



2010-2011 NEAT Grant Program Report

April 30, 2011

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## Purpose of Grant Project

The purpose of this National Educational Alumni Trust grant project was to evaluate and develop the most effective strategies to retain meaningful electronic communications with alumni, students, prospective students and other friends of K-State. This is vital to an alumni association's core mission and success. With the continued surge and ever-changing growth of online communications, it has become even more important for alumni associations to identify and implement targeted strategies that have the most potential to significantly benefit and impact those constituent groups.

The K-State Alumni Association launched a new website with enhanced capabilities in May 2010. One outcome of this project is to gather timely information from alumni, students and campus collaborators about how they interact with others online, what electronic communication tools provided by the Alumni Association are most beneficial, and what we can provide to meet their needs in the future.

A component of our current strategy is engaging those audiences through the Association's website, social media sites, e-mails and e-newsletters. We now have the capability for members to view the Association's quarterly magazine online and can provide additional, desired connections via an internal community integrated with Facebook. With an estimated one in three online users now updating their social media status at least once per week, it is critical that we continue to recognize, plan and react to this medium's significance in the lives of our constituents.

## Process and Timeline

September	The student intern was selected and she began researching other methods and practices used by Big 12 schools. Weekly meetings were held to discuss her findings and decide the goals of the survey.
October	Survey questions were drafted.
November- December	The survey was built and tested using the AXIO program.
January	The survey was available and data was collected.
February	Results were gathered and analyzed.
March	Compiled research and survey results into a comprehensive handbook and created a strategic social media calendar.

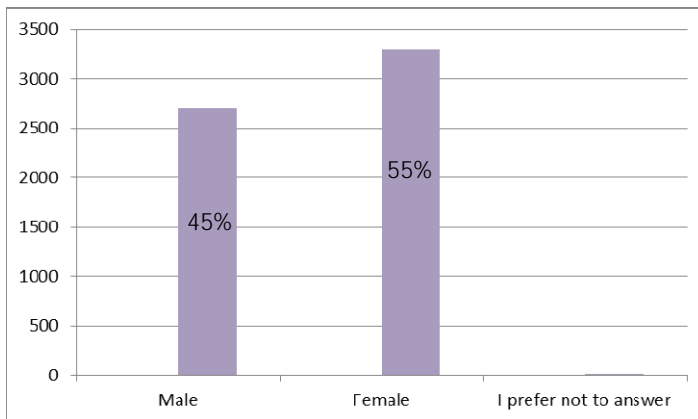
April

Handbook was completed and NEAT Report was written.

Throughout this process, the student intern subscribed to and received e-mails from various corporations ranging from retailers to restaurants. The student intern analyzed the design and purpose of the e-mails. Additionally, she participated in multiple webinars and read weekly blogs on sites like Mashable to supplement the research.

### Scope

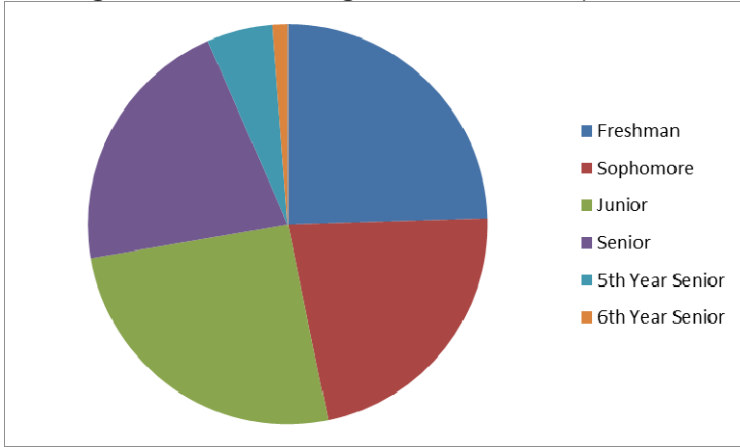
The Electronic Communications survey was open to the public. K-State alumni, parents of current K-State students, faculty members and friends of the university all took part in the survey. Data was collected from more than 6,000 surveys over the course of one month. The graphs and tables below shows the demographics of the audience surveyed.



