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# An examination of alumni engagement at Rowan University

Jessica Kanady

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**AN EXAMINATION OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY**

by  
Jessica R. Kanady

A Thesis

Submitted to the  
Department of Educational Services and Leadership  
College of Education  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in Higher Education Administration  
at  
Rowan University  
May 6, 2015

Thesis Chair: Burton R. Sisco, Ed.D.

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## **Dedication**

*I would like to dedicate this thesis to my favorite Rowan University alumnus, my husband, Brian Kanady.*

## **Acknowledgments**

First, I would like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Burton Sisco. I am extremely grateful for all of the time you spent with me preparing this thesis and your dedication in ensuring it was a quality product that I could be proud of. Thank you not only for your assistance throughout this process, but also for your guidance throughout my time in the program. I appreciate your advice, support, and understanding.

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It is also appropriate for me to thank my family. Mom and Dad, thank you for your encouragement throughout this process. I would not have been able to do this

without your help. I could have never imagined that when you dropped me off at Rowan University for my undergraduate degree so many years ago, that I would be returning for my master's degree. Thank you for instilling in me the value of education and a strong work ethic. Additionally, I would like to thank my sister, Michelle Meehan. You were there for me throughout the entirety of this process. From the beginning, you always knew exactly what to say - advising me to take everything one step at a time. I look up to you in so many ways. You truly are a shining example of a woman who can do it all.

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## **Abstract**

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AN EXAMINATION OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY  
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The purposes of this study were to (a) examine what selected alumni report about their engagement as alumni at Glassboro State College/Rowan University in the areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, student recruitment, and satisfactory reflection (b) determine if there was a significant relationship between demographics factors such as age, sex, income, spouse/partner alma mater, distance from the university, and reported engagement (c) determine if there was a significant relationship between undergraduate satisfaction and alumni engagement (d) investigate what would encourage selected alumni to be more engaged as a graduate of the institution (e) see what recommendations subjects provide for future alumni events and activities. The survey tool that was utilized consisted of 59 items which collected demographics and employed a series of Likert-style statements. There was also one open-ended question. The subjects consisted of 423 alumni who graduated with their bachelor's degree from the institution. The results of the study showed that the most frequent form of engagement across all factor groupings was in the area of satisfactory reflection, followed by student recruitment. More alumni reported that they very often formally advocate or lobby on behalf of the institution than very often engage in any one area in the entire giving factor grouping. Results of the study showed no significant relationship between demographic factors and forms of engagement. There was a moderately strong correlation between

three areas of satisfactory reflection and student recruitment. Alumni reported that they would be more engaged if they had more time or more money. Sixty-five alumni responded to the question asking for recommendations for future events and activities. Answers ranged from professional and career-oriented events to a camping outing, and everything in-between.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

Alumni play an important role in the continued success and advancement of any collegiate institution. When institutions are effective, they yield alumni who are not only successful, but also share a love for and loyalty to their alma mater. Affection towards a graduate's alma mater and allegiance can play out in a number of behaviors after graduation including various opportunities for engagement. Engagement may include, but is not limited to, recruiting students, becoming politically involved, making financial contributions, and attending events organized by one's alumni association.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Alumni engagement at colleges and universities is important for many reasons. Creating a culture of philanthropy among alumni is vital to the success and sustainability of the institution. Also, alumni participation rate would likely be considered when the institution is making decisions on how to allocate its resources and when large scale companies and foundations are looking to make donations (Annualgivingexchange.com, 2014). In addition, giving can help or hinder an institution's reputation, as that specific form of alumni engagement is taken into consideration for institution rankings, which potential students, parents, and counselors regularly review before making the decision of where to apply (The Annual Giving Network, 2013). Furthermore, high engagement rates are an indicator of alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate experience (Annualgivingexchange.com, 2014). Consequently, the level of alumni engagement has implications for all colleges and universities.

Rowan University is currently able to measure engagement in a limited number of ways. Some of the ways include calculating attendance at events, number of alumni who volunteer, and number of alumni who open email they receive from the office.

According to Chris D'Angelo (personal communication, March 25, 2015), associate director of alumni engagement, attendance at events has risen from 562 in fiscal year 2012 to 1,501 in fiscal year 2014. The number of volunteers has also increased from 86 in fiscal year 2013 to over 120 in fiscal year 2014 (C. D'Angelo, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Volunteer numbers captured include alumni who serve as Alumni Board members, alumni who serve on other known alumni advisory boards across campus, alumni guest speakers, and alumni who work as event volunteers. However, D'Angelo (personal communication, March 26, 2015) reports that capturing volunteer metrics can be challenging since alumni may volunteer in areas of the institution where there is no formal involvement with the Office of Alumni Engagement. The Office of Alumni Engagement is also able to measure the open rates of emails sent from the office, including monthly newsletters, information regarding alumni benefits and services, and emails for large events like Homecoming. According to D'Angelo's records for fiscal year 2014, only 16% of alumni receiving these emails are opening them (personal communication, March 26, 2015).

Another form of engagement measured at Rowan University is participation rate. Participation rate measures the percentage of alumni who provide financial contributions to the college during the year. At Rowan, the participation rate is very low. According to University documentation (Appendix A), the number of alumni on record has increased by over 20,000 since 2007. Though, the same documentation also showed that, for the

most part, the percentage of alumni who donate has been on a steady decline from 8.32% in fiscal year 2007 to 2.81% in fiscal year 2014. The participation rate at Rowan is less than half of what the average percentage rate across the country was in 2013 - just under 9% (Case.org, 2014a). However, the 9% also includes private institutions, which typically have higher participation rates than public institutions like Rowan University.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was multifaceted. First, it aimed to see what selected alumni reported about their engagement at Glassboro State College/Rowan University in the areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, student recruitment, and satisfactory reflection. Secondly, it examined the relationship between demographic factors such as age, gender, income, spouse/partner alma mater, distance from the university, state of residence, and reported engagement. Thirdly, it sought to find if there is a significant relationship between undergraduate satisfaction and alumni engagement. Fourthly, it investigated what would encourage selected alumni to be more engaged as a graduate of the institution. Lastly, the study sought recommendations from subjects for future alumni engagement opportunities such as events and activities.

### **Significance of the Study**

Although Rowan University's Office of Alumni Engagement is looking to increase engagement and giving, recent research on the topic specific to their alumni has not been conducted to this extent. The results of this study provides a more detailed look into the engagement patterns of university alumni and factors that impact engagement. Such factors include demographics and undergraduate student satisfaction. In addition, the research sheds light on what alumni report would boost their engagement following

graduation, as well as offers them the opportunity to suggest an event or engagement opportunity. The information obtained not only assists the office in planning well-attended events, activities, and meaningful opportunities for engagement, but also targets their efforts to increase giving. Overall, the results assists the office in improving practice which will assist the institution in better serving their alumni.

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

The scope of this survey was limited to alumni who were enrolled at the Glassboro campus and received their bachelor's degree anytime between when the institution was founded in 1923 and 2014. Originally, the research sought to use only a representative sample. For the representative sample, all subjects had to have a current email address on file with the Office of Alumni Engagement so they could be sent the electronic survey link. Of the approximate 78,000 alumni, roughly 40,000 alumni have an email address on file. The original subjects were a representative sample, made up of 1,053 alumni.

Initially, I experienced a poor response rate. After a month of the survey being made available to the representative sample, I began to pursue a convenience sample to increase the number of responses. The electronic survey tool was distributed via email and through my social media accounts such as Facebook and LinkedIn. I also pursued another avenue of gaining survey takers by attending a large alumni event where I was able to approach alumni and personally request their participation. I encouraged subjects to share the survey with other alumni who graduated between 1923 and 2014 who were enrolled at the Glassboro campus and received their bachelor's degree from the institution.

The survey was voluntary, and only those who returned or completed the survey participated in the data collection. The self-reporting nature of this study assumed that all subjects were alumni and all subjects were truthful in their responses. The electronic nature of the survey, and the means by which it was distributed, may have limited potential responses. In addition to me being an alumna of the institution, at the time of the research, I was working as an intern in Rowan University's Office of Alumni Engagement, which may have resulted in possible bias.

### **Operational Definitions**

1. Alumna: A singular noun referring to one female graduate (Grammarist, 2011).
2. Alumnae: A plural noun referring to a group of female graduates (Grammarist, 2011).
3. Alumni: A plural noun referring either to a group of male graduates or to a group of both male and female graduates (Grammarist, 2011).
4. Alumni Engagement: Refers to all ways in which alumni can be involved with their alma mater including, but not limited to, giving, attendance at events, visiting campus, politics, student recruitment, and interaction with institutional social media.
5. Alumnus: A singular noun referring to one male graduate or unisex singular (Grammarist, 2011).
6. Fiscal Year: A budget year used for calculating annual financial statements in higher education.
7. Giving: Refers to financial contributions made by an alumnus to their alma mater.

8. Participation Rate: A percentage of alumni giving, calculated by dividing the number of undergraduate alumni donors by the number of undergraduate alumni of record (The Annual Giving Network, 2013).

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. What do selected alumni report about their engagement as alumni at Glassboro State College/Rowan University in the areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, student recruitment, and satisfactory reflection?
2. Is there a significant relationship between demographic factors such as age, sex, income, spouse/partner alma mater, distance from the university, and reported engagement?
3. Is there a significant relationship between undergraduate satisfaction and alumni engagement?
4. What would encourage selected alumni to be more engaged as a graduate of the institution?
5. What recommendations do subjects provide for future alumni events and activities?

### **Overview of the Study**

Chapter II provides a review of scholarly literature pertinent to this study. This section includes discussion on the role of alumni affairs and perceived alumni role. Forms of alumni engagement are also discussed, including alumni association membership, volunteerism, political involvement, monetary donations and other forms of involvement. Additionally, undergraduate experience and demographic factors that

impact alumni engagement are covered. Factors discussed include student involvement, Greek organization membership, student athletics, current distance from the institution, marital status, years since graduation, gender, and emotional connection. Furthermore, Chapter II discusses three relevant theories that explain the relationship between alumni and alma mater, including the theory of discretionary collaborative behavior, social exchange theory, and theory of reciprocity. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of topics discussed.

Chapter III discusses the methodology and procedures used in this study. The context of the study, the population and sample selection, instrumentation, data collection processes, and analysis of the data are all included.

