



Strategic Brief

Seton Hill University Alumni Website Redesign

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Introduction

WHAT'S IN THIS DOCUMENT?

In this document, you'll find an overall strategy and specific tactics we recommend to guide the development of a new website serving the alumnae and alumni of Seton Hill University. It's called a brief because it's... brief!

This brief begins a concept and strategy that should support all of the efforts on your site. Then, it moves through specific recommendations which include the proposed primary navigation structure for the site (how the content will be organized) and the templates we propose to design for integration into your content management system. We've also included key findings from our metrics analysis of your existing site, stakeholder interviews, and research conversations with alumnae/alumni.

Please provide us with questions, feedback, and revisions no later than 5pm on February 5th, 2016. Thank you for collaborating with us on this excellent work!

Website Concept

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

A website concept gives our work a center of gravity upon which other aspects of our strategy can balance. It should confirm what we've learned and answer the questions, "what is Seton Hill trying to say to alumnae/alumni with this website," and "why?"

The Concept:

Seton Hill University alumnae and alumni value their connection to the community which they experienced while they were in school. They also wish to extend that community. That community experience is built upon several things:

- Having **awareness** of the achievements of their peers, and of the ongoing development and growth of Seton Hill University
- Having **access** to people, including other alums, faculty, and advancement staff
- Reconnecting to their college experience through **activities**, primarily reunion

Alumnae and alumni engagement within the site and across other key engagement metrics, will thrive by supporting awareness, access, and activities.

Strategic Approach

GIVING THE CONCEPT FORM & FUNCTION

How does a concept turn into a real website? The following strategic approach translates the concept into real decisions governing content, information architecture, art direction, and even development.

The Strategy:

The new alumni web site should be the central source of content for any and all alumni outreach efforts. This currently includes the magazine, e-mail outreach, class notes, and event promotions. Information should be published on the site first, *then* on other mediums afterward. This is the opposite of the way you work now. But, with time and commitment to a different way of working, it will evolve from being “conversation anemic” to a conversation hub.

To do this, the best strategy is to **conceive of the site as a magazine itself**. This is not an unheard of strategy, but it is a more recent one. Recently Carnegie Mellon scrapped the print version of

their alumni magazine in favor of providing long form, journalistic style stories on a website called “Carnegie Mellon Today” (<http://cmtoday.cmu.edu/>) Much of Boston University’s online efforts focused on engaging alums exists in their award-winning magazine site, “Bostonia” (<http://www.bu.edu/bostonia>). In comparison, the official site for alums is primarily built using social media and Bostonia content (<http://www.bu.edu/alumni/>), and, as a result, is rather anemic.

The new site will be a magazine which tells the stories of alumnae and alumni, stories about the current state of the university, and facilitates the

business of alumni services as a clear but secondary purpose. It will eliminate the need for separate sites for alumni services and a magazine, because the magazine experience is the primary value proposition, as we learned in

our research. It's also where you've got the most valuable content, as evidenced by donations directly sourced from the magazine donation envelope. We want to help that success go digital.

Objectives & Key Results

WHY AND HOW

Companies such as Intel and Google use a framework known as Objectives & Key Results—or OKRs for short—to create an effective connection between site results and organization goals. OKRs help teams to focus and prioritize around a specific outcome.

Objectives are the qualitative part of the equation. They should be ambitious but vague, and occasionally uncomfortable because they force you to reflect on your own opinions. To help teams realize those Objectives, they are paired with quantitative Key Results. Good key results are hard to reach, but not unrealistic. Usually they are graded on a score from 0 to 1, and a good score is between 0.6 and 0.8. Scoring a 1 means it wasn't tough enough, but scoring less than a 0, it might have been too tough.

Seton Hill Alumni Objective & Key Results

Develop print magazine style reading, giving, and sharing behaviors online.

We know that the print magazine generates excellent giving behaviors in alumni. Let's move that behavior into the online space by tying web site giving to more frequent publications of articles.

Key Results

1. 50% increase in online giving rates around specific articles

We would like to see an increase in the percentage of gifts given online as you make magazine style articles more central to the experience. We'll design those articles so they tie directly into the giving process. Since we have a baseline of online giving behaviors that ranges from 5 to 200 gifts per month depending on the time of year, we would hope to see an increase of anywhere from 8 to 300 gifts per month, for the associated month. E.g. a month which previously

saw 20 gifts should see 30 under this new strategy.

2. Streamlined alumni notes creation process, resulting in increased alumni notes creation by 10%.

Our intention is to provide a streamlined, digital way of submitting and reviewing class notes, and make those notes a more central part of the digital experience. As such, you should see an increase in note submissions for all classes of 10%, and a decrease in the amount of effort in getting those class notes in front of alums.

