

A Study of the  
Definition of Alumni Participation in  
Religiously Affiliated Private Colleges and Universities

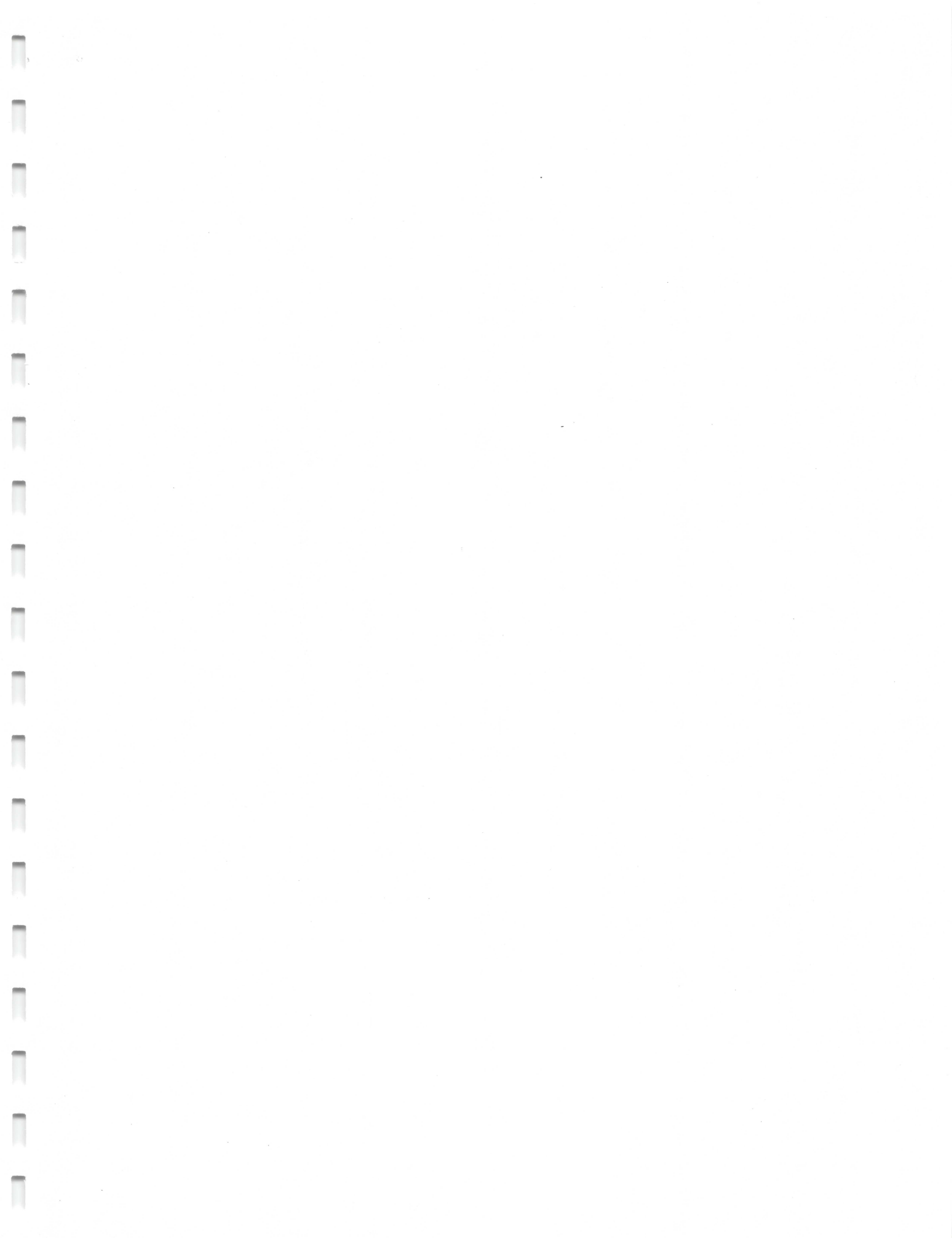
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## Abstract

This study provides information on a survey conducted concerning the definition of “alumni participation” among randomly selected religiously affiliated private colleges and universities. Additionally, the study confirms the group of people that the same institutions recognize as “alumni”, and provides response as to the degree of importance of alumni to the institutions. Further, attitudinal responses concerning alumni giving and overall participation are also included in this study so as to further gain an understanding of an institutional definition for “alumni participation”. It is recognized that member organizations for higher education attempt to define “alumni participation”, but that this tends to be a controversial definition on the part of both public and private colleges and university alumni associations. The attempt to establish one definition for “alumni participation” for all institutions could prove a strong influencer in the attitudes of religiously affiliated private institutions.

## Chapter 1

### **Definition of the Problem**

The main purpose in conducting this study is to determine how religiously affiliated private colleges and universities define “alumni participation”.

Today, whether an organizational group is an educational institution, a non-profit or a for-profit corporation, or other religious or community organization, “alumni” can impact that group’s future success. That impact can be significant whether it’s favorable or unfavorable. The views of “alumni” have an immeasurable influence on current and future students of educational institutions. Likewise, past employees can influence current employees, and former members of organizations can shape the views of current members. Consider the reason why a business would include satisfied customer stories in a marketing campaign. Businesses recognize effective ways to influence customers to consider their services or products helping that prospective customer to visualize how they, too, can benefit.

The alumnus who has just completed requisite coursework has been prepared to venture into new employment opportunities. This student is now ready to fulfill a life’s vision that he or she has formulated through years of discipline and study. Even though an alumnus may be satisfied with their education (especially as they apply their newly acquired knowledge and skills), there is an evident departure from college activity to a newly patterned life. Naturally, as people move away they disconnect mentally, emotionally, and socially. In the case of the alumnus, no longer are classmates present - for they have scattered across the region and world; no longer are they rubbing shoulders daily with their professors – “homework” is now performed for the new boss; and, no longer do they reside in a residential or collegiate community – their home life shifts as they potentially build families of their own.

But, assume that an alumnus remains devoted to their alma mater; and, therefore, without much persuasion remains genuinely concerned about the institution's vision. The alumnus will offer influence, resources, innovation, new concepts, wisdom and other meaningful involvements that can enhance and assure institutional mission. Yet, the institution may view the alumnus as being no more or less connected.

To the alma mater, prior students have received an education and are successfully on their way, and if the institution expects future connection with its alumni it must be intentional in maintaining and growing these relationships. This study focuses on how educational institutions would define alumni participation as they strive to maintain relationship with prior students. It is important to note that this study focuses on the definition as it would be described among religiously affiliated private colleges and universities. This study is not intended to include views or opinions of the alumnus or alumni groups; although it is recognized that including alumni in this research would help define "alumni participation", it is the intention of this study to better understand the way in which colleges and universities define "alumni participation".

The problem for the educational institution is straight forward: how to involve their alumni in such a way that brings benefit to institutional mission while at the same time providing value to alumni. The cost for an institution to reconnect with disconnected alumni can be significant, and efforts to provide meaningful participatory functions could easily consume operational budgets. This type of investment may be profitable; but it comes without surety. This uncertainty can cause the institution to direct operational resources toward high-risk alumni programming. The institution must establish indisputable goals for the achievement of "alumni participation" to ensure that there will be a return on the institution's operational investment.



After all, isn't the university's primary mission to serve its current students? Therefore, wouldn't the inclusion of alumni services conflict with the scope of the mission of most colleges and universities? Is it possible for an alumni relations program to encumber an institution so that there is little, if any, return on the institution's investment?

The Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) is a professional organization that assists advancement professionals in the area of alumni relations, communications and development. The organization services 3,200 colleges and universities in the United States and 200 in London, England. In 1995, CASE qualified the meaning of "alumni participation" as a "rate of alumni participation". The "rate" would be the proportion of alumni who give during the fiscal or annual year, or who give to the annual fund drive. This definition defines "alumni participation" as a single act, performed once a year, involving a financial transaction.

This definition for "alumni participation" is an attempt to level the "playing field" when comparing one educational institution to another. Although this creates an advantage for institutions when measuring one university to another, it also encourages assessments that tend to view "alumni participation" as this "single annual act" of a donation; thus, leading the alumnus, and evaluators, to believe that this one act is the fulfillment of "alumni participation".

For example, consider how alumni participation rates are used to persuade major gifts from donors, foundations or government grants. Secured funding would depend on whether the institution has achieved a minimum "alumni participation rate". In order to realize a highest rate, educational institutions are pressed to conduct fundraising efforts that are costly when funding awards are speculative. Additionally, studies conducted by Sturtevant<sup>1</sup> have proven that 90% of an organization's contributions will come from 10% of its constituents. To attempt to reverse the

“90/10 rule” could potentially impair the institution financially when its primary purpose in expenditures is to prepare and train its current students.

The attempt to standardize “alumni participation” for the purpose of assessment by service organizations, such as CASE, by defining participation as a solitary alumni activity to compare one educational institution to another, has stirred controversy among even the top Ivy League schools. Top universities are traditionally leaders in highest dollars raised from alumni; yet, those dollars are given from only a few. Therefore, the question of whether university educators value “rate of participation” as a measurement arises. As for funding outcomes, it is highly probable that universities are concerned about how they would be viewed by grant makers.

For the university that concentrates on raising “rate”, it is likely that the university will send a limited message to the alumnus and reduce opportunity for untapped potential that alumni have to offer. A broader perspective for alumni participation could strengthen the university in many areas and permit the university to consider ways of involvement over the alumnus’ lifetime.

Most likely the definition of “alumni participation” varies from institution to institution just as student cultures vary from institution to institution. It is least likely that one definition suffices for all institutions; and highly probable that each institution must develop its own definition based on the culture of that institution. Religiously affiliated universities will need to ask: 1) to what degree does the institution value alumni participation; 2) is there a broad definition for alumni participation that will create opportunity for alumni within the culture of the institution; and 3) what resources will the institution provide to help increase alumni participation overall?

This study anticipates a broad definition for “alumni participation” among religiously affiliated private colleges and universities. Considering the faith-based nature of religious colleges and universities, it is most probable that the institution must consider varied ways in which alumni are engaged with the institution.

This study is also conducted to provide an understanding of the groups of people associated with religiously affiliated private colleges or universities who are termed “alumni”, as well as, how alumni are counted and measured when considering participation rates. Through literary research, surveys, and outcome analysis, it is the purpose of this study to provide a definition that would accurately reflect the alumni involvement in religiously affiliated private college or university.

In conclusion, the study conducted anticipates a broad definition for alumni participation that would demonstrate that religiously affiliated private colleges and universities highly value alumni involvement in the current educational climate of the institution. It would be expected that these universities would enjoy an expressed alumni participation that demonstrates involvement in the areas of governance, mentorship and career placement, fundraising, volunteerism, event planning, and other innovative and collaborative efforts. Private colleges and universities have uniquely stated missions that would allow for creative opportunities to engage alumni through earnest and heartfelt partnership. By better understanding a definition for alumni participation within the unique culture of the religiously affiliated private colleges and universities; it would be expected that these universities would experience high levels of participation in the many and varied aspects of university purpose and student life.



## Chapter 2

### **Literature Review**

“Alumni are part of the lifeblood of any successful university, contributing knowledge and advice and acting as ambassadors and role models within the wider community. Personally, I regard our former students as life members of the UCL community from the day of their arrival here, not as temporary users of our facilities whose connection to the institution comes to an end the day they receive their degree.” Malcolm Grant, President and Provost of University College London, 1971.

Much research and study has been conducted that focuses on alumni motivation.

Whether it’s a psychological or spiritual understanding, there are usually underlying reasons for why a person will choose to be philanthropic. Focus groups and other research studies, including alumni surveys, are conducted to specifically understand alumni motivation. Overall, participation could be summed up in two words – “willingness” and “capacity”. In other words, is the alumnus willing to give (time, talent, money), and do they have the capacity (resources, ability, willingness) to do so?

Many articles and books are written on encouraging and directing alumni to give to their alma mater. National organizations, such as C.A.S.E., exist primarily for the purpose of helping institutions to develop alumni into donors. The C.C.C.U. (The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities) also publishes articles and studies in the area of alumni development. However, there is limited material on how an educational institution would define “alumni participation”.

The term “alumni participation rate” surfaced in 1995 among public and private universities across the United States and Canada (“rate” defined as the proportion of alumni who give during the fiscal or annual year, or who give to the annual fund drive). The concept of “rate” has caused controversy among even the most outstanding of universities across the nation. It is expected that if a greater proportion of alumni are participating by giving dollars to their alumni mater; therefore, then, it would mean that alumni highly valued their student experience.

However, Joye Mercer (1996) states that a “rate” of over 50% is considered high; especially when noting that the national average is 20.7%. Mercer interviewed alumni directors from several universities and discovered that there was conflicting opinion about focusing exclusively on a “rate” as a means for and a measurement of a successful alumni program. The emphasis of “raising an alumni participation rate” created a narrow scope for alumni participation and limited participation to one type of activity as universities focused resources toward this one area.

For example, Mercer’s interview reports that Bucknell University’s Alumni Director is more concerned that dollars come from an increasing number of alumni and is less concerned about whether dollar amounts annually increase. Yet, the University of Wisconsin views “rate” with less significance because it’s just a statistic that has universities grabbing for something that allows the institution to showcase a “best number”. According to Andrew A. Wilcox, president of the University of Wisconsin Foundation, “you take your best number and put it up on the marquee.” The University of Wisconsin views a broader definition of alumni participation where giving of dollars is one of many ways alumni can advance their alma mater.

A question that continues to surface when considering “rate” is “who is defining ‘alumni participation’?” Is it an outside organization? Or, is it the institution, including its alumni, that create a definition based on their institutional goals and constituent groups?

Since the method for computing alumni participation rates vary from institution to institution, and yet these rates are used to compare one university to another, some universities have taken rather unethical approaches to elevate their “participation rate” to assure that their institution is a fundable consideration (such as sending \$1 to each of their alumni and asking them to mail the dollar back). Narrowing the definition of “alumni participation” to “alumni who give” could potentially be causing unethical promises.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Sturtevant's keynote address at the annual Association for Arts and Sciences Advancement Professionals meeting can be obtained in "Major Gifts Fundraising: The Mission and Promise. Pittsburg, June 4, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Mercer, J. quotes several alumni directors on the topic of participation rate.

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Cabrera, Weerts, and Zulick reference Sturtevant's<sup>1</sup> "90/10 rule". They discuss how alumni research can be used to help alumni reflect on the way in which their alma mater has prepared them for employment. The 90/10 rule establishes an informal guideline that suggests that 90 percent of funds contributed for colleges and universities is derived from 10 percent of the donors. This theory more specifically quantifies the gift, or the size of the gift, rather than places emphasis on the quantity of alumni who would give funds. "You can spend dollars, but it's hard to spend a participation rate," states Kim Heitzenrater, director of annual giving at the University of the South.<sup>2</sup>

Institutions that have been operating for many years have developed alumni programs so that alumni are involved in a broad variety of ways that help advance the institution. Yet, emphasis on alumni participation seems to narrow in description as colleges and universities gain larger alumni numbers. For example, an institution when it is young typically has small classes where students develop meaningful associations and long-lasting relationships. The culture of the institution focuses on genuine concern for the improvement and growth of the student with concern for all basic stages of life development. In this environment students build trusting relationship, common vision, and practical outcomes. Many return to their alma mater as



professors, administrators, contributors, trustees, mentors, etc. They also carry genuine qualities into their professions; and thrive because of them. Their success is noticed by future students; and, therefore, more and more students enroll come to the institution so as to train for success.