Chapter IV presents the findings or results of this study. This chapter addresses research questions posed in the introduction of the study. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was utilized to summarize data in this chapter.

Chapter V discusses the major findings of the study as well as provides a comprehensive summary. Conclusions and recommendations for practice and further study are also included.

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

Alumni engagement plays a vital role in the advancement and success of an institution. Some alumni choose to become engaged in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. This literature review covers the role of both alumni and institutions' alumni affairs offices. The review touches on opportunities for alumni to become engaged. Areas of engagement include but are not limited to alumni association membership, volunteerism, political influence, and monetary donations. Student experiences and demographic factors that may impact alumni engagement are also covered. Additionally, this literature review reports on the level of undergraduate involvement, Greek organization membership, and student-athletics in regards to the connection with alumni engagement. Also discussed are demographic factors that may affect alumni engagement. Demographic factors explored include: distance from the institution, marital status, years since graduation, and gender. The emotional connection an alumnus feels towards their alma mater is also examined. In conclusion, the literature review discusses theories that can be applied to explain the relationship between alumni and their alma mater.

#### **Alumni Affairs and Alumni Role**

Alumni affairs operations are a distinctive and crucial branch of every institution of higher education. The office is a fundamental contributor to the institutional advancement of the college or university due to its significant relationship with past students. Former students, otherwise known as alumni, have the ability to advance the

institution's mission and philosophy, provide opportunities for current students, sustain the institution, and to create and maintain its positive reputation (Shakil & Faizi, 2012). A positive relationship between alumni and alumni affairs is needed in order to be sure that messages about an institution are both positive and current (Case.org, 2014b).

Some researchers also contend that a strong connection between alumni affairs and student affairs makes for a successful alumni department. Though every institution is different, Singer and Hughey (2002) suggest that both student affairs and alumni affairs offices stand to gain when they collaborate on activities. Collaboration improves the student experience, resulting in an increased sense of connection with the institution upon graduation (Singer & Hughey, 2002). Individuals who have an increased sense of connection with their institution are more likely to be supportive of its mission as an alumnus (Singer & Hughey, 2002). Alumni affairs professionals aim to improve the image of the institution and those connected (Singer & Hughey, 2002). That being said, alumni offices are unique from many other offices on a campus because they work with alumni whose association with the institution differs from that of a current student (Singer & Hughey, 2002).

When one transitions from a student to an alumnus, it can be difficult for an alumni affairs office to determine why one alumnus becomes engaged while another leaves the institution behind. Researchers have been studying the reasons for years. McDearmon (2013) suggests that one factor impacting engagement after commencement lies with an alumnus' perceived expectations of their role upon graduation. Weerts and Ronca (2007), report that expectations historically established by institutions include, but

are not limited to, making monetary donations, participating in political advocacy, and recruiting new students.

### **Opportunities for Alumni Engagement**

**Alumni association membership.** Traditionally, one of the numerous ways an alumnus can become engaged with their alma mater is through a membership in their alumni association. According to Newman and Petrosko (2011), membership of an alumni association is valuable to the growth of the institution since, in some instances, members provide funding to the college's association and also serve as a valuable resource to the institution. Though the importance of alumni association membership is known, practitioners are reporting that it is a challenge to recruit and retain members (Newman & Petrosko, 2011). Stuart (2009) states that affiliation could be declining as a result of fees associated with membership.

**Volunteerism.** Engagement in an alumni association does not always come at a cost. For instance, volunteerism is often cited as a form of involvement. Volunteer alumni can serve as recruiters, mentors, and help elevate the institution's profile (Weerts & Ronca, 2007). In fact, recruitment of new students is one of the most important tasks alumni can assume. Alumni often serve as some of the most enthusiastic advocates for their alma mater (Fogg, 2008). An alumnus is a free walking advertisement for a college or university. More importantly, alumni have the capability to reach more potential students than an admissions office (Fogg, 2008). Still, there are challenges when involving alumni in the recruitment process. Fogg (2008) suggests a great deal of training is needed to ensure that each alumnus is equipped with all the most current institution information.

**Political engagement.** Another area of alumni engagement that may require some preparation is playing a part in politics. For example, it is not unusual for alumni to act as both advocates and lobbyists for their alma mater (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Weerts and Ronca report that this is just one of the ways institutions are looking to utilize the influence of their alumni. In a 2010 study by Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford, a number of alumni report that they show support of their organization primarily through political actions. This type of engagement may include meeting with legislators or writing letters to local officials on behalf of the institution (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2010).

**Monetary donations and giving.** The need for monetary donations to higher education institutions is not new. Research dating back to 1978 suggests that there has been an increase in monetary demands placed on institutions of higher education (Carlson). According to Carlson (1978), the growing need for financial assistance may have contributed to colleges' great deal of growth over the years. That growth has led to an emphasis that has been placed on the need for facilities, classes, and services for students (Carlson, 1978). Those needs have only increased since Carlson's research. Recently, studies find that states are still funding higher education at pre-recession levels (Mitchell, Palacios & Leachman, 2014). Since fiscal year 2008, state funding for higher education in New Jersey has dropped over 23% - equaling more than \$2,000 per student (Mitchell, Palacios & Leachman, 2014). For that reason, institutions are dependent on financial support from their alumni to cover operating expenses, implement large campaigns, funds, and a variety of other areas (Holmes, 2009).

While historically tuition fees and support funds from the government have served as the largest support systems, they can no longer be the primary financial

backings for an institution (Lertputtarak & Supitchayangkool, 2014). Currently, charitable donations have become a significant source of revenue for higher education (Holmes, 2009). Alumni are often the individuals courted to contribute because they tend to be the most loyal support group (Lertputtarak & Supitchayangkool, 2014). Gottfried and Johnson (2006) report that on average, alumni donations make up the largest source of contributions to an institution. That being said, alumni play an important role in financing their alma mater.

Carlson (1978) suggests that institutions capitalize on the natural tie between a alumni and their alma mater. However, research illustrates that being characterized as an alumnus does not necessarily mean that one is any more likely to donate. In fact, a great deal of research has been conducted to determine linkages between certain factors and motives behind monetary contributions to an institution. With this information, alumni offices spend a great deal of time and resources to solicit alumni donors (Holmes, 2009).

While alumni offices play a vital role in the advancement of a given institution (Singer & Hughey, 2002), it is not the only avenue in which alumni can contribute financially. Indirect monetary contributions through the purchase of university insignia is another way that institutions can obtain revenue from alumni. Nevertheless, there is a correlation between the two. Tom and Elmer (1994) conducted a study to see if there was a relationship to the purchase of institutional insignia and alumni contribution behavior. The study found that those who possess goods with university insignia indicate greater willingness to give than alumni who do not (Tom & Elmer, 1994).

**Other forms of alumni engagement.** There are other forms of alumni engagement on which only a small body of research has been conducted. For instance,

there are those who stay connected by reading alumni-related publications. Individuals who read these kinds of publications may be more inclined to contribute (Conley, 1999). These types of publications are specifically designed to keep alumni informed of an institution's various activities, achievements, and demands (Conley, 1999). Additionally, there are those who visit campus for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, athletic and alumni events. Conley (1999) references six out of nine studies that consider this to be a significant variable in the magnitude of alumni giving. Nevertheless, reading alumni publications and visiting campus have not been studied as much as other forms of alumni involvement.

### **Undergraduate Experience and Demographic Factors that Impact Alumni Engagement**

**Student involvement.** Many studies show that alumni engagement with their alma mater is related to past student experiences. According to Singer and Hughey (2002), the success of an alumni office starts with the overall quality of student life experienced as an undergrad. This concept was the motivation behind a 2005 study conducted by Gaier. Gaier (2005) defined involvement as either participating in the alma mater in the past three years, or alumni giving. Overall, the study showed significant increases in alumnus engagement and giving as a result of satisfaction with the participant's undergraduate experience. In particular, academic satisfaction during one's undergraduate years was more closely tied to alumni giving than other forms of engagement (Gaier, 2005).

Nevertheless, research on connecting undergraduate involvement to alumni engagement is inconclusive. For instance, McNally (1985) conducted a study at

California State University at Sacramento with 400 alumni. The study analyzed alumni philanthropy related to personal, academic, and social characteristics. McNally (1985) found that there were no statistically significant differences between those who contributed money and those who did not contribute money in relation to organizational memberships as an undergraduate.

**Greek organization membership.** Involvement in student activities as an undergraduate also plays a noteworthy role in alumni engagement. Gaier (2005) found that alumni who participated in at least one formal student activity were 87% more likely to give and 1.5 times more likely to be engaged in other ways. Though undergraduate Greek organization membership would be considered a formal student activity, Gaier (2005) found that there was no significant relationship between Greek organization membership and giving. However, alumni engagement was 78% more likely for those who participated in a Greek organization (Gaier, 2005). Similarly, a 1999 survey conducted with Pennsylvania State University (Penn State) alumni indicated that Greek membership had a positive impact on alumni activities including participation in alumni questionnaires (Ikenberry, 1999). Ikenberry also found that Greek membership had a significant correlation with annual membership with Penn State's alumni association. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that the increased opportunities for social involvement an institution's main campus may offer, including things like Greek membership, could impact student involvement and thus later influence alumni engagement (Ikenberry, 1999).

**Student athletics.** Alumni who were student-athletes are another population that merits further attention. Filardo (2003) sought to find if it was probable that student-

athletes would make financial contributions to their alma mater. Filardo (2003) designed a survey aimed at measuring the attitudes of educational philanthropy of alumni student-athletes. The study found that student-athletes who experienced more academic success were most likely to contribute. In fact, of the top five reasons alumni student-athletes give back to their alma mater, receiving an excellent education was number one with 87% indicating that (Filardo, 2003). This is consistent with Gaier's (2005) finding that academic satisfaction is closely tied to giving.

**Distance from the institution.** Proximity to the institution is considered a demographic factor that may play a role in alumni engagement. Holmes (2009) found that alumni who live within 250 miles of their alma mater were amongst the most generous donors. Consistent with Holmes' findings, Gaier (2005) found that alumni who lived in the same state as the institution were more likely to give and participate in a number of other forms of engagement. When Gaier (2005) compared those who lived out of state, but in the same region as their institution, and those who lived in a state further away, both categories were just as likely to donate.

