YOUNG ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES

IN AN ERA OF TUITION AND FEES

COPYRIGHT

2013

Gretchen C. Dobson
For Chris

Who, along with my cohort, encouraged me to trust the process
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A dissertation takes more than the student and the idea. A dissertation is possible with a challenging yet supportive learning environment. The research question is only advanced by the assistance of colleagues and institutions. The ability to accomplish each stage of the process is highly influenced by our Cohort community, friends and family.

I first want to thank my instructors at Penn for their enthusiasm and excellence in the classroom and for creating opportunities for me to expand my understanding of the complexities of higher education, both at home and abroad. I was privileged to study under and work closely with Bob Zemsky, my advisor and one of the best thinkers in higher education today. Bob helped me hone my writing skills throughout the last year and I will continue to take these learnings into my consulting and writing career.

Second, my dissertation research took place in England and there are several colleagues who I owe gratitude: Holly Peterson, Deputy Director of Development and Alumni Relations, The University of Exeter; Megan Bruns, Head of Alumni and Community Relations, Fundraising & Supporter Development, King's College London & King’s Health Partners; Claire O’Sullivan, Head of Alumni Relations, University of Birmingham; the young alumni who shared their insights and opinions on behalf of their respected alma mater; current students who candidly assessed their experiences and goals; and The Sutton Trust for sharing early findings of similar research. I also need to thank Vikki Garth for lending me a bed during research days.

Third and last, I have to thank members of Cohort 11, including Ginger O’Neill, who collectively held each other’s hands for close to two years of classes, conversations, and building community. I learned to trust our timeline and to ask for help. Thank you,
dear friends. I want to also thank Julie Dobrow and Luisa Barbaro for serving as editors in different stages. My former colleagues at Tufts, Tim Brooks, Brigid Burke, Ryan Earley, and Emily Donahue, created space and time for me to pursue the program in the first year. Finally, the emotional support from family and my closest friends cannot be underestimated nor under appreciated.
ABSTRACT

YOUNG ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH UNIVERSITIES
IN AN ERA OF TUITION AND FEES

Gretchen C. Dobson

Robert M. Zemsky

Before 1998 a majority of English youth were supported to attend university. The government paid out “living grants” to students who enrolled in universities across the country. Some of the grants covered all living and school expenses outside tuition; others were not as generous. The subsequent story in England, however, is one of a society having been given a public good, like education, to then experience that security dwindling away in the form of new tuition and fees. This study analyzes the perceptions of former students who have been caught in the financial spiral and whether their own experience while at university and as recent alumni motivates their involvement with their university. Specific attention to the most recent tuition increases effective in 2012 and the changing nature of alumni relations services across three institutions illustrates how universities have reacted to their own awareness that students and young alumni may be expecting more from universities. A qualitative methodology including document analysis and interviews with three peer universities was conducted in efforts to study this phenomenon. Alumni engagement, however, is not a one-way street. Higher education institutions in England are aware of the notion of alumni as consumers and some are preparing proactively for addressing the needs and interests of their
constituents. The quantity and quality of these interactions between the young alum and alma mater may be influenced by what is perceived today as a lifelong transaction.

Success in building relationships with recent graduates faced with greater financial debt rests with the ability of the institution to provide relevance and value for students and young alumni alike.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments........................................................................................................iv

Abstract.......................................................................................................................v

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The Context...................................................................................................................1

Alumni Relations in England.......................................................................................3

Significance of this Study............................................................................................6

Introduction of the Chapters......................................................................................7

CHAPTER 2: University of Buckland

Overview....................................................................................................................9

Alumni Relations: perceptions and reality.................................................................11

Investing in the Future: staffing up to strengthen the student experience..............13

Communication Change............................................................................................20

Closing: Questions Buckland is Asking.................................................................25

CHAPTER 3: University of Enfield

Overview....................................................................................................................28

Campus Culture Builds Community........................................................................30

The Alumni Relations Plan is the University’s Plan..............................................32

Communicating and Leading Change......................................................................36

Closing: Questions Enfield is Asking......................................................................41

CHAPTER 4: Knight’s College

Overview....................................................................................................................45

Challenges of an Urban University...........................................................................46

Fundraising During Fees.........................................................................................51

Student and Young Alumni Perceptions...............................................................57
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Context

Academic fees are accelerating the pace of change for what is expected across England’s higher education system. Once a public good provided at no cost to students, economic austerity measures introduced by ruling governmental parties have created new price tags for higher education institutions. The cost of education has grown exponentially since the inception of the first fees of £1,000 in 1998. Along with the most recent tuition spike of £9,000 come new requirements of universities to better serve underrepresented students. Access Agreements require universities to sponsor programs and initiatives that help students in lower socio-economic brackets get financial aid for higher education.

The culminating impact of these changes has raised two key questions: Will more bursary support offset the perception of an unattainable university education with a 200% increase in tuition and fees? Will institutions be able to raise more money from private sources to support a growing number of needy students?