After time, and with increased enrollments, is it possible for institutions to view their students, and alumni, as a commodity? Essentially, are they viewed as a “product”; created by the educators who have trained them; and are they viewed as paying “customers” and therefore someone to be served? Clayson and Haley (2005) discuss the implications that educators create when they consider students as “products” or “customers”. “Many in education have begun to adopt a customer model for students. It is not explicitly stated, but evidence for this orientation can be found in many behaviors and procedures of higher education... Universities have created the “student as customer” paradigm generally with good intentions,” states Clayson and Haley (2005).

Further, Clayson and Haley discuss four premises for why universities have chosen to consider their students as customers. Although these reasons appear to be well-founded the student outcomes are less desirable. They suggest that education is viewed by the student as short-term and, therefore, they enroll in “easy” classes to maintain a high GPA; that students fail to be accountable and responsible for their learning often critical when they don’t learn from their professor; and that students are called on to be a judge over the educational experience allowing opportunity for unfounded dissatisfaction. These among other unfavorable outcomes cause the student to view their education as a commodity; and, likewise, leave with an unclear sense of their own purpose. “One could argue that our purpose in college is no longer to attain higher thinking, but rather a means to get a degree, which is a means to get a job, which is a

means to making a moderate amount of money someday. . . . To shorten this, college is a means to making money.” p. 4, Athay (2003) (Clayson and Haley).

A different model is proposed by Clayson and Haley who reference writers such as Bay and Daniel 2001 and Hennig-Thurau et. al. 2001. The paradigm shift to a partnership model between the institution and the student is described. “The student as a collaborative education partner constitutes a positive paradigm shift from a customer model...” (p. 6), and this model would mean that the institution exists not only to “meet its own needs and the needs of the customer, but also to maintain and advance individuals’ and society’s long-term interests.” (p. 6) Under this model, the function of the college or university is to advance the interests and goals of all of the institutions’ constituencies. “Not only is the current student a constituent, but the person the student will be in the future is also a constituent.” (p. 8) In this model the student is too important to be treated only as a customer; and, therefore, transitioning from student to alumnus certainly will result in continued partnership with the institution as a “stakeholder”. For the stakeholder, they realize they are part of something bigger and better than themselves. Through this role they can find ways to contribute and make a positive impact on the whole. They are reminded of their responsibility with other stakeholders as well as to themselves.

This partnership paradigm provides an intellectual and emotional means by which an institution would define “alumni participation”. In 1886, a Harvard representative conducted a study on those universities who were moving away from government and church governance toward two boards, a Board of Regents who would be concerned for the management of the institution, and a second board comprised of alumni who are involved in decisions relating to institutional vision, direction and even the hiring of the President. In an article from an 1886 Editorial the writer comments on the fallacy of thinking that “alumni have no rights in a college –

Footnote

<sup>3</sup> Pat Squire e-mailed from University of Portland.

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they are simply its beneficiaries”. He further inquires as to what constitutes the wealth of a college. “Reputation is as much a part of its capital as money. The personal character, the public influence, the loyalty, and the enthusiasm of its alumni belong to the earnings of a college quite as much as the interest on its endowments.” (p. 644)

On the other hand, the governing boards of colleges are often referred to in undisguised contempt because they are not made up from the most well-known names among the alumni. What is forgotten is that the most famous graduates are usually absorbed in other interests that hinder their ability to voluntarily attend, with careful and devoted attention, to the needs of their alma mater. Yet, there are other alumni, even though less known, who have both the time and capability.

As further study is conducted it will be noteworthy to consider how religiously affiliated private colleges and universities view student populations and how this guides the definition of “alumni participation”.

Universities will struggle with the definition if they are looking beyond their own institutional culture. Even though CASE has established guidelines for educational institutions, the Alumni Relations Commission of CASE, a think-tank group of alumni directors from around the world, have developed an Alumni Relations Benchmarking Tool (ARBT) to help institutions with measuring alumni participation. However, some universities (e.g.: University of Portland and Southern Alberta Institute of Technology in Canada) have chosen to develop their own institutional definition and measurement tools.<sup>3</sup> The Council of Alumni Association Executives,



Footnote

<sup>4</sup> Patricia Squire (personal communication) (2005).

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an invitation-only group of directors, have created their own surveys and measurement tools to gauge alumni participation. Alumni participation is defined as membership in the alumni association, participation and attendance at events, giving to the institution, involvement in legislative advocacy, service on board and committees, submitting alumni news, contacts with professors, schools and departments, and mentoring students.<sup>4</sup>

Some universities that struggle with the issue of alumni participation are moving toward a concept of alumni “engagement”. With “engagement” an institution identifies the various ways an alumnus is currently involved with the university and then develops programs that further match alumni interests. Activities are then associated with each alumnus, and a systematic assessment is performed that allows the institution to understand the degree to which an alumnus is involved with the institution. This method helps in designing the alumni program and assists in understanding the differentiation between one alumnus and another. This aids in the development of a lasting partnership.

Hamilton College in New York began their alumni association in 1950. The college is committed to a culture of giving, not only in terms of philanthropy, but also in community service. The emphasis on “giving” begins while students are in college and is realized in their senior year when the Board of Trustees challenges the class with 100% participation. Overall participation is then carried forward by the graduated student and strongly valued by the alumnus.



Institutions must recognize and seize opportunities for alumni to participate.

Participation will shape itself in the same way that students view their association with the college or university, and these views will likewise carry into their involvement as alumni.

Whether the institution determines a narrow definition, or a broad definition, for alumni participation; ultimately, the institution will direct activities toward that definition. Overall, it will depend on the resources available to the institution to determine if it can successfully re-educate alumni who have been trained by the institution to think of themselves as customers.

Ultimately, the most honest definition of alumni participation could be as obvious as the active involvements of those currently enrolled at the institution.

## Chapter 3

### **Research Methodology**

To further understand how religiously affiliated private colleges and universities would define “alumni participation”, research was conducted a survey by means of a questionnaire directed to the institution’s advancement departments (see Appendix A). Colleges and universities with membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), an association whose members are private and non-profit and religiously affiliated educational institutions, were randomly selected from the membership directory of the CCCU. Every other institutional member was identified and asked to participate in the survey.

Design. A questionnaire was used to survey participants about various aspects of their alumni program; number of alumni, membership inclusion, number of events, alumni involvements, importance of alumni to the institution, types of involvement, ways alumni participation is measured, and solicitation of funds and participation rate. Further questions were asked to determine institutional attitude toward alumni participation rates in respect to their overall alumni program.

Sample. Of a randomly selected group, a sample of 41 advancement offices were invited to participate, 21 agreed (a 51% response rate), and 16 institutions returned surveys resulting in a 76% returned response rate. Non-respondents were contacted within 10 days, and within another 10 days, following the initial agreement; yet, there was no response. These non-respondents have been excluded from further consideration in the results of this study.