**Marital status.** Marital status has often been considered another demographic indicator for alumni giving. Specifically, there is interest in the role marriage between two alumni plays on engagement and giving. The research does suggest a positive correlation between the two. As an example, studies conducted by Ikenberry (1999) and Okunade and Berl (1997) found that one of the most promising indicators for fundraising prospects is alumni whose spouses were also alumni. Another study conducted by Thomas (2005) at Hardeman University in Tennessee, revealed that alumni who were married to another alumnus had donated more than three times the amount over their

lifetime than those who were not married to an alumnus. For those reasons, Okunade and Berl (1997) suggest that it may be more profitable for alumni associations to target this population to solicit donations.

**Years since graduation.** The number of years since graduation is another strong distinguishing factor between donors and non-donors that researchers have focused their attention. Thomas (2005) found that the average donor in his sample graduated 6.25 years ago, while the average non-donor graduated 4.95 years ago. The findings of Gaier's 2005 study were similar. The results indicated that younger or more recent alumni gave significantly less than their older counterparts. Though younger alumni are less likely to give, they are more likely to be engaged in other ways (Gaier, 2005). Gaier (2005) asserts that this may be the case because typically younger alumni have not yet acquired the financial resources to give. However, they are more engaged because they usually are not bogged down with as many familial responsibilities.

**Gender.** While gender is another demographic factor tied to alumni engagement, the research has yielded varying results. McNally (1985) reports that males are slightly more likely to contribute than females. Additionally, the analysis of a study conducted by Haddad (1986), shows that males contributed larger amounts of money to their alma mater than females. Conversely, more recent research by Holmes (2009) found that males were 7% less likely to donate than females. A 2007 study also indicated that females are more likely to give to their alma mater in other ways, such as volunteering (Weerts & Ronca).

**Emotional connection.** The attachment to an institution that is formed as a student has implications for alumni engagement. Hanson (2000) declared that each

student forms a unique and special connection to his or her alma mater and Ikenberry (1999) suggests that the main campus often facilitates a stronger commitment to the institution. According to Ikenberry (1999), many alumni continue to feel a sense of commitment to the institution years after graduation. Those individuals normally join alumni associations and donate to their alma maters (Ikenberry, 1999). Furthering that point, research suggests that alumni who have positive feelings toward the university are more likely to give (Gaier, 2005). It is believed by Conley (1999) that emotional attachment is a significant predictor of donor status. Additionally, those who have a strong emotional attachment to their alma mater are more likely to want to send their children to the same school (Baker, 1998).

### **Relevant Theories**

**Theory of discretionary collaborative behavior.** Research shows there are a number of theories that can be used to explain or understand the relationship between an alumnus and their alma mater. One example is the informal theory of discretionary collaborative behavior (DCB). According to Heckman and Guskey (1998), this theory operates on the belief that alumni are past customers and thus alumni and university share a marketing relationship. DCB has been well-defined as a behavior by a customer to help a vendor (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). Said behavior is performed without expectation and contributes to the effective functioning of the relationship between alumni and alma mater (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

In their study, Heckman and Guskey (1998) put forth five theoretical propositions that aim to guide further research on DCB and higher education. The first is that customers, or alumni, perform discretionary behaviors that are not bound by any

contractual requirements (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). The second is that self-sacrifice is not specifically related to the act of discretionary collaborative behaviors (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). Heckman and Guskey's third proposition is that certain individuals are more likely to perform these types of behaviors. Those individuals are typically knowledgeable, influential, and informed. The fourth proposition is that bonds and customer satisfaction are the greatest indicators of DCB. Lastly, the final proposition states that over time, performing discretionary collaborative behaviors will increase customer satisfaction and also cause ties to deepen (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

Heckman and Guskey (1998) believe that it would be beneficial for institutions to proactively solicit support from their past customers, alumni. To do so, they suggest that four things should be considered when encouraging discretionary collaborative behavior. Satisfaction, relational bonds, personal attributes, and asking for help are all important factors (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). For instance, customer satisfaction is the key to building strong customer relationships. Another important facet is the formation and continuation of strong bonds (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). Simply asking for help is an additional issue that should be considered. However, it is important to identify individuals with attributes that have commonly been associated with a greater likelihood to help (Heckman & Guskey, 1998).

**Social exchange theory.** A more formal theory used to explain the relationship between alumni and their alma mater is social exchange theory. According to Fournier (2014), social exchange theory proposes a process of cost-benefit analyses between parties. The theory is often used in social psychology and sociology. The theory can be applied to almost any relationship, including the association between alumni and their

alma mater. In relation to higher education, a successful relationship would be one in which both alumni and institution feel that the benefit of their relationship with one another outweighs the cost.

When parties feel they benefit from a relationship, they are more likely to invest in it. With that said, social exchange theory is particularly significant when an exchange of money is being made (Dial, 2012). According to Dial (2012), in higher education, alumni who make monetary contributions may feel that they have some sort of power over the institution, consequently benefitting them. The institution also stands to benefit from this social exchange. For instance, Dial (2012) states that an institution typically has power over how to use funds or recognize donors.

Charitable giving is not the only give-and-take between the two parties. Social exchange theory is also noteworthy in cases where alumni are volunteering their time (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). When the theory is applied to volunteering, Weerts and Ronca (2008) suggest that the costs of volunteering are weighed against the benefits alumni have received from their alma mater in either the past or present. Based on that information, an individual then makes an informed decision on whether or not they plan to donate their time (Weerts & Ronca, 2008). Weerts and Ronca (2008) report that alumni who volunteer at their institution may be doing so in response to benefits they believe they have received as a result being exposed to a high quality academic program.

**Theory of reciprocity.** The theory of reciprocity is a commonly employed to describe the relationship between alumni and alma mater. Gouldner (1960) was one of the most well-known, if not the most well-known, theorist who spoke about the theory or norm. Gouldner (1960) suggests that one of the universal demands of the norm of

reciprocity is that people should help those who have helped them. Simply, those who have received assistance feel a sense of obligation to reciprocate it (Baldwin, 2008).

This theory can easily be applied to the relationship that exists between alumni and their alma mater. While enrolled, students and institutions mutually benefit from one another. Students contribute financially to the institution. In turn, the institution provides them with an education. As alumni, the reciprocal relationship continues. In the results of a 2008 qualitative study, Baldwin reports that alumni donors often express the desire to “give back” to their institution. According to Baldwin (2008), the interviewees felt that they had received something of value to them either personally or professionally.

### **Summary of the Literature Review**

When a strong relationship exists between an alumnus and their alma mater, the institution stands to benefit. Alumni often become involved by serving in the capacity of promoter, ambassador, volunteer, and advocate (Case.org, 2014b). More importantly, alumni are often an institution’s biggest supporters (Case.org, 2014b). At a time where funding for higher education is changing, alumni are often partially responsible for the financial stability of their alma mater. For that reason, it is important to increase alumni engagement since they play an important role in institutional advancement.

Reasons for engagement among alumni vary and can be contributed to a number of factors. Factors include, but are not limited to: student involvement, gender, marital status, the number of years since graduation, and distance from the institution.

Additionally, the bond, or emotional connection one feels to their alma mater, affects engagement. Though a great deal of research has been done on specific factors that may

affect engagement, the results are unpredictable and cannot be applied to all institutions of higher education.

Several theories including the theory of discretionary collaborative behavior, social exchange theory, and the theory of reciprocity can all be applied to explain the unique relationship between alumni and alma mater. The theory of discretionary collaborative behavior uses a marketing model, describing alumni as customers who behave in a way that assists a vendor, their alma mater (Heckman & Guskey, 1998). Social exchange theory operates on the notion that both alumni and institutions must feel as though they are receiving more from the relationship than they are giving (Fournier, 2014). Lastly, the theory of reciprocity explains the relationship as one that is reciprocal in nature (Gouldner, 1960).

In conclusion, more research needs to be conducted in these areas. Although past research serves as a guide for alumni affairs it cannot be consistently applied to all higher education institutions. Moreover, research that determines factors that affect alumni engagement should be completed at every higher education institution to ensure it is both unique and applicable to their alumni and their college.

## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

#### **Context of the Study**

The study was conducted at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey. Rowan University is a public institution located in Gloucester County. The co-ed university, then Glassboro State Normal School, was founded in 1923 with a mission to train teachers for South Jersey classrooms (Alumni.Rowan.edu. 2014b). While the school originally served fewer than 250 students, the university now serves over 12,000 undergraduate students and close to 2,000 graduate students (Rowan.edu, 2014).

The growth in enrollment is just one of the many changes the university has experienced since it was established. For instance, in order to meet the growing needs of enrollees, in 1969 Rowan opened a campus in Camden, NJ (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014b). In 1984, the institution added the majors of communication and engineering. Additionally, it was the first public institution in the state to offer a doctoral program (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014b). In 2013, under the direction of the institution's current president, Dr. Ali Houshmand, Rowan became the second institution nationwide to have both an allopathic (M.D.) and osteopathic (D.O.) granting medical school (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014b).

While the institution has evolved in a number of ways since it was founded, perhaps the most significant transformation came as a result of a \$100 million dollar donation made by industrialist Henry Rowan and his wife, Betty, in 1992 (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014b). As a result of the donation, the institution changed its name

to Rowan College of New Jersey. In 1997, the college gained university status and changed its name, yet again, to Rowan University (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014b).

Rowan University currently serves approximately 78,000 alumni (Alumni.rowan.edu, 2014c). The Office of Alumni Engagement, which works to maintain a lasting and positive relationship between graduates and the University, is a division of the institution's Office of University Advancement. The Office of University Advancement seeks "to secure philanthropic support and engage alumni, donors and other constituents to advance the mission of Rowan University" (Rufoundation.org, 2014a, para.1). Through the Office of Alumni Engagement, the Office of University Advancement aims to build strong relationships with their alumni as well as provide successful alumni programs and services that "help promote the interests of the University, its alumni, and the community (Rufoundation.org, 2014b, para.2). In addition to providing oversight to alumni engagement, the Office of University Advancement oversees development, advancement services, and the Rowan University Foundation (Rufoundation.org, 2014a).

The Office of Alumni Engagement is comprised of four full-time staff and one part-time staff. In addition to paid staff, there are a number of volunteers who make up the Alumni Board of Directors. According to the University's Alumni Board of Directors' page, the Board "supports the advancement of the University and its alumni by fostering and sustaining relationships between alumni, friends, and the University community" (2014, para.2). These volunteers sponsor activities and programs for alumni and are representative of all eight of the University's colleges (Alumni.rowan.edu. 2014a).