To help answer these questions this study asked the administration of three different but still upper end institutions to share their experiences of what it feels like to prepare for and deliver a menu of services for students and their most recent graduates who may expect more from their educational experience. At the same time this study asked young alumni to share their opinions of their student experience, how paying
tuition has impacted their interest in staying involved with their university, and further
expectations they have from their alumni relations offices.

Shifting more of the financial burden from the state to private sources created a
new consumer relationship between institution and its undergraduates or future alumni in
1997. That year the Dearing Report was the first public document introducing students to
the notion of personal fiscal responsibility for their education:

There is a growing interdependence between students, institutions, the economy,
employers and the state. We believe that this bond needs to be more clearly
recognized by each party, as a compact which makes clear what each contributes
and what each gains. (Dearing Report, 1997, introduction, item 9).

In the Dearing Report report “contributions” for students and graduates include greater
financial contribution to the costs of tuition; however, under “benefits” there is no
mention of access of and membership in an alumni network. Rather, the benefits are
described as ‘better information and guidance to inform decisions’ and ‘fairer income
contingent arrangements for making a financial contribution when in work.’

Communicating change is one of the major themes of this study and the Dearing
Report included a recommendation that all higher education institutions as in the United
Kingdom (UK) have “overarching communications and information strategies by
1999/2000” to advance the message to their students, prospective students, staff, and
alumni (Dearing Report, 1997, Recommendation 41). Moreover, Section 135 stated:

The Government must also ensure that new arrangements are well-publicized and
explained clearly to prospective students and their families.

The recommendations seemed to go unnoticed by the most important constituent:
potential students. Even after the second tuition increase was announced in 2004 a study published in 2006 by Nick Foskett, David Roberts and Felix Maringe showed that applicants “knew about the fees system from university open days, university websites and summer schools, but found the information confusing, erratic, incomplete, conflicting, and not easy to access.” For many students, “the complexity and difficulty related to accessing information was a deterrent to applying,” according to the study *Changing Fee Regimes and their Impact on Student Attitudes to Higher Education* (Report of a Higher Education Academy Funded Research Project 2005-2006).

Recent history and the case studies described in this study demonstrate that the government has not sufficiently helped the users of higher education and the general public grasp the fine details of tuition and fees including repayment policies and how the new funds would be utilized. It is important to note the fee increases do not generate extra income for universities; rather, increased fee revenue is making up for the governmental shortfall in funding. The case studies provide more weight as to why the government has been heavily blamed. The overriding feelings of university staff and young alumni also point to their frustrations and how the lack of good information is hurting current perceptions of the next generation of university students.

**Alumni Relations in England**

Successful global companies, such as Starbuck’s, understand the importance of developing a loyal customer base. Starbuck’s members receive free coffee and are the first to know about new products. Starbuck’s and many other successful companies have
built brand loyalty by developing ongoing methods of providing members added value. Starbuck’s drinkers are part of a tribe. University alumni relations is also about fostering a tribe. Alumni relations is about affinity between graduates and the institution, the consumer and the provider. When does this relationship begin? How do alumni perceive the institutional identity, brand, and culture?

In England new tuition charges have occurred at the same time most universities have established alumni relations and fundraising offices. What may have been one-person alumni relations offices fifteen years ago have grown into larger units responsible for creating relevant relationships between both students and alumni, and alumni and the university. The benefits of these relationships are marketed internally to students and externally to alumni. Concurrently, the millennial generation has increasingly viewed its university experience as more transactional in nature than transformational (Daugherty, 2012). The impact of tuition on the alumni affinity leads to several questions:

• Has tuition in England produced skepticism among young alumni, negative enough to discourage affiliations with their alma mater?

• Have alumni relations offices been able to cultivate young alumni engagement regardless of the changing tuition policies?

• What is it that English universities need to do to build alumni loyalty, build “brand,” and create a culture of affinity among alumni with their colleges/universities in an era of increasing tuition and fees?

The majority of higher education institutions in England (excluding historical icons such as Oxford and Cambridge) have nascent alumni relations programs. This research focuses
on the range of impact that further tuition increases have on the relationship between alumni and their alma mater. Specifically, the experience and the personal stories of the most recent graduates leads to an analysis of best practices for alumni relations programs as well as important pitfalls to avoid in building affinity programs. In short, have these institutions invested enough in alumni relations “up front” to weather the forces produced by the newest era of tuition and fees?

Another byproduct of decreased government spending and increasing tuition and fees on overall alumni affinity is that English universities are now better understood as charities. The culture of philanthropy is changing in the United Kingdom as it is more the norm to give to education. The fact that it cost students much more to attend university is helping institutions raise more money for student bursaries and scholarships (Interview October 19, 2012). According to a recent report fund-raising at British universities could triple and yield £2 billion ($3.2 billion) a year within a decade if institutions continue to invest in building relationships with alumni. About 204,000 people gave to universities last year, but this could reach 640,000 by 2022 (Pierce Report, 2012). What will tuition and fees look like then? Moreover, how will alumni relations efforts in the next decade impact annual giving and will universities pay more attention to young alumni in efforts to acquire new donors (Allenby, 2012)?