Measurement. Nominal variables were used to identify characteristics of the respondents. Those questions utilizing nominal variables included campus location (city and state); type of community where campus resides (rural, small town, large or mid-size city); religious orientation

and denominational affiliation; age of institution; enrollment size; and whether student body is of single or dual sex.

In order to gain a definition for the “term” alumni, a fixed-format self-report measure was used and various selections were listed. Respondents were asked to “check” all items that apply to their institution. Respondents were also given a free-form item to identify an applicable “other” description that may not have appeared in the list of items. A fixed-format was also used for respondents to describe their institution’s concept of how alumni participate in their university.

Respondents also rated the level of importance that alumni would be to the institution according to a Likert scale, and the same type of scale was used so that respondents could give their opinion regarding statements about alumni participation. The scale ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Attitudes toward alumni participation rates as a means of measuring the success of an institution’s alumni program, and the institution’s attitude in regards to greater number of alumni rather than greater dollar giving amounts was determined by providing four questions. Respondents were asked to answer each question choosing one of five options. A five-point Likert scale was used with the choices of strongly agree (coded 1), agree (coded 2), no response (coded 3), disagree (coded 4) and strongly disagree (coded 5). Once responses were coded, analysis was conducted for the purpose of identifying the mean ( $\mu$ ), standard deviation, and variance. Consideration of standard deviation allows for an appropriate assessment of attitudinal questions. If results deviate too strongly to the left or right of the curve, then a larger sampling would be needed to accurately determine institutional attitude. Variance is another statistic that helps assure whether the sampling returned a wide range of responses. The closer the variance

statistic is to 1; then, the attitudinal results would be considered most characteristic of the sample group.

Procedure. The questionnaire was designed in Excel format and electronically mailed to willing participants. Participants answered questions directly onto the Excel sheet, and returned the completed questionnaire by electronic mail. Once collected, results were compiled onto a summarized sheet for the purpose of data analysis and a summary report.

Data Analysis. Institutional responses were described using measures of central tendency, frequency, and standard deviation. Correlation coefficient between two scales (alumni members and number of people types) was also obtained.

Individual institution names and corresponding institutional responses are confidential, and are not specifically named in this study.



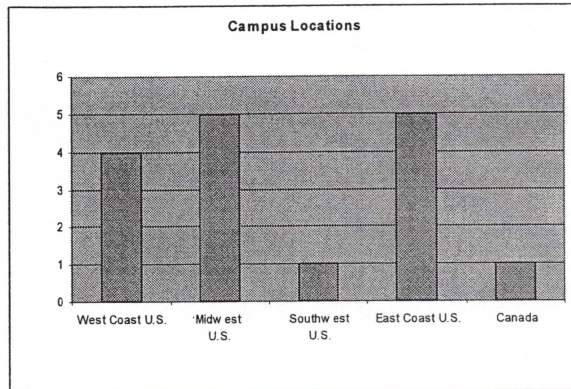
## Chapter 4

### **Data Analysis**

Respondent demographics. Geographically, campus locations are situated in 13 states of the United States and in Southwest Canada. Four

(4) institutions located in the West United States, five (5) in the Midwest United States, one (1) in Southwest United States, five (5) in the East United States, and one (1) in Southwest Canada. Graph 4.1 demonstrates the distribution of surveyed campuses by regional areas.

Graph 4.1



One hundred percent (100%) of the participants are faith-based institutions, and one hundred percent (100%) enroll both male and female students. A range of denominational affiliations were represented. Denominations included Mennonite (1), Southern Baptist (1), Baptist General Convention (1), Wesleyan (2), Christian Reformed Church (1), Church of God (2), Assemblies of God (1), Churches of Christ (1), Free Methodist (1), Church of the Nazarene (1), Evangelical Free Church of America (1), Presbyterian (1) and two (2) with no denominational affiliation.

Respondents were asked to describe their service range as either local, regional, national or international. Of those surveyed, 43.75% predominately enroll students regionally; 37.5% internationally; and 18.75% nationally. Zero percent (0%) of the respondents described their institution as one that would enroll students only from a local population.

Campuses are situated in populaces ranging from 1,750 to 1,100,000. Thirty-one percent (31%) of the institutions are situated in large cities with populations from 250,000 to 1,100,000. Nineteen percent (19%) of the campuses are in midsize cities with populations of 100,000 to

250,000; and twenty-five percent (25%) in small towns with populations of 10,000 to 100,000. Twenty-five (25%) of the colleges are located in what would be considered rural areas with populations of under 10,000.

The average total student enrollment for the sampling is 1,797; and the average number of years the sampled colleges have been operating is 97 years.

Defining the term “alumni member”. The next section of the survey was to help define “whom” the institution would consider to be an “alumnus”. It is thought that the definition of ‘alumni participation’ would best be understood by gaining an accurate description of an alumni association membership.

The mean ( $\mu$ ) number of alumni of the respondents surveyed is 16,496; yet the mode is 10,000 (see appendix B.1). Only 19% of the respondents operate an alumni association separate from the non-profit charter of the institution.

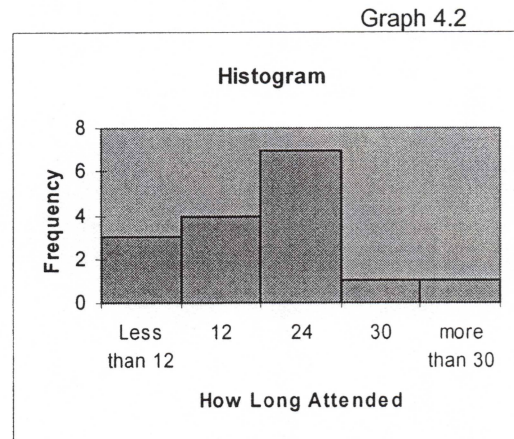
The common notion that only degreed students would be considered alumni members would be an obvious assumption, and this assumption was confirmed as all 16 respondents identified graduating students as alumni members. For purposes of this study graduating alumni will be known as the “core group”.

The survey also showed that the term “alumni members” is expanded to include other college-related group types. Besides the core group, other groups of people identified and included as alumni association members were varied among the respondents. Other group types named were non-graduates, students, post graduates, faculty, staff, past presidents, honorary alumni and board members.

Fifteen (15) of the 16 respondents consider non-graduating students as alumni, but only under certain conditions. Non-graduates were included as alumni if they had completed a



specified number of hours or academic periods. Note in Graph 4.2 that most respondents identified that non-graduates would need to have completed at least two semesters (or at least 24 credits). Three (3) of the responding institutions include former students as alumni association members if the student had completed between one (1) to twelve (12) credit(s) of study. Four (4) institutions included non-graduates as members of the alumni association if the student had completed 12 credits of study, and two (2) institutions would require at least 30 hours or more of completed credits before the institution would term the non-graduating student as an alumnus. However, seven (7) institutions term the non-graduate who would have completed at least 24 credits (typically one year of coursework) as an alumnus of the university.



Respondents further described their alumni by stating the associated group types that are included in the institution's alumni association. Table 4.1 lists the college or university associated group types and the various combinations of group types described by the respondents. Some respondents noted that employees and faculty members were included as "alumni" once

Table 4.1

Specified group types included as "alumni" and the number of Institutions for each described association group											
4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates	Graduates
Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Board Members	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads	Non-Grads
Post Grads	Current Students			Current Students	Past Presidents	Post Grads	Employees	Employees	Employees	Faculty	Employees
	Post Grads					Honorary Alumni	Faculty	Faculty	Faculty	Staff	Faculty
							Staff	Post grads	Staff	Boards	Staff
									Boards	Current Students	Boards
									Post Grads	Post Grads	Current Students
											Post Grads

they had served for 2 or 3 years at the institution. One (1) institution considers honorary alumni as a member of the alumni association, but excludes this group type from giving statistics.