3. Overall increase in content engagement, as measured by visits, of 50%

Currently your site sees an estimated 800 visits per day, and 4,000 visits per month using January 2016 as a baseline. We think our improvements should definitely result in an increase in those numbers, and the target we are shooting for is to double them. One year from now, in January 2017, we want to see 1,600 visits per day, and 8,000 visits per month.

Navigation & Template Recommendations

SITE STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS

Primary Navigation

The primary navigation structure of the site could be as follows:

- **Connect** (Alumni Stories, Class Notes, Profile Update Form*, Alumni Directory*, Corporate Connectors Content)
- **Events & Reunion** (Calendar, Event Registration*)
- **Ways to Give** (Giving Form* and General Giving information)
- **Contact Us** (Lead with Profile Update and Giving Call-to-Action, followed by staff directory organized by purpose to prevent

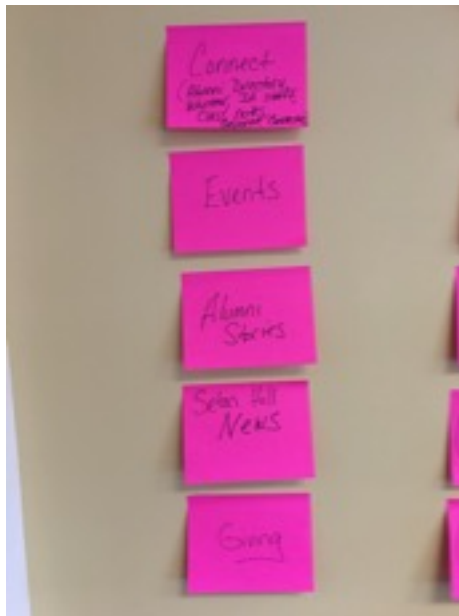
Items denoted with an asterisk* will live in Blackbaud systems, outside of the new templates.

Secondary Navigation

Secondary navigation will live in the footer but can also be surfaced in appropriate parts of other pages. It should be focused on actions we want alums to take.

- Share Your News
- Make a Gift
- Update Your Contact Information

This is our first recommendation, and we full expect to iterate on it when we deliver the first full sitemap and content structure document on February 16, 2016. But if you've got feedback now, let's hear it! For reference, here are some photographs of the navigation ideas which we developed together in our workshop.



Template Recommendations

All the templates we design and develop will be completely based existing visual styles and systems that make up the new Seton Hill University site. We will make the two sites appear seamless with one another.

Items denoted with an asterisk* will live in Blackbaud systems outside of the new site. Their functionality and design may be limited by Blackbaud's capabilities.

The eight templates that we will be developing for you are listed here:

- Home Page
- Landing Page (possibly the Connect page)
- Individual Story/Article Page
- Form Styles (including Giving*, Profile Update*, Class Notes, Contact Form)
- Events Calendar Landing Page
- Individual Event Landing, with Photo Gallery
- Alumni Directory*
- Contact Us

We will also adapt one of these into an additional template, an E-mail Template, for use with your e-mail newsletter and other forms of e-mail outreach.

Appendix 1: Alumnae/i Interview Findings

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seton Hill is community. Students come to Seton Hill for an education, to become job-ready, and to be with like-minded people. What they find along the way is a community that former students describe as welcoming, familial, approachable, spiritual, and uniquely Seton Hill. Once students graduate, they lose the access they once had to that community. The most active alumni either seek out that community (actively participate on the board or in events) or happen upon it by accident (are asked to help and become active over time). Through their participation as active alumni members, they rekindle that sense of community both with other alumni and Seton Hill Staff and Faculty. The more they experience that sense of community and access they had as students, the more they participate in planning and fundraising capacities.

If Alumni Relations focuses digital efforts (website and also cross-channel strategies - more on that below) on communicating and building a sense of

community, it will not only serve alumni, but also increase engagement and participation.

The community that students and active alumni experience is comprised of two things that alumni digital services should feature prominently:

- People
- Place

And that community is inscribed with these values:

- Achievement
- Service
- Access

These things that make up the SHU community aren't just things that inform what technical features the website should have, but a tone/voice feature that all digital (and analog) communications for alumni services. This extends to print and in-person event planning.

Key Findings and Recommendations

People are a Key Feature of Seton Hill—Feature People Prominently

Many interviewees mentioned staff, faculty, even Seton Hill presidents by name. They told stories about being friendly with and on a first name basis with the president. They were and still are friends with professors. They made friends with other students who they still keep touch with. The biggest feature here is the access they felt as students to all of these people. If they had a question, they could knock on the President's door or call up an administrator on the phone. Because of the small class sizes, they knew many of their classmates and felt a sense of camaraderie. Once they graduated, many alumni felt like they lost the access they once had to their peers, faculty, and staff...or they didn't know they still had access.