Students and alumni are more intentional than ever about how their degree impacts their employability. The university degree must bear utility. Universities in England are responding by creating more resources from new partnerships between alumni relations and student services, such as career offices. Beyond the impact that
tuition and fees has on building alumni affinity, timely and important questions exist about helping the next generation prepare for their careers:

- What type of career services do students and young alumni want?
- Are institutions forecasting to create greater student services to meet rising student demand when it comes to employability?
- What role does alumni relations play in helping students or young alumni prepare for their first (or subsequent) job?
- At what level will young alumni support their alma mater given the fact they paid tuition and are going to be in a competitive job market?

In sum, a shared understanding about the transaction between institution and students and young alumni -- what each party gives and what each party gets – deserves careful consideration.

**Significance of the Study**

The central thrust of the literature on the impact that tuition has on building affinity, participation and support with students and young alumni is found in theories ranging from institutional identity and the impact on alumni affinity to more mainstream journals and trade publications treating current American applications of engagement practices.
Alumni perceptions are influenced by institutional identity, institutional brand, and institutional culture, and how they are developed might alter perceptions. Despite the critical importance of how institutional identity is developed and deployed, the evidence of its effectiveness in building alumni engagement in different countries is an area open to new scholarship.

In a new era of tuition and fees, English institutions are becoming increasingly aware of the value of alumni relations and, as a result, are investing more financial and human resources in alumni relations and fundraising units. It is important to note that students in England do not affiliate with their graduating class. Rather students build communities centered on societies, athletic teams and academic programs. Institutions involved in this study are mindful that programs and services must cater to student and young alumni needs and interests. The detailed responses from each case study also teach us something about the English politics of access, the role of affordability, and an institution’s capacity to change with the times.

Introduction of the Chapters

The following four chapters both describe and analyze how the three universities in this study approached their alumni relations practices during the recent era of new and expanded tuition and fees. The perceptions of each university’s most recent graduates are interwoven into each institutional profile along with the administrative and professional assessment provided by current and former alumni officers. Chapter 2 describes how the University of Buckland created an institutional plan to strengthen alumni and student
services. Chapter 3 presents the University of Enfield, the youngest of the three universities, and the recent investments made to create stronger student and young alumni affinity. Chapter 4 focuses on Knight’s College and how administrators have addressed the inherent challenges faced by the urban university. Chapter 5 considers how the Americanization of higher education is translated across the three case studies in terms of the success each institution had in managing the effects of the increased tuition and fees in England. The final chapter continues with a discussion of challenges that remain in England as well as new opportunities to better understand how tuition and fees impacts both alumni relations practices and the mindset of the next generation of alumni.
CHAPTER 2

UNIVERSITY OF BUCKLAND

Overview

Ninety minutes northwest of London is Buckland, the second largest city in England. It is the Midlands metropolis for many working-class families that have raised generations of children and have owned and operated family businesses. A crown jewel of the city is the University of Buckland. The university was founded in 1900 and as of 2010 its enrollment had grown to over 26,800 students studying at both the undergraduate and graduate level. The university is a member of the Russell Group, a consortium of top-ranked elite universities in the United Kingdom known for their research and teaching prowess. Alumni cite Buckland’s reputation and the opportunity to forge relationships with faculty as two major reasons for applying to the university.¹

The complexion of the campus has changed in the last 15 years. What was traditionally a white, middle-class student body in 1998, has become multi-cultural environment including a large number of first-generation students from England who have benefitted from Buckland’s strong commitment to fair access. Students are described as friendly, enthusiastic about their education, and get involved in sports and clubs. One of Buckland’s strengths is their residential program. Accepted freshers are

¹ Material from Buckland young alumni received through confidential focus group conducted in London, England on November 4, 2012 and subsequent personal correspondence between November 4 – 12, 2012.
guaranteed housing on campus in a living community set away from the academic quads thereby enhancing community and peer connections.

Even though universal fees have been a fact of life for Buckland’s alumni since the early 2000s, the university has taken ownership of communicating the nature of the most recent fee increase to its perspective students, current students, alumni, and staff. The university understands it has inherited the burden of communicating change, not an easy task for such a large university with students representing a breadth of need. Managing the message is the goal, says Buckland’s head of alumni relations:

The nature of fees – the message -- is not widely understood in the UK. This is doing a huge amount of harm if you are from backgrounds like mine where you are the first to go to university.²

Moreover, some students at Buckland are not exposed to the university application process as early or as often as their peers who attend colleges or other A-level programs. These students lack a tacit understanding of the new fee structure let alone the university experience. In 2012, 289 students came through the Access to Buckland (2B) program (http://www.Buckland.ac.uk/students/requirements/requirements-ug/a2b/index.aspx). This scheme is open to those who are the first generation to attend university and are from lower socio-economic postcodes. Widening awareness to the realities of fees, types of bursary support available, and methods of applying for aid is one of Buckland’s student recruitment goals.