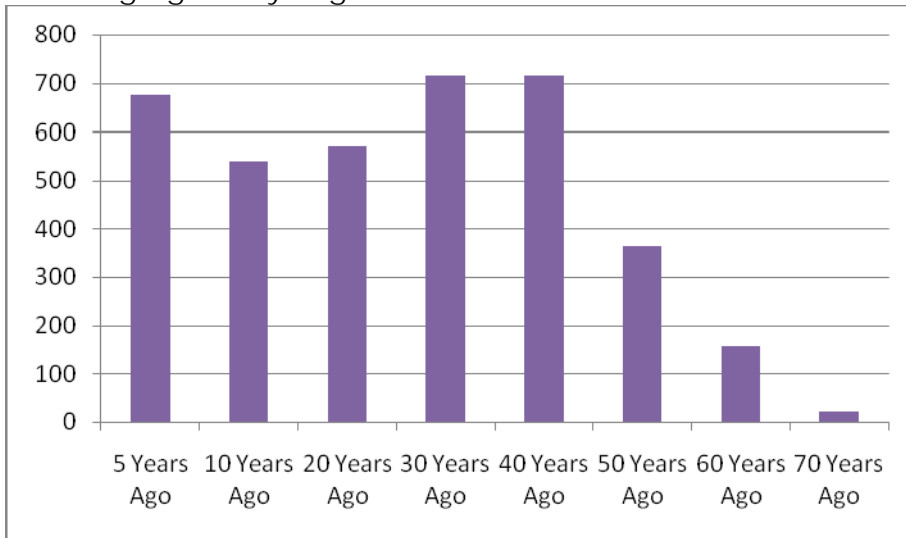
Please choose **one** of the following that **best** describes yourself.

K-State alumni		3680 (61.12%)
K-State student		1696 (28.17%)
K-State faculty or staff member		338 (5.61%)
Other (fan, friend, parent of a student)		307 (5.1%)
N/R		0 (0%)

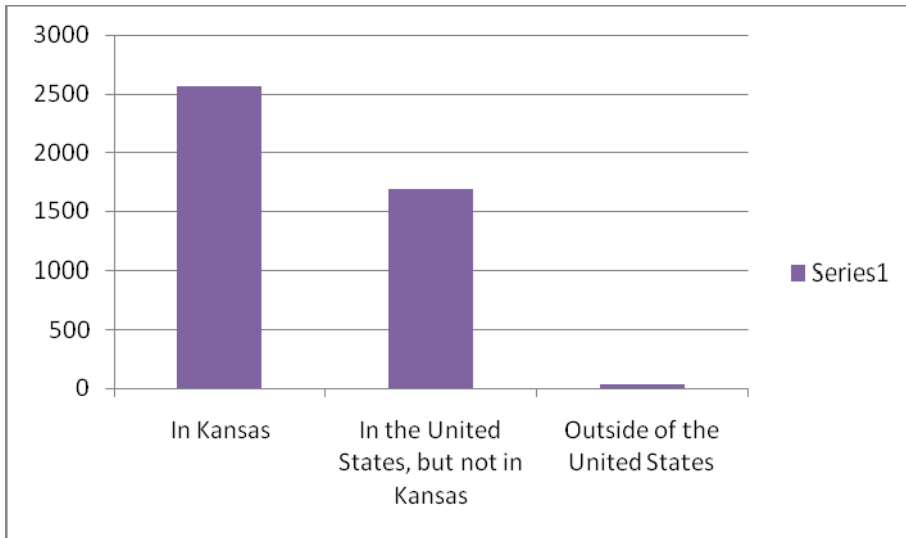
Undergraduate Standings of Student Respondents:



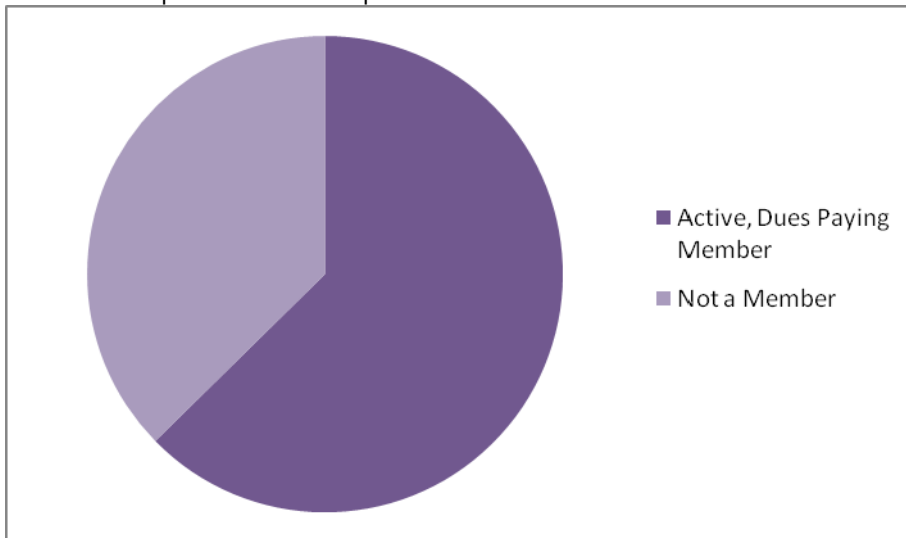
How long ago did you graduate from K-State?



Geographic Location of Respondents:



Membership status of Respondents:



Do you participate in a K-State club or attend K-State events in your area?

Often		710 (11.79%)
Sometimes		2230 (37.04%)
Never		1267 (21.04%)
N/R		1814 (30.13%)

Through the NEAT grant program, we hired a student intern to conduct research and survey alumni, current students and campus collaborators, with a focus on the following:

- Evaluate the current effectiveness and benefit of electronic communications provided by the Alumni Association to include components on our website, social media sites, e-mails and e-newsletters.
- Research strategies employed by similar alumni associations, colleges, universities and organizations to develop, maintain and enhance online connections with constituents.
- Gather survey information to help determine:
  - What information and interaction users and potential users desire from our website and other electronic communication vehicles (e.g. increasing interaction between students and alumni, club resources and tools, social media integration, career networking).
  - How the Alumni Association can further utilize online technology to support and enhance university endeavors through collaboration and ultimately increase the value of the Association to students and the overall university.
  - What beneficial information, programs and networking opportunities the Alumni Association can offer to its audiences not currently provided by mainstream social media sites.
  - How the Alumni Association can enhance its vital role as the preserver of traditions by identifying and implementing additional online communications strategies.
- Review results, determine priorities, evaluate resources, create and implement strategies to target different constituent groups.

Social Media	Number of Followers Before the Survey	Number of Followers as of April 2011	Difference
Facebook	5,364	5,777	+ 413
Twitter	1,597	1,962	+ 365
LinkedIn	2,483	2,867	+ 384

### **Budget**

Please see separate Budget documents.

### **Summary of Findings**

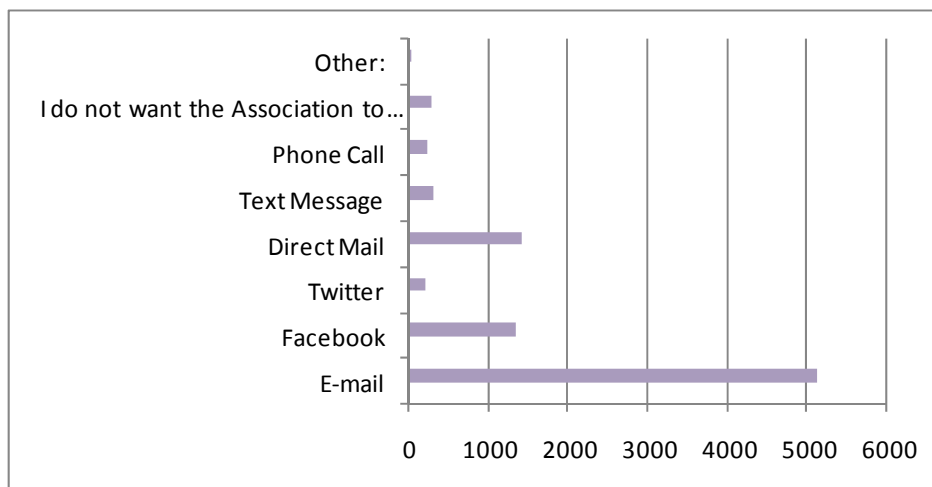
Through the Electronic Communications Survey, and with additional secondary research that has been conducted from various sources, we feel confident in moving forward with our strategic communication plan. The majority of the findings from the survey were positive. For example,