## **Population and Sample Selection**

The target population for this study was alumni of the Glassboro campus who received their undergraduate degree from the institution any time between 1923 and 2014. Mixed methods sampling techniques were used in this study. First, in order to ensure representation from a wide range of alumni, the director of advancement services worked with The Office of Institutional Effectiveness, Research & Planning to generate a list of alumni who were a representative sample. The number for the representative sample was determined using the target population comprised of approximately 78,000 alumni. At a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 3%, the randomly selected and representative sample size consisted of 1,053 alumni who all had an email address on file with the Office of Alumni Engagement. A convenience sample was also used to gain greater participation. As a result of outreach efforts, 423 individuals responded to the survey.

## **Instrumentation**

The instrument used for purposes of this study grew as a result of the knowledge base. Before creating the instrument, tools used in the studies mentioned in the literature review were examined. Since none of the studies looked at all the factors this research covered, I worked to create a comprehensive survey tool. Format, questioning, and scaling used on various alumni-related surveys inspired the production of the instrument used in this study.

The survey (Appendix B) consists of four parts. The first section collects seven demographic factors unique to the participant, including gender, spouse or partner's alma mater, state of residency, year alum received their bachelor's degree, age, household

income, and miles from Glassboro campus. The second section asks subjects to indicate the frequency in which they participated in certain behaviors. Statements are concentrated on five different factor areas. In order to avoid subjects becoming complacent with the wording of the statements, the statements are shuffled. The areas include giving (containing 10 statements), formal and informal involvement opportunities (containing 14 statements), politics (containing 3 statements), student recruitment (containing 3 statements), and satisfactory reflection on undergraduate experience (containing 10 statements). Each statement uses a six point frequency Likert scale, 1=N/A, 2=never, 3=rarely, 4=sometimes, 5=often, and 6=very often. The third section consisted of 11 statements aimed at determining what would make alumni more engaged. In this section, subjects were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5 point Likert scale, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree. Lastly, the subjects are asked to complete an open-ended question asking them to briefly describe any suggestions they may have for alumni events, activities, and engagement opportunities. Overall, there are 59 total items on the survey.

The study was submitted for Institution Review Board Approval on December 4, 2014. Following the December 10, 2014 approval from the Institutional Review Board of Rowan University (Appendix C), a pilot test of the survey was conducted. Three Rowan University alumni were given the survey as a trial to test it for its readability and face validity. None of the alumni involved in the trial expressed any issues with understanding the content. The survey took no more than five minutes for each individual to complete. Following data collection, Cronbach's alpha test was used to determine reliability of the survey based on standardized items. The internal

consistencies for the five factor groups, gauging frequency in which alumni take part in certain areas of engagement, were as follows: giving, .953; formal and informal involvement, .869; politics, .510; student recruitment, .791; and satisfactory reflection, .763. The internal consistency for the 11 Likert scale-style statements used to determine what would encourage an alumnus to be more engaged was .820. As a whole, the test resulted in a .899 - indicating great internal consistency of the items (variables) in the survey.

### **Data Collection**

Initial outreach to the representative sample was conducted through a mass email sent to subjects by the Office of Alumni Engagement in January of 2015. The email included a letter from me and a direct link to the survey on Qualtrics, the online survey tool. Reminders were sent out to subjects via email. Outreach to the convenience sample was done in a variety of ways, including email outreach to subjects I had access to. Additionally, the survey was shared on various social media platforms including Facebook and LinkedIn. I encouraged subjects to share the survey with fellow alumni. I also attended an alumni event in February where attendees had the opportunity to immediately have the survey sent directly to their email.

A \$100 American Express gift card was offered as an incentive for those who participated. At the end of the survey, subjects were provided with instructions on how to enter the drawing. The names of the subjects and their contact information were sent directly to the Office of Alumni Engagement who then completed the drawing. I never saw the names nor contact information for the subjects. I had no way of knowing who

participated except for those subjects who self-disclosed. The settings on Qualtrics made it unfeasible for individuals to take the survey more than once.

### **Data Analysis**

Seven demographic factors were collected in the first part of the survey. Factors included gender, spouse or partner's alma mater, state of residency, decade alum received their bachelor's degree, age, household income, and miles from Glassboro campus.

Demographics were collected to determine if there was a correlation between demographics and reported participation. In addition to the seven demographic factors, 40 Likert scale-style statements were made to determine the frequency alumni take part in the areas of financial donations and contributions, formal and informal participation opportunities, politics, student recruitment, and satisfactory reflection. Furthermore, a set of 11 Likert scale-style statements were used to determine alum's level of agreement with reasons that would contribute to them being more engaged. Lastly, subjects were asked to briefly describe any suggestions for alumni events and activities they may have.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to observe trends in the data. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate measures of central tendency including means and standard deviation as well as frequencies and percentages. Pearson product moment were used to determine correlations.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Findings**

#### **Profile of the Sample**

The target population for this study was alumni of the Glassboro campus who received their undergraduate degree from the institution any time between 1923 and 2014. The survey was created on Qualtrics, an online survey software tool. The link to the survey was first sent to the representative sample via the Office of Alumni Engagement in the middle of January 2015. The link to the survey was also shared on social media platforms and via email to a convenience sample in mid-February 2015. The survey was closed on March 7, 2015. There were a total of 423 responses resulting in a response rate of nearly 40%. Only the data from those who completed the entire first section of the survey or more was used. With each new section of the survey, the number of question responses decreased. Of the alumni reporting sex, 186 were male (44%) and 237 were female (56%). Twenty percent of respondents (86) indicated that their spouse or partner is also an alumnus. A majority (77.5%) of subjects resided in the state of New Jersey. There was representation from 21 other states. Two respondents lived internationally. The age of subjects ranged from 22 to 78 with the average age being 38.7. More than half of the respondents indicated they live within 30 miles of the institution (52%).

Table 4.1 contains demographic data on the decades respondents indicated they graduated with their bachelor's degree. Most of the survey takers graduated in the 2000s

(41%), followed by those who have graduated in 2010 or later (24%), and the third highest percentage consisted of those graduating in the 1970s (12%). No alumni from the 30s, 40s, or 50s participated in the study.

Table 4.1

*Decade Bachelor's Degree was Earned (n = 421)*

Decade	<i>f</i>	%
1930s	-	0
1940s	-	0
1950s	-	0
1960s	17	4.0
1970s	50	11.9
1980s	37	8.8
1990s	45	10.7
2000s	171	40.6
2010s	101	24.0
Missing=2		

Table 4.2 contains information about the subjects' reported annual household income. Most respondents report that their annual household income is approximately \$90,000-\$120,000 (23%). Only 5.8% of respondents report that their annual household income is under \$24,000.

Table 4.2

*Approximate Annual Household Income (n = 413)*

Income	<i>f</i>	%
Under \$24,000	24	5.8
\$24,000-\$36,000	26	6.3
\$36,000-\$48,000	46	11.1
\$48,000-\$60,000	56	13.6
\$60,000-\$90,000	62	15.0

Table 4.2 (continued)

Income	<i>f</i>	%
\$90,000-\$120,000	95	23.0
\$120,000-\$180,000	68	16.5
Over \$180,000	36	8.7
Missing = 10		

### Analysis of the Data

**Research question 1.** What do selected alumni report about their engagement as alumni at Glassboro State College/Rowan University in the areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, student recruitment, and satisfactory reflection?

In this section of the survey, 40 statements were made to determine the frequency and percentage in which alumni participate in five different areas of engagement. The tables below are broken down by factor grouping. Likert-style scaling was used in order from least positive to most positive for all five factor groupings. In regards to the area of giving (see Table 4.3), which consisted of 10 statements, 14.8% of the respondents' stated that they often, or very often, feel good when they donate to the institution. Just under 10% reported that they often, or very often, stay loyal to the institution by making donations while 13.1% indicated that often, or very often, improving the quality of the institution is a priority of theirs. Only 5.1% reported that they often, or very often, donate when they receive direct mailings from the institution. Approximately 70% of respondents stated that they never donate to the Rowan Future Fund. Items in Table 4.3 are arranged by mean score reflecting the highest frequency to the lowest frequency.

Table 4.3

*Alumni Engagement in the Area of Giving*

(*N/A = 1, Never = 2, Rarely = 3, Sometimes = 4, Often = 5, Very Often = 6*)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Improving the quality of the institution is a priority of mine <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.93, <i>SD</i> =1.32 Missing=36	35	9.0	147	38.0	90	23.3	64	16.5	28	7.2	23	5.9
I donate to specific institution organizations and initiatives <i>n</i> =384, <i>M</i> =2.81, <i>SD</i> =1.27 Missing=39	24	6.3	191	49.7	70	18.2	52	13.5	27	7.0	20	5.2
I stay loyal to the institution by making donations <i>n</i> =388, <i>M</i> =2.53, <i>SD</i> =1.24 Missing=35	36	9.3	235	60.6	53	13.7	26	6.7	14	3.6	24	6.2
I donate as a way to “pay back” the institution for my accomplishments since graduation <i>n</i> =388, <i>M</i> =2.46, <i>SD</i> =1.24 Missing=35	46	11.9	241	62.1	36	9.3	29	7.5	14	3.6	22	5.7

Table 4.3 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I donate as a way to “pay back” the institution for my undergraduate experience <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.45, <i>SD</i> =1.20 Missing=36	49	12.7	229	59.2	43	11.1	33	8.5	16	4.1	17	4.4
I donate when I receive institution emails soliciting donations <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.39, <i>SD</i> =1.01 Missing=36	36	9.3	245	63.3	53	13.7	35	9.0	9	2.3	9	2.3
I donate to the Rowan Future Fund <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.36, <i>SD</i> =1.10 Missing=36	34	8.8	273	70.5	30	7.8	21	5.4	13	3.4	16	4.1
I donate when contacted by current students through the institution’s Student Calling Program <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.34, <i>SD</i> =1.12 Missing=36	57	14.7	235	60.7	38	9.8	32	8.3	14	3.6	11	2.8
I feel good when I donate to the institution <i>n</i> =383, <i>M</i> =2.30, <i>SD</i> =1.63 Missing=40	181	47.3	80	20.9	31	8.1	34	8.9	30	7.8	27	7.0

Table 4.3 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I donate when I receive direct mailings from the institution soliciting donations <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.30, <i>SD</i> =0.99 Missing=36	38	9.8	264	68.2	46	11.1	22	5.7	11	2.8	9	2.3

Table 4.4 shows the frequency and percentage in which alumni took part in the area of formal and informal involvement. The factor grouping consisted of 14 statements. Of all the statements, “I read *Rowan Magazine*” had the highest percentage of respondents reporting they do so often, or very often (37.2%). Over 30% indicated that they often, or very often, read emails sent by the Office of Alumni Engagement. However, a large percentage (38.6%) specified that they never interact with the institution on social media. Approximately 68% of respondents indicated that they never attend class reunions while just fewer than 68% reported that they never attend sporting events and trips organized by the Office of Alumni Engagement. Less than 14% indicated that they attend homecoming festivities often, or very often. Over a third of respondents (138) indicated that they rarely visit the Glassboro campus. Items in Table 4.4 are arranged by mean score reflecting the highest frequency to the lowest frequency.