²Material from the University of Buckland’s Office of Alumni Relations received through confidential interviews conducted in Buckland, UK on September 24, 2012 and in London, UK on November 6, 2012).
This first case study tells Buckland’s story in three parts: the first section describes how the recent hike in tuition and fees prompted new investments to better serve students and alumni; the second section discusses how tuition and fees impacts the role of alumni relations today from the viewpoint of both administrators and young alumni; the last section describes how the alumni relations office shared the news of increased tuition and the types of reactions from staff, students, and young alumni.

**Alumni Relations: perceptions and reality**

The tuition and fees discussion offered both alumni relations and its young alumni a chance to talk about how they perceive the role of alumni relations. Are alumni relations programs relevant to alumni today? What should students know about alumni relations? An elevator speech for Buckland alumni relations may be heard as: “we want you to know our university is successful and recognized around the world for impacting society on a global, national and local levels. There is value for staying connected and we are relevant to you throughout your life.” Obviously, there is more to the story and alumni relations needs to explain the types of impact expressed in research and civic engagement as well as the types of services and programs offered to all alumni. The messages for young alumni would be the same but expressed more creatively. The ways in which Buckland communicates to its young alumni needs specific packaging. It’s a goal, said the head of alumni relations:

> We’re not there right now. We need to make it really easy for them to get that information but it might not even occur to them that we can do it. It is quite an educational process. The reasons why we have networking events are that a young
alum might meet this alumnus who can open these doors. So, sometimes it just comes down to ways in which we communicate to young alumni.

Buckland has also found one of the best ways to both recruit young alumni leaders and provide an orientation message for freshers is to have an active role in the Welcome Meetings that occur at each academic college during the first week of classes. During the orientation meetings current students discuss the student experience with the new students and alumni also speak about majoring in the specific discipline and how their Buckland experience prepared them for their current career. Student speakers may be targeted and invited to participate in more alumni-student programs or may be recruited to work with the telefund. Getting these students involved early will increase the chances of them returning as active young alumni. The alumni speakers during Welcome Meetings represent an important contribution to a new student’s first days. Administration and the leadership (including the Vice Chancellor) see incredible value in ensuring alumni and students interact during the academic introductory meeting and that students see that alumni are contributing to a culture of giving whether that is voluntary or financial support.

When asked what advice young alumni would give to the head of alumni relations at Buckland, it was surprising to note how the majority stressed the excellence in the types of communications received throughout the year and their appreciation for the nexus between alumni relations and annual giving:
AR today is about enabling fundraising and creating ways alumni can be engaged, increase their affinity, and to do important volunteering to help students. But, overall, to build the relationship with alumni so they will want to become donors.

Be proactive and work in tandem with annual giving. I was very please to have a telefund call with a student and then get a hand-written thank you note from her three days later.

Alumni relations should help alumni connect to students and alumni in a facilitative way – on a one on one basis.

One of the things I want to say that makes me proudest as an alum is that Buckland is one of the leaders in the field by keeping alumni engaged by using digital marketing and video.

On the whole, young alumni felt alumni relations has managed a very balanced but informative communications schedule with its alumni: the right amount of emails, a newsletter once a month, and updates about the current campaign, *Circles of Influence*.

**Investing in the Future: staffing up to strengthen the student experience**

When telling the story of tuition and fees at Buckland it is important to note the influence of university leadership and the investments made to expand staff and services. The resulting shift of resources positions alumni relations to contribute to a more collaborative academic and student culture.

University leaders such as Vice Chancellors often have the privilege of knowing what higher education news will hit the front pages of the London dailies before their staffs, students or the public. Buckland’s Vice Chancellor was in this position as a member of the Browne Review Group that set the 2012 fee. In November 2009, Eastwood joined the independent panel which began its review and on October 12, 2010 “Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education,” an independent review of higher
education funding and student finance was published as the Browne Report. This report proposed a 200% fee increase and set off a series of debates nationwide between policymakers, higher education officials, and students (Browne Report, 2010).

The Vice Chancellor understands the power of building relationships with alumni and is actively involved in students’ first days on campus. The Vice Chancellor’s office co-hosts the Welcome meetings for new students at each of the colleges. Here, he shares a history of the university and introduces an alumni speaker to share their student and post-Buckland story. Welcome meetings for students are a new form of ritual for the Buckland community. They are designed to both orientate students with each other as well as make their new surrounds more accessible and personal.

The Vice Chancellor shares his messages with alumni through his column, “The First Word” in the alumni newsletter, The Alumni News (The Alumni News, May 2012, p. 2). Compared with the Alumni Magazine that highlights academic prizewinners and Buckland-connected politicians, The Alumni News is more youthful in tone featuring articles about early career alumni making a difference in the community or young alumni entrepreneurs and their business experiences. The newsletter does not shy away from the giving message; rather, it boldly lists a variety of ways that Buckland’s Circle of Influence campaign is contributing financially to support more Access programs benefitting disadvantaged youth as well as channeling resources into research funds to help treat victims of prostate and breast cancer (Ibid, p. 9). The goal is to create more inspiring and accessible messages for all alumni.
Another goal is to attract the interests of students. Buckland’s alumni relations office recognized tuition increases shift the overall student experience. The relevance of alumni services must be felt earlier in the student lifecycle. If a first-year student entering in 2011 felt the university could assist him in getting a job after graduation, today’s fresher has his eyes on internships, career planning and alumni support to find the best-paying job available. A drive to build greater student identity around academic colleges has resulted in new alumni staff and programs and is another example of alumni relations establishing more value-added programs for the Buckland community.

