Enhancing Alumni Engagement and Alumni Database Management for African Community Education

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Enhancing Alumni Engagement and Alumni Database Management for African Community Education

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ABSTRACT

The African Community Education program (ACE) assists African immigrants with educational and social support to help the children and families adjust to life in the United States. ACE approached the Worcester Community Project Center for help with alumni tracking and engagement. Our project group conducted research to gather information about desirable alumni engagement ideas. The group created recommendations to help ACE improve its alumni engagement, develop existing programs, and implement new programs. We also recommended an alumni database that can be used effectively by ACE to manage alumni information. These two deliverables are vital for ACE to improve and expand its alumni network.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ACE (African Community Education) is a non-profit organization that aims to help African refugee students with tutoring and homework help. ACE started on a small scale, with most volunteers being from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Later, it partnered with Worcester Public Schools to help properly place African refugees in the appropriate grade based on their education level, not just their age. ACE's main goal for the IQP (Interactive Qualifying Project) team was to research how to improve alumni engagement for alumni who leave ACE and provide recommendations based on the findings. Another goal was for the team to recommend a database that can be utilized by the staff at ACE. The group determined that semi-structured interviews and an alumni survey would be the best methods to collect useful information regarding the project. The original plan for the team was to conduct in-person interviews with interviewees. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews had to be conducted virtually, and Zoom was chosen as the video conferencing platform.

In order to collect useful information, the project group chose two populations to interview: Experts on alumni matters and ACE alumni over the age of 18+. The experts on alumni matters were people who worked in the alumni departments of colleges and other organizations. Their job role included alumni engagement through alumni programs and events and managing alumni databases. The experts on alumni matters were very helpful because they were experienced in the goals the project group was hoping to achieve. They offered an interesting perspective and insight on alumni topics. The alumni experts included Worcester Polytechnic Institute experts, College of Holy Cross expert, and Refugees Artisans of Worcester Cofounders. In addition to interviews, a survey was sent to ACE alumni. The ACE alumni were vital because they have an

inside and personal look at what they, and other alumni, would be interested in. The alumni were so important because the project goals all were centered around helping them, so it was important to know how exactly they needed help and what they were passionate about.

Before formulating the interviews and survey questions, the group collected information about refugees in the United States. The information focused on the struggles refugees face once they come to the United States. We learned that refugees have to face a variety of hardships like being taken advantage of by their employers because they do not know their rights, learning a new language, and learning to complete taxes correctly and on time. The project team also researched how non-profit organizations, like ACE, offer support to African refugees. All of the research conducted helped gain a better understanding of ACE and the refugees themselves, along with narrowing down the questions to ask. It also was important to research refugees so the group could be knowledgeable about sensitive matters. Many of the refugees in the United States have come from terrible living conditions, so it was important to be mindful and to make sure not to ask questions that could mentally harm the interviewees.

The project team was able to conduct a total of 12 interviews. There were 6 interviews with ACE alumni 18+ and there were 6 interviews with experts in alumni matters. The team also received 10 survey responses from ACE alumni. The group had hoped that there would have been more responses to the survey. ACE reached out to alumni who completed the survey, asking them to send it to other alumni they knew. We also posted the survey in an ACE Alumni Facebook group. Unfortunately, we were unable to increase the number of survey responses, so we decided to create a new plan to gather more data. The group decided to conduct a focus group discussion with ACE alumni. The team drafted a focus group protocol that had questions elaborating on the

ones in the survey. The group felt that the volunteers for the focus group were likely to be the same individuals that had already responded to the survey. We developed questions based on the answers we received from them in the survey and aimed to gain deeper insights on those topics. For example, many survey respondents wanted help with job and scholarship opportunities. The group decided to ask a question in the focus group about what specific resources they wanted for job and scholarship opportunities to get an in-depth insight into the topic.

The project team has created recommendations based on the gathered data. The objective was to improve alumni engagement through tracking information about alumni, keeping in touch with them, and organizing alumni activities. The group found three categories of events that alumni are interested in. The three categories of events are Programming, Networking, and Social events. The programming events involved activities related to education and jobs. The top programming events alumni were interested in were:

- College Preparation Sessions
- Scholarship Opportunities and resources
- College Trips
- Information about Job Opportunities

The networking events the alumni were interested in centered around keeping the alumni connected with ACE. The networking events included:

- Whatsapp group for Alumni & Whatsapp group for current students
- Newsletter with updates

The social events the alumni were interested in involved alumni having fun with ACE students and staff. By having alumni come to have fun at these events, ACE can stay more connected with them. The social events recommended are:

- Alumni Dinner

- Sport Events: Soccer Game

- Volunteering Opportunities

- Virtual Discussions through Zoom

- Storytelling Videos of ACE students and alumni

The alumni management software that we recommend is VeryConnect. When looking at varioys alumni management software, most programs fit within ACE's price range and provide member management, a jobs board, support, and both desktop and mobile platforms. However, what makes VeryConnect more suitable for ACE than the other programs is VeryConnect's ability to integrate MailChimp within its mailing list feature. Since ACE already uses MailChimp, this feature was a must have.

Through this project, the project team was able to accomplish the first project goal of researching best practices of alumni engagement and recommending some useful alumni events to connect ACE alumni. The team also was able to accomplish the second goal of recommending an effective database software that can be used by ACE to keep track of their alumni. Putting those alumni events in place is extremely beneficial for non-profit organizations like ACE because the bigger network they have, the more they can continue to support the community.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Antonio Guterres once said, "While every refugee's story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage, the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild their shattered lives" (Redmon, 2005). African Community Education (ACE) is a nonprofit organization in Worcester that assists African immigrants with educational and social support in order to help African children and their families adjust to life in the United States. However, ACE has seen that the services they provide to their members often end after that member has graduated high school. ACE wants to be able to extend their services to alumni who have graduated from high school and are continuing their education at a university or entering the workforce. The two goals for the Interactive Qualifying Project are to recommend alumni engagement ideas and research an alumni database for ACE.

1.1 Refugees in the United States

Immigrants that come to the United States are fleeing their homes because of situations that threaten both themselves and their families. These terrible conditions consist of poverty, hunger, war, political instability, and natural disaster. Many people flee and seek refuge in the United States with the hope that they can have a better life for their families. Figure 1 shows that 35% of America's refugees in 2018 came from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a country in central Africa (Hutt, 2019). That African country alone provides a huge percent of the total number of immigrants that the United States are receiving.

Once they have fled their countries, refugees must find a new settlement. In 2014, there were a total of 14,000 African refugees living in Massachusetts (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). This population of immigrants created both a sizable and diverse community. Once these refugees reach the United States, they have many challenges to overcome. They are now in a new and foreign country, making it hard to fully settle into their new homes because of cultural differences. They need assistance to adapt to the new lifestyle in the United States, especially with tasks such as filing their taxes, processing government paperwork, and understanding their employment rights. A simple example of cultural differences is America's obsession with sports, specifically American Football. New refugees may feel like outsiders since they would not know the fundamentals of American Football, which is arguably an important part of American culture.

Where America's Refugees Came From In 2018
Top origin countries of refugees entering the U.S. in FY 2018*

Share of total

Dem. Rep. Congo	7,878	35%
Myanmar	3,555	16%
Ukraine	2,635	12%
Bhutan	2,228	10%
Eritrea	1,269	6%
Afghanistan	805	4%
El Salvador	725	3%
Pakistan	441	2%
Russia	437	2%
Ethiopia	376	2%
Other	2,142	10%
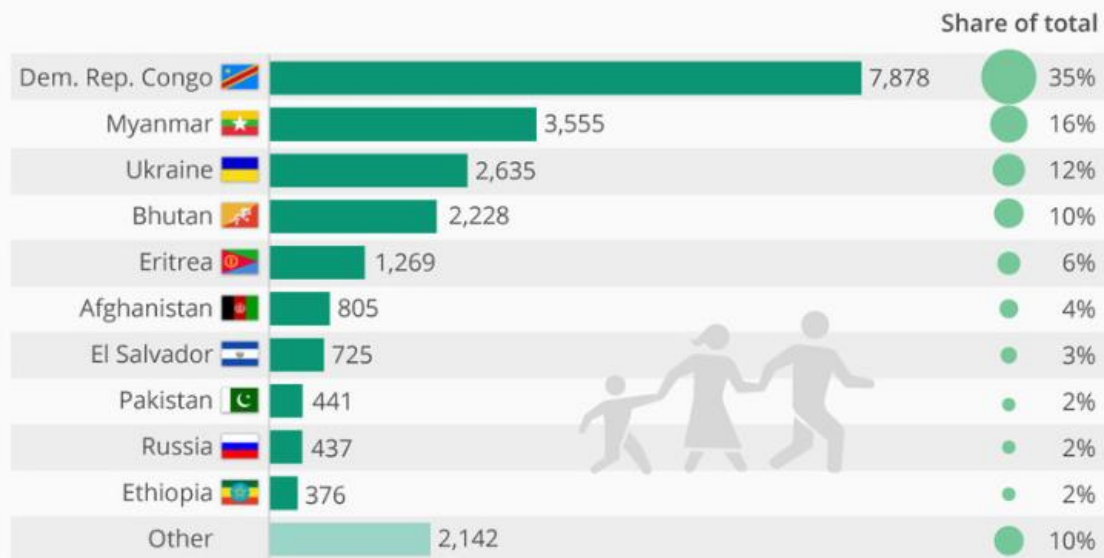
* Excluding special immigrant visa recipients
and certain humanitarian parole entrants.