Table 4.4

*Alumni Engagement in the Area of Formal and Informal Involvement*  
 (N/A = 1, Never = 2, Rarely = 3, Sometimes = 4, Often = 5, Very Often = 6)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I read <i>Rowan Magazine</i> <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =3.98, <i>SD</i> =1.39 Missing=36	5	1.3	68	17.6	71	18.3	99	25.6	74	19.1	70	18.1
I read emails sent by the Alumni Engagement Office/Alumni Association <i>n</i> =388, <i>M</i> =3.80, <i>SD</i> =1.38 Missing=35	18	4.6	65	16.8	64	16.5	114	29.4	82	21.1	45	11.6
I proudly don institution insignia <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =3.67, <i>SD</i> =1.35 Missing=37	11	2.8	87	22.5	71	18.4	105	27.2	74	19.2	38	9.8
I take pride in the institution's athletic success <i>n</i> =384, <i>M</i> =3.55, <i>SD</i> =1.57 Missing=39	39	10.2	76	19.8	77	20.1	74	19.3	62	16.1	56	14.6
I visit the Glassboro campus <i>n</i> =389, <i>M</i> =3.50, <i>SD</i> =1.23 Missing=34	1	.3	84	21.6	138	35.5	94	24.2	29	7.5	43	11.1

Table 4.4 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I purchase Rowan insignia items (clothing, accessories, etc.) <i>n</i> =389, <i>M</i> =3.13, <i>SD</i> =1.03 Missing=34	1	.3	123	31.6	132	33.9	101	26.0	20	5.1	12	3.1
I interact with the institution on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) <i>n</i> =389, <i>M</i> =3.11, <i>SD</i> =1.18 Missing=34	5	1.3	150	38.6	99	25.4	82	21.1	37	9.5	16	4.1
I attend Homecoming festivities <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.84, <i>SD</i> =1.32 Missing=36	14	3.6	216	55.8	61	15.8	42	2.9	23	5.9	31	8.0

Table 4.4 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I attend institutional celebrations marking major milestones (Rowan University's 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary, WGLS-FM's 50 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary, etc.) <i>n</i> =389, <i>M</i> =2.67, <i>SD</i> =1.02 Missing=34	5	1.3	232	59.6	70	18.0	57	14.7	18	4.6	7	1.8
I shop/eat on Rowan Boulevard <i>n</i> =389, <i>M</i> =2.67, <i>SD</i> =1.00 Missing=34	15	3.9	207	53.2	83	21.3	63	16.2	18	4.6	3	.8
I attend alumni networking events <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =2.56, <i>SD</i> =0.99 Missing=37	15	3.9	229	59.3	81	21.0	38	9.8	16	4.1	7	1.8
I attend alumni events NOT organized by the alumni office <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =2.55, <i>SD</i> =1.12 Missing=36	29	7.5	235	60.7	45	11.6	46	11.9	24	6.2	8	2.1

Table 4.4 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I attend sporting events and trips organized by the Alumni Engagement Office/Alumni Association (e.g. Phillies game, 76ers game, etc.) <i>n</i> =388, <i>M</i> =2.45, <i>SD</i> =1.06 Missing=35	23	5.9	263	67.8	46	11.9	30	7.7	13	3.4	13	3.4
I attend class reunions <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =2.09, <i>SD</i> =0.90 Missing=37	67	17.4	263	68.1	28	7.3	14	3.6	9	2.3	5	1.3

In Table 4.5, respondents reported the frequency and percentage in which they took part in the area of politics. The factor grouping consisted of three statements. A majority (80.6%) of subjects indicated that they never contact local, county, or state officials on behalf of the institution. Of all three statements, “I formally advocate or lobby on behalf of the institution” had the highest percentage of respondents reporting they do so often or very often (24.7%). Items in Table 4.5 are arranged by mean score reflecting the highest frequency to the lowest frequency.

Table 4.5

*Alumni Engagement in the Area of Politics**(N/A = 1, Never = 2, Rarely = 3, Sometimes = 4, Often = 5, Very Often = 6)*

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I formally advocate or lobby on behalf of the institution <i>n</i> =384, <i>M</i> =3.26, <i>SD</i> =1.52 Missing=39	34	8.9	134	34.9	48	12.5	73	19.0	58	15.1	37	9.6
I vote for local, county, or state officials based on their positive connection to the institution <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =2.23, <i>SD</i> =1.29 Missing=37	118	30.6	169	43.8	36	9.3	32	8.3	14	4.4	14	3.6
I contact local, county, or state officials regarding the institution <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =2.02, <i>SD</i> =0.65 Missing=37	44	11.4	311	80.6	20	5.2	3	.8	6	1.6	2	.5

Table 4.6 illustrates the frequency and percentage in which alumni took part in the area of student recruitment. The factor grouping consisted of three statements. A majority (83.7) of alumni indicated that they speak positively of the institution to others often, or very often. Two hundred and forty seven alumni (64.1%) stated that they often, or very often, advocate for college bound students to attend the institution. Just 10.1% indicated that they never advise parents of those making a college choice that they should

consider the institution. Items in Table 4.6 are arranged by mean score reflecting the highest frequency to the lowest frequency.

Table 4.6

*Alumni Engagement in the Area of Student Recruitment*

(N/A = 1, Never = 2, Rarely = 3, Sometimes = 4, Often = 5, Very Often = 6)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I speak positively of the institution to others <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =5.24, <i>SD</i> =0.86 Missing=36	2	.5	1	.3	10	2.6	50	12.9	149	38.5	175	45.2
I advocate for college bound students to attend the institution <i>n</i> =385, <i>M</i> =4.68, <i>SD</i> =1.34 Missing=36	17	4.4	17	4.4	26	6.8	78	20.3	121	31.4	126	32.7
When I have the opportunity, I advise parents of those making a college choice that they should consider the institution <i>n</i> =385, <i>M</i> =4.09, <i>SD</i> =1.62 Missing=36	39	10.1	39	10.1	42	10.9	85	22.1	87	22.6	93	24.2

Table 4.7 shows the frequency and percentage in which alumni participated in satisfactory reflection of their undergraduate experience. A majority (83.4%) of alumni

reported that they are often, or are very often, happy they chose to attend the institution. Just over 82% indicated that they are often, or very often, pleased with the education they received. More than 73% often, or very often, think back fondly on the professors they had, while 64.1% are often, or very often, happy with the extracurricular activities they participated in as a student. Over 10% indicated that they never think back fondly on the Greek Organization membership they had. Items in Table 4.7 are arranged by mean score reflecting the highest frequency to the lowest frequency.

Table 4.7

*Alumni Satisfaction with Institution*

(N/A = 1, Never = 2, Rarely = 3, Sometimes = 4, Often = 5, Very Often = 6)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I am happy I chose to attend the institution <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =5.27, <i>SD</i> =0.90 Missing=36	3	.8	1	.3	11	2.8	49	12.7	134	34.6	189	48.8
I am pleased with the education I received <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =5.21, <i>SD</i> =0.80 Missing=37	-	-	-	-	11	2.8	58	15.0	156	40.4	161	41.7

Table 4.7 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I think back fondly on the professors I had <i>n</i> =384, <i>M</i> =5.02, <i>SD</i> =0.94 Missing=39	2	.5	2	.5	18	4.7	80	20.8	144	37.5	138	35.9
I am satisfied with the courses I was offered <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =4.88, <i>SD</i> =0.96 Missing=36	3	.8	3	.8	23	5.9	87	22.5	162	41.9	109	28.2
I am satisfied with the institution's common-area facilities while I was a student (library, cafeteria, classrooms, etc.) <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =4.66, <i>SD</i> =1.14 Missing=36	13	3.4	5	1.3	29	7.5	95	24.5	158	40.8	87	22.5

Table 4.7 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I am happy with the extracurricular activities I participated in as a student <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =4.43, <i>SD</i> =1.71 Missing=36	53	13.7	14	3.6	26	6.7	46	11.9	116	30.0	132	34.1
I am satisfied with my experiences with administrative staff as a student (bursar, housing, financial aid, etc.) <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =4.20, <i>SD</i> =1.36 Missing=36	28	7.2	17	4.4	41	10.6	134	34.6	99	25.6	68	17.6
I am satisfied with the on-campus housing I was provided as a student <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =3.06, <i>SD</i> =1.96 Missing=36	171	44.2	5	1.3	20	5.2	49	12.7	106	27.4	36	9.3

Table 4.7 (continued)

Statement	N/A		Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Often		Very Often	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I think back fondly on the athletics I participated in <i>n</i> =385, <i>M</i> =2.09, <i>SD</i> =1.85 Missing=38	268	69.6	21	5.5	9	2.3	16	4.2	23	6.0	48	12.5
I think back fondly on the Greek organization membership I had (sorority/fraternity) <i>n</i> =386, <i>M</i> =1.78, <i>SD</i> =1.60 Missing=37	284	73.6	39	10.1	9	2.3	8	2.1	8	2.1	38	9.8

**Research question 2.** Is there a significant relationship between demographics factors such as age, sex, income, spouse/partner alma mater, distance from the university, and reported engagement?