The alumni relations team at Buckland has tripled in size since the second tuition increase was announced in 2004. From 2005 to 2012 the staff grew from 5 to 15. The office was configured with a staff member servicing events, another overseeing communications, two support positions entering data and a head of the office. With such a bare bone operation it was impossible to tailor services or programs for a particular alumni cohort.

As the staff expanded its first attempts at segmentation were developing programs to serve generalist categories of young alumni and professionals. The types of programs were large-scale networking events and one called “Fab-n-Frenzy Reunited” attracted over 1,200 young alumni (normally graduates within the last 5 years) to return to have drinks on campus at the Student Guild on the eve of a student holiday break. The goals for alumni relations were to attract young alumni and to validate their contact information. A requirement for staying on the mailing list for the annual drinks reception was an updated email address. This low-cost, low-risk program delivered everything the
alumni relations office wanted. This is not the case with reunion programming. Due to low registration numbers Buckland cancelled their 10-year reunion program several years ago. Annual programs still exists for older classes but are held on the same day to consolidate resources.

Today the alumni relations office is interested in developing programming to reach a broader audience. The events team has a new focus: online events and seminars to engage a growing audience located outside England. Author talks are one example of the new type of programming that utilizes technology and reduces event costs. No specific young alumni programs have been developed for the 2012-13 academic year but the head of alumni relations plans to revisit new ideas when she feels she has adequate resources. In the meantime, she feels it is important to share the right messages with young alumni, invite their participation, and be able to secure good contact information.

Russell Group universities are investing more resources to help students prepare for careers and gain relevant skills. Even though graduates from these universities are generally very well qualified academically, one young alumna believes the influence that alumni play in students’ preparation is a determining factor in helping a student gain some advantage:

It is through alumni volunteers offering internships, referrals, informational interviews…the network will help get some through the door. I would imagine this is very much in demand today. Students are savvier and they will look for more help.

The Vice-Chancellor could not agree more with this young alumna. Published at the height of the recession, the Browne Report prompted Buckland to make some hard and
fast decisions about ways to help students prepare for their first job. It was strategic to simultaneously announce the hike in fees with the announcement of an investment of millions of pounds into their employability provision.

Buckland has risen in the rankings both in their position within the Russell Group and nationally (personal correspondence, September 6, 2012). Specific figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) show every institution’s graduate employability for 2011/12 leavers as per the Times League Table methodology for calculating graduate employability. The results from the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) are also a factor. In the most recent years, Buckland:

- **Ranked 12th out of 117 institutions.** If the league table includes the same institutions, Buckland has **jumped eight places** for graduate employability as it was ranked 20th for Graduate Employability for the 2010/11 year.

- **Ranked 11th** in the Russell Group and 1994 group – **an increase of six places** from 2009/10 DLHE data when it was ranked 17th in the Russell Group and 1994 group.

- **Ranked 10th** in the Russell Group – **an increase of five places** from 2009/10 DLHE data it was ranked 15th.

The DLHE is distributed to new alumni six months after they have graduated. It is of the highest priority to have correct contact information for graduates before they leave to ensure there will be enough completed surveys verifying where graduates are working, in which fields, or if graduates have yet to find a position. Alumni relations and the careers office participate in each graduation ceremony to verify contact information for each graduate. By taking an active role in the process they promote their partnership and create
awareness among leavers that the two offices are working together to create a stronger alumni network.

Promoting how they have risen in the rankings -- and how they are making more financial investments in employability provisions -- makes for good public relations and is another way for Buckland to attract greater interest from alumni to assist with student internships and mentoring programs. But there is more to do, as expressed by a senior staff member:

In the next two to three years I would look at working more closely with careers to look at how we can continue to support young alumni with their careers. I think there is a very steep learning curve as you look for that job, the first couple of jobs – you’re not just learning technical skills, you are learning how to enhance your soft skills and that is increasingly what makes you employable.³

Potential new programming could include early career mentoring, programs promoting cutting-edge thinking, other exclusive opportunities by and for Buckland alumni.

The idea of doing more for students was one that the alumni relations team in 2004 entertained in theory but knew, with limited resources, was not practical. Today the theory and practice of building affinity with new students is embraced as an institutional mindset. In fact, Buckland’s academic affairs units have shifted closer to the administrative side with the new partnership with alumni relations. Today, college alumni managers serve as both alumni relations and development officers for all colleges as they build a relationship and a portfolio for their particular college. The relationships between

³ Material from the University of Buckland’s Office of Alumni Relations received through a confidential interview conducted in Buckland, UK on September 24, 2012.
the college alumni manager and students formally begin during academic orientation and Welcome Meetings.