@StatistaCharts Source: U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing
Center via Pew Research Center

statista

Image: Statista

Figure 1: Where American's Refugees Came from in 2018. Source: https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/06/chart-of-the-day-where-americas-refugees-came-from-in-2018/

1.2 Immigrant Struggles in the United States

In general, college students struggle physically and mentally when moving their belongings from

dorm to dorm each year. Applying that feeling in relation to moving your entire life from one

country to another is hard to imagine. People face a surplus of obstacles, starting with language

barriers. Not all the people in African countries speak or learn English, resulting in refugees

being hindered regarding communication in their new environment. In addition to language,

another huge obstacle a refugee family might face is culture shock. The term culture shock was proposed by the Canadian anthropologist, Kalervo Oberg, in 1954 and it is defined as the feeling of confusion or uncertainty and sometimes anxiety that results from being exposed to a different culture or a new environment (Oberg, 1960). This happens because each culture has its own customs, traditions, and beliefs. This makes it difficult for immigrants to assimilate to the USA because they already have other traditions in place. Another barrier that refugees face is finding a job that will provide for their family. Finding employment can be challenging because each job has its own requirements and qualifications. Such requirements could be diplomas, which refugees either have none of, or their diplomas are only valid in the country they received them in. Some jobs also require fluent English reading and speech, which many refugees are unable to perform. Some jobs take advantage of refugees, because the refugees are not aware of their rights. Thus, refugee and immigrant programs and organizations were established in Worcester to generally address the issues discussed above. Immigrant programs persevere to rebuild the African refugees' shattered lives.

1.3 Organizations Aiding Immigrants

There are various organizations in Massachusetts that aid immigrants by providing support services, educational services, and financial services. These organizations share a similar goal of helping immigrants overcome adversity and adjust to American life. Even though these organizations all aid immigrants, the target population can vary by focusing on different backgrounds such as religion and ethnicity.

Two organizations that focus on immigrants in general include the Refugee and Immigration Assistance Center (RIAC) and the Berkshire Immigrant Center. The RIAC is an organization with offices in Boston, Lynn, and Worcester. Their mission is to "promote cultural, educational, and socioeconomic development in the refugee and immigrant community." In pursuit of this mission, they offer counseling, resettlement opportunities, and community outreach to aid individuals. The RIAC can help individuals obtain US citizenship. This is essential for allowing immigrants access to all opportunities the US offers. The RIAC also offers after school programs in order to help individuals who have to work long hours to support themselves and are unable to care for their children. Children can receive homework help during these programs which will alleviate the disadvantages many immigrant children face in the classroom, and in turn help the parents who are unable to be there (The Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center, 2020). The Berkshire Immigrant Center helps immigrants adjust to resettling in Massachusetts by offering services that make individuals more comfortable in their new home. The services provided by the Berkshire Immigrant Center include referrals to immigration attorneys, access to English courses, voter education, and access to housing services. These services help immigrants assimilate into their new communities which will help them become productive citizens (Berkshire Immigrant Center, 2020). Other organizations aid immigrants in the Catholic community.

Catholic Charities USA is a network of churches across the nation with the goal of addressing poverty and other issues in various communities. Founded in 1910, Catholic Charities provide services to individuals regardless of religious affiliation. These services include food and nutrition, affordable housing, immigration and refugee services, as well as advocacy and social

policy initiatives ("Catholic Charities USA," 2020). The Worcester County branch of Catholic Charities started in 1951 with the goal of providing a network of support throughout Worcester County. In order to prevent homelessness and help stabilize a family's housing situation, basic needs are provided through food banks, as well as clothing and diaper drives. Housing and utility assistance is another resource for individuals looking for stable housing. Some of the family services provided include Project Chill and Parent Aide. Project Chill teaches violence prevention to youth, and Parent Aide teaches parenting skills to individuals whose children are at risk of abuse ("Catholic Charities Worcester County," 2019). Not only is religion used as means of reaching out to immigrants but also culture, which is how other organizations create a network of immigrants.

Crocodile River Music is an organization that aims to bring African music and dance to New England, focusing more on the art side of African culture. They host many concerts, workshops, lectures, and educational programs to globally promote cultural awareness of African culture. They also work with the African refugee and immigrant community, providing them leadership in pursuing future careers in education and the arts, which overlaps with ACE's mission (Crocodile River Music, 2020).These are just a few of the organizations in Massachusetts that have a large impact on the lives of immigrants. Similarly, ACE offers services in order to alleviate the burdens African immigrants face daily.

Even though these various nonprofit organizations differ in the services provided or the demographics of their immigrant population, they do share the common goal of helping tear down societal barriers that prevent immigrants from reaching success in this country. The focus

of this report, African Community Education (ACE), is a similar organization in Worcester,

Massachusetts that targets the African immigrant population.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 African Community Education

ACE was founded by Kaska Yawo and Olga Valdman in 2006. They dreamed of establishing a program for African refugee students, with the hope it would continue to grow. They had a shared goal to help these refugee students with tutoring and homework help. The non-profit organization ACE was created because of this goal (African Community Education Program, n.d). Due to their lack of resources, ACE started on a small scale, with most volunteers being from the University of Massachusetts Medical School. ACE partnered with Worcester Public Schools to help properly place African refugees in the appropriate grade based on their education level, not just their age. As of the year 2020, ACE has helped over 1800 people through their programs and guidance (African Community Education Program, n.d). Figure 2 shows the model that ACE follows to optimally serve the families and children in need, from cultural expression to social-emotional support (Yawo, 2016). ACE balances a variety of aspects of life, such as culture and education, to provide a wonderful organization made for helping African refugees. They take the fundamental aspects of being an African refugee and combine it with a balanced family life to create programs that best serve the refugees. The people ACE help join valuable programs ACE has to offer, for instance The After-School Program and The Saturday Program. Since ACE is a small organization, they sometimes reach out to others for help.

ACE'S MODEL

Figure 2: ACE's Model. Source: https://www.socialinnovationforum.org/sites/default/files/ACE-2016-Prospectus.pdf

2.2 Project Goals

The first and primary goal for the ACE IQP was to conduct research and interviews to help ACE

gather information to find good alternative solutions for ACE alumni engagement. The two

groups of people interviewed were experts on alumni matters and ACE alumni 18+. These two different groups of people allowed more perspective and insight on alumni topics. The recommendations that our group came up with will aid ACE to create their first alumni programs. In order to prepare for the research that will be conducted, it was necessary to conduct background research onAfrican immigration in the United States, organizations similar to ACE, and the programs that are already offered by ACE. The secondary goal was for the team to research and help choose an alumni database that could be used by the organization to track their alumni. In various types of organizations, alumni help develop the organization through volunteering and can also offer a great deal of wisdom and experience that can be useful for surveys, networking, mentorship, and various other programs. ACE is a small organization with scarce resources and they also felt they were losing touch with their alumni; therefore, they hoped to be more connected through this useful repository of information. So, researching and recommending an alumni database management software would be extremely valuable for them.

2.3 ACE's Contributions

2.3.1 Programs

The programs ACE offers are available to both adults and children. The first program at ACE is the After School Program, which helps high school students thrive academically with their schoolwork through the use of tutoring and activities offered by ACE. Another important program offered by ACE is called The Saturday Program, where current students enroll in activities such as ELL, STEM, and many other active learning opportunities to aid them in their education and learn a variety of subjects (African Community Education, 2020). In addition to the programs listed above, ACE offers the Mentoring Program, which provides one-on-one

counseling for both academic and personal challenges the students might face. The organization also offers an Outreach Program, which specifically provides resources for the families, such as informational support, finding jobs, connecting with employers, and meeting other refugee families. ACE also holds a Summer Reading Program, where current students at ACE receive assistance with reading assignments over the summer break. Finally, there is the Work Development Program, where students prepare for the real world by learning how to apply for jobs, completing their college applications, and conclusively how to maintain a job (African Community Education, 2020).

Ultimately, all the above programs are offered in the goal of creating a secure network for both refugee parents and children who are registered at the ACE organization. The programs are extremely valuable resources for all of the African refugees in the Worcester area. Figure 3, ACE's Program Performance, shows the number of children and families that attended a variety of ACE programs throughout the course of three years. The first row shows the number of students enrolled in the Saturday School Program, which has increased from 90 to 150 students from the years 2016 to 2018; this is a clear sign that ACE is expanding its network. In fact, all of the programs have been getting an increase in the number of attendances throughout the years and this shows that refugees are interested in those programs.

	FY 2016	FY 2017(P)	FY 2018 (P)
PROGRAM PERFORMANCE			
Number of students enrolled in Saturday School	90	120	150
Number of families reached through ACE's wraparound services	225	300	375
Number of students reached through afterschool academic support	62	90	110
Number of youth reached through cultural activities	57	70	85
Number of alumni engaged in networking and mentoring of ACE students	4	20	30
Number of students who receive transportation assistance	50	70	90
ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH/CAPACITY-BUILDING			
Increase individual donations	$16,000	$18,500	$20,625
Increase corporate donations	$4,000	$15,000	$18,750
Increase staff salaries to equitable professional levels	Plan	Implement	Evaluate
Research, develop and implement an integrative evaluation system	Develop	Train & Launch	Assess
Total Revenue	$574,000	$590,000	$676,000

Figure 3: ACE's Program Performance. Source: https://www.socialinnovationforum.org/sites/default/files/ACE-2016-Prospectus.pdf

2.3.2 Events

The Annual ACE Festival takes place every June. This event commemorates the work students and families have accomplished over the course of the year. African culture is celebrated through food, music, and dance. At ACE's 13th Festival, Crocodile River Music held a percussion and dance performance. A soccer tournament was held with teams from ACE, Ascentria, and the Bhutanese Community of Massachusetts ("African Community Education," 2019). Figure 4, ACE Spring Festival, is a picture taken from the ACE website that illustrates the excitement of ACE students during the Spring Festival (Gray, 2014).

Figure 4: ACE Spring Festival. Source: https://www.guidestar.org/profile/14-1970474

The ACE Gala is a popular event that occurs on a yearly basis every November. This event raises a large amount of money to support ACE and help them expand their current programs. In fact, the Gala is not just about raising money, it is also an entertaining opportunity for individuals to have fun. Every year the theme of the Gala changes, for example, the theme of the 2019 Gala was The Journey. During the event, ACE offers many activities, like dancing, fashion shows, ethnic food, and meeting people involved with ACE ("The Journey," 2020). Figure 5, ACE Gala, is a picture taken from the ACE website; the photograph shows attendees at the ACE Gala posing for the camera and enjoying themselves ("The Journey," 2020).

