The Seven Essentials of Highly Engaged Alumni
“Today’s donors have more options for their philanthropic interests than ever before, and they want deep connections with institutions that matter to them and share their values.” (Jarrell, 2009)

“Colleges that don’t figure out what alumni want from them can reinforce the idea that institutions are only looking for money when they reach out to graduates.” (Strout, 2006)
Background

Analysis of disparate pieces of data:

- Gallup Consulting Research Reports 2004, 2006 and 2009
- SE WI alumni survey
- MUAA Alumni Involvement Committee graphs
- 2008 – 2009 Alumni Chapter & CIB Club Annual Report and Leadership Feedback; Regional Club additional information (club presidents and event rosters)
- Right Brain Strategy
Background: What Evolved

• Seven essentials define desirable characteristics of highly engaged alumnus/a – in how they view themselves and how they connect to their alma mater (not necessarily to all essentials concurrently, as this will vary by life stage)
• Tool to assist with categorizing, refining, adding and decreasing specific offerings
Questions Prompted by Seven Essentials

• What are the voids in current programming?

• Where is there excess? What does this mean? Do we trim in these areas to focus on our voids?

• How can programming be enhanced to minimize these voids and offer a well-rounded menu of opportunities for alumni to connect back with their alma mater?

• What programs and services not currently offered would alumni like to see added? What would they be most likely to participate in?

• How do alumni currently view the university as a philanthropic organization? What might inspire them to give?
Community & Networking

• Most offerings – “primary” and “secondary” categories
• Well-established essential through CIRCLES, forums, Marquette WORKS, etc.
  – Inspired by Gallup 2006 data; focus group work through Host Committees
• No voids; slight overage in social offerings = empowerment of volunteer leaders
Pride & Spirit

- Strong quantity of offerings (behind Community & Networking)
- Marketing product in men’s basketball program (history, excitement, affinity, prestige)
- Affinity- and college-based programming
- Opportunity identified: capitalize on Pride & Spirit offerings to infuse Giving & Creating Legacy essential
- No voids identified
Spirituality & Character

- Limited in scope of offerings: Mass & Brunches and seasonal reflections
- Incorporated into focus groups to learn thoughts regarding online spirituality, spiritual forums, retreats and Jesuit collaboration
Service

• Expanded service project offerings in FY11 in club regions, but limited in scope
• Concept of service was instrumental component of student experience -- shouldn't it be a part of alumni experience also?
• Incorporated into focus groups to learn how we tap into or recognize community work alumni already do, interest in collaboration with university partners
Learning

- Strides made in FY11 (book clubs, faculty travel, forums, Marquette WORKS)
- Incorporated into focus groups to learn interest in online opportunities (relevant lectures, career resources, chat rooms, campus tours)
Connecting with Students

• Strides made in FY11 and FY12
  – Summer Send-offs
  – Yield receptions
  – Student Ambassador program
  – Marquette Nation
  – Student infusion in programming
  – Legacy family offerings
  – eMentorship

• More local opportunities; in turn, incorporate this essential into regionally-based focus groups
Giving & Creating Legacy

• Frequent overlap of this essential with others (CIRCLES, high-end gatherings, reunions, awards, milestone celebrations)
• Incorporated into focus groups to learn what more could have been done during student years and what more Marquette can do to inspire giving
Seven Essentials Focus Groups

- Using analysis of current offerings and identification of voids, facilitation guide was formulated

- Couldn't focus on every essential so identified areas of void to provide the focus

- Community & Networking

- Pride & Spirit

- Spirituality & Character

- Service

- Learning

- Connecting with Students

- Giving & Creating Legacy
Seven Essentials Focus Groups

- Recruitment Criteria
  - Marquette alumni with minimal to no engagement with the university (engagement scores of 1 through 4)
  - Undergraduate degree status
  - Email address on record
  - Proximity to campus
  - Status as a non-donor for the past three years

- Within the recruitment criteria, Marquette alumni of all ages, ethnicities, genders, etc. were offered an equal opportunity to participate

- Emailed 750 randomly selected alumni within criteria

- MUAA Alumni Involvement committee outreach to peers
Seven Essentials Focus Groups

- Four focus groups segmented by life stage held in April 2011
  - Early Career/Young Family
    1998-2006, ages 27-35
  - Mid-career
    1983-1997, ages 36-50
  - Combined Peak Career and Legacy Years
    1960-1982, ages 51-73
- 38 total participants
- Incentive = $100 gift card to Amazon.com or Speedway gas station
Focus Groups: Involvement

- Perceptions of own involvement in line with reality (based on metrics)
- Themes: Time, intimidation, connection already exists

“Campus just looks SO different, I’m kind of a little bit lost … you know, it’s not my stomping grounds from days gone by.”

