

“Our chapter leaders are starting to use Affinity Circles to stay in touch with our members. I see new groups being created regularly and alumni inviting other alumni to join. At our next annual chapter meeting we plan to share this success with other volunteers so everyone understands all the tools and resources that Affinity Circles offers. Some have already discovered this on their own and really embrace it. I would say within a year, probably six months, all of our chapters will use it as a primary way to communicate.”

Jen Heisey
UC Alumni Association

University of Cincinnati Alumni Association Background

The University of Cincinnati Alumni Association exists to inspire pride, foster loyalty and cultivate support for the University of Cincinnati among its 200,000+ alumni and its many friends, faculty and staff members, current students and their families.

Membership dues allow the Alumni Association to serve the university, its alumni, and students in many meaningful ways. In addition, an array of programs, services and activities enable UCAA members to maintain a strong connection to the university they love.

Changing Preferences Warrant New Communication Methods

Four years ago, the UC Alumni Association’s primary means of communicating with alumni was through membership renewal letters and the UC magazine, produced by the University’s communications department. Seeking to enhance alumni communications, the Association brought in a consultant to analyze the organization and recommend improvements to heighten its success. The consultant found that, from a technology perspective, the association was missing the mark. Recommendations from the consultant included developing a better capacity to do targeted emails to constituents, redeveloping the Association’s web site, establishing an online alumni community, and giving alumni the ability to update their records online.

While 50 percent of the University of Cincinnati’s alumni live in Cincinnati the Association didn’t have an electronic mechanism to bring everyone together and inform people about programs and events. Results from an alumni attitudes survey supported the Alumni Association’s belief that most people preferred electronic communications. The UC Alumni Association selected Affinity Circles to give alumni a virtual place to come together and reconnect on their own time and on their own terms.

Relieving the Human Resource Burden

Before launching its affinity circle, the UC Alumni Association lacked the staff and resources to accomplish all of its goals, including managing alumni records, following up on individual events and activities, and offering a career center. “Using Affinity Circles helps our human resource issues,” noted Heisey. “It gives us the opportunity to use technology to do things more effectively and efficiently without having an individual person to handle each component.”

With Affinity Circles, instead of visiting different places on the alumni web site to change their address, add an email address, or view other alumni business cards, alumni can view and change all contact information from within the network.

The Association actively uses its affinity circle to post information about alumni clubs and events, informing the community about when the events are taking place and how to RSVP. After an event, the network is frequently used to follow up with the community and prompt future participation. Through the alumni association's affinity circle, groups can post photo albums from events and use them as a mechanism to engage more alumni by inviting them to join the group and view the album.

One of the most successful Alumni Association programs on its affinity circle is the mentoring program. The Association partners with the Office of Exploratory Studies to help undergraduate students who aren't sure about their major or their career plans. The shadowing program connects students with alums who are working in a career they may be interested in. The Association put the whole system on its affinity circle in a group and the network is now performing all of the functions the UCAA staff would otherwise need to do manually. Previously, the staff would create databases and search by jobs or by regions, requiring many hours of staff time. With Affinity Circles, the process is managed automatically. Everyone who wants to be a mentor or who wants to participate shadowing is encouraged to put themselves in the group. The mentoring program is another good example of how the association's affinity circle is pulling the Association's human resource out of the middle of everything, allowing them to be more proactive with other alumni programs.

inCircle Jobs™: Connecting Local Employers with UC Alumni

The UC Alumni Association was one of the first Affinity Circles customers to launch inCircle Jobs, a way for employers to post jobs to authenticated, qualified candidates from within the targeted and trusted UC alumni community. Job seekers on the association's affinity circle see available jobs alongside peers already working at the hiring company. inCircle Jobs increases the likelihood that potential candidates will come with a referral from a current employee.

"The inCircle Jobs launch has been really successful for us," said Heisey. "In the first month alone we had 1,300 new alumni users sign on to view the jobs. Additionally, we had 40 premium jobs listed on the network and for us that's really great. We didn't typically have 40 jobs listed when it was free on our career site!"

The Affinity Circles Difference

The UC Alumni Association staff found Affinity Circles to be more innovative and progressive than many vendors they worked with in a past. Key to the successful working relationship between Affinity Circles and the UC Alumni Association are Affinity Circles' flexibility, willingness to improve and make changes when necessary, and constant technology updates that keep the UCAA on the cutting edge of social networking. The Association appreciates that Affinity Circles gives them all of the tools necessary to manage the network and handles requests in a reasonable and timely fashion.

Affinity Circles provided the UCAA with template letters to assist with communications. The association has used the email templates and has also leveraged other Affinity Circles marketing information for use in UC magazine articles promoting the association's affinity circle.

"I don't like empty promises. I have a lot of trust and faith in what Affinity Circles is doing and the service they help us provide to our alumni. I have worked closely with the team, and I certainly will continue to recommend Affinity Circles to others."

*Jen Heisey
UC Alumni Association*

Affinity Circles can help your organization:

- ✓ Connect with your alumni community.
- ✓ Drive quality contact information back to your database.
- ✓ Increase the effectiveness of your marketing programs.
- ✓ Empower alumni to manage communications previously handled by your staff.
- ✓ Create revenue growth opportunities.
- ✓ Build your brand and demonstrate value to your most important constituency.

Contact us for a demo today!

www.affinitycircles.com

(650) 810-1500