The Spring Festival and ACE Gala have generally been a large success for ACE. They are also great opportunities to bring ACE alumni together. In order to recommend similarly successful events, it was important to understand other popular alumni programs. Alumni programs are programs designed to bring students and alumni together through meaningful interaction for a variety of purposes such as networking and socializing.

2.4 Existing Successful Alumni Program

One of those popular alumni programs that we learnt about after interviewing Brienne Ross, Associate Director of Alumni Relations & Annual Giving at Worcester Polytechnic Institute, is the alumni scoring system that WPI has it ready to go June 30th of 2020 in terms of tracking and evaluating alumni on a score from 1 to 20 based on their interactions through emails and other platforms, through their participation in events as well as their donations, participation, and volunteerism. The score is determined from the information provided in the WPI database. Once the donor score system identifies a person as likely to donate, it then assigns that individual a score from 1 to 20. Within the scoring system, alumni can also score programs they attended and

rank them. The alumni scoring system is found to be helpful and successful because it encourages alumni to participate and donate as well as invite other alumni or friends to the events in order to raise their score. Another successful program is one that is run by the founders of Refugee Artisan of Worcester (RAW) organization where they have ongoing sales of the artisans' crafts at College of the Holy Cross Bookstore. The purpose of this program is to help those artisans earn money and brand their businesses.

2.5 Databases

Creating a database was an important part of the project, so it was crucial to research what exactly a database was. A database is a "collection of records or data that is stored in a computer so that it can be consulted by a program to answer queries" (Berrington, 2014, p.59). Databases are used by organizations to organize a large amount of data so that decisions can be made based on that data. Databases are composed of records and fields. The records are the rows and contain a set of attribute values for a single entity. The fields are the columns and contain multiple values for the same attribute (Berrington, 2014). Figure 6, Format of a Database, is an excellent example of a layout of a database. It shows a database table with records, fields, and data values.

Figure 6: Format of a database table showing the records, fields, and data values. Source: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mpaic.2013.12.002

The three basic types of databases include the relational, hierarchical, and network models. The

relational model organizes data into two dimensional tables. Each table created corresponds to a

particular relation based on the records and fields used. The relationships among tables allow

complex information to be efficiently retrieved from the data. One to one, one to many, and

many to many relationships can be made from a relational model.

Figure 7 shows how a relationship can be drawn from a relational database (Berrington, 2014).

Here a teacher can teach multiple classes however, only one teacher can teach a particular class.

Using multiple tables allows information such as which teachers are teaching at a particular time

or the emails of all teachers teaching math classes. The ability to create relationships is what

separates a relational database from a spreadsheet (Hock-Chuan, 2010).
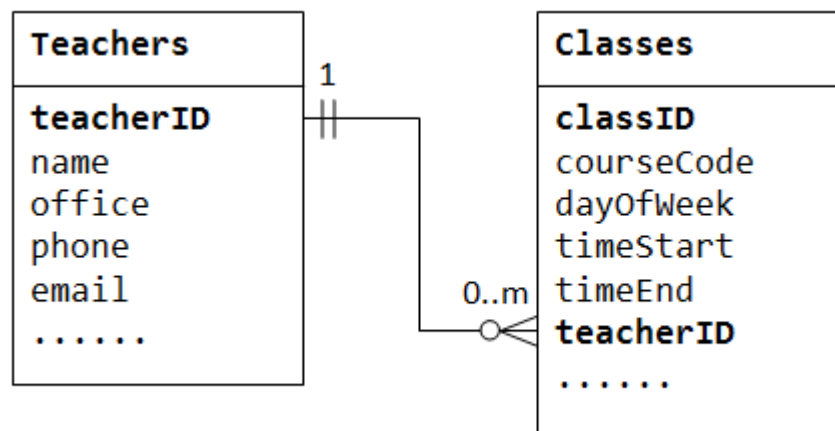
Figure 7: Linking Two Tables in a Relational Database. Source:
https://www3.ntu.edu.sg/home/ehchua/programming/sql/Relational_Database_Design.html

The hierarchical data model organizes concepts into a tree structure where "some concepts exist

on their own while the others depend on the former" (Hainaut, 2015). This data model works

well for one to many relationships; however, it does not work well for other types of relationships. Items at the top of the hierarchy that have relationships to multiple items are easy to access. Figure 8 is an example of what a hierarchical data model could look like (Hainaut, 2015).
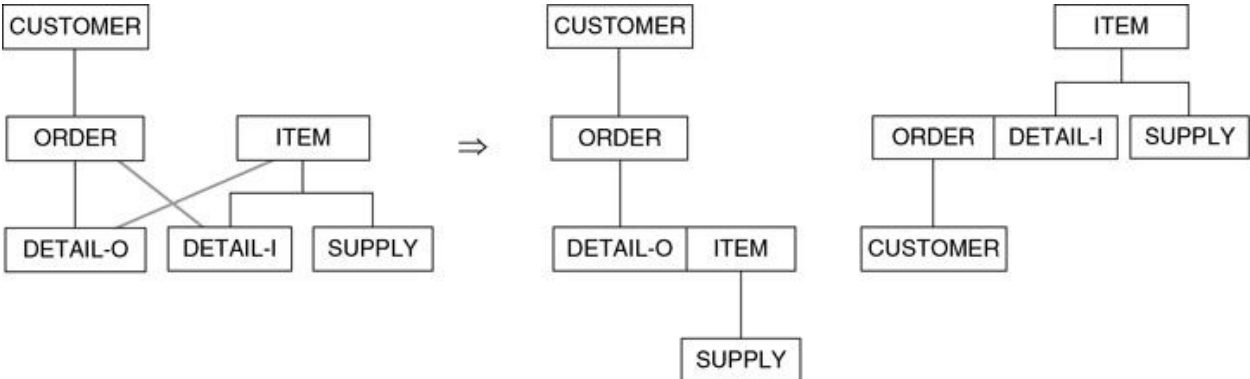
Figure 8: Hierarchical Model. Source: https://mariadb.com/kb/en/understanding-the-network-database-mode

The network model allows many relationships to be expressed. This is done by allowing each child to have multiple parents ("Understanding the Network Database Model," n.d). This data model is very flexible because of the multiple linkages between the records (Network Database Model). Figure 9 is an example of how a network data model could be structured ("Network Model," 2020).
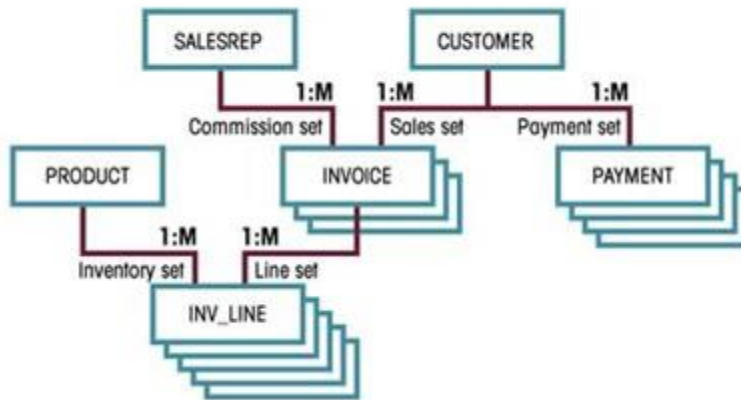
Figure 9: Network Model. From Network Database Model. Source:
http://www.computerbusinessresearch.com/Home/database/network-database-model

For the purpose of this project, the relational data model was a better aid than the hierarchical

and network model because the relational data model allowed the data to be formatted in a

spreadsheet format with the records forming the rows and the fields forming the columns. The

spreadsheet format would allow ACE staff to better interpret and utilize the data that was

collected.

To summarize, in order to help ACE fulfill its mission in helping better the lives of African

refugees who come to the United States, their alumni outreach had to be improved. This entailed

creating both a set of recommended alumni events and an alumni database. In order to

accomplish this goal a thorough plan was created that helped to collect the necessary data. In the

next section, the data collection and analysis methods are discussed.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The goal of the project was to provide recommendations for improving alumni engagement and to recommend an effective alumni database for ACE. Two objectives were developed in order to gather the data needed and serve the goals mentioned above. The two objectives completed were gathering primary data for alumni engagement programs and conducting secondary research for appropriate databases for ACE to use.

3.2 Gathering Alumni Information

The first objective was to collect primary data for alumni engagement ideas. One of the most effective methods for gathering data is having one on one conversation with the subject. It was decided to use semi-structured interviews and a script of specific questions was created for the interviewees (Csordas et al, 2010). But those questions were susceptible to change as more information was gathered. The semi-structured interviews were successful, and it was conducted in a professional and ethical way. To ensure that the interviews were ethical, an IRB process was completed and approved. This made the interviewee feel comfortable and open up to sharing his/her points of view and concerns (O'Sullivan, 1985). Tim O'Neil provided a list of ACE alumni to be used as a source of interviewees. Tim O'Neil is a staff member of ACE who is the direct sponsor for this project. The interviews and surveys were accomplished after the list of names of alumni was obtained.

When gathering information from people, it was important to phrase questions in appropriate ways. There were a few strategies to use when forming questions. Open ended questions were very useful for getting a large amount of data. This allowed the interviewee to add as much detail as they could to their answers. It was also important to ask short questions and then follow up with more questions. When asking an individual a long question, they can get confused or only answer part of the questions (Bunting, 2014). It is often more successful to ask more short questions to make sure the interviewee has a chance to address all the parts.