- 94.5 percent of people surveyed responded positively to the question, 'do you find useful information in the Association e-mails?'
- 87 percent of people answered positively to the question, 'do you read/open e-mail from the Association?'
- 40.2 percent of people reported they read @K-State, the Alumni Association's monthly e-newsletter.
  - According to the Convio 2011 Benchmark Report, the national average is 24% for higher education.

As we suspected, there is a gap in the number of people who are using social media and the number of people who 'following' the Association via social media. By conducting this primary research we have a better grasp on how our publics like to be communicated with and what kind of information they are interested in. (See figures below)

Additionally, from other research we have discovered innovative ways to incorporate social media and we know the content that our audience enjoys the most. The graphs and tables below illustrate some of the most compelling results from the survey.







How would you like the Association to communicate with you?







Respondents could choose as many channels as they wished. In analyzing this data, it was taken into consideration, that the survey was distributed solely via electronic communications.

**E-MAIL:**





Do you think the e-mails from the Association are easy to read?

Always		1445 (24%)
Most of the time		3056 (50.76%)
Sometimes		591 (9.82%)
Rarely		46 (0.76%)
Never		8 (0.13%)
N/R		875 (14.53%)

The amount of e-mail you receive from the Association is:








Just right		4519 (75.05%)
Too many		535 (8.89%)
Too few		92 (1.53%)
N/R		875 (14.53%)

The amount of e-mail you receive from K-State as a whole is:

Just right		3981 (66.12%)
Too many		1003 (16.66%)
Too few		162 (2.69%)
N/R		875 (14.53%)







What information do you like to receive the most? Mark all that apply. (Please note that the percentages below are greater than 100 because respondents were allowed to choose multiple answers.)

Campus activities		3135 (52.07%)
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

Athletic news		3345 (55.56%)
Alumni Association information		2491 (41.37%)
Member benefits		2387 (39.64%)
Upcoming K-State events		3981 (66.12%)
Traveling Wildcats		1164 (19.33%)
Other:		130 (2.16%)
N/R		875 (14.53%)

#### WEBSITE:

How often do you visit the Association website? ([www.k-state.com](http://www.k-state.com))

One or more times per day		455 (7.56%)
Weekly		354 (5.88%)
Monthly		956 (15.88%)
Only when prompted to		3037 (50.44%)
Never		972 (16.14%)
N/R		247 (4.1%)

Can you find the information you are looking for on the Association website?

Always		502 (8.34%)
Most of the time		3084 (51.22%)

Sometimes		1073 (17.82%)
Rarely		91 (1.51%)
Never		10 (0.17%)
N/R		1262 (20.96%)

Do you find useful information on the Association website?


Always		562 (9.33%)
Most of the time		2600 (43.18%)
Sometimes		1464 (24.31%)
Rarely		125 (2.08%)
Never		9 (0.15%)
N/R		1262 (20.96%)

Would you participate in an online group, hosted on the Association website, in order to interact with other K-Staters?

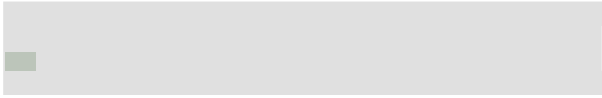

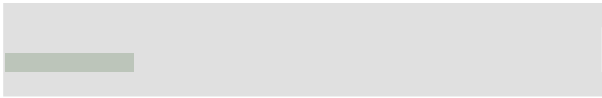


Yes		587 (9.75%)
Maybe		2459 (40.84%)
No		1156 (19.2%)
N/R		

Do you read @K-State, the monthly e-newsletter?