A question surfaces as to whether institutions with larger alumni populations would generally include a greater number of people types as members of the alumni association. But, the correlation coefficient is -0.13 when considering each institution's alumni population and the number of people types referenced by each institution (see appendix B.2). The negative coefficient demonstrates an inverse correlation; therefore, the larger the alumni membership; then, the lesser number of people types comprise the association membership. This is not to infer that if an institution includes less people types that then their alumni associations would be larger, but more to reveal that in this sample group a larger alumni association does not necessarily mean that the institution is including a broad membership of people types.

No specification was made as to whether memberships were gained through application, or, if these people groups were assumed into membership; however, 87% of these institutions stated that they made no distinction between alumni of record and "members" of the association.

Alumni events held by institutions. An assumption was made that the larger an institution's alumni base, then the greater number of alumni events held by the alumni association. In this instance, the study demonstrated that

this is an accurate assumption.

However, it is noted that the average number of off-campus events are greater than the average number of on-campus events for varying alumni association membership ranges (note Table 4.2).

**Number of On and Off Campus Events**

Table 4.2

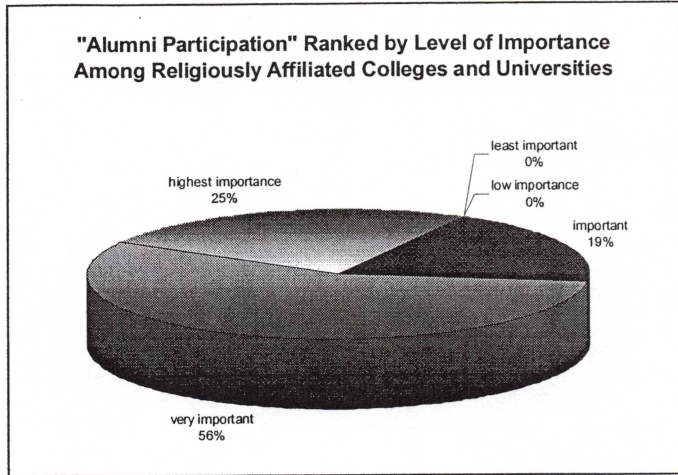
Total Number Of Alumni	Frequency	Average Number of On Campus Events	Average Number of Off Campus Events	Total No. On and Off Campus Events
40,001 to 50,000	1	14	50	64
30,001 to 40,000	0	-	-	-
20,001 to 30,000	2	13	15	28
10,001 to 20,000	8	5	9	14
0 to 10,000	5	5	7	12
Averaged Totals		37	81	



Value of alumni participation.

Institutions were asked to respond to the question, “How does the college or university view the importance of “alumni participation” in relationship to the institution’s mission?” All institutions responded that they consider alumni participation to be important to the institution’s mission; yet, 25% viewed this relationship of highest importance. More than one-half considered participation of their alumni to be very important (note Graph 4.3)

Graph 4.3



Activities to define alumni participation. Respondents identified several activities that the institution would recognize as ways that alumni participate. The two most frequent activities that most universities identified were attendance at events and giving of funds. Another activity that most universities (56%) described as an alumni participatory activity was volunteerism.

Other activities such as guest lectureship, graduate program enrollment, study tours, and updating general information such as addresses, phone numbers, employment, and other personal information were named but less frequently described by respondents.

Table 4.3

Activity	Frequency (of 16)	Percentage
Attendance at Events	11	69%
Committees	8	50%
Volunteerism	9	56%
Study Tours	2	13%
Giving funds	13	81%
Grad Programs	4	25%
Guest lecturer	5	31%
Updating Information	1	6%

Institutions offered three main ways they measure alumni participation. The most frequent method of measurement named by 9 of 12 respondents, answering the free-form question, was whether alumni are participating in giving (note Table 4.4). Additionally, 58% of the respondents measure participation by whether alumni are attending events, and 50% consider participation in volunteerism as to be a means of measurement.

Table 4.4

Measurement	Frequency (of 12)	Percentage
No. Giving	9	75%
No. Attending Events	7	58%
No. Volunteering	6	50%
Membership	1	8%
Feedback, Info Update	5	42%
Recruiting	2	17%

Alumni and giving of funds. At least 12 of the 16 respondents track an annual alumni participation rate. Of these, the mean ( $\mu$ ) is 19.92%; nearly at the 20% median. A 25% annual rate is the central tendency as it is the rate most frequently reported in this sample.

Attitudes on alumni giving: increased rates vs. increased amounts. Since alumni participation rates measure the proportion of alumni giving to the institution in comparison to the whole, rather than the amount of dollars raised, survey questions were asked to gain a clearer view on respondents' reactions to this participation rate for giving as a means for gauging whether alumni are participating.

In response to the question, "Even if alumni give twice as much money this year than last, the increase matters less than how many of them were giving," the mean ( $\mu$ ) return was 2.31, and the standard deviation 1.08 demonstrating that religiously affiliated private colleges and universities will generally *agree* with this statement. However, the analysis has a high margin of error at 27%, and a 95% chance that if the question was presented once again, so as to gain a larger number of responses, the accuracy would be in the range of 54% to 60% that the same *agree* response would result.

The mean return of 1.93 resulted in association with the question, "Rate of participation is an important gauge for the college to understand what its own constituents think of it". Institutions *agreed* that "rate of participation" helps the college in understanding whether alumni are engaged with their alma mater. However, the sample variance is a low .195 suggesting that there wasn't a variety of responses other than *agree*, and with a confidence level of 26%, the probability that a second sampling would return the same result is highly unlikely.

"Less significance should be placed on the rate of alumni participation because the dollars raised are really secondary". The mean result was 3.8 which indicates that the sampling *disagreed* with the statement, although a  $\mu$  of 3.8 leans closer to a neutral, or non-response, position by the respondents. The level of confidence that this result would return a similar result is at .40, and the range of responses showed a higher variance of .56.

A fourth question, "Alumni participation has too many variables and cannot be defined by any single institution or governing body," resulted in a mean of 2.6 of which suggests that the respondents generally *agreed* with this statement.

## Chapter 5

### **Outcomes and Recommendations**



Outcomes. The purpose of this study has been to understand “alumni participation” as it defined by religiously affiliated private colleges and universities. We approached this study on the premise that religiously affiliated private colleges and universities would have a broad definition of “alumni participation”, and that they would highly value this participation as they would consider alumni essential to the current mission of the university.

Based on the survey of the sample group, the study did not support this initial premise. The high percentage of respondents did confirm that alumni are important, and they agreed that participation should be encouraged with an emphasis on increasing the percentage of participation in proportion to the entire alumni population. But, the most frequently named item that would define participation was whether an alumnus was giving financially. This outcome was further supported by the result that most institutions perceive gifting from alumni to confirm how favorable the alumni view the institution; and that increased numbers of alumni giving to the institution is more important than increased dollar amounts; and, further, that tracking “rate of participation” is of significance. It can be concluded that most religiously affiliated private colleges and universities consider a “rate of participation”, centered on giving, to be a top priority in defining alumni participation.

A higher total number of alumni does not necessarily mean that the institution is including an expanded group of people in the alumni association. Although a broad range of people types are included among the universities (the most predominant being graduates and non-graduates), it’s significant to recognize that even though the institution has a greater number of total “alumni”, it does not necessarily mean that they include a broader range of people types. In fact, the term “alumni” is associated with fewer people types – specifically graduates and non-

graduates completing at least two semesters of coursework; and an inclination toward post-graduates and current students.