3.2.1 Interviews

An interview is a structured conversation where one participant asks questions and another participant answers (Penning, 2015). Virtual semi structured interviews via Zoom were conducted to collect qualitative data because the plans changed due to Covid-19 and everyone is working from home now. The first step to begin the interview process was to research aspects relating to the people participating in the interviews. By learning about the individuals interviewed, it helped form questions (Penning, 2015). Throughout C term, information was gathered regarding the alumni at ACE and the individuals that attend ACE. This was important to create appropriate and concise questions regarding the alumni's specific involvement with the organization.

Please refer to Table 1 for a description of the interview participants.

Participants	Gender	Associated with ACE since	Working Professional
1	Female	2006	Full time student at Jacksonville university
2	Female	2019	Full time student
3	Female	2006	Full time student
4	Male	2011	Working at ACE
5	Male	2011	Looking for a full-time job in Political Science
6	Male	2016	Working at ACE
7	Male	N/A	Executive Director Lifetime Engagement at WPI
8	Female	N/A	Brooks Alumni Fellow at College of the Holy Cross
9	Female	N/A	Associate Director of Alumni Relations at WPI
10	Female	N/A	Associate Director of International Advancement at WPI
11	Female	N/A	Cofounder of Refugees Artisans of Worcester
12	Female	N/A	Cofounder of Refugees Artisans of Worcester

Table 1: Individuals interviewed through Zoom

The second step of conducting a thorough interview was to create a script. Forming a script, which should be brought to the interview, would aid in remembering important information and steps (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). These scripts were extremely important for the beginning and end of an interview to remember steps, such as, gathering consent from the participants (Maurer et al, 2008). The script also laid out the questions and follow up questions for the interviewees. There were two scripts used for interviews; the first script was for experts on alumni engagement (see Appendix A), and the second script was used during interviews with alumni from ACE (see Appendix B). It was necessary to make scripts of questions for each of the three groups of people because each group with the hope of gathering different information. The list of who we will be interviewing in the Alumni Engagement section below. The goal for interviews was seven experts and seven ACE Alumni. In order to conduct the interviews, we will need to know who to contact. At the beginning of D term, ACE gathered names of alumni to speak with. The alumni then were reached through phone calls and emails.

3.2.2 Focus Groups

A focus group is a diverse group of people gathered to participate in a guided discussion. (Kamberelis& Dimitriadis,2013). Even though focus groups can be used to trigger ideas and thoughts, it was not an ideal decision to conduct them in this case because of the logistics involved and the limited resources at our end.

3.2.3 Surveys

Surveys are a great tool to use for finding information on a large population (Schonlau et al., 2002). From surveys we were able to determine a statistical inference which is an assumption

about a large population made from data from a sample of the population. Surveys can reach many individuals through web, mail, and telephone.

There were many steps to go through in order to conduct a survey. First the survey objectives had to be identified by the researchers. This involved determining the population of interest and what kind of data needs to be obtained. Then a sample needed to be drawn from the population of interest. A sample is a small fraction of the population of interest in which data can be drawn from. Samples were used because it was impossible and much more difficult to survey every single individual from the population of interest. After the researcher made the sample, he/she created research and chose the survey instrument. A survey device can be an email, a piece of paper, or a telephone. The participants, or individuals of the sample, were contacted and sent the survey which was then completed. Data from the survey was analyzed and an inference about the population could be made (Schonlau et al., 2002).

Surveys administered through in person interviews can elicit high response rates however, the cost of conducting these interviews is higher than other methods. Asking questions face to face can allow the researcher to collect data on the participants appearance and attitude. Telephone surveys are less costly than in person interviews however, the response rates for telephone surveys are lower. Mail surveys are also less costly than in person interviews however elicit a low response. Internet surveys are not only less costly than in person interviews but also can elicit a high response rate if the entire population has access to the internet (Price et al, 2015).

Surveys were useful for quickly collecting data from a large population of individuals. Online surveys will allow us to reach a large number of participants even if many may not live near Worcester. Qualtrics is a survey program offered by WPI which aided in creating the survey, there was collaboration in designing the survey, the survey was sent out to participants via email, and data was collected and analyzed data from the participants. The surveys consisted of both closed and open questions. Closed questions provided multiple prepared responses to each question for the participants to choose from. This increased response rate because participants are more likely to complete the survey if the questions are quick and easy to know answers (Kelley et al., 2003). It also allowed in creating graphs that provided information about the ACE alumni population. The responses provided for the participants to choose from will consist of dichotomous, nominal, and ordinal responses. Dichotomous responses ask respondents to select one of two choices, such as yes or no. Nominal responses provide respondents with more than two unordered responses and ordinal responses provide respondents with more than two ordered responses (Bhattacherjee, 2012). Whether a set of responses is ordered or unordered depends on if the sequence of a group of prepared responses for a question matters or not. Open questions allowed for responses from questions that may elicit a very broad range of responses that could not have been obtained through closed questions (Kelley et al., 2003).

The results from the interviews allowed us to make changes to the surveys in order to gain more useful data from the ACE alumni population (see Appendix C). The interviews gave a better comprehension of the alumni's current involvement at ACE and what alumni may potentially look for in ACE alumni programs.

3.2.4 IRB Protocol and Samples

When working with human subjects, it was important to follow the IRB to protect the individuals participating in the project. The IRB guidelines were followed, and no physical or mental harm came to participants. This project was not an experiment regarding the human body, so there was little to no chance that subject would get physically harmed. The project did involve asking questions, which had the potential to cause mental harm to our subject. While making questions, the participants were kept in mind and topics were avoided that could cause them distress (Institutional Review Board, 2020). For example, some of the participants in the study were refugees, so there was a great chance that they came from poor living conditions prior to their life in the United States; this subject was avoided since it could be painful for people to think about.

3.2.5 Consent Form

A consent form was a necessary part of a project involving human subjects. Participants needed to know what they are getting involved in prior to participating. The consent form explained our project and how the participants aided us (Institutional Review Board, 2020). It also explained that the participants can stop helping in the study at any point in time if they wish to. The participants did not have to finish answering our questions if they desired to leave. The participants had to agree to sign the consent form before being allowed to participate in the study (see Appendix D).

3.3 Alumni Engagement

As stated before, a goal for the project was to research best practices in the area of alumni engagement. There was collaboration among similar organizations in Worcester via emails,

phone calls, and zoom calls. This helped collect the necessary data on what alumni programs they offer and how they keep their alumni connected. A list of possible experts who were believed to be viable to have been interviewed was created:

1. Refugee & Immigrant Assistance Center (RIAC)
2. Refugee Artisans of Worcester (RAW)
3. Crocodile River Music
4. Worcester Alliance for Refugee Ministry (WARM)
5. Worcester Refugee Assistance Project (WRAP)
6. Catholic Charities of Worcester County (CCWC)
7. ACE alumni 18+

It was believed that all the above groups of people were useful resources, since they aided in the process to learn different strategies on alternative ways of expanding ACE's network and improving alumni engagement.

3.4 Alumni Database Management

The second goal was to research a database to catalog data from the alumni. A database will allow ACE to keep track of its current and future alumni. The elements for the database that ACE should include are name, past address, current address, history of volunteering, programs attended during their time at ACE, and ACE events attended as alumni. It was desirable to collect data that can give information on how many alumni are in the Worcester area, how involved everyone was during their time at ACE, and how involved everyone was after their time at ACE.

Relational databases are useful in organizing data from survey responses. In the database for this project the columns consisted of name, address, phone number, email address, and social media handles. The rows consisted of this information for each individual alumnus. A relational database ensured that data retrieval is convenient. The database programs that were recommended to ACE needed to fit a criterion of features. These high priority features included: price not exceeding $4000 per year, jobs board, mailing list management that integrated with MailChimp, desktop and mobile platforms, and support. These features were given to us by Tim O'Neil, our project sponsor, because that would help our team find the best suitable program for ACE.

In order to research the programs, we used secondary data collection. Secondary data collection involves using data collected by other researchers earlier. Secondary data can be retrieved online through the Internet or through data files on devices such as CD-ROM or DVD data discs (Hox, 2005). The benefit of secondary data collection over primary data collection is that it saves more resources for the investigators. Time and funds are not consumed as much because unlike primary data collection, the investigators do not need to work directly with research participants due to the fact that the research has already been completed (Castle, 2003). The data we collected also had to be displayed in a way to communicate the benefits of each program. In order to visually display the data we collected, we used a type of matrix, also commonly referred to as a comparison chart or table. Matrices are useful in that it allows objects or concepts to be compared using multiple variables (Verdinelli, 2013). This would allow us to show how each program was rated amongst the various features important for an alumni management software.

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Data on the alumni management programs were collected from Capterra. Capterra is a website that keeps track of features and reviews of a wide variety of software programs. This allows businesses to research and find the program most appropriate for them. Capterra also allows multiple programs to be directly compared side by side which highlights the advantages certain programs have over others (Capterra). The data collected was used to create a comparison table using Piktochart. Piktochart is a free program that helps communicate data in the form of infographics. The infographic showed how we came to our conclusions on which programs we recommended for ACE (see Figure 16).

3.5 Project Deliverables

At the end of the project ACE staff were provided with a comparison chart of various possible databases they could use to keep track of all their alumni and events to keep alumni involved. This chart of databases will clearly lay out features of different valuable databases so ACE can easily decide which database best fits what they want for tracking alumni. The hope is for the database and alumni engagement ideas to help ACE reconnect with their alumni and create a long-term plan to keep in touch with future alumni. Therefore, we hope to collect qualitative data through our research methods (interviews and survey) which can be used by other similar non-profit organizations and can be developed furthermore by other project teams.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Through our interviews, survey, and secondary data collection, we were able to collect data to complete our goals. The first goal was to research best practices to improve alumni engagement and form recommendations based on those findings that can be applied at ACE and other similar non-profit organizations. Whereas the second goal was to research an alumni database that can be suitable for ACE in terms of cost and available features such as organizing alumni events and getting them to connect with each other remotely. A challenge presented to the project group was researching ways ACE can improve their alumni engagement through programs and events and determining which alumni database software best suited the needs of ACE. First online interviews were conducted to have a direct conversation with various ACE alumni and experts so that we can record their opinions on alumni management. A Qualtrics survey was then shared to ACE alumni through a list given to us by Tim O'Neil and an ACE alumni Facebook group. In addition to that, various alumni management softwares were analyzed and scored through information obtained through official websites and reviews.