Administratively, the arrangements have worked well. The colleges fund the salaries and operational budgets for the alumni managers but the managers report to the head of alumni relations (2012 Organizational Chart, retrieved September 25, 2012). The college manager relationship has been key to Buckland’s ability to increase capacity, become much closer to the student experience, and help build enthusiasm with academic staff.

One young alumna would like to see more news from her department if it were feasible to expect departments to keep in better touch with their alumni. The head of alumni relations agrees there is more to do to connect students, alumni and the schools. One idea is to increase the number of college alumni managers in the College of Social Sciences. This college includes the Business School and is the largest on campus. The propensity of alumni to work in higher paying jobs is also an incentive for early cultivation and stewardship of students and young alumni.

The relationship between alumni relations and students can begin at the applicant stage. Buckland alumni do not participate in Open Days but the head of alumni relations believes alumni would play a natural role in sharing their experience with prospective students. Alumni are featured in the prospectus and there is a sense that alumni are always welcome to refer and recruit new students to Buckland.
The student experience and student culture have been positively influenced by the growth in alumni-sponsored internships, work placements, and new programs such as mentoring. Shortly after the tuition increase was announced, the office of alumni relations contacted alumni and asked if they would like to mentor a student, offer an internship, or work placement. The response was overwhelming. The office had more alumni who could mentor than students who wanted to be mentored. Alumni interest continued for the next year.

A more deliberately designed initiative called the Alumni Leadership Mentoring Program (ALMP) grew out of the involvement and interest of one of the top alumni leaders from Buckland to create an elite mentoring program for select alumni and students. This leader approached 15 of her peers and then, with the help of the alumni office, recruited and paired up 15 high caliber students. Her motivation was strategic: she saw that it was a priority of the university to see that graduates were employed within 6 months after graduation, the time period used by the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey. She personally committed her time to recruit her peers, brief them on the goals that these top students should have jobs, and that the mentoring relationships would have an impact. Buckland continues the ALMP and is looking at ways to expand the involvement of both their VIP alumni and top students.

**Communicating change**

In general, communicating change is often through word and deed. The university employed several mechanisms for sharing the news of the tuition increase with its constituents knowing that some alumni not connected to higher education (or having not
kept up with the tuition story over time) would not understand the nuances involved in obtaining bursaries or repayment policies. Many alumni followed the government announcements, media’s interpretations, and bought into a mass portrayal of “how could they?”

The best way of describing Buckland’s approach to communicating the changes in tuition is proactive. Alumni managers and the university leadership understood there would several points of view to digest and discuss. Instead of using social media, a widely accepted way of communicating with alumni today, the university applied an old school, traditional approach of a formal email and a full-page article in the university alumni Magazine.

Thus the university’s tuition increase was announced in two ways to alumni. The primary method of communication was a stand-alone email that went to all alumni worldwide for whom Buckland had an email address (Office of Alumni Relations correspondence, March 25, 2011). The content of the email was almost verbatim what was communicated to staff and students. The message did not acknowledge how the tuition increase affects alumni but stressed how it is relevant to alumni and “how alumni are important to the success of a unique time in higher education and how they can help maintain Buckland’s reputation,” recalled the head of alumni relations.

The email was delivered to 40,000 alumni on March 25, 2011, the same day as staff and students received their emails. Alumni relations was contacted by 30-40 alumni who shared mixed reactions: some quite strongly-opposed to the tuition increase some
people felt positive, and others had become a bit opportunistic and talked about careers and employability and “can I benefit from that (extra tuition)?” Buckland’s message was that the University Council has decided to charge £9000 a year and we have decided to invest £175M pounds into these university priorities: £3.5M into career services and £40M million in campus projects such as the library and sports facilities.

Positive responses from alumni expressed how they value the investments in the career services area and how much they appreciated Buckland for not compromising access for students who might not naturally migrate to the University. About 60 alumni extremely dissatisfied with the messages, requested that the university remove their names from the active alumni database used for communications. Some of these alumni were counted among the 30-40 alumni cited above who shared their comments.

Since there was so much misinformation about the topic and because not all of the alumni have email, Buckland felt it was very important to include a piece about tuition in the Buckland alumni magazine (The Buckland Magazine, Issue 23 2011-12, p. 25). Moreover, alumni relations felt it was important to share the messages about how the university was investing in enhancing student access and improving the student experience. Assuming alumni were interested to read through the magazine to get to the article, the alumni relations office witnessed no alumni reaction.

Staff members have debated the tuition topic for many years with mixed reaction and, again, commentary to the 2012 tuition increase was quite mixed. At one end of the spectrum there were those who were ideologically opposed to paying for education. At
the other end, a large contingent of staff realized, for Buckland to retain its position as a world-class university, the cost of an education and the cost of educating students would regrettably increase. There were also alumni staff members with differing opinions. Overall, the majority understood that in tough economic times universities would need to find ways to make up for lost public support in order to survive - and thrive.

The campus environment may influence student culture and the camaraderie between students, staff and faculty can be felt when discussing hot topics. The tuition increase was met with student protests led by Student Guild leaders and involved a few hundred students, a small number compared to the overall student population. Perhaps realizing that they were grandfathered into the current tuition rate of £3000, the majority of students abstained from commentary.