Attendance at events was a second identifier that would define “alumni participation”. It’s notable that the number of events for alumni increased as the alumni association population increases, and that institutions are conducting more off-campus events than on-campus. An alumni population of 16,496 (the average for this sampling) would mean that alumni would have opportunity to participate in as few as 14, yet as many as 28, events each year. Event attendance is another method of measuring alumni participation success, however, at a much lesser degree than financial giving.

#### Recommendations.

- Assessment of the institutions definition of alumni participation would be recommended; considering the mission and culture of the university and striving to reflect the involvements experienced when the alumnus was a student.
- Engage alumni by developing a broader definition of alumni participation so that it allows the alumnus to partner with the institution based on their interests, strengths, and abilities (e.g.: governance, recruitment, teaching, graduate program enrollment, leading events, etc.).
- Initiate an institutional review on how a student is viewed by the university that would instill a partnering mentality that develops accountability, responsibility and association.
- Develop a culture of giving that reflects alumni funding interests and stresses quality of the alumnus’ gift instead of quantity of participants.
- Develop an engagement program that helps the institution build networks and serves as a means to track an alumnus’ involvement for enhanced program planning.



Chapter 6

**Conclusion**

This study revealed that most religiously affiliated private colleges and universities define alumni participation as “number of alumni giving to the institution”. An “alumni participation rate” measures the institution’s success in securing gifts from the greatest number of alumni. Religiously affiliated private colleges and universities consider this rate to be an important gauge in whether their alumni are favorable or unfavorable toward their alma mater. Further, the survey demonstrated that most religiously affiliated colleges and universities view giving of funds by alumni as critical to the institution’s mission. Event attendance and volunteerism were viewed by a lesser number of institutions, approximately 50%, as ways for alumni to participate.

The outcome is a departure from the original premise that “alumni participation” would encompass a broader definition of alumni involvement therefore reflecting the values of the institution. Potentially the nature and construction of the survey tool used in this study may have limited respondents’ answers in defining “alumni participation”. Further research might provide greater clarity if definitions are broader. For example, understanding a purpose for alumni events could help with establishing a clearer definition.

This study is not to suggest that institutions should consider placing less emphasis on alumni giving, but that institutions should consider various ways in which alumni might engage with their alma mater. There are multi-faceted ways in which an alumnus might participate in advancing institutional mission. These many ways need to be identified by the institution, and then the alumnus’ participation encouraged and enthusiastically recognized by the college or university.

**Appendix**

**A and B**

## Appendix B

B.1 Total number of alumni considered members in the alumni association

<i>Alumni Members</i>	
Mean	16496.13
Standard Error	2720.509
Median	13472
Mode	10000
Standard Deviation	10882.04
Sample Variance	1.18E+08
Kurtosis	7.878073
Skewness	2.627444
Range	44014
Minimum	7986
Maximum	52000
Sum	263938
Count	16

B.2 Correlation coefficient of total number of alumni and total number of people types included in the institution's alumni association resulting in a inverse correlation (the larger the total of alumni, the corresponding number of group types is smaller).

No. of Alumni	No. Groups
52000	4
29000	3
20648	3
18000	2
17000	8
16223	5
14500	3
14444	3
12500	8
12000	3
11745	4
10000	3
10000	3
9894	9
7998	5
7986	3

<i>No. of Alumni</i>		<i>No. Groups</i>	
No. of Alumni	1		
No. Groups	-0.129179373		1

B.3 Analysis of annual rate of alumni participation among 12 of 16 respondents. The mean at 19.92%; median 20%; and mode 25%.

<i>Alumni Participation Rate</i>	
Mean	19.92
Standard Error	2.04
Median	20.00
Mode	25.00
Standard Deviation	7.05
Sample Variance	49.72
Kurtosis	-1.30
Skewness	0.22
Range	21.00
Minimum	10.00
Maximum	31.00
Sum	239.00
Count	12.00



**Appendix A**  
**Survey of "Alumni Participation" Among Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities**  
**Fall 2005**

My name is Joni Campbell, an MBA Graduate Student at Northwest University in Kirkland, Washington. Northwest University is a member institution of the CCCU. Since I am also employed by a non-profit corporation, *specifically in a higher-education setting*, I am conducting a study related to colleges and/or universities. My study is focused on the definition of "alumni participation" among selected private colleges and universities. Your religiously-affiliated institution was randomly selected from the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities member's list. Your response will help understand whether institutions experience various levels of alumni participation and the way in which these levels are measured. Data will be confidential, and will be used only for this study. An institution's responses will not be named (*unless the survey would provide exceptional benefit to the topic. In this situation, the institution would be contacted for inclusion permission*). To use this file: enter responses in fields provided, save as a new file, and attach in an e-mail to: [joni.campbell@northwestu.edu](mailto:joni.campbell@northwestu.edu)

**A copy of the summary report is available to any institution participating in the survey.** The survey results will be included in a graduate research writing that will be published in a collection of research work conducted by graduate students enrolled in the Masters in Business Administration Graduate Program at Northwest University and held by the MBA Office. If you have questions, please feel free to contact me via e-mail or by calling 425-417-1522. Thank you for your willingness to help in this study.

**INSTITUTIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS**

<p>1 College/Univ Name <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p>3 Address: Street <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">City <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/></p> <p>4 College Founded In <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/> (YYYY)  <small>Enter all 4 digits for Y</small></p> <p>5 Faith-based College? (Y/N) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>7 Denominational College? (Y/N) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>8 The college constituency is:  <small>Put an X in the one that best applies</small></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> local    <input type="checkbox"/> regional    <input type="checkbox"/> national    <input type="checkbox"/> international         </p> <p>9 The college is in a:  <small>Put an X in the one that best applies</small></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> large city    <input type="checkbox"/> mid-size city    <input type="checkbox"/> small town    <input type="checkbox"/> rural setting         </p> <p>10 Number regular alumni events held on campus each year: <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/> #</p>	<p>2 Fall '05 Enrollment <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/> #</p> <p>PO Box? <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;">State <input style="width: 30%;" type="text"/> Zip <input style="width: 30%;" type="text"/></p> <p>Yr 1st Class Graduated <input style="width: 40%;" type="text"/> (YYYY)  <small>Enter all 4 digits for Y</small></p> <p>6 Single Sex School? (Y/N) <input type="checkbox"/> (M) <input type="checkbox"/> (F) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Affiliated with? <input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/></p> <p style="margin-left: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> #    <input type="checkbox"/> # held off campus:         </p>
---	--

**ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

11 No. of Alumni of Record  #

12 Does your college/university operate an alumni association? (Y/N)

13 If yes, does the association operate under a charter separate from the university? (Y/N)

14 Who are considered "alumni" of the college/university (or who are members of the association)?

Graduates	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Attended (no degree)	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	How long attended? <input style="width: 60%;" type="text"/>
Non-graduates	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Employees	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	faculty (Y/N) <input type="checkbox"/> staff (Y/N) <input type="checkbox"/>
Board members	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Parents	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Current Students	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Post graduates	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> please describe
Other	(Y/N)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input style="width: 80%;" type="text"/> please describe



*Survey of "Alumni Participation" Among Religiously Affiliated Colleges and Universities  
Fall 2005, page 2*

15 Is there a distinction between "association alumni" and "alumni of record"? (Y/N)

**ALUMNI PARTICIPATION**

16 How does the college or university view the importance of "alumni participation" in relationship to the institution's mission?