The results of a Pearson product moment indicate that there were no significant relationships between the demographic factor sex and any area of engagement. There was also no significant relationships between alumni's spouse or partner also being alum and any area of engagement. Additionally, the decade in which alumni graduated from the institution, age, annual household income, and miles residing from the institution did not reveal any significant relationships with any form of engagement.

**Research question 3.** Is there a significant relationship between undergraduate satisfaction and alumni engagement?

The results of a Pearson product moment indicated that there was a positive correlation between alumni being happy they chose to attend the institution and two areas of student recruitment (see Table 4.8) including speaking positively to others ( $r=.671$ ,  $p<.000$ ) and advocating for college-bound students to attend the institution ( $r=.523$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Two other areas of satisfactory reflection that shared a moderately strong positive correlation with student recruitment was satisfaction with courses alumni were offered ( $r=.527$ ,  $p<.000$ ) and satisfaction with the education alumni received ( $r=.602$ ,  $p<.000$ ), (see Table 4.8). No other moderately strong or strong positive or negative correlations were found with satisfactory reflection and the engagement areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, and student recruitment.

Table 4.8

*Correlation between Satisfactory Reflection and Student Recruitment*

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
I am happy I chose to attend the institution	I speak positively of the institution to others $n=387$ , $M=5.24$ , $SD=0.86$ Missing=36	.671**	.000
	I advocate for college-bound students to attend the institution $n=385$ , $M=4.68$ , $SD=1.34$ Missing=36	.523**	.000
I am satisfied with the courses I was offered	I speak positively of the institution to others $n=387$ , $M=5.24$ , $SD=0.86$ Missing=36	.527**	.000

Table 4.8 (continued)

Subscale	Item	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
I am pleased with the education I received	I speak positively of the institution to others <i>n</i> =387, <i>M</i> =5.24, <i>SD</i> =0.86 Missing=36	.602**	.000

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**Research question 4.** What would encourage selected alumni to be more engaged as a graduate of the institution?

In this section of the survey, 11 Likert scale-style statements were made to determine alums level of agreement with factors that would encourage them to be more engaged. Almost 23% of alumni stated that they strongly agreed they would become a more engaged alumnus if they had more time, followed by 20.2% strongly agreeing they would be more engaged if they had more money (see Table 4.9). The table also shows that less than 3% of respondents reporting that they strongly agreed they would be more engaged if they supported the institution in its current affairs whether it is in regards to institution politics, administration, or the institution's expansion. Only 23 alumni (6.2%) indicated they strongly agreed they would be a more engaged alumnus if their spouse or partner was also an alumnus. Items in Table 4.9 are arranged by mean score from highest to lowest.

Table 4.9

*Factors that Would Contribute to Increased Engagement**(Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4, Strongly Agree = 5)*

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
I had more time <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =3.59, <i>SD</i> =1.174 Missing=52	26	7.0	47	12.7	66	17.8	147	39.6	85	22.9
I knew other alumni who were involved <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =3.46, <i>SD</i> =1.135 Missing=52	32	8.6	44	11.9	67	18.1	176	47.4	52	14.0
I had more money <i>n</i> =372, <i>M</i> =3.41, <i>SD</i> =1.200 Missing=51	28	7.5	63	16.9	83	22.3	123	33.1	75	20.2
There were more opportunities for career and professional development <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =3.34, <i>SD</i> =1.131 Missing=52	27	7.3	58	15.6	105	28.3	125	33.7	56	15.1
I lived closer to Glassboro Campus <i>n</i> =372, <i>M</i> =3.18, <i>SD</i> =1.262 Missing=51	44	11.8	69	18.5	102	27.4	90	24.2	67	18.0
I was aware of events/opportunities to be involved <i>n</i> =373, <i>M</i> =3.17, <i>SD</i> =1.026 Missing=50	24	6.4	64	17.2	141	37.8	111	29.8	33	8.8
Events were held closer to where I live <i>n</i> =370, <i>M</i> =3.11, <i>SD</i> =1.130 Missing=53	35	9.5	72	19.5	119	32.2	104	28.1	40	10.8

Table 4.9 (continued)

Statement	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
I had a stronger emotional connection to the institution <i>n</i> =372, <i>M</i> =2.92, <i>SD</i> =1.093 Missing=51	40	10.8	90	24.2	130	34.9	84	22.6	28	7.5
My spouse/partner was also an alum <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =2.78, <i>SD</i> =1.130 Missing=52	60	16.2	84	22.6	129	34.8	75	20.2	23	6.2
I supported the institution in its current affairs (political, administration, expansion, etc.) <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =2.74, <i>SD</i> =0.959 Missing=52	48	12.9	78	21.0	179	48.2	56	15.1	10	2.7
Someone for the institution personally contacted me <i>n</i> =371, <i>M</i> =2.67, <i>SD</i> =1.066 Missing=52	56	15.1	109	29.4	123	33.2	68	18.3	15	4.0

**Research question 5.** What recommendations do subjects provide for future alumni events and activities?

In this section of the survey, subjects were provided with the opportunity to submit suggestions for alumni events and activities in an open-ended design. There were 65 responses (see Table 4.10). Respondents provided ideas for a wide-range of activities, events, and engagement opportunities. A consistent theme was for events targeted towards specific majors and colleges. Answers that also appeared more than once

include but were not limited to: leadership and career networking; wine tastings, beer fests, cocktail parties and other similar events; events in north Jersey; and events closer to where alumni live. In the name of complete transparency, suggestions provided by alumni in the table below are written exactly as they appeared. No capitalization, spelling, punctuation, or grammar corrections have been made in Table 4.10. The suggestions are listed in the order they were received.

Table 4.10

*Suggestions for Alumni Events and Activities (n=66)*

Suggestion Responses

1. Career connection events
2. I was very disappointed with my experience at GSC. I wrote a letter to administration when I left explaining in detail
3. No idea – I’ve never been very involved with alumni activity aside from keeping up with friends in California
4. Perhaps have an event that caters to the not so recent alums
5. Would help if there were regional chapters of the Alulum Assoc. Living in northern NJ since graduation 72’ there has been no local reachout. It could h
6. Have more in northern NJ
7. I would be more likely to attend alumni events that were specific to my department (the art department).
8. Mixers at local pubs; these can be anywhere a concentration of alumni can be identified
9. How to pay back \$50,000 in student loans.
10. I’m not really sure offering more dates or more awareness so we can “save the date”
11. Sorry my answers may throw off your survey but I don’t live in the USA
12. No suggestions at this time
13. Not sports
14. I usually receive notification of events too late via mail.
15. I would get involved in alumni activities in regards to career developments. Workshops or conference where I can make RU connections/learn more.
16. Events targeting specific majors
17. Not interested
18. Off campus and more centrally located nj events such as cocktail parties or shows
19. Alumni weekend similar to university of delaware
20. I think more events that focus on a smaller organization reunions would be fun to attend (like the PROS one).

Table 4.10 (continued)

Suggestion Responses
21. Wish I loved closer and had functions geared at my interests and career to attend.
22. More in north jersey
23. Na
24. Job Fairs, Phillie Phanatic Games and Career advising
25. Don't know of any in North Jersey
26. Send out information in the mail. I only see facebook items and sometimes I'm too late to see them
27. It could be interesting to host an alumni leadership conference
28. Music Dept alumni gatherings, RTF alumni gatherings, updated lists of alums attending such events
29. Golf outings
30. Phillie Phanatic gamed beerfest homecoming
31. N/A
32. n/a
33. Business alum networking happy hour in south jersey!!!
34. Emails to the email of alumni would raise awareness about events and activities. Direct mailing might also raise awareness.
35. NYC events.
36. poker night, speakeasy-themed chinese auction
37. The only events I've ever attended were the "Networking Events". A University should care about helping students connect with successful alumni
38. More events closer to campus.
39. I currently reside in Europe, and am very ill-informed in terms of current alumni events, so I would say that my opinion is of little value here.
40. Mixers for singles
41. A Communication Reunion!!
42. alumni party! gathering at the local watering hole.
43. Activities in Northern NJ.
44. California based bar night
45. Alumni paintball event, beer/wine tasting
46. I think rowan does well with these events. Having small children two working parents does not leave much, if any, time to participate in alumni event
47. Unfortunately, I don't have an interest in any of the alumni events at Rowan
48. more events like the comedy night. this was the first time attending an alumni event
49. I'm not interested in any alum. activities. I was non-traditional student.
50. I would like to see more events in Philadelphia. Possibly with easy access to public transportation.
51. Camp out, rent out a campground
52. I enjoy attending the social gatherings at various bar, etc.
53. more alumni events involving the performing arts dept.
54. Phillie Phanatic game night, Trenton thunder game night, rent a room in a bar
55. More wine mixer and tap takeover events.

Table 4.10 (continued)

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Suggestion Responses
56. Reunion of Music Department alumni
57. We've been so crazy busy – my job is very invasive – that we're just getting into the Alumni thing. So glad to be able to feedback into the process.
58. N/A
59. Perhaps have an online networking job fair
60. More Friday or Saturday night get togethers like comedy night. Maybe a casino night, or mardi gras night etc.
61. Raise the price of the Comedy night and add some additional food choices.
62. I'd like to see more events directly related to my major or college. Or more activities – athletic events, theatre tickets, demonstrations, etc.
63. No suggestions at the moment.
64. happy hours in PA
65. It is a matter of propinquity, the greater the distance, the less involvement.

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## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

#### **Summary of the Study**

This study investigated several areas of alumni engagement including: what selected alumni report about their engagement at Glassboro State College/Rowan University in the areas of giving, formal and informal involvement, politics, and student recruitment; the relationship between demographics factors such as age, sex, income, spouse/partner alma mater, distance from the university, and reported engagement; the relationship between undergraduate satisfaction and alumni engagement; factors that would encourage selected alumni to be more engaged as a graduate of the institution; and recommendations from subjects for future alumni events and activities. The subjects in the study were alumni of the Glassboro campus who received their undergraduate degree from the institution any time between 1923 and 2014.

The questionnaire utilized was comprised of four sections. The survey began with an alternate consent statement. The first part of the survey collected demographic information while the second and third part of the survey was comprised of Likert type items. The last section was open-ended. The survey was made available on Qualtrics, an online survey tool. Mixed-methods sampling was used to obtain subjects. At a confidence level of 95% and a confidence interval of 3%, the randomly selected and representative sample size consisted of 1,053 alumni who all had an email address on file with the Office of Alumni Engagement. A convenience sample was also used to gain greater participation. As a result of outreach efforts, 423 individuals responded to the survey for a response rate of 40%.

