



*A*LUMNI ASSOCIATION

IUB STUDENT STUDY
TASK FORCE

FINAL REPORT

MAY 2005

History and Overview of Project

The Student Alumni Association (SAA) was formed on the Bloomington campus in 1976 in order to increase the ties between students and alumni and create student awareness of alumni activities. The student program has now expanded to each of the IU campuses and includes almost 2,500 annual members, 2,100 of those being from the IU Bloomington campus.

National studies have consistently shown a strong correlation between student involvement and alumni engagement. Additionally, the level of a student's involvement has a positive effect on the affinity they have toward the institution. Our most active student leaders tend to become our most dedicated alumni leaders. With this realization, the IU Alumni Association (IUAA) must wage an aggressive campaign to reach, support, and develop student leaders.

In the fall of 2004, IUAA President and CEO Ken Beckley appointed a student study task force. As staff embarked on the planning it was determined that this initial task force would specifically look at the IUB student program and focus on undergraduate students. Chaired by IUAA Director of Student Programs Sondra Inman, the task force embarked on a six-month investigation to accomplish the stated goals of President Beckley:

Identify and recommend strategies to:

- 1. Increase awareness of IUAA**
- 2. Increase membership in SAA**

Process

The task force was comprised of 10 IUAA staff members, seven SAA executive board members, seven at-large student representatives, and five university administrators.

Task Force Roster:

Adam Basey, Erin Bottorff, Rachael Crouch, Sagar Desay, David Frantzreb, Joan Hall, John Hobson, Kristin King, George Kuh, Nikki Lazzaro, Andrea Linton, D'Andre May, Richard McKaig, Heather Mooney, Jeanne Power, Adam Russ, Jason Russ, Cynthia Schultz, Brad Snyder, Libby Spille, Trish Surfus, Sarah Thompson, Rachel Tudor, Steve Veldkamp, Kirk Walda, Todd Waldman, Dottie Warmbier, Mark Warner. Chair: Sondra Inman

The committee met four times and at each meeting split into three break-out groups:

- First-year Experience
- Bridging the Gap - Sophomores and Juniors
- Transition from Student to Alumni - The Senior Class

Each break-out session began with the following discussion points:

- What can be done to reach students as a whole and within the following sub-groups?
 - International students
 - Minority students
 - Legacies (Parent is an IU alumna or alumnus)
 - Student organizations and their leaders
- How do we stress the idea of entering a lifelong relationship with IU while raising awareness of the IUAA?
- What can we do to increase SAA membership?
- What events and activities could help accomplish the above goals?
- What membership offerings would help accomplish the above goals?

To assist the task force, SAA staff provided membership data, information on organizational structure, a detailed list of current SAA events and activities, and an "Idea List". The "Idea List" is a compilation of programs and services either proposed to SAA by marketing students during class projects or based on similar student programs from peer institutions.

In conjunction with the IUB Student Study Task Force, the IUAA was also conducting a Visioning Task Force. Through committee discussion and an overwhelming consensus on where the future of the IUAA could be most impacted, the Programs and Services committee of the Visioning Task Force focused on student programming. The Student Study Task Force report should provide complimentary recommendations to be compiled with the results from the Visioning Task Force related to the growth and strengthening of the IUAA's student programs.

Recommendations

Each of the three break-out groups provided a final list of recommendations. The following categorizes the recommendations into four overarching themes: awareness, membership, organizational structure, and programs and events.

Awareness

The initial charge to the task force addressed the issue of awareness of the IUAA and the SAA. The committee focused on potential initiatives while stressing the establishment of an ongoing awareness campaign prior to and throughout the students' time on campus. Specifically, the committee members suggest:

1. Create and send a congratulatory letter or postcard to admitted or admitted "paid" freshmen. Through cooperation with the Admission's Office, the IUAA/SAA could send a mailer to the households of all admitted students (approximately 17,000) and/or a piece to the admitted and paid students (approximately 7,000). The letter could be formal and addressed to parents from the president of the Alumni Association or a visually appealing post card addressed to students and signed by the president of the Student Alumni Association. If resources permitted, the IUAA could attach a decal or other small giveaway to the mailing. The mailing data could be separated by legacy and non-legacy students with targeted messages to each. Contacting the newest members of the IU family -- admitted students -- with a message from the IUAA/SAA would be beneficial in raising awareness and also supports the Admissions Office's retention efforts.

2. Administer informational survey to identify students' wants and needs. The survey could be dispersed with the help of SAA volunteers and via the SAA web site. Set a minimum response rate of 360 surveys submitted in order to validate results. Create a five-question monthly web survey for entrants in the monthly SAA membership prize drawing. Once survey responses are tabulated, provide additional attention and analysis to individual survey items reporting at a 70% or below response rate. Seek to partner with other surveying tools, such as National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and the Higher Education Freshmen Survey, that are currently being conducted.