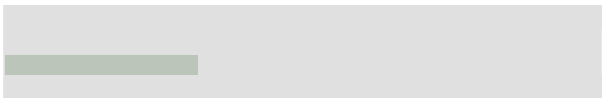

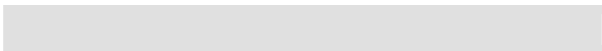
Yes		3109 (51.64%)
No		2037 (33.83%)

N/R		875 (14.53%)
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Why don't you read @K-State?

It doesn't have information relevant to me.		281 (4.67%)
It doesn't look easy to read.		111 (1.84%)
I don't receive it.		1265 (21.01%)
Other:		368 (6.11%)
N/R		3996 (66.37%)

Please indicate if you would like the Association website to be personalized toward your preferences once you log in?

Yes		1924 (31.95%)
No		2836 (47.1%)
N/R		

The K-State Alumni Association website, launched in May 2010, has some capabilities not currently utilized. We used the survey to gauge interest in these particular features.

**FACEBOOK:**



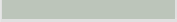
For the social media aspects of the survey, we implemented a conditional branching format. This format allowed respondents to skip questions that did not apply to them. These respondents are represented in the N/R, no response, category in the charts below.

Do you have a Facebook account?

Yes		4315 (71.67%)
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

No		1406 (23.35%)
N/R		300 (4.98%)

Are you a fan of the Association on Facebook? ([Facebook.com/K-StateAlumniAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/K-StateAlumniAssociation))





Yes		1092 (18.14%)
No		3221 (53.5%)
N/R		1711 (28.42%)

From the data, we can see the gap between people who use Facebook, and people who are following the Association is 3,223 people.

Why aren't you a fan of the Association on Facebook?

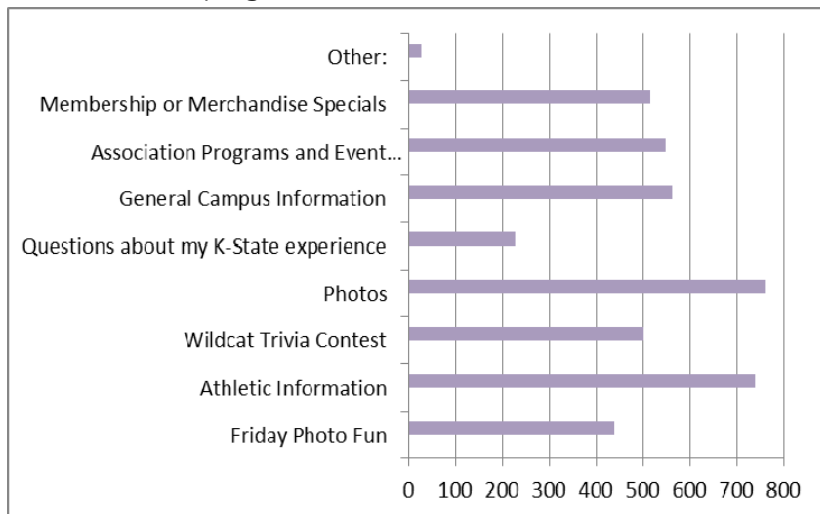
I didn't know the Association had a Facebook page.		2362 (39.23%)
I am not interested in being a fan of the Association.		568 (9.43%)
Other:		286 (4.75%)
N/R		2805 (46.59%)

How have you participated on the Association Facebook page? Mark all that apply.

'Liking' something		460 (7.64%)
Commenting on a post or photo		149 (2.47%)
Posting a question or comment to the page		34 (0.56%)
Submitting a guess for Wildcat Trivia or Friday Photo Fun		70 (1.16%)
I have not participated on the		563

Association Facebook page		(9.35%)
Other:		17 (0.28%)
N/R		4943 (82.1%)

What type of information do you like to see on the Association's Facebook page? Mark all that apply. (The figure below shows the data from people who are fans of the Facebook page)



**What type of info would you like to see more of on Facebook**

- Events in my area
- Photos
- Campus Information
- History
- Discounts and coupons for members
- Student activities (SGA, SAB, etc.)
- 'Bragging information that I can share on my Facebook'

**TWITTER:**

Do you have a Twitter account?