4.2 Sample Description

Of the 16 alumni who responded to the Qualtrics survey, six identifited as female, four identified as male, and two identified as non-binary. The ages of the respondents ranged from 18 to 27 years. The average age was about 22 years. Seven of the respondents reside locally in Worcester. The alumni surveyed were students at ACE at different times between 2006 and 2018. The respondents were also heavily involved during their time at ACE. Eleven respondents

participated in the After-School Program and Saturday Program, eight respondents participated

in Summer Reading, seven participated in the Mentoring Program, and four participated in

Workforce Development (see Figure 10 and Table 2). Looking at the highest education level

achieved, three respondents ended their education at high school or some equivalent, four

respondents have some college education but no degree, one has obtained an Associate's degree,

and four respondents have obtained a Bachelor's degree (BA, BS, AB, etc).
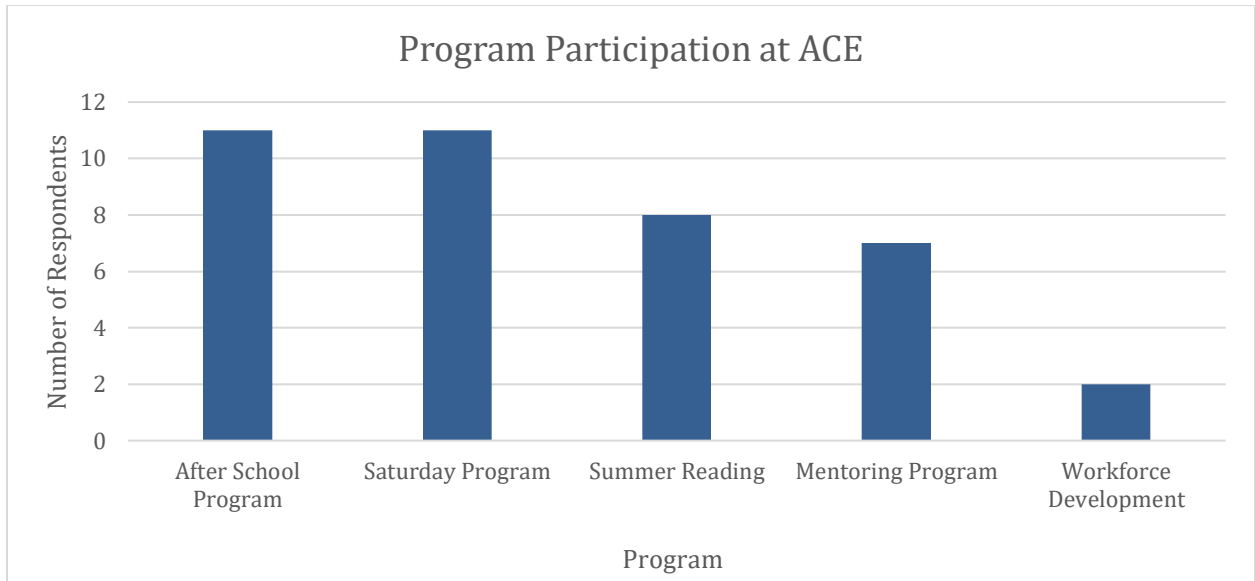

Figure 10: Bar graph showing the number of participants involved with each ACE program

Program Participation at ACE				
Program	Male	Female	Non-binary	Total Respondents
After School Program	3	6	2	11
Saturday Program	4	5	2	11
Summer Reading	4	2	2	8
Mentoring Program	2	4	1	7
Workforce Development	2	2	0	2
Total	4	6	2	12

Table 2: Gender participation in each ACE program

4.3 Communication with Alumni

Communication with alumni is vital for nonprofits. During our interview with a member of the Alumni Relations team at WPI, she stated, "When looking for creative ways of keeping contact that don't cost a lot of money, starting with some type of social media would be a good way of doing that." She also said that "[social media] is free and most people are on some type of social media." Another expert we interviewed, who works for the College of Holy Cross Alumni Office stated that information is shared with alumni through email and social media. Emails about events are sent out to certain alumni depending on the alumni's age and location. She explained that "[Holy Cross] has a social media person within the office and that [they] have special Holy Cross accounts for Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter." She also stated that "It's important to know who is using social media and who uses what". This information from our experts showed

us that it was important to look into how ACE currently communicated with alumni and does ACE alumni use any kind of social media.

In order to help ACE improve its communications with alumni, it was important to understand how ACE currently reaches out to their alumni with news and updates about the organization. Seven respondents out of the ten receive ACE news from Facebook, five respondents receive ACE news from email, two respondents receive news from Instagram, two respondents receive news from Whatsapp, and two respondents receive news from other sources such as keeping in touch personally with staff from ACE (see Figure 11). This data shows that ACE is currently reaching the majority of their alumni. The existing outreach tools, such as the ACE Alumni Association Facebook group and the ACE newsletters, contribute to the high percentages for Facebook and email communication.
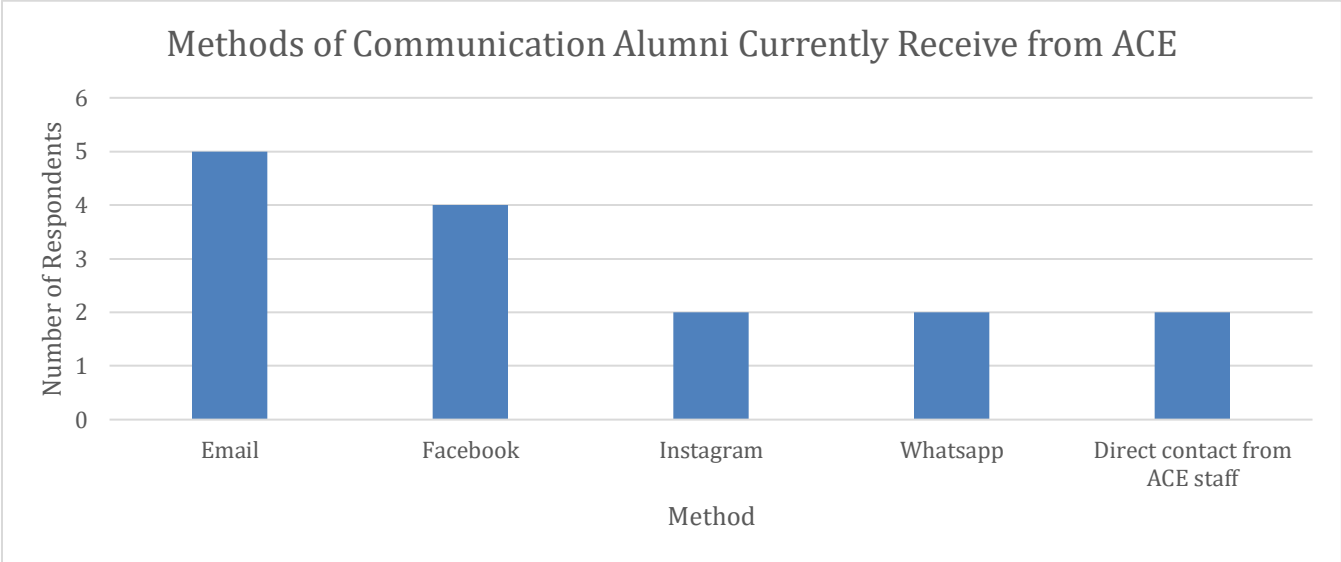

Figure 11: Bar graph showing the number of ACE alumni that receive ACE information through each tool

We then looked at how ACE can successfully communicate news and updates about these potential events and other ACE information in the future to alumni. Without a good communication system in place, alumni would not be informed about events that they would likely attend. Participants were asked which method of communication they would like to receive from ACE for future events. The choices consisted of social media, email, and cellphone. It was discovered that six respondents prefer Facebook and eight respondents prefer email (see Figure 12). This is interesting as it correlates to the interviews where the project team gathered data on how ACE alumni are currently receiving information from ACE. In both the survey and interviews, Facebook and email were the top two methods. This shows that ACE alumni prefer their current communication mediums for receiving information from ACE. Therefore, ACE needs to focus on Facebook and email communication mediums.
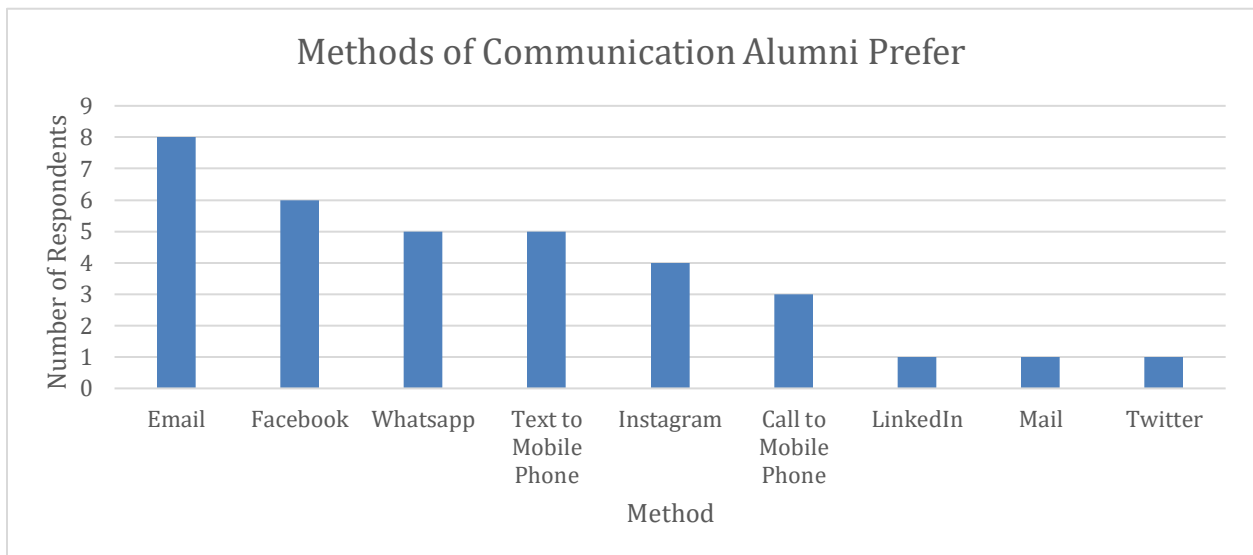