1=least important  
2=low importance  
3=important  
4=very important  
5=highest importance

#

17 Are any of the following used to define whether alumni are participating in the institution's mission?  
(check as many as are applicable)

18 Briefly give at least 3 ways your institution measures alumni participation

- |                      |                          |               |                          |
|----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|
| Attendance at events | <input type="checkbox"/> | Committees    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Volunteerism         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Study Tours   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Contributing funds   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Grad Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Guest lecturer       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other         | <input type="text"/>     |
- please describe

19 Are all "members" of the institution's alumni solicited for funds? If so, how often in a year?  
(Y/N)  #

20 What is the institution's alumni participation rate, (if recognized)? %  annual?  lifetime?   
please check one

21 Are only alumni who financially contribute counted in this percentage? (Y/N)

Indicate how your college or university would respond to the statements below:  
(check one response for each Q?)

22 "Even if alumni give twice as much money this year than last, the increase matters less than how many of them were giving."

Strongly Agree   
Agree   
Disagree   
Strongly Disagree   
No response

23 "Rate of participation is an important gauge for the college to understand what its own constituents think of it."

Strongly Agree   
Agree   
Disagree   
Strongly Disagree   
No response

24 "Less significance should be placed on the rate of alumni participation because the dollars raised are really secondary."

Strongly Agree   
Agree   
Disagree   
Strongly Disagree   
No response

25 "Alumni participation has too many variables and cannot be defined by any single institution or governing body."

Strongly Agree   
Agree   
Disagree   
Strongly Disagree   
No response

26 Please send me a summary report of this survey (Y/N)

Information provided by  Title

Phone  e-mail



## Appendix B

B.1 Total number of alumni considered members in the alumni association

<i>Alumni Members</i>	
Mean	16496.13
Standard Error	2720.509
Median	13472
Mode	10000
Standard Deviation	10882.04
Sample Variance	1.18E+08
Kurtosis	7.878073
Skewness	2.627444
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Minimum	7986
Maximum	52000
Sum	263938
Count	16

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14444	3
12500	8
12000	3
11745	4
10000	3
10000	3
9894	9
7998	5
7986	3

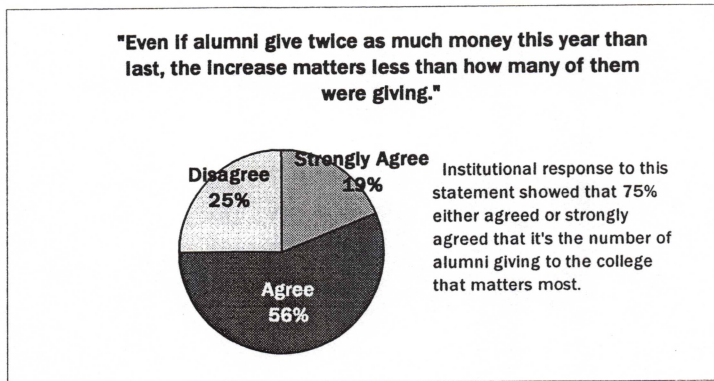
  

	<i>No. of Alumni</i>	<i>No. Groups</i>
No. of Alumni	1	
No. Groups	-0.129179373	1

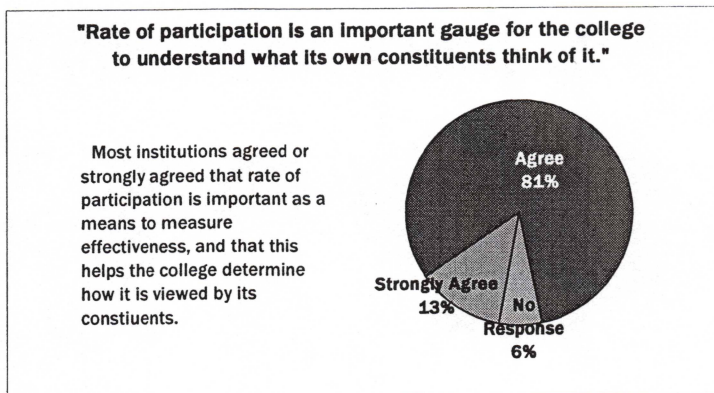
B.3 Analysis of annual rate of alumni participation among 12 of 16 respondents. The mean at 19.92%; median 20%; and mode 25%.

<i>Alumni Participation Rate</i>	
Mean	19.92
Standard Error	2.04
Median	20.00
Mode	25.00
Standard Deviation	7.05
Sample Variance	49.72
Kurtosis	-1.30
Skewness	0.22
Range	21.00
Minimum	10.00
Maximum	31.00
Sum	239.00
Count	12.00

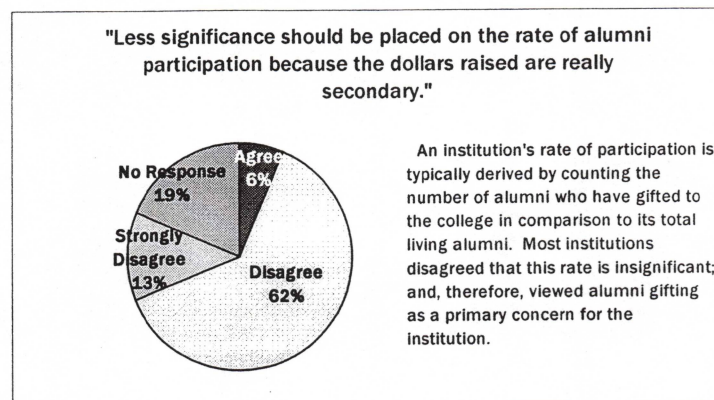
Column1	
Mean	2.3125
Standard Error	0.269548
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.078193
Sample Variance	1.1625
Kurtosis	-0.65469
Skewness	0.739418
Range	3
Minimum	1
Maximum	4
Sum	37
Count	16
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.574528



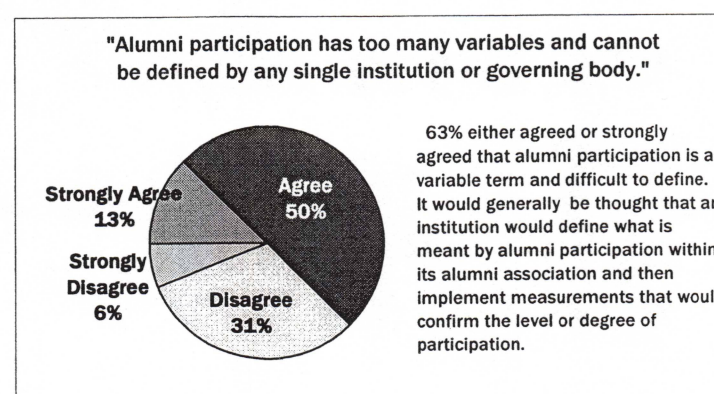
Column1	
Mean	1.9375
Standard Error	0.110633
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	0.442531
Sample Variance	0.195833
Kurtosis	3.616375
Skewness	-0.3915
Range	2
Minimum	1
Maximum	3
Sum	31
Count	16
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.235808



Column1	
Mean	3.8125
Standard Error	0.1875
Median	4
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	0.75
Sample Variance	0.5625
Kurtosis	1.357536
Skewness	-0.74921
Range	3
Minimum	2
Maximum	5
Sum	61
Count	16
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.399647



Column1	
Mean	2.6875
Standard Error	0.3125
Median	2
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	1.25
Sample Variance	1.5625
Kurtosis	-1.2014
Skewness	0.447086
Range	4
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
Sum	43
Count	16
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.666078