3. Strive to better partner with Residential Programs and Services, Orientation, and Admissions. In order to achieve optimal awareness of the SAA and IUAA, students must be reached as soon as their IU relationship begins. Partnerships with the above mentioned entities are mutually beneficial and should be explored and strengthened. SAA needs to encourage our student leaders to be active in these offices as well. Encouraging SAA leaders to serve as orientation leaders and Admission's Office volunteers helps strengthen the common missions of supporting student leadership development and connecting students to the university. Students should recognize that they are beginning a lifelong relationship with the institution and that the Alumni Association plays an integral role in facilitating that relationship.

4. Send letter of congratulations to campus organizations, Greek chapters, university administrators, and student leaders who have been recognized for significant achievement. Providing recognition to students, faculty, administrators, and organizations ensures that the brightest of IU are aware of the IUAA and that the organization, as the voice for alumni, appreciates their efforts to better our institution.

Membership

In addition to awareness, President Beckley charged the task force to identify strategies to increase membership in SAA. The committee members compiled the following recommendations related to membership initiatives:

1. Create a four-to-five year nonrefundable SAA membership option.

Nearly 800 students sign up to be SAA members during orientation. Creating a four-to-five year membership plan allows these students a choice to remain connected to SAA/IUAA during their time at IUB. Parents are influential in signing up students during orientation, and this option gives them the chance to support the multi-year membership. Several peer institutions have similar student membership options, and examples of successful programs could be modeled. For data integrity issues, the committee recommends that student members update their contact information through the online directory.

2. Add an SAA membership check-off box allowing students to purchase membership when they register for classes.

Currently students have options to purchase a variety of items, such as Little 500 tickets, when they register for classes. Since we already have bursar billing in place, the addition of an SAA membership during student registration makes sense and provides a fast and convenient way for students to join either for an annual membership or the four-to-five year collegiate membership.

3. Provide immediate membership level access to seniors and graduating students.

Many IUAA membership benefits are most useful during the transition from student to alumni: career services, relocation assistance, chapter information, and others. IUAA needs to provide access to those services in a timely manner. Partnering with the career services offices could help facilitate the awareness of those featured benefits.

4. Continue and increase promotion of 2for\$20.

Created as a way to overcome the issue addressed above in recommendation No. 3, the 2for\$20 program provides immediate access for soon-to-be and recent graduates. The successful kick off of this promotion can be improved by continued and enhanced promotional efforts at the Grad Fair and Commencement.

Structure

As the committee discussed the overall themes of awareness and membership, it became apparent that some internal changes could help facilitate the proposed initiatives. The following recommendations relate to the leadership responsibilities as defined through the SAA Committee of the Whole:

1. Create an Outreach and Diversity position in the SAA to encourage greater cross-campus involvement. The SAA and the IUAA Director of Diversity Programs have hosted student-leader luncheons each fall to address issues regarding minority student involvement in majority organizations. These discussions have led to co-sponsorship of events and provided a communication link between the organizations. To build on this success, the SAA needs to commit to a year-long outreach effort. While partnerships with minority student organizations have increased, SAA needs to reach out to international student groups.

2. Create an Alumni Relations position on the SAA Committee of the Whole to serve as liaison between alumni and students and to work toward the forming of an SAA Affiliate Group.

By designating a student leader to focus on alumni relations, there will be specific guidance given to projects and initiatives to create more opportunities for students and alumni to connect. Collaborating and reaching out to IUAA chapters and SAA alumni will be a priority.

3. Develop alumni relations areas in specific student groups to facilitate connections between students and established or potential affiliate groups (successful examples include Union Board/Whittenberger Society).

Create and distribute guidelines for student groups to assist in the involvement and development of alumni affiliate groups. Research has shown that graduates relate more to their areas of activity than their class year or academic area of study. The IUAA needs to outreach and support the development of these groups as a way to gain involvement and engagement of alumni.

4. Create a tangible identity for SAA.

Because SAA is often confused with IUSA (the student government) and the antidotal evidence of a perception issue over the oxymoron "Student - Alumni," the identity of the organization needs to be addressed. Some committee members felt strongly that creating a mascot (i.e.: Clifford the Big Red Dog) for SAA could help the group be more recognizable on campus. Others suggested a slogan or tagline. The recommendation from the task force is for the SAA Executive Council or possibly a separate task force be appointed to further study SAA identity issues.

Programs and Events

Recognized as vehicles to accomplish awareness and membership goals, the committee spent extensive time looking at potential programs and events that best fit with the SAA mission. The following were identified as priorities:

1. Organize a freshmen event during the first month of class.

An event such as a “Back Yard” cookout at the DeVault Alumni Center, could be promoted through summer orientation (similar to the A Cappella for the Arts event). Additionally, the event could be marketed to the 400 students in Intensive Freshmen Seminar (IFS) and at the residence halls during move-in week. The event might also include an organized Powder Puff football game, where professors are coaches, men are cheerleaders, and women are players.

2. Sponsor a legacy event during Freshmen Family Weekend.

Modeled after similar events hosted at other schools, this event would bring legacy freshmen and their families to the DeVault Alumni Center for a ceremony/event in recognition of the Indiana University family tradition. The committee had some concerns about this event and has suggested that if the decision is made to host such an event, the IUAA must be cognizant of alienating first-generation students.