Figure 12: Bar graph showing the number of ACE alumni who would prefer a certain method of communication

4.4 Alumni Support

When asked in interviews if ACE provided educational, financial, or emotional support an interviewee stated that ACE did not help with those types of problems, but she hopes they do

now for the current students because she would have wanted that type of help. Furthermore, when inquiring about ways of support other than educational means, another interviewee stated that the best form of support that any alumni can have is having ACE there for them, ready to help them with any problems they are having in life. Few other interviewees also stated that either no support was given or that ACE could have done better. These statements show us that ACE can improve upon how they support their alumni. We then further investigated what exact resources alumni are interested in.

In order to understand the needs of ACE's alumni population, the participants were asked how ACE could support them, with options including care packages, professional and networking events, volunteering opportunities, internship opportunities, providing ACE students as volunteers at the alumni's organization, online information sessions, scholarship opportunities, job opportunities, and other. eleven respondents would like to receive job opportunities, eleven respondents would like to receive scholarship opportunities, six are interested in networking events, five are interested in volunteering at ACE, seven would like an updated list of internships, four would like care packages, and four are interested in online information sessions (see Figure 13). This indicates that the majority of ACE alumni would like to see employment assistance from ACE and opportunities to help fund their education. This finding is further supported in our interviews.
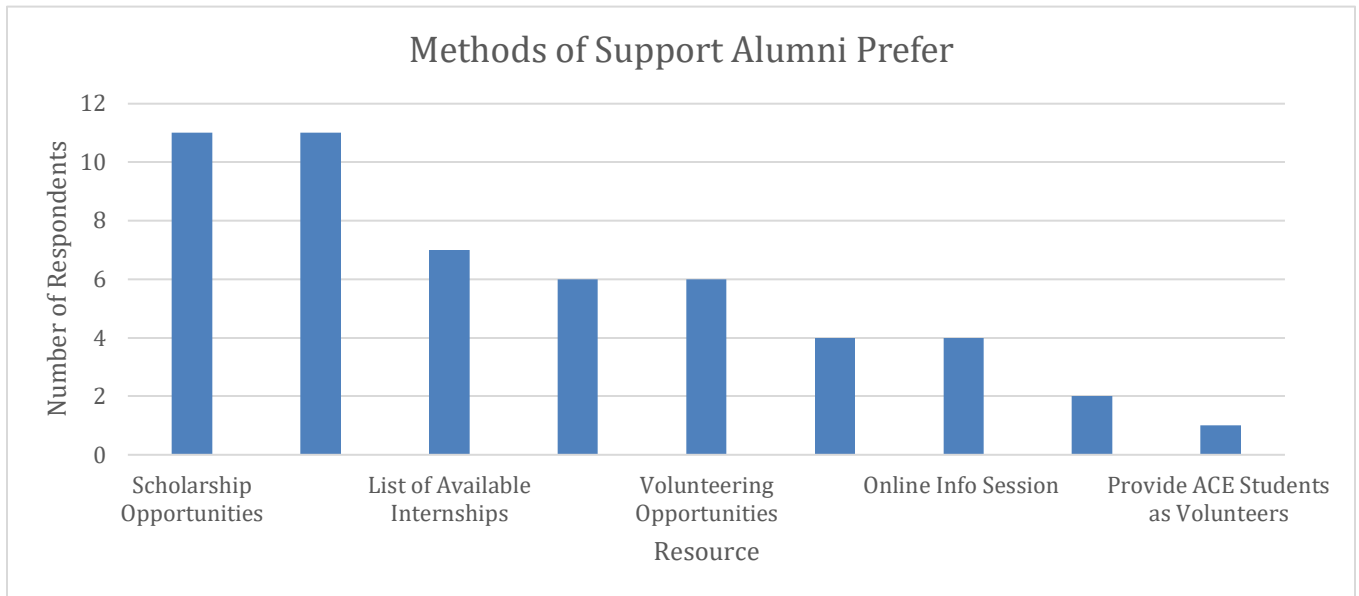
Figure 13: Bar graph showing number of ACE alumni interested in each method of support

4.5 Alumni Events

The types of programs ACE alumni are interested in was investigated so that ACE could optimize program attendance. When interviewing a member of WPI Alumni Relations it was stated that "social events are the most popular events" due to the fact that alumni want to hang out with their peers and their favorite faculty. When creating possible events for ACE they were categorized into three categories: social events, programming, and networking events. The social events that were proposed to the participants consisted of a reunion, dinner, picnic/barbecue, alumni game, trip to a sporting event and others. It was found that fourteen of respondents are interested in alumni sporting events, a specific recommendation being an alumni soccer game. Ten are interested in a trip to a sports event, six are interested in a dinner, eight are interested in a reunion, eight are interested in a picnic or barbecue, and three are interested in other events such as ACE trips and a Fashion Show similar to the one held during ACE's 2019 Gala (see Figure

14). These data are exciting as they show that alumni are interested in events that ACE already holds. During the Spring Festival, ACE holds a soccer tournament for its students and other teams in Worcester. Tailoring a similar tournament for alumni would raise engagement. Also, events with food are popular, therefore creating a similar event to the banquet at the Spring Festival that is tailored to alumni would increase involvement. Networking events were also proposed since ACE alumni have a large interest in job and internship opportunities. There were suggestions of a resume workshop, panel discussion, and speed networking. Other choices that were written in by respondents include job assistance and tutoring. Thirteen of respondents are interested in a resume workshop, eight are interested in panel discussions, eight are interested in speed networking, and two are interested in other choices (see Figure 15). This data will help guide ACE into deciding what aspects of networking and professionalism should be focused upon for their future events. The data gathered in the survey supported what ACE alumni said they wanted in the interviews we had with them.
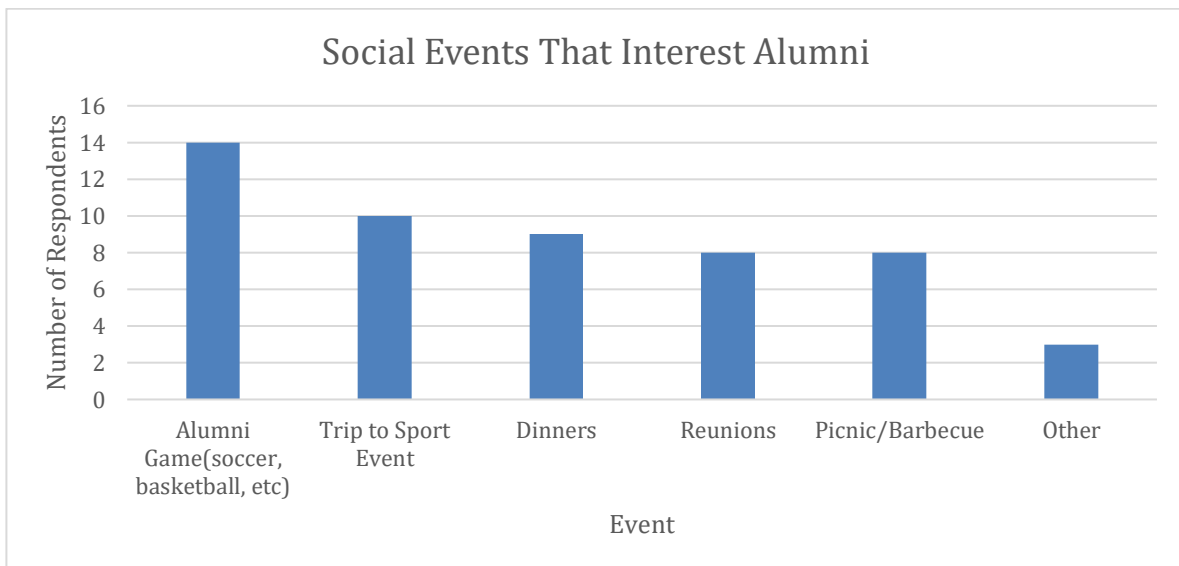
Figure 14: Bar graph showing number of ACE alumni interested in each social event
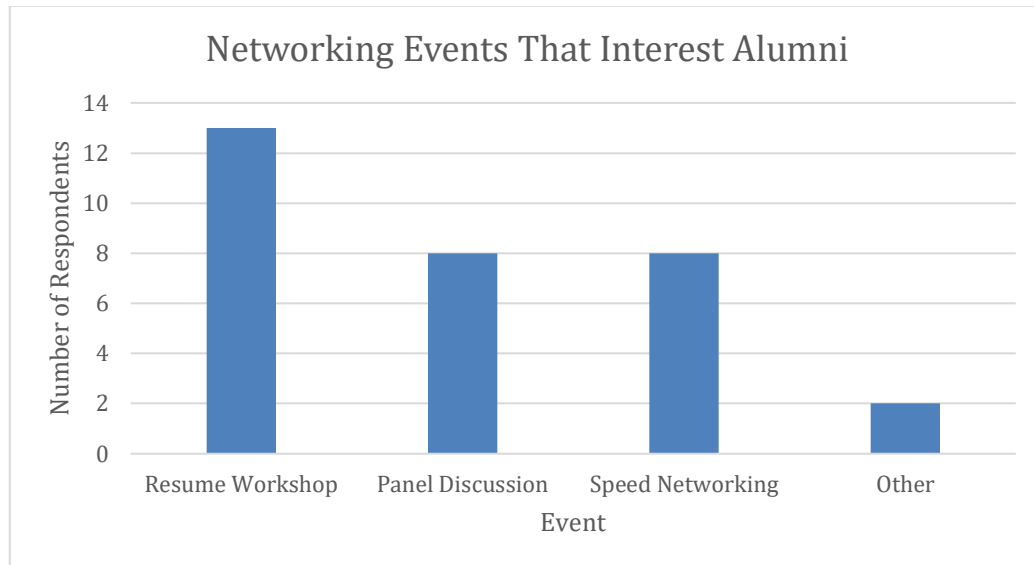
Figure 15: Bar graph showing number of ACE alumni interested in each networking event