Yes		959 (15.93%)
No		4744 (78.79%)
N/R		320 (5.31%)

Do you follow the Association on Twitter? ([@KStateAlumni](#))

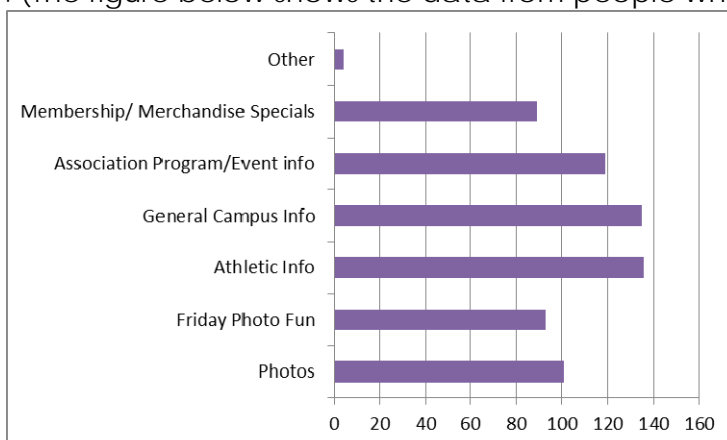
Yes		196 (3.26%)
No		763 (12.67%)
N/R		5062 (84.07%)

From the data, we can see the gap between people who use Twitter, and people who are following the Association is 763 people.

Why aren't you following the Association on Twitter?





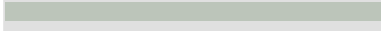
I didn't know the Association had a Twitter account.		474 (7.87%)
I am not interested in following the Association on Twitter.		194 (3.22%)
Other:		97 (1.61%)
N/R		5258 (87.33%)

What kind of information do you like to see on the Association's Twitter account? Mark all that apply. (The figure below shows the data from people who follow the Associations Twitter)



**YOUTUBE:**

Where have you watched an Association video? Mark all that apply.

Association YouTube channel		433 (7.19%)
Association Facebook page		285 (4.73%)
Association website		1503 (24.96%)
Other:		325 (5.4%)
N/R		3768 (62.58%)

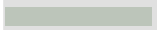


Note: Video capability was introduced with the website launch in May 2010. After analyzing survey results, regarding the YouTube channel. We have found the majority of people are interested in watching videos in the following categories:

1. Interview with the athletic staff and student-athletes
2. Campus events
3. A virtual tour of Manhattan
4. Interviews with student leaders
5. Interviews with Association board members




However, providing these videos with the current resources would be a challenge.

**LINKEDIN:**

Do you have a LinkedIn account?





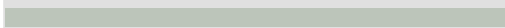
Yes		1447 (24.03%)
No		4222 (70.12%)
N/R		352 (5.85%)

Are you a member of the official [Kansas State University Alumni Association](#) group on LinkedIn?







Yes		408 (6.78%)
No		1038 (17.24%)
N/R		4575 (75.98%)

From the data, we can see the gap between people who use LinkedIn, and people who are following the Association is 1,039 people.



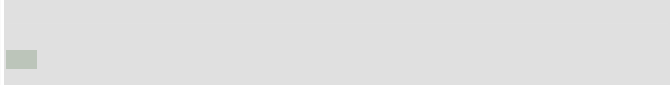

Why aren't you a member of the [Kansas State University Alumni Association](#) group on LinkedIn?

I didn't know the Association had a group on LinkedIn.		827 (13.74%)
I'm not interested in being a member of the group.		91 (1.51%)
I already belong to a different K-State group.		20 (0.33%)
Other:		98 (1.63%)
N/R		4985 (82.79%)

How often do you read a useful article posted on the LinkedIn group page?