Questions posed to young alumni (see Sample Focus Group Questions, Appendix D) asked them to reflect on their knowledge of the issue, their own experience paying fees, and how they feel fees may affect the next generation of Buckland students and their involvement with alma mater. One comment from an “insider” summarized the feeling that the universities could do more:

I really don’t understand (after having worked for two) why universities don’t articulate better the REAL cost of educating undergraduate students. I think there is a perception that universities are trying to profit from undergraduate students in some areas. In some areas people feel that the fees are there to bring in as much income as possible as opposed to looking at the real cost of educating a student which is about £7000-8000 pounds a year for the arts and humanities and more for the sciences.

Looking back on her own experience, one 2006 graduate described her experience as “seamless,” in the sense that her fees were subsidized due to her parental income
(personal correspondence, November 12, 2012). She never felt her education was a transactional experience and enjoyed being an active student. A 2003 graduate paid the initial tuition of £1000 while in school. During her final year she was very conscious of the disparity between course instruction times for different programs. If she were at Buckland today she may rethink her English major:

I would take a long, hard look at the costs. Can I honestly say that 27K pounds for an English degree is a good value? Will the arts/humanities degree fall by the wayside because the earning potential may be less? I don’t know. I suspect that these types of question will become asked more.

Another point of view compared their high private secondary education fees to university costs. They had no objection paying for what, to them, was virtually free at the time they attended Buckland.

When young alumni were asked through a emailed survey and a young alumni focus group in London in November 2012 who is to blame for the fee increase, the answer was unanimous: the government. Some took a more cynical stance describing how only a small percentage of students will pay the full fees over their lifetimes and how many alumni will have their fees forgiven, as they will never earn the minimal £21K per annum that prompts repayment. Scenarios like this would result in the government paying more than in the past. Others expressed their increasing sympathy for current students who will find it much harder to find a job than in the previous decade.

The university wants to capitalize on some of the growing alumni sympathy by promoting its status as a charity and as an excellent place to get an education. These messages are sent to alumni to engender more support for scholarships. Alumni still need to be educated about the impact of tuition and fees. Staff members had other lingering questions:
I do wonder if charging £9K a year for your education will create a scenario where those alumni come out and think that they get an alumni service that is three times as valuable as the one they are getting right now. But we have not done any work on that yet.

Communicating the changes and impact of the new era of tuition has produced an array of reaction, influenced perceptions and, now, creating more questions than answers.

Closing: Questions Buckland is Asking

What other questions are Buckland’s alumni relations officers and young alumni thinking about when the topic of tuition and fees is addressed? How will the impact of a higher price tag impact the ability of students and young alumni to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market?

Alumni relations officers predict more students will have to find part-time work while studying and balancing both may lead to heightened stress. There may also be more students studying closer to home to balance the costs of living in a different city or town. An increase of commuter students could impact student culture and more student services may need to be created during weekday hours or on line to meet the needs of students who traditionally only spend time on campus for class.

Staff members are also interested in metrics and measuring the return of investing in career services is predicted to become more important. There is also a compelling need to support alumni looking to move from their first to their second career. Universally across England, alumni career services are complimentary and only available for one year post-graduation. The time frame for this support is not enough and strongly influences young alumni perceptions:
I think we are often seen as the profession that lets down the alum after one year out. I think that your second (year out) is more important than your first (year out) and, at the moment, I don’t feel that we are equipped to do that and that might be a way that tuition and fees are going to have the biggest impact on alumni and we probably won’t see that until 2016/17. They can ask: what does investing £27K mean to me when I’m building my career?

The opportunity to invest in alumni career services will benefit the university in the end. Helping alumni find good paying jobs will mean there will be more alumni paying back their loans they received when they attended Buckland. One young alumna working in higher education attended a workshop on the topic of fees was quick to offer this finding: today’s Home (or domestic) students are in a better position to pay back their loans than alumni who paid £3000 per annum. She pays approximately £90 per month (£30 of which is interest) and the new payback rate for the entering class of 2015 will be closer to £30 per month. (personal communication, November 12, 2013).

The university is thinking quite hard about what the tuition increase means to students and are therefore making sure students (and future alumni) perceive and believe in the value of their degree. Should alumni relations begin developing a two-tiered alumni relations provision for pre-2015 alumni and post-2015 alumni? It would be unrealistic to do so, says the head of alumni relations:

That is where there are some challenges for the alumni relations sector about ‘can we up our game for everyone? How much is alumni relations being used? How seriously is everyone taking this lifelong relationship?’ I don’t see how you can maintain something that is a 2-speed project: the traditional programs and anything new to address these most recent graduates (highly-charged employability issues, for example).
Buckland’s alumni relations office will look carefully to past events, programs, and practices while reviewing what their alumni are asking for to determine what their overall strategy is going to be and how will that strategy take into account their development goals for increasing overall donor participation numbers and pounds.