Now that various events and programs that ACE alumni show a great deal of interest in were identified,

4.6 Alumni Management Software

The group started with some database selection criteria from Tim and used the criteria to look for an alumni management software. Starting with the price, which is high priority, less than $2,500/year is preferred, and up to $4,000 if needed. Mailing list management is a high priority that it integrates with Mailchimp. A jobs board is also a high priority. Platforms are high priority because we want alumni to be able to use the database on mobile and desktop. Finally, technical support is a high priority in case alumni or staff experience any problem. The categories used to score each software include cost, member directory, events management, jobs board, social media integration, 24/7 technical support, and platforms.

Chapter 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Alumni Engagement Programs

For the first alumni engagement recommendation, the project group recommends ACE to organize sessions for college preparations to help them with their college essays. We came up with this conclusion because all the alumni we interviewed suggested that ACE should have prepared them with the college process. When those alumni were asked how ACE can do that, they mentioned that ACE could have held specific tutoring for Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) and sessions for college essays. They also said that ACE could have helped alumni with finding scholarships because most of them come from low-income families and cannot afford the expensive tuition fee in the United States. Therefore, ACE can also hold other sessions about available scholarship opportunities and resources to help their current students as they are about to graduate and become alumni themselves. This can be done by assigning some volunteers tutors on certain days of the week to go over college details specifically. It is similar to high schools that have a college counselor who directs seniors with their entire college application process. The project team also recommended for ACE to organize college trips for their junior and senior high school students to visit 3-4 colleges in the area of Worcester, such as Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Clark University, Becker College, and College of the Holy Cross, etc. This trip will motivate the students to work hard and aim for a college degree. Whereas for job opportunities for alumni, the group believes that the database will help alumni find other alumni who are working in their desired work field and can get advice from them. Other alumni will also have access to posting about their job interests.

For the second recommendation of Networking events, the project group recommends ACE to have an active Facebook group, Whatsapp group for Alumni and another Whatsapp group for current students. For ACE alumni in college, ACE should keep an updated list of available internships and scholarships that students can apply to. We recommend ACE to post updates about their programs, events, volunteering opportunities as well as updates about their new students and outstanding students on those groups. In addition to that, it is recommended that ACE send out a newsletter detailing updates on ACE events and students so that alumni feel that the strong connection with ACE is still present throughout the years.

For the third recommendation related to Social Events, ACE should host an alumni dinner twice a year so that alumni in colleges and the ones in the workforce have a chance to attend at least one. The date for this dinner should be based on alumni availability. For example, one dinner can take place on the weekend of Thanksgiving where everyone is off from school and work. Alumni families can be invited too if budget is at hand. Another social event that are recommended ACE to is to create Story telling videos and/or lectures where an alumnus can come and share his/her own story to current students to spread positivity and motivations toward a better and bright future for all those refugees. The lectures can be recorded and can be posted on ACE's social media so that other alumni and people can watch them which will encourage others to step forward and share their stories. ACE can also hold virtual discussions about global issues such as immigration, viruses, gun control, etc. Zoom can be used to conduct those discussions virtually. The group believes that all the above events will improve alumni engagement of students and families who leave ACE and build a big connected family where they communicate with each

other about these events via Social Media and the database we are going to recommend to inform alumni and seek participation.

Table 3 summarizes the three types of events alumni are interested in.

Event Type	Event Content
Programming	1. College Preparation and Assistance Sessions 2. College Trips
Networking	1. Whatsapp group for Alumni & Whatsapp group for current students 2. Newsletter with updates 3. Information about Job Opportunities 4. List of College Internships and Scholarships
Social	1. Alumni Dinner 2. Sport Events: Soccer Game 3. Volunteering Opportunities 4. Virtual Discussions through Zoom 5. Storytelling Videos

Table 3: Recommendations for ACE categorized into three group: Programming, Networking, and Social

5.2 Alumni Database

The program that we strongly recommended is VeryConnect. At $200/month VeryConnect is well within ACE's price range. VeryConnect also provides a free demo which will give ACE a chance to try its features out before spending money on the program. The membership management features VeryConnect offers include a member portal, member accounts, and member directory. These membership features are typical for an effective alumni management software. VeryConnect also provides a jobs board. This is important because through the surveys conducted, it was discovered that most alumni would like support with searching for employment. A jobs board would allow ACE to provide that support to their alumni. VeryConnect allows MailChimp to be integrated within its mailing list management feature. Since ACE already uses MailChimp to send out mail, VeryConnect will save ACE time and resources. ACE staff will find it easy to adjust to VeryConnect's mailing list management feature. Furthermore, VeryConnect provides 24/7 support which is essential since VeryConnect will be a new experience for ACE. Any technical difficulties that the staff at ACE may run into will need to be quickly addressed. VeryConnect's software is also run through desktop and mobile platforms. Staff and alumni will be able to use VeryConnect through their computers or mobile phones. This will ensure that using this program is convenient for any individual.

Figure 16: Infographic showing the features of VeryConnect

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Through this project, the project team was able to accomplish the first project goal of researching best practices of alumni engagement and recommending some useful alumni events to connect ACE alumni. Putting those alumni events in place is extremely beneficial for non-profit organizations like ACE, because the bigger network they have, the more they can continue to support the community. The team also was able to accomplish the second goal of recommending an effective database that can be used by ACE to keep track of their alumni information. VeryConnect will allow ACE to easily manage and keep track of their alumni. The features that VeryConnect provides integrate well with ACE which will ensure that ACE staff and alumni find little to no trouble with the software.

The group reached out to eleven alumni because the list Tim gave us had contact information for that number of alumni. Some of the alumni responded to emails quickly, but others had to be texted through their phone numbers because they do not check their emails regularly. Some alumni were helpful enough to send the project group phone numbers of other alumni and even ask them to talk to the group to arrange an interview. This all shows how collaborative work can help get things done effectively. However; the group was not able to conduct any current ACE student interviews because the list provided for the project team had only a few students.

The next step ACE can take will be to create ways alumni can contribute financially to ACE through donations. Our research on alumni engagement showed that alumni can be a great source of funding for nonprofit organizations. Therefore, it will be beneficial for ACE to build a platform in which it can raise money from its alumni so that over time, as ACE adds more members to their alumni community, they will see a large increase in alumni donations.

The methodology the group used to answer the research questions can be applied to similar nonprofit organizations who are also aiming to enhance their alumni programs. Data collection techniques such as the interviews and survey have proved very helpful in gathering ideas from an alumni population. Future attempts at enhancing alumni engagement in other organizations can use the interview and survey questionnaire as a framework and adjust to fit the organization's needs. Nonprofits across the country are constantly faced with obstacles such as a limited budget or lack of personnel to take on projects. Therefore, we hope that the findings from this research can be used to help alleviate these burdens and aid nonprofits in building their organizations through alumni engagement and alumni database management.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR EXPERTS IN THE FIELD

1. Hello, my name is _____ and I am interviewing you on behalf of African Community Education or ACE. My group and I are currently working on our Interactive Qualifying Project. The goal of our project is to research best practices to improve alumni engagement of students and families who leave ACE and to recommend a database that can be utilized by the staff at ACE. We are here because you are an expert in this field and would like to collect some useful information from this conversation. ACE recognizes it often asks a lot of its alumni and does not offer as much in return as the organization could. One of the goals of this project is to learn more about your experience so ACE can better serve you and other alumni in the future. Is it ok if this interview is recorded?

2. Would you like your answers to be kept anonymous or are you ok with your answers to be linked to your name?

3. Now to start, can you tell me a little about yourself and what your role is at _____?

    a. How long have you been working with alumni at _____?

    b. Why did you decide to work with alumni?

4. Why is it important for your organization to stay connected with alumni?

5. What are the alumni events your organization holds?

    a. What makes these events so successful with alumni?

    b. What do you do on the programming level?

    c. What do you do on the networking level?

6. What tools do you use to contact alumni about the events your organization offers?

    a. If multiple tools are used, what are the pros and cons of each tool?

7. For alumni who move and live far away from the area does your organization still serve as a resource for them?

    a. If yes, what does your organization provide them?

8. Have you ever thought of some events that could be good for alumni that your organization does not currently have in place?

    a. Why do you think these events would be good?

9. What important information does the organization keep track of regarding alumni?

    a. Why do they track this information?

    b. Do you think they should track any other information as well?

10. What software do you use to keep track of this information within a database?

    a. What does the software cost to maintain?

11. Would you recommend this software for a small nonprofit organization?

    a. If no, are there any programs that you would recommend?

12. What do you do to engage your alumni?

    a. Events-communications- emails

    b. Pros and cons/ what works what does not work?

    c. What tools do you use to engage with your alumni?

        i. Social media, applications, etc

13. Thank you for taking the time to help us collect data. Can we contact you again with any questions we might have?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ACE ALUMNI

1. Hello, my name is _____ and I am interviewing you on behalf of African Community Education or ACE. My group and I are currently working on our Interactive Qualifying Project. The goal of our project is to research best practices to improve alumni engagement of students and families who leave ACE and to recommend a database that can be utilized by the staff at ACE. We are here because you are an expert in this field and would like to collect some useful information from this conversation. Is it ok if this interview is recorded?