Daily		9 (0.15%)
Weekly		62 (1.03%)
Monthly		69 (1.15%)
Less than monthly		171 (2.84%)
Never		92 (1.53%)
N/R		5618 (93.31%)

Have you made a useful connection with someone you met through the Association's LinkedIn group?

Yes, I have made a connection with 1-5 people.		92 (1.53%)
Yes, I have made a connection with more than 5 people.		23 (0.38%)
No		287 (4.77%)
N/R		5619 (93.32%)

**At the conclusion of the survey, respondents were given the option of providing additional comments. Comments ranged in topic, and did not necessarily relate to electronic communications. Repeated additional comments include:**

- Would like more information on Association events taking place in their specific area, or would like to start a new group-(14)
- Want to see more job postings on the LinkedIn page-(14)
- Want to choose the type of information they receive-(12)
- What are the benefits of becoming a member/ why should I join/what does the Association do- (9)
- Would like to see more photos on the Facebook page-(9)
- The Association membership/events are too expensive-(8)
- Would like a mobile app(2) foursquare (4) for the Association

Below is the comparison of K-State and the other alumni associations in the Big 12 Conference as of September 2010.

**Comparison of Peer Universities Online Alumni Efforts**

University Name	Kansas State University	University of Kansas	University of Missouri	University of Nebraska	Colorado University	University of Texas	Texas A&M University	Texas Tech University	University of Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University	Baylor University	Iowa State University
<b>Twitter</b>	Following: 556 Followers: 1,194 Listed: 71 Promotional tweets	Following: 1,394 Followers: 1,674 Listed: 111 Tweets appear on homepage; Drive people to news articles/ press releases	Following: 113 Followers: 2,109 Listed 115 Fun Facts, Current News, No selling	No	Following: 23 Followers: 437 Promotes CU and campus events, games, speakers, etc. News stories, pictures and videos	Following: 208 Followers: 1,960 Football events, news stories about alumni, pictures Have info for their other social media down the side of their page	No	Following: 103 Followers: 599 Some promotional/informational tweets	Not updated regularly; Information about sports	Following: 3,406 Followers: 3,539 Promote athletic events Many of the same messages on Facebook	No	Promoting things on their Facebook and blog
<b>Facebook</b>	Have 5 tabs Music Player; Don't have Upcoming Events	Have 6 tabs they are a fan of; Upcoming Events; Post about events, not selling as much	6 tabs No music, events, videos, same messages as their tweets	Has Photos and Upcoming Events No Pages or Music Player Give away volleyball tickets to the 7th person to comment on that post	No tabs music, or upcoming events Same messages as on their Twitter	No tabs or music Do have upcoming events Almost all posts are relating to stories on the alumni website blog Get tons of comments on each post, not all positive though	No photo albums, music or upcoming events Some promotional posts and postings of single pictures	No wall activity	Used for events and links, No wall activity	16 tabs No photos, music, or upcoming events Post trivia questions and promote football games Changed profile picture to promote ring sales	No tabs Update Photos; Upcoming Events Promote blog stories Friday Photo Contest	6 tabs; 2 videos; Some photos; Upcoming Events Mostly post about Alumni activities and promoting
<b>YouTube</b>	Most recent videos are 2 months and 1 year old (one just added about license plates); Have 4 playlists, all related to athletics 55 subscribers	Update videos weekly; Have 8 broad category playlists (Stu Life, This is KU, Athletics, Service, etc.) <b>1,142 subscribers</b>	No Playlists; Occasionally uploads videos 62 subscribers	No	Only 3 videos 5 subscribers	Uploads 1-3 videos about every month Highlighting Alumni, and students Videos about university history and promotional pieces 150 subscribers	Upload 1 video about every other month 158 subscribers	9 Playlists 3 videos in the last 2 weeks 776 Subscribers	No	4 Playlists Upload videos as events occur 'Outstanding Seniors' segment 73 Subscribers	No	No Playlists 4 Videos 2 Subscribers
<b>LinkedIn</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Career Services page, not specifically the Alumni Association	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
<b>Flickr</b>	No	Many Albums, Almost no comments, little views	No	3 Albums for events in 2010; Average 200 views, no comments	Over 200 albums w/ hundreds of views	Around 30 albums; Hundreds of views	No	No	No	37 albums; Average less than 50 views	No	No
<b>Website compared to KSU Alumni Association</b>			Features more campus-wide news Links to things in Columbia- Hotel Finder, maps Tiger Trivia Question and Prize	Ask Andy' Staff Historian who answers questions Communications Tab- archives of publications and press releases	Media Tab which includes photos, student paper, blogs, etc.	Have quick buttons to their blog Facebook App and e-card Graduating Seniors tab to get them interested in membership	Publications and Multimedia Tab 'Find An Aggie' Link	Have blog		Podcasts MySpace 'Orange Door Business Network'- \$100 annual membership fee to be in a searchable database	Post on average 5 times a month to their blog	Blog, but not updated regularly Have Retirees tab- organization of retired faculty to stay connected