The alumni website and accompanying communications (email, social media, events) can imbue the alumni experience with a sense of and

access to its wonderful community of people in the following ways:

Imagery

Feature images of students, faculty, and staff prominently throughout the website, especially on the homepage and key landing pages.

Achievements and News

Alumni are instilled with an immense amount of school pride. They are especially proud of the people (students, faculty, staff, alumni) and what they have accomplished. Several alumni mentioned reading (or scanning) for updates in The Forward magazine, but not wanting to wait half a year to get those updates.

Several alumni mentioned getting such updates via Facebook (either from the school or more likely from the alumni themselves) and through informal social networks (local dinners with friends). While alumni have ways to get this information, the alumni website can help by prominently featuring such information on the

homepage and key landing pages, as well as in key communication materials. While alumni mention that they are unlikely to visit the website unless they want to find out more about, or register for, an event or find out how to contact someone (more on key behaviors below). They say that if they do visit the website, they want to feel a sense of accomplishment and serendipitously come across more news. It makes them feel good. The better they feel, the more involved they want to be.

Service

For the alumni we talked to, service is a key feature of the Seton Hill community and its people. Several alumni mentioned the Sisters of Charity and the pride they feel having been involved in an institution that fosters service. Several alumni mentioned that if they knew they could be of service, they would be more likely to get involved in alumni activities. Many alumni mentioned that they were more likely to give time and energy to the school than money at first. This is either because when they first graduated, they didn't earn enough to give financially, or because they weren't yet ready to commit financially. The

more involved they became over the years, the more likely they were to give or help fundraise. We believe that the more Seton Hill can engage alumni in some kind of service capacity, the more likely it will be able to increase financial participation over time.

A (Virtual) Open Door

Alumni want to feel the way they felt when the president invited them to coffee or when they knew office staff by name. There are many ideas Alumni Relations probably has or can brainstorm here, but some of ours include: letters from the president, more prominent staff directories and contact information, luncheons (either in Greensburg or when staff or the president travels to other cities), and updates from professors (many currently rely on Facebook for this). What's key here is that alumni feel that open channel and access. A little can go a long way.

Alumni Database

While many alumni expressed that there may be privacy issues or reasons why this can't be published, a searchable alumni database was by

far the most requested website feature. Alumni want a way to track down former peers. If technical feasibility limits this from being possible, the next best thing would be to let website visitors know that they can and how to contact Alumni Relations to track down other Alumni.

Imbue the Website and Digital Communications with a Sense of Place

Seton Hill is built on people and it's literally built on a hill. That hill carries a lot of symbolism for alumni. The hill symbolizes accomplishment and grandeur ("I climbed the hill!" "atop a hill"), community ("on the hill" or "expanding into town"), and much later in life a barrier to access ("I can't climb the hill and can't find parking on the hill, so I can't participate in campus life anymore" or more commonly "I don't live near Greensburg anymore and am not as much a part of the community as I would like to be"). The hill is also situated in, yet apart from, Greensburg. That barrier or separation is something that most alumni support removing. They are proud of Seton Hill's involvement in the greater community in Greensburg, as well as other states, even other countries, beyond the local area. The more the website and

accompanying digital communications feature the geography and grandeur of the hill, as well as what it signifies, the more alumni will feel a continuity with their student experience that they otherwise miss since graduating.

Alumni Services can imbue their website and digital communications with a sense of place in several ways:

Imagery

Just as alumni identify with photographs of people from the Seton Hill community, they identify with the hill, campus, and what they remember as being beautiful, serene, and awe inspiring. While website imagery cannot replace being on campus, it should communicate and exude the same feelings alumni had when they were students. This will remind them of what it feels like to be a part of the Seton Hill community, which is something they miss and want more of.

Events

Accessing information and registering for local campus (and Greensburg), and local (around the

country, near wherever alumni live) events is by far the most common and frequent use case alumni have for using the alumni website. Web analytics should support this anecdotal claim. Currently, events are “buried” in a calendar. Alumni find it difficult to find out what’s going on, whether it’s on campus or abroad. Some alumni said that the only way they could get information about an event was by getting an email and having a direct url to an event page, but that they’d never be able to find the event on the website. Most alumni admitted that while they rarely visit the alumni website to get news or information, if they are on the website, for any reason, they want it to feel dynamic, up to date, and informative. Events (and news, see above) should be featured prominently on the homepage, as well as throughout secondary and tertiary pages so that alumni: a) know that the community is active, and b) find interesting events they can attend...or ways to participate.

Note: While one alumna expressed an interest in participating in virtual events through the website, this interest and behavior was an outlier and not something that should be a current strategic focus. For now, in person events are central to

how alumni engage with the community after graduation. The website should support in-person events and not supplement them.