“…You have so many Marquette connections … You always feel that you’re somehow connected to Marquette even if you’re not actively involved.”
Focus Groups: 
Learning through Online Opportunities

- Time participants were willing to spend online ranged from 15 min to 1 hour in a sitting (30 minutes being most common)
- Online lectures and webinars
  - General lack of excitement; however, interest in watching clips on own time (i.e. The Difference Network, similar to TED)
Focus Groups: Learning through Online Opportunities

- When interested in pursuing online opportunities, value and relevance are key:

“As someone who changed careers, I think that would great to offer, like resume building ... Not everyone is looking for the 22 year old graduate. There are a lot of places that would like to have a seasoned employee, and I think that would be great to use Marquette for that.”

“I’ve had to hire people and instead of going through the riff-raff that I find online or Journal Sentinel, I’d love to narrow it down to someone who went to school here.”
Focus Groups:
Learning through Online Opportunities

One participant hypothesized that online learning opportunities for someone in California looking to connect, may be more appealing but shared:

“Locally, I have no interest in engaging in online opportunities as part of my connection to the university other than other social networks with people I know.”
Focus Groups: Communication

• Marquette Magazine = powerful tool for communication
  
  “I always read Marquette Magazine and get very nostalgic about certain things.”

• Willingness to connect through social media

• Multiple mentions around segmenting based on interest or life stage
  
  “…If there is some way to filter … and just get emails for what you’re interested in…”

• Subject line needs to be clear - determines whether someone opens an email
Focus Groups: Spirituality and Character

• Already have spiritual community in their lives; therefore, seeking help and resources with own Masses and Bible studies (readings, teachings, recommended books, quotes, reflections)

“We are looking always for studies to do with our church group that would further growth.”

“I would probably read an inspirational quote every day that made the teachings new or fresh and if it came from Marquette that would be pretty cool.”

• Legacy demographic most interested in additional spiritual offerings or retreat opportunities
Focus Groups: Volunteerism and Service

• All focus groups mentioned an interest in posting volunteer needs for organizations they’re involved with (a forum to call for volunteers)

“I would love the opportunity to be able to post if … we need some more support … so other alums could get involved if they wanted to.”

• Alumni are also interested in learning more about partnerships with Boys & Girls Club, Cristo Rey, etc. (highlight what Marquette is doing to partner with them)
Focus Groups: Giving and Creating Legacy
Understand Perceptions around Financial Support for Marquette

- Most disclosed they are not currently donors

- Legacy matters …

“I have a much greater appreciation for Marquette now that I have two boys coming and they’re getting some pretty nice scholarship money. Well, that didn’t just fall out of the sky. Someone wrote a check to Marquette so that they have this pool of money. So my fondness has grown tremendously now that I know how my kids will benefit.”
Focus Groups: Giving and Creating Legacy
Understanding Perceptions around Financial Support for Marquette

- Need more information to understand Marquette as a cause – present the case
  - Perceive that Marquette is doing “just fine” without my money
  - Do not see “Marquette as an underdog in the world of need.”
Focus Groups: Giving and Creating Legacy
Understanding Perceptions around Financial Support for Marquette

- Better illustrate how small gifts make a difference (hear the impact of large gifts but don’t see how their gift of $25, $100 has an impact)

“I feel like I’m a really small fish in a big lake ... I just feel there are other areas where I can donate and the amount of money at this point in my life that I can give just seems like a drop in the bucket here where other places it would be more meaningful.”

“Marquette Magazine sometimes highlights million, billion dollar donors and so I don’t feel that my small donation is significant, kind of ‘why bother?’”
What’s Next?

- Community & Networking/Pride & Spirit
  - Continue good work being executed with more emphasis placed on empowerment of volunteers
  - Affinities and micro-regions: intimidation factor, meet alumni where they are

- Online Learning
  - Career Development
    - Package our resources differently?
    - LinkedIn workgroup to ensure we capitalize on this platform
  - Difference Network (similar to the TED experience): Consider expanding promotion outlets
What’s Next?

• Communication
  – Strides being made around subject lines, segmentation with emails, collecting preferences
  – MUAA Interactive Marketing committee

• Spirituality & Character
  – Pursue spiritual offerings online – what additional resources can we give to our constituents based on their feedback?
  – Internal ideation taking place with campus partners (Living Ignatian) to offer spiritual retreats and seminars for constituents (start in Milwaukee, possibly expand to Chicago)
  – Pop words to consider: fresh, inspiring
What’s Next?

• Service
  – Determine means for alumni to post online and continue to tell us about their commitment to their respective communities (photos, call for volunteers)

• Giving & Creating Legacy
  – Think differently around reunion messaging
  – Share with Scholarship Aid/Annual Campaign team

• Where to next?
  – Need to learn more from our regionally-based alumni
  – Next stop: Chicago