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the survey data using descriptive statistics. Moderately strong correlations between demographic factors and areas of alumni engagement, as well as undergraduate satisfaction and areas of engagement, were determined using Pearson product moment.

### **Discussion of the Findings**

Of the 14 statements made regarding formal and informal involvement, the statement “I read *Rowan Magazine*” garnered the highest percentage of alumni indicating that they do so often, or very often (37.2%). Since *Rowan Magazine* is sent out in the mail to every alumnus with a physical mailing address on file, and since it is made available online, it is not unexpected. According to Conley (1999), individuals who read these kinds of publications may be more inclined to contribute. Over 16% of alumni taking the survey indicated that they never read emails sent by the alumni office which is inconsistent with the numbers the Associate Director of Alumni Engagement report. According to personal communication with D’Angelo (2015), only approximately 16% of alumni opened emails sent by the alumni office in fiscal year 2014.

As far as events are concerned, less than 14% indicated that they attend Homecoming festivities – the biggest event of the year – often, or very often. In 2014, over 1,200 alumni returned to campus for Homecoming (C. D’Angelo, personal communication, March 25, 2015). Also, while several people specified that they would like to see the office organize more networking events, professional conferences, career fairs, and activities of the like, fewer than 6% of respondents indicated that they attend networking events often, or very often. The data showed that currently, networking

events are one of the least popular reported forms of formal and informal involvement among subjects.

In a 2010 study by Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford, a number of alumni reported that they showed support of their organization primarily through political actions such as meeting with legislators or writing letters to local officials on behalf of the institution. Weerts, Cabrera, and Sanford (2010) report political involvement is one way that institutions try to utilize alumni's influence. At Rowan, fewer than 25% indicated that they often, or very often, formally advocate or lobby on behalf of the institution while a majority (80.6%) stated that they never contact local, county, or state officials on behalf of the institution. Following the trend of reported low political involvement from alumni, only 8% indicated that they often, or very often, vote for local, county, or state officials based on their positive connection to the institution.

The area of giving was another significant factor grouping in the study. Findings of the study were consistent with the low participation rate indicated by university documentation (Appendix A). Over 70% of alumni reported that they never give to the Rowan Future Fund. More than 63% reported that they never donate when they receive institutional emails soliciting donations while over 68% indicated that they never donate when they receive direct mailings from the institution soliciting donations. Over 60% stated that they never donate when contacted by students through the institution's Student Calling Program.

In a 2008 qualitative study, Baldwin reports that alumni donors often express the desire to "give back" to their institutions. In this study, two statements were made to determine if alumni donated because they felt a sense of obligation to the institution to

reciprocate for what it had given them. The results from the study did not support the theory of reciprocity. Most alumni (59.2%) stated that they never donate as a way to “pay back” the institution for their undergraduate experience while more than 60% of alumni reported that they never donate as a way to “pay back” the institution for their accomplishments since graduation.

One of the areas of alumni engagement that had a high number of respondents indicating they do so often, or very often, was in the area of student recruitment. A majority (83.7%) of survey respondents indicated that they speak positively of the institution to others often, or very often. More than 64% stated that they often, or very often, advocate for college-bound students to attend the institution while over 46% take it a step further and advise parents of those making a college choice that they should consider the institution. Weerts and Ronca (2007) state that the recruitment of new students is one of the most important volunteer tasks alumni can assume which bodes well for Rowan University.

A study conducted by Gaier (2005) shows significant increases in alumnus engagement and giving as a result of satisfaction with the participant’s undergraduate experience. In this study, 10 statements were made to gauge the frequency in which alumni report they take part in the area of satisfactory reflection. Almost half (48.8%) of the subjects stated that they are very often happy they chose to attend this institution. In regards to satisfactory reflection regarding their education, more than 40% indicated they are very often pleased with the education they received while over 35% indicated that they very often think back on the professors they had. Fewer than 30% stated that they are very often satisfied with the courses they were offered. Gaier (2005) reports

academic satisfaction during one's undergraduate years was more closely tied to alumni giving than other forms of engagement (Gaier, 2005). In this study, reflecting positively on the education one received from the institution did not share a significant relationship with alumni giving at Rowan University. As far as other forms of engagement, there was a significant relationship between three types of satisfactory reflection and student recruitment.

Demographic factors were collected in this study to determine if there were any correlations between the factors and areas of alumni engagement. Though Holmes (2009) found that the distance alumni live from the institution was an indicator for giving, this study found that distance from the institution did not share a moderately strong or strong correlation with giving or any other form of engagement. While Berl (1997) and Ikenberry (1999) suggest that two alumni being married to each other might have implications for alumni giving, this study found no correlation. In addition, years since graduation and alumni age did not share a significant relationship with any form of engagement. Thus, no demographic factors collected shared a significant relationship with any form of engagement.

Though informal discussions had with staff within the Division of University Advancement (2014) indicate that they have considered alumni may not be as engaged because the several name changes the institution has undergone makes it difficult for an individual to feel connected to Rowan University, only 7.5% reported that they strongly agree that they would be a more engaged alumnus if they had stronger emotional connection to the institution. Similarly, only 10 subjects (2.7%) stated that they strongly agree that they would be a more engaged alumnus if they supported the institution in its

current affairs (political, administration, expansion, etc.). Near 23% specified that they strongly agreed they would become a more engaged alumnus if they had more time while more than 20% indicated they strongly agreed they would be more engaged if they had more money.

In order to determine the types of events and activities alumni would be interested in seeing, respondents were asked to indicate any suggestions they had. Less than 16% (66) took advantage of the unique opportunity to influence engagement opportunities. The events and activities suggested were wide-ranging in nature and included things like a poker night, professional sporting event trips, job fairs, networking events, and more. According to conversations with D'Angelo (2015), the Office of Alumni Engagement is interested in offering more career-oriented and professional development activities in the future.

## **Conclusions**

In some ways, the results of this study were inconsistent with previous research conducted on the subject. While there is a great deal of literature suggesting demographic factors are strong indicators for alumni engagement, in particular giving, the study showed no significant relationship between the demographic factors collected and any form of engagement. Though Gaier (2005) suggests that academic satisfaction was closely tied to engagement in the form of alumni giving, this study did not find that to be true either. Since Rowan University has historically been an education school, the low giving numbers could be contributed to the lower salaries educators earn in comparison to other professions making it more difficult to give back. However, the addition of the medical school and the expansion of the engineering college could have

implications for future alumni participation rates since doctors and engineers typically earn higher salaries.

While demographic factors did not share a significant relationship with any form of engagement measured, satisfactory reflection did share a moderately positive correlation with student recruitment. Student recruitment was the second most popular factor grouping of engagement among survey subjects. Currently, the Office of Alumni Engagement does not work with alumni to provide any formal training to utilize former students in the recruitment of new students. The least popular form of engagement among alumni was political involvement. At a time when the university is experiencing substantial growth and constantly evolving, alumni could assist in the advancement of the institution through political actions.

Alumni did report that if they had more time or more money, they would be more engaged. Usually, alumni events and activities are hosted during the week and require a small fee. Suggestions for engagement opportunities show that alumni have a wide range of ideas the office could implement that they would be interested in participating in. However, the broad range of suggestions exemplifies how difficult it could be to try and satisfy everyone's personal interests. Additionally, many of the suggestions have been and continued to be implemented in some capacity by the Office of Alumni Engagement.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Based upon the findings and conclusion of the researcher, the following suggestions are presented.

1. When possible, the Office of Alumni Engagement should consider keeping costs to attend events at a minimum so that money does not play a factor in engagement opportunities.
2. When possible, the Office of Alumni Engagement should try and host events later in the evening and on weekends so work and other weekday obligations do not hinder engagement.
3. Alumni engagement staff should continue to advertise all upcoming events and volunteer and giving opportunities in *Rowan Magazine*.
4. Alumni engagement staff should consider organizing more events targeted at specific majors and colleges.
5. Rowan University should utilize alumni in a more formal capacity to recruit new students.
6. The Office of Alumni Engagement should increase the number of career and professional development opportunities they offer to alumni and consider offering these opportunities online (webinars).
7. The Office of Alumni Engagement should consider hosting more events in areas where there is a heavy concentration of alumni.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Based upon the findings and conclusion of the researcher, the following suggestions are presented.

1. Researchers should be aware that response order in Likert scales could influence responses. For instance, making sure that responses are consistently positive to negative or negative to positive from section to section.

2. A shorter survey could ensure a higher number of individuals who started the survey complete it in its entirety.
3. Formal studies should be conducted every 2-5 years as the alumni base grows and changes.
4. Additional surveys conducted should be made available in a non-electronic form.
5. Further studies could be conducted to see if the combination of certain demographic factors results in a statistically significant relationship with all forms of engagement.

## References

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## Appendix A

### Internal Participation Rate Documentation

#### Alumni Participation History at a Glance (FY06-Present)

	FY14	FY13	FY12	FY11	FY10	FY09	FY08	FY07	FY06
<b>Alumni Donors</b>	2,189	2,482	2,766	3,088	2,923	3,815	4,652	4,788	4,662
<b>Alumni of Records</b>	77,802	70,527	66,575	63,993	63,000	61,201	59,094	57,579	56,101
<b>Records Growth</b>	10.3%	5.9%	4.0%	1.6%	2.9%	3.6%	2.6%	2.6%	3.7%
<b>Participation Rate</b>	2.81%	3.52%	4.15%	4.83%	4.64%	6.23%	7.87%	8.32%	8.31%

## Appendix B

### Recruitment Letter and Survey Instrument

Greetings <insert name>!

My name is Jessica Kanady and I am a 2008 graduate of Rowan University. In 2013, I made the decision to come back to campus to pursue my master's degree in higher education administration. As a part of the graduate program, we are required to complete a thesis capstone project. **In order to complete my thesis, I was hoping for your help in the completion of a survey that should take less than 5 minutes!**

For the past several months I have been interning with the Alumni Engagement Office. Through my attendance at various events, I have had the opportunity to meet so many wonderful alumni! The interactions got me thinking – what makes one alumnus remain connected to the institution and another alumnus leave it in their past? I knew then that I wanted to examine alumni engagement for my thesis. So, where do you come in? **As a Rowan alumni, you have an important voice that could impact future alumni events, outreach, and programs!**

The purpose of the survey is to examine engagement habits among Glassboro State College/Rowan University alumni and factors that influence engagement. In addition, the survey will examine factors that could increase engagement. While your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions, I would appreciate any information you could provide. In fact, as a sign of my gratitude, **those who complete the survey will be provided with directions on how to enter a drawing to win a \$100 American Express gift card!**

**You can access the survey by clicking [here](#).** You may only take the survey once. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [jkanadyresearch@gmail.com](mailto:jkanadyresearch@gmail.com).