## **Summary of Conclusions**

Based on these findings, the Association will tweak the way it corresponds with audiences to strengthen existing relationships. Some of these changes include posting items during peak hours in social media use and creating guidelines for how sensitive information will be handled. Based on a comparison of all other alumni associations in the Big 12 Conference, the K-State Alumni Association has discovered areas to enhance efforts.

These include uploading more YouTube videos when available and adding more features to the website, including city information and traditions information. This is a key element in preserving and enhancing Kansas State traditions. From our research we have also concluded that it would be beneficial to invest in another form of social media, such as foursquare, and we are getting that process underway.

By looking at what has been successful for not only other universities, but also local companies here in Manhattan we have incorporated promotional items in our social media sites as well. In March, the Association celebrated being ranked #1 in the Big 12 membership for the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row by having a 15 days of trivia and prizes promotion on Facebook. The Association's Facebook page saw a large increase in activity and amount of followers during this time period.

## **Summary of Impacts**

The NEAT grant the K-State Alumni Association received will impact the future office programming in multiple ways, including the creation of a Social Media Handbook, annual calendar and overall management strategies (See Appendix A and B). The survey results will impact the way in which the K-State Alumni Association communicates with its publics. With the information gathered, we know what type of information audiences prefer to receive on the varying social media sites, as well as through e-mail.

We also are hopeful for increased participation on our social media sites and in the Association as a whole. Additionally, conducting this research has led to the development of a Social media Handbook for the Association. This will be a vital tool in forming a consistent voice over all the forms of communication. It will establish guidelines and practices that the Association abides by, so that trained staff members will be able to contribute to social media websites with ease. The Handbook provides a list of the 'best practices' for each area of communication. This section shows what posts or messages had the most views or greatest amount of activity in a given period of time.

A calendar for the upcoming year was developed to help plan social media posts. This calendar will be very beneficial because it will allow the entire staff to be aware of the upcoming events and the kind of information that is going to be

published on the social media sites. Other research combined with the survey results also will change the look and feel of e-mail communications over time.

Some strategies to publicize the Association's social media sites have already been implemented. In May 2010, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube icons were placed on the K-State Alumni Association homepage. These icons were embedded at the top of all e-mails the Association sends starting in March 2011 as well. The Association also changed the name of the LinkedIn group from the Kansas State Alumni Association to Kansas State Alumni to sound more inclusive of all alumni and just Association members.

### **Personal Reflection**

I have learned a tremendous amount of information that will be useful in my future career in the marketing and communications arena. This valuable information not only includes facts I learned, but also research techniques and problem solving skills. I was forced to take the initiative and come up with creative solutions for new situations. This project was very flexible, giving me the freedom to take the survey results and present them in the best way I saw fit. The opportunity I had to work with a group of people and see how they conduct business has been an irreplaceable experience. From the research I did, on other Alumni Associations and through various outlets, I feel confident that I will bring a large amount of knowledge regarding social media to my next position.

## Appendix A: Social Media Handbook



2011 K-State Social Media Handbook.pdf

## Appendix B: 2011-2012 Social Media Calendar



Calendar.pdf