3. Host basketball Big Red Warm-ups (BRWs) for every home weekend Big 10 game and expand invitations to include alumni.

The current basketball BRWs are only promoted to SAA members. The committee recommends that we expand these events and promote similar to the football BRWs. See below under recommendation No. 5 for more details on improving BRWs.

4. Host a Midnight Madness open house from 9 p.m. to midnight on the opening day of basketball practice.

Initially proposed by students participating in a marketing class project focused on increasing awareness of the IUAA/SAA, the committee endorsed the idea. Similar to a BRW, the DAC would be opened up with food, refreshments, and entertainment provided. Students, alumni, and friends of the university would be invited to attend.

5. Enhance football Big Red Warm-ups.

The committee felt our current BRWs could be enhanced with live music and scheduled visits by the cheerleaders and Marching 100. We could better use the building by tenting the plaza or adding a retractable roof to the back of the building. Additionally, better promotion and media coverage of the event is needed to draw in more students and alumni.

6. Support opportunities for alumni and students to interact.

Feedback from student and alumni leaders stresses the positive benefits of this interaction. The committee recommends the IUAA consider the following options: Coordinate alternative spring breaks for students and alumni; support student leader attendance at away BRWs; encourage student leaders to attend chapter-sponsored student send-offs; finally, encouraging student and alumni to partner in community service projects is a great way to accomplish the goal of student–alumni interaction while positively impacting the community.

7. Clear and branded presence of the IUAA at Commencement.

Seen as a lost opportunity, the committee felt that graduates should know that the IUAA is responsible for the ceremony. Some ways the committee felt this could be accomplished include a larger staff presence (mandatory for professional staff and optional for support staff) at line-up, requiring that staff wear a consistent recognizable uniform (blazers or button-down shirt), providing better staff training to answer and direct inquiries. Additionally, it is suggested that the IUAA host a “Graduation Station” in Gladstein

Fieldhouse where membership information and offers, photo ops, giveaways, and refreshments are available. Along with increased visibility during line-up, the recommendation also includes a more active membership presence at school/department Commencement functions.

8. Partner with bookstores for a stronger and more visible presence during Grad Fair and graduation week events.

At some similar institutions, the Grad Fair is hosted by the alumni association and the first stop for a soon-to-be graduate as they come in is to register with the alumni office. The IUAA needs to partner with the bookstores and vendors to collect senior e-mail/contact information during the Grad Fair, book buy-back, and cap-and-gown sales.

9. Host a “Life after IU” lecture series

Based on programs run by other alumni associations, the series could include the current etiquette program along with financial consultation, student-loan consolidation, and insurance information. By partnering with IUAA affinity partners, costs could be kept to a minimum while providing a benefit to students.

Next Steps

The committee is enthusiastic about the positive impact the report can have on the direction of IUAA student programs. The following points outline the immediate actions taken towards the implementation of the above recommendations.

1. As mentioned on page 2 of this report, the IUAA Visioning Task Force has recently submitted a report containing a variety of far impacting recommendations. Within that report there are specific proposals related to student programs. Those recommendations will be compiled with the above recommendations for one complete report. The end result will provide a comprehensive set of ideas gathered from staff, student leaders, IU administration, and alumni volunteers on the future direction of how we engage and attract students.

2. Student Study Task Forces appointed on each of IU's regional campuses and at IUPUI. President Beckley proposed to regional campus alumni directors the idea of additional task forces. They decided instead of one task force, they will each conduct a task force for their campus. IUPUI will conduct two task forces – one for undergraduate students and one for graduate students. Those reports will be delivered to President Beckley in May, 2006.

3. Implemented for the 2005 – 2006 academic year.

- This June, IUAA is mailing a post-card to 7,000 admitted students welcoming them to Indiana University and encouraging them to get involved.

- In addition to a presence during the Orientation Resource Center, SAA will present during the evening "Sprint" sessions. These 15-minute presentations will highlight the programs and events of SAA and encourage membership.

- On the 2005 – 2006 SAA Committee of the Whole (COW) a new position has been created with the responsibility of fostering alumni relations.

- The 2005 – 2006 SAA Executive Council is currently pursuing the use of a mascot to assist in campus recognition and create a tangible identify for the organization.

- Several enhancements for BRWs are planned including a mailing to season ticket holders, inviting the cheerleaders, pom squad, Marching 100, and football team to visit, scheduling live music or a deejay, and expanding the use of the building.

Conclusion

The task force's recommendations are based on the active participation of a core group of dedicated student leaders, IUAA staff, and IUB administrators. The committee suggests that the IUAA appoint a standing committee to track progress of these recommendations during bi-annual meetings. Additionally, it suggests another IUB Student Study Task Force be called in 2010 to revisit and reconstruct goals for the IUB student program.

The enactment of the above recommendations should have a considerable impact on the future of IUAA. As the IUAA and SAA reach out this summer to the class of 2010, patience must be exercised as the current and upcoming efforts may take years to result in positive and measurable outcomes.

The committee applauds President Beckley and the IUAA for their focused attention of the student program and their continued support of student leadership development.