News

Almost as important as the hill are the buildings and changes to buildings situated on that hill...and more so down the hill and in town. Alumni are keenly interested in and proud of the construction projects happening on campus and in town. They want to know about new buildings, renovations, what’s new on campus, and what’s the same. Staying informed about construction on campus is a way for alumni to stay as connected to the campus as they were when they were students. Alumni aren’t afraid of change, nor do they want change...they are ambivalent to change. But...alumni love to know about change. It keeps them connected.

Consider the Website a Hub That Alumni Might Visit Infrequently, But That Represents Broader Alumni Relations Cross-channel Initiatives

When asked, all of the alumni we spoke to said that they rarely or never use the alumni website.

That said, many of them do use the website to find out about and register for events. This discrepancy can be explained in two ways. First, people consider “using” a website something you do when they actively go to Facebook or The Wall Street Journal to see what’s going on. That’s not a behavior that alumni have with the alumni website, nor are they likely to have that relationship with the website in the future.

Second, while all alumni we talked to visited the website for event-related tasks, that behavior is almost invisible. Participating in events happens because of an email notification or a Facebook post. Alumni then navigate to the alumni website to complete a transaction. That interaction almost becomes invisible and seamless (except when events or registering is difficult, which is the biggest pain point people have with the current website), but is nonetheless the key interaction all of the alumni we spoke with have with the website. Considering how alumni do and don’t engage with the current website, the redesign strategy should focus on events as the main task, while then supporting all of the needs, activities, and tone listed above. Doing so will help alumni

actively participate in events, while feeling that sense of community they miss.

For the website, as well as social media and email (which is where all alumni said they get most of their alumni news), here is how alumni want to stay and feel involved:

- News about alumni achievements
- News about the campus (buildings, programs, etc.)
- News about alumni, generally (life events, etc.)
- News about university achievements - these alumni know that SHU is the best and want to be reminded of it
- Stay connected with faculty, staff (and the president) - what are they up to? How do alumni update them back?
- Events: Local Greensburg and campus events
- Events: Local to where alumni live or are traveling to
- Ways to volunteer (Greensburg and local to where they live)
- Ways to contact other alumni (they hack it with FB now)
- Ways to share what they're up to
- Ways to share when they have job openings, internships, etc.

Appendix 2: Stakeholder Findings

WHAT WE HEARD FROM YOU

Home Page

- Needs to inform & engage
- Should feel sophisticated & fresh
- Login present and required for a lot of content
- Upcoming events helps
- Events registration, volunteering, prayer requests, post class notes, and more
- Problem: very few people are paying attention to it
- Older alums will always call Establish baseline measurements for each key business goal.

Giving

- 25 to 200 gifts per month
- Supports one time, recurring, campaign, event based gifts
- Team is getting the hang of what they can customize in Blackbaud/Raiser's Edge

Forward Magazine

- 200+ views since last issue launch
- Far too clunky
- No direct article linking
- Content re-entry
- Great source of stories, e.g. the teacher that pushed students into the pool
- Locally designed by Dragon's Teeth
- Up to \$50K in giving per issue

Events

- Best way to reconnect to classmates/the university
- Complex process of content creation between net community and Raiser's Edge - a lot of back and forth
- Better landing templates for events are desired
- Technical challenges related to names, accurate records/registration

Class Notes

- People like reading about themselves (and people they know)
- Disorganized and highly manual process via e-mail, class managers, etc.
- Would like to move this outside of Raiser's Edge

Alumni Profile Updates

- Updates every day!
- Minimizes the need to rely on conversation to get contact information
- People don't realize that an "alumni profile" updates the phone directory

Corporate Connectors Program

- New program
- Relatively simple content requirements, text and contact forms
- Sign up to volunteer/join as a company

Appendix 3: Metrics Findings

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

Audience Size

- Up to 1970s: 2,500
- 70s-90s: 5,000
- 2000s: 5,750
- Total Alumni: 13K +

Alumni Site/Magazine Metrics

- 60K + Visits Per Year (Home)
- nearly 4K Visits This Month (Home)
- nearly 800 page view per day (Site)
- Average Page Views per Visit (1)
- Magazine: 200ish views a month

Main Seton Hill Site (For Comparison)

- 660K + Sessions Per Year
- nearly 45K Sessions This Month
- nearly 5,200 page views per day (Site)
- Average Page Views per Visit (nearly 3)
- Bounce rate (60%)
- New Sessions (50%)

Estimated Alumni Engagement (Not Accurate*)

- Per month as against audience size: 30 %**
- Per day against audience size: 6%**
- Magazine (6 mos) against audience size: 1.5%**
- Need to know uniques!
- Consider internal traffic, including alumni office

* Take these numbers and percentages with a big grain of salt. Because Blackbaud does not present unique visitors in their interface, this is the *best case scenario* for the numbers we've observed. The actual numbers are probably much lower, assuming an amount of internal (Seton Hill staff) visitors and repeat visitors.