2. Ice-breakers: [Name], how are you connected with ACE? What is your occupation if any? What is your education? Anything you want to share about yourself?

    a. Tell me more about your occupation

    b. Tell me more about your education

3. Would you like your answers to be kept anonymous or are you ok with your answers to be linked to your name?

4. What was your experience with ACE? Did you have any challenges while being a student at ACE? If challenges, please elaborate on them.

    a. What was your day-to-day life like at ACE?

    b. Do you have any stories from ACE you would like to share?

    c. What is your relationship with ACE?

    d. Favorite programs?

        i. Why?

  ii. How could it have been better?

e. Duration at ACE?

f. What did you gain from ACE?

g. Least favorite programs?

  i. Why?

  ii. How could it have been better?

5. What best describes the path you took after becoming an ACE alum? Examples:

■ If not graduate high school and entered the workforce

 ❏ Did ACE prepare you for going straight to work before graduating high school?

  ❏ What could they have done better?

  ❏ Any challenges?

■ Did not graduate high school, entered into alternative education

 ❏ Did ACE help and prepare you for your alternative education?

  ❏ What could they have done better?

  ❏ Any challenges?

■ Graduated high school and entered the workforce

 ❏ Did ACE prepare you for going into the workforce after graduating high school?

  ❏ What could they have done better?

❑ Any challenges?

■ Graduated high school and attended 2-year college

❑ Did ACE prepare you for going to college?

❑ Did you feel ACE was willing to offer help during your college experience if you needed it?

❑ How could they have done better?

❑ Any challenges?

■ Graduated high school and attended 4-year college

❑ Did ACE prepare you for going to college?

❑ Did you feel ACE was willing to offer help during your college experience if you needed it?

❑ How could they have done better?

❑ Any challenges?

a. During your next experience after leaving ACE, where did you find support? Examples: Family, friends, mentors, college staff and faculty, etc.

    i. What did this support provide you?

        1. Elaborate

    ii. Could you have used more support during that time?

        1. If yes, what support would you have liked to receive?

  2. What support could ACE specifically have provided?

6. Have you stayed in contact with ACE since becoming an alumnus?

  a. If yes, how did you stay in contact? Who did you stay in contact with?

  b. If no, why not?

7. Have you stayed in contact with your peers from ACE?

  a. If yes, how, ex Social media?

  b. If no, why?

8. Do you have family members who are still involved with ACE?

  a. If yes, do you go to ACE with them sometimes?

9. Has ACE stayed in contact with you since becoming an alumni?

  a. If yes, how has ACE reached you?

    i. Do you feel ACE was effective in reaching out to you?

  b. If no, how can ACE keep in contact with you?

10. Have you gone to ACE events since becoming an alumnus? (ACE Gala, ACE Festival)

  a. If yes, what events did you attend?

    i. What did you like about these events?

  b. If no, what has prevented you from attending ACE events?

11. Do you feel like ACE is still a resource available to you?

  a. If yes, how do they help you currently?

  b. If no, why not?

  c. How can ACE help you more?

12. What events would you like ACE to hold that they currently do not?

a. Please describe in detail what you would want to happen at such event(s)

13. Would you like ACE to contact you for future events?

    a. If yes, how would you like to be contacted?

    b. If no, why are you not interested in being contacted?

14. What sort of updates would you like to receive from ACE? Ex. Networking

    opportunities, events, current student updates.

    a. Why do you like these types of updates?

15. What time of the year would be best for you for going to ACE events?

    a. Why?

16. Is there anything not included in the emails that you would like to be added?

    a. If yes, what could ACE add to the emails?

    b. If no, what do you like about the ACE emails?

17. Is there anything left out you would like to tell us about?

18. Thank you for taking the time to help us collect data. If we have more questions later can

    we contact you again?

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONS FOR THE SURVEY

1. When did you become a member at ACE?

    a. 2006

    b. 2007

    c. 2008

    d. 2009

    e. 2010

    f. 2011

    g. 2012

    h. 2013

    i. 2014

    j. 2015

    k. 2016

    l. 2017

    m. 2018

    n. 2019

2. 1

    a. 1-5

    b. 6-10

    c. 11-15

    d. 16-20

3. How many hours a week did you spend at ACE programs during summer?

    a. 1-5

    b. 6-10

    c. 11-15

    d. 16-20

    e. Did not participate in summer programming

4. What program(s) did you participate in at ACE? (Select all that apply)

    a. After School Program

    b. Saturday Program

    c. Mentoring Program

    d. Summer Reading

    e. Workforce Development

5. How can ACE continue to support you?

    a. Provide Care packages

    b. Networking and professional development events

    c. Volunteering opportunities at ACE

    d. Provide a list of available internships

    e. Provide ACE students as volunteers at your organization

    f. Online information sessions for topics of interest

    g. Scholarship opportunities

    h. Job opportunities

    i. Other:

6. What ACE alumni networking events are you more likely to be interested in?

a. Resume workshop

b. Panel discussions

c. Speed networking event

7. What ACE alumni social events are you more likely to be interested in?

a. Reunions

b. Dinners

c. Alumni game(soccer, basketball, etc)

d. Trip to sporting event

e. Picnic

8. Would you like to be receiving information from ACE and stay updated with news from ACE?

a. Yes

b. No

9. If Answer to 8. Is "Yes". What kind of information would you like to receive?(Select all that apply)

a. Upcoming ACE events

b. Volunteering Opportunities

c. Job Opportunities

d. Stories about ACE students

e. Stories about ACE alumni

f. Other

10. If Answer to 8. Is "Yes".What is your preferred method of receiving communication from ACE?(Select all that apply)

a. Facebook

b. Twitter

c. Instagram

d. Snapchat

e. WhatsApp

f. LinkedIn

g. Email

h. Mail

i. Text through Mobile Phone

j. Call through Mobile Phone

k. Other (Please mention.)

11. Are you interested in in-person volunteer opportunities?

a. Yes

b. No

12. Are you interested in remote volunteer opportunities?

a. Yes

b. No

13. What is your current residential address?

a. Street Address

b. City

c. State

d. Zip

14. What is your current mobile phone number?

15. What is your current email address?

16. What is your age(in years)?

17. What do you identify as?

     a. Male

     b. Female

     c. Non-binary

     d. Prefer to self describe

     e. Prefer not to answer

18. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

     a. Less than High School

     b. High School (no degree)

     c. High School graduate or equivalent

     d. Some College, no degree

     e. Associate's degree (including occupational or academic degrees)

     f. Bachelor's (BA, BS, AB, etc.)

     g. Graduate degree (MA, MA, MBA, PhD, EdD, etc.)

     h. Professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)

19. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

     a. Employed full-time

     b. Employed part-time

     c. Unemployed

     d. Homemaker

     e. Retired

      f.   Disabled/Unable to work

      g.   Student

20. If employed, what is your occupation?

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATION IN ACE IQP STUDY

We are asking you to participate in a research study titled "African Community Center Alumni Engagement Study". We will describe this study to you and answer any of your questions. This study is being led by Sarah Strauss, a professor at WPI. The Co-leader for this study is Purvi Shah, an assistant professor at WPI.

Principal Investigators:
      Sarah Strauss, sstrauss@wpi.edu
      Purvi Shah, pshah@wpi.edu

Student Investigators:
      Courtney Flokos, crflokos@wpi.edu
      Luigi Apollon, ljapollon@wpi.edu
      Jihan Nabahani, jnabahani@wpi.edu

Purpose of this Study:
      To gather information to help with research for ACE regarding alumni engagement.

Procedures:
We will ask you to participate in our interview and answer the questions we ask to the best of your ability. If you do not wish to answer a question, you may skip the question.

Risks and Discomforts:
We believe there will be minimal physical or mental risk in participating in this study. We do not anticipate any physical risks from participating in the research. There is a minimal chance of mental risk because you will be answering questions. We will make our questions as sensitive as possible and avoid asking any questions we feel could cause you mental harm. There will not be any legal risks in participating in this study.

Benefits:
Participants' answers will greatly help ACE create events for future events to attend. Participants also should pride themselves in helping ACE with their alumni engagement. Information from this study may benefit other people, including you, now or in the future.

Recording:
The interviews we will be conducting will be recorded. They will be recorded to help us gather all the information and access the information at a later date.

      ⭕ I am willing to have this interview audio recorded
      ⭕ I am willing to have this interview video recorded
      ⭕ I am willing to have my picture taken

Signed:_____

Print Name:_____

Date:_____

Privacy/Confidentiality/Data Security:
The information we gather from you in this study will be available for the others to access through the WPI Library.

Taking Part is Voluntary:
Participating in this study is voluntary, you may refuse to participate before the study begins. You may discontinue the study at any point or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. There will be no penalty or effect for withdrawing. There will be no penalty on your academic standing, record, or relationship with this organization or another organization by being involved with the research.

Follow up Studies:
We may contact you again to request your participation in a follow up study. As always, your participation will be voluntary, and we will ask for your explicit consent to participate in any of the follow up studies.

May we contact you again to request your participation in a follow up study? Yes/No

Questions Regarding the Study:
The main researcher conducting this study is Sarah Strauss, a professor at WPI. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Sarah Strauss at sstrauss@wpi.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the IRB Manager for WPI, Ruth McKeogh, Tel. 508-831-6699, Email: irb@wpi.edu. You can also contact the Human Protection Administrator, Gabriel Johnson, Tel. 508-831-4989, Email: gjohnson@wpi.edu.

Participants will be given a copy of this form.

Statement of Consent
I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature_____Date_____

Your Name (printed)_____

Signature of person obtaining consent _____Date_____

Printed name of person obtaining consent_____