celebrate students

Recommendations

- ❖ Develop clear steps to transition upper-year students into engaged alumni
- ❖ Educate and involve students in fundraising activities at the University of Saskatchewan
- ❖ Establish a strategic and interactive presence online
- ❖ Hold events of interest to young alumni
- ❖ The *Green & White* magazine should include more content geared towards young alumni

Next Steps

- ✧ These recommendations are now being discussed by the Directors in University Advancement to determine a 3-5 year implementation plan and appropriate allocation of resources.
- ✧ Testing has begun on a few initiatives such as Huskie Clubs, re-naming & re-vamping DISorientaiton, research into class gift programs and others.

Measures of Success

- ✧ Awareness (Number of interactions with alumni – verbal, written, web, etc.)
- ✧ Participation (Attendance at alumni events)
- ✧ Levels of Engagement (Number of alumni volunteers on and off campus)
- ✧ Gifts to Annual Giving program
- ✧ Number that move into leadership roles (Association board members, receives an award, makes a major gift, etc.)

Questions & Discussion



More Information

- ✧ If you would like to receive more information on this project please contact:

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Thank you!