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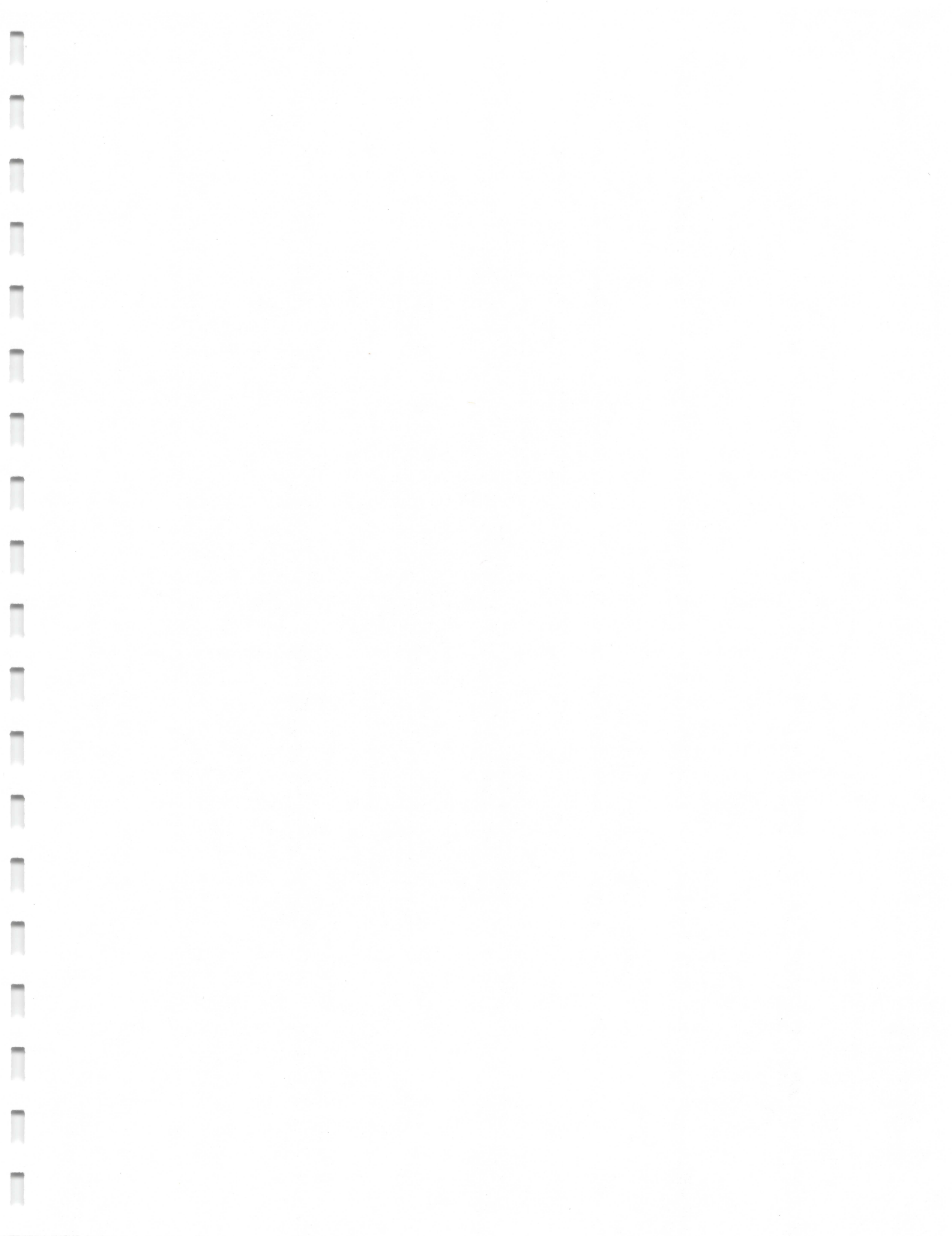
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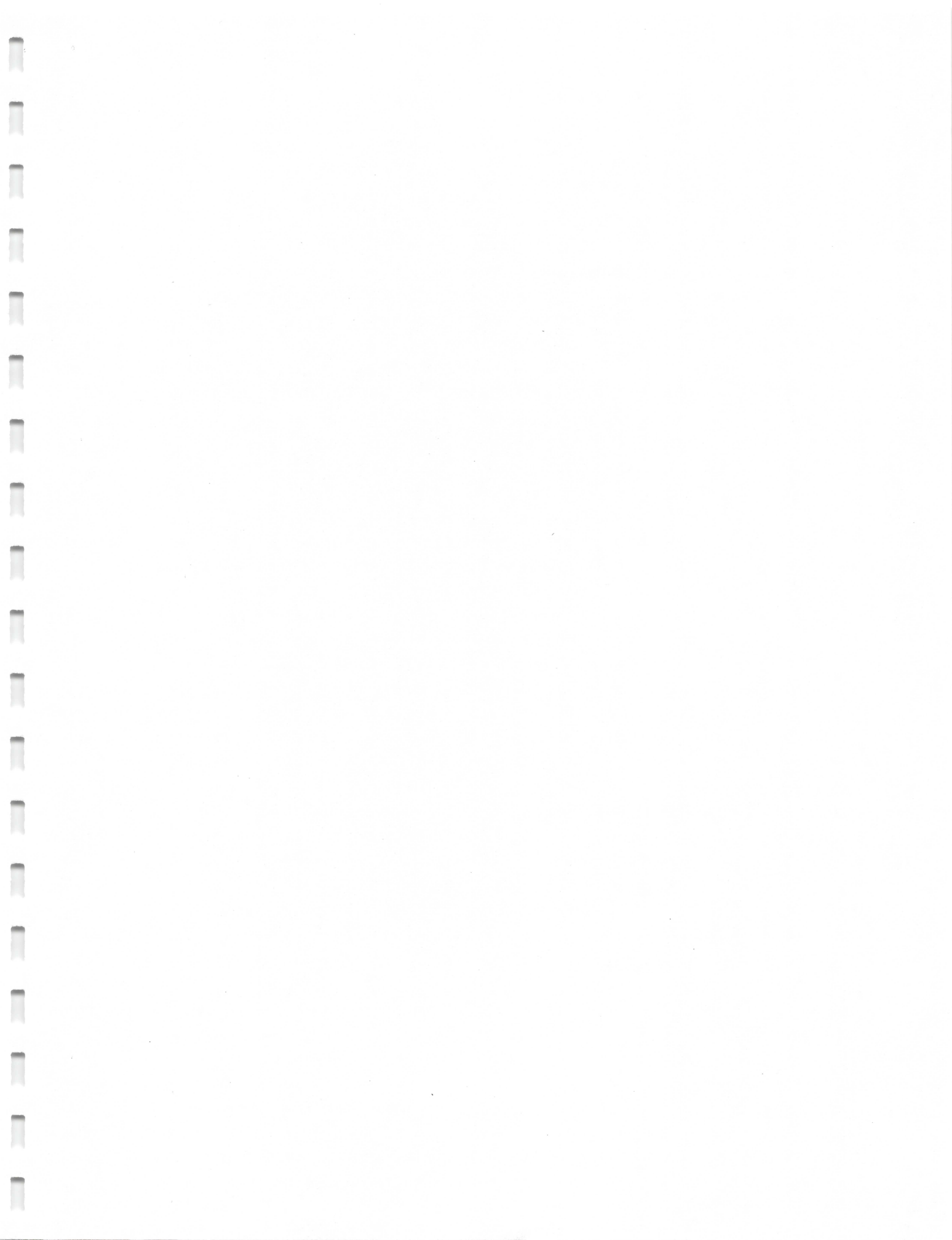
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