From one alumnus to another, thank you!

Best,

Jessica Kanady

## Institution Alumni Survey

The purpose of this study is to examine engagement habits among Glassboro State College/Rowan University alumni and factors that influence engagement. In addition, the survey will examine factors that could increase engagement. This survey is part of a graduate thesis study being conducted by a student in the institution's Higher Education Administration program. While your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you are not required to answer any of the questions, we appreciate any information you could provide us. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Your responses will remain anonymous. There is no psychological or physical risk in answering these questions and you may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you have any questions or problems concerning participation in this study, please contact graduate student Jessica Kanady at [jkanadyresearch@gmail.com](mailto:jkanadyresearch@gmail.com) or Dr. Burton Sisco at (856) 256-4500 ext. 3717 or [sisco@rowan.edu](mailto:sisco@rowan.edu). Thank you for your valuable input.

## Section A: Demographic Information

1. Please indicate your sex

- Male
- Female

2. Is your spouse/partner a Glassboro State College (GSC) or Rowan University (RU) alum?

- Yes
- No
- n/a

3. Which state do you live in?

4. During what decade did you receive your bachelor's degree from Glassboro State College (GSC) or Rowan University (RU)?

- 1930s
- 1940s
- 1950s
- 1960s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000s
- 2010s

5. Please indicate your current age

6. What is your approximate annual household income?

- Under \$24,000
- \$24,000-\$36,000
- \$36,000-\$48,000
- \$48,000-\$60,000
- \$60,000-\$90,000
- \$90,000-\$120,000
- \$120,000-\$180,000
- Over \$180,000

7. Approximately how many miles do you reside from Glassboro campus?

- Under 10
- 10-30
- 30-60
- 60-90
- 90-120
- 120-150
- 150+

Section B: Please indicate the frequency in which you take part in the various behaviors listed below

	N/A	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often
1. I read emails sent by the Alumni Engagement Office/Alumni Association	<input type="radio"/>					
2. I purchase Rowan insignia items (clothing, accessories, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
3. I read Rowan Magazine	<input type="radio"/>					
4. I attend institutional celebrations marking major milestones (Rowan University's 75th Anniversary, WGLS-FM's 50th Anniversary, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
5. I shop/eat on Rowan Boulevard	<input type="radio"/>					
6. I interact with the institution on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
7. I proudly don institution insignia	<input type="radio"/>					
8. I visit the Glassboro campus	<input type="radio"/>					
9. I am satisfied with the on-campus housing I was provided as a student	<input type="radio"/>					
10. I formally advocate or lobby on behalf of the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
11. I donate to specific institution organizations and initiatives	<input type="radio"/>					

12. I attend alumni networking events	<input type="radio"/>					
13. I donate when contacted by current students through the institution's Student Calling Program	<input type="radio"/>					
14. I attend alumni events NOT organized by the alumni office	<input type="radio"/>					
15. I am happy I chose to attend the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
16. I speak positively of the institution to others	<input type="radio"/>					
17. I advocate for college-bound students to attend the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
18. I donate when I receive institution emails soliciting donations	<input type="radio"/>					
19. I stay loyal to the institution by making donations	<input type="radio"/>					
20. I donate to the Rowan Future Fund	<input type="radio"/>					
21. I donate as a way to "pay back" the institution for my accomplishments since graduation	<input type="radio"/>					
22. Improving the quality of the institution is a priority of mine	<input type="radio"/>					

23. I donate as a way to "pay back" the institution for my undergraduate experience	<input type="radio"/>					
24. I feel good when I donate to the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
25. I contact local, county, or state officials regarding the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
26. When I have the opportunity, I advise parents of those making a college choice that they should consider the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
27. I attend Homecoming festivities	<input type="radio"/>					
28. I attend class reunions	<input type="radio"/>					
29. I donate when I receive direct mailings from the institution soliciting donations	<input type="radio"/>					
30. I am happy with the extracurricular activities I participated in as a student	<input type="radio"/>					
31. I am pleased with the education I received	<input type="radio"/>					
32. I am satisfied with the institution's common-area facilities while I was a student (library, cafeteria, classrooms, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					

33. I attend sporting events and trips organized by the Alumni Engagement Office/Alumni Association (e.g. Phillies game, 76ers game, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
34. I am satisfied with the courses I was offered	<input type="radio"/>					
35. I think back fondly on the professors I had	<input type="radio"/>					
36. I take pride in the institution's athletic success	<input type="radio"/>					
37. I am satisfied with my experiences with administrative staff as a student (bursar, housing, financial aid, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>					
38. I think back fondly on the athletics I participated in	<input type="radio"/>					
39. I vote for local, county, or state officials based on their positive connection to the institution	<input type="radio"/>					
40. I think back fondly on the Greek organization membership I had (sorority/fraternity)	<input type="radio"/>					

Section C: Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements beginning with, "I would become a more engaged alumnus if..."

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. I was aware of events/opportunities to be involved	<input type="radio"/>				
2. Someone from the institution personally contacted me	<input type="radio"/>				
3. I had more money	<input type="radio"/>				
4. I had more time	<input type="radio"/>				
5. I lived closer to Glassboro campus	<input type="radio"/>				
6. Events were held closer to where I live	<input type="radio"/>				
7. My spouse/partner was also an alum	<input type="radio"/>				
8. I knew other alumni who were involved	<input type="radio"/>				
9. There were more opportunities for career and professional development	<input type="radio"/>				
10. I had a stronger emotional connection to the institution	<input type="radio"/>				
11. I supported the institution in its current affairs (political, administration, expansion, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				

Section D: Please briefly describe any suggestions for alumni events and activities you may have.

\*If you would like to be entered into the drawing to win a \$100 gift card, please click [here](#). The information you provide will only be used for purposes of contacting you in the instance that you win the drawing.

## Appendix C

### Institutional Review Board Approval



\*\* This is an auto-generated email. Please do not reply to this email message.  
The originating e-mail account is not monitored.  
If you have questions, please contact your local IRB office \*\*

**DHHS Federal Wide Assurance**

**Identifier:** FWA00007111

**IRB Chair Person:** Harriet Hartman

**IRB Director:** Sreekant Murthy

**Effective Date:**

### eIRB Notice of Approval

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#### STUDY PROFILE

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**Study ID:** [Pro2014000181](#)

**Title:** An Examination of Alumni Engagement at Rowan University

<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	Burton Sisco	<b>Study Coordinator:</b>	None
<b>Co-Investigator(s):</b>	Jessica Kanady	<b>Other Study Staff:</b>	None
<b>Sponsor:</b>	Department Funded	<b>Approval Cycle:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Risk Determination:</b>	Minimal Risk	<b>Device Determination:</b>	Not Applicable
<b>Review Type:</b>	Exempt	<b>Exempt Category:</b>	2
<b>Subjects:</b>	1053		

CURRENT SUBMISSION STATUS

<b>Submission Type:</b>	Research Protocol/Study	<b>Submission Status:</b>	Approved
<b>Approval Date:</b>	12/10/2014		
<b>Pregnancy Code:</b>	No Pregnant Women as Subjects Not Applicable	<b>Pediatric Code:</b>	Not Applicable No Children As Subjects
		<b>Prisoner Code:</b>	Not Applicable No Prisoners As Subjects
<b>Protocol:</b>	Comprehensive - survey, letter, and protocol.pdf eIRBProtocolfinal.docx Institution Alumni Surveyfinal.docx Survey recruitment letterfinal.docx	<b>Consent:</b>	There are no items to display
		<b>Recruitment Materials:</b>	Survey recruitment letterfinal.docx

\* IRB APPROVAL IS GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE STIPULATION(S) THAT:

\* **Study Performance Sites:**

Glassboro Campus                      201 Mullica Hill Road Glasboro, NJ 08028

**ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
2. **Continuing Review:** Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
3. **Expiration of IRB Approval:** If IRB approval expires, effective the date of expiration and until the continuing review approval is issued: **All research activities must stop unless the IRB finds that it is in the best interest of individual subjects**

**to continue. (This determination shall be based on a separate written request from the PI to the IRB.) No new subjects may be enrolled and no samples/charts/surveys may be collected, reviewed, and/or analyzed.**

**4. Amendments/Modifications/Revisions:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, including but not limited to, study procedures, consent form(s), investigators, advertisements, the protocol document, investigator drug brochure, or accrual goals, you are required to obtain IRB review and approval prior to implementation of these changes unless necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects.

**5. Unanticipated Problems:** Unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:

<http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>

**6. Protocol Deviations and Violations:** Deviations from/violations of the approved study protocol must be reported to the IRB Office (45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 312, 812) as required, in the appropriate time as specified in the attachment online at:

<http://www.rowan.edu/som/hsp/>

**7. Consent/Assent:** The IRB has reviewed and approved the consent and/or assent process, waiver and/or alteration described in this protocol as required by 45 CFR 46 and 21 CFR 50, 56, (if FDA regulated research). Only the versions of the documents included in the approved process may be used to document informed consent and/or assent of study subjects; each subject must receive a copy of the approved form(s); and a copy of each signed form must be filed in a secure place in the subject's medical/patient/research record.

**8. Completion of Study:** Notify the IRB when your study has been stopped for any reason. Neither study closure by the sponsor or the investigator removes the obligation for submission of timely continuing review application or final report.

9. The Investigator(s) did not participate in the review, discussion, or vote of this protocol.

10. **Letter Comments:** *There are no additional comments.*

**CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE:** This email communication may contain private, confidential, or legally privileged information intended for the sole use of the designated and/or duly authorized recipients(s). If you are not the intended recipient or have received this email in error, please notify the sender immediately by email and permanently delete all copies of this email including all attachments without reading them. If you are the intended recipient, secure the contents in a manner that conforms to all applicable state and/or federal requirements related to privacy and confidentiality of such information.