From a student perspective, young alumni interviewed for this study feel fees are a good thing, particularly for the Russell Group, as it forces universities to invest in the student experience and by upgrading facilities so the strong brand of Buckland is matched with strong services and amenities (these same alumni understand that universities are not profiting from higher fees). Students will also want to attend a university that will equip them with the right skills for their desired area of work or at least prepare them for future generations. Another positive effect of fees is a greater amount of scholarships available to students and the chance to influence students to apply, especially those who feel overwhelmed by a £27K debt upon graduation. Young alumni also predict more alumni will want to make a provision to help students. The new era of higher tuition is stirring a new chord of empathy.

A Buckland education needs to be relevant and of high-value. The challenge for the alumni relations office is to continue to communicate the relevance and quality of the graduate network to both their students and most recent alumni.
Overview

Enfield is very different than Buckland. Enfield has three campuses located in the southeastern part of the country far from a major urban center: the main Streatham campus; the Falmouth campus in Cornwall that hosts popular geography and environmental sciences programs; and a St. Luke’s campus that specializes in health sciences. The university was started in 1955 and was characterized by tiny classes and domestic (or Home students) who studied, played and enjoyed that time of their life. Everybody knew everybody and it was easier to stay in touch after graduation,” recalls a member of the current administration. Students graduated but stayed in touch. Lifelong friendships were formed over 40 years. It was the students, themselves, not an alumni relations program that fed this momentum. Not more than 3,000 students had enrolled in the university through the mid-80s keeping the campus on the smaller side.

Demographics shifted in the second half of Enfield’s history and student numbers grew exponentially in the mid-80s and early 90s when polytechnics in England became universities. Without developed alumni relations and a systemized method of tracking alumni contact information it was harder for both the university to be in touch with the alumni and for the alumni to be in touch with both fellow alumni and the university. The

---

4 Material from interview with former alumni officer received through a confidential interview conducted by phone October 19, 2012.
result in Enfield’s words, was a Lost Generation, a cohort of the alumni body that continues to be dis-engaged.

The new millennium ushered in more support for developing alumni relations programs in England and, by 2002, Enfield was laying the foundation for alumni relations with the goal that by investing in alumni relationships the university was investing in improving their reputation. Alumni became more interested in seeing students succeed in their studies, graduate and become members of the Enfield network. A cultural shift has occurred: in the 80s students graduated and forgot about Enfield; in recent years, students graduated and expected to enter into a network that would help continue to serve their social and professional needs.

Young alumni perceptions also shifted from the time they graduated. A 2010 graduate, returned to campus in 2012 to work in a research lab and immediately noticed Enfield’s massive improvements to its facilities as compared to what he experienced as a student:

During my final year (and this was the cause of quite a bit of controversy) there were spaces on campus under construction. A beautiful garden (and area where we wanted to take graduation pictures) was sanctioned off and dug up! We had to go to Reed Hall and we didn’t have any connection to that place. When we were trying to study for finals the university had crews hammering away and making a lot of noise.

At the time it was frustrating but now I think it is brilliant. All of the work that was done (changing from a 70s/80s façade to a more modern look) is for the best.  

---

5 Material from interview with young alumni received through a confidential interview conducted in Enfield, UK on November 12, 2012.
This chapter tells the story of the University of Enfield, its recent history, and its recent and rapid reputational rise in the last 15 years. As with Buckland, both the alumni relations functions and personal experiences of young alumni from Enfield influence how affinity is built or broken over time. Enfield’s story will be told in three sections: first, the Enfield student and alumni culture are introduced. Next, a glimpse into institutional priorities serving students and alumni show how the university, itself, is grooming its reputation. Finally, how Enfield communicated the fee increase, who was involved, and what types of responses were witnessed will be discussed.

**Campus Culture builds Community**

For a university made up of three campuses and 16,000 students, students feel the Enfield is a community connected by beautiful surroundings and through a strong student culture that supports sports societies, clubs and an active social scene in and outside the halls of residence. All accepted first year students are guaranteed housing whether or not they have applied for accommodation. The first-year experience at Enfield is much like any other well-managed residence life program offering students a space to socialize, study, and build relationships. Most of the student societies and sports teams are made up of Home students apart from the specific country-based or culturally based societies that international students typically join and lead.

Enfield alumni are a unique breed in England. More similar to U.S. university alumni, they share similar feelings about tradition that lie outside the realm of alumni relations. For example, sport is very important at Enfield and alumni stay in touch with
former teammates and student players. Socializing at the campus bar remains a favorite pastime of alumni who return to campus after 40 years.

What is slightly different with Enfield (compared to Buckland) is there is a very strong sense that the university belongs to its alumni; that the alumni “own the university.” The idea that the university is “ours” is a familiar sentiment among American university alumni. Alumni of all ages are comfortable offering constructive criticism as well as praise to the alumni relations staff. Here an alumni story is worth retelling. Enfield’s traditional color is green and during one incident 10 years ago the university changed the color from green to blue. Alumni voiced their disapproval and influenced the university to restore the green logo and to make sure everything “alumni” was marketed in green. Paying attention to traditions such as those has helped Enfield’s alumni relations foster a stronger sense of community among alumni.

As much as students remain active outside the classroom they are becoming more preoccupied with having career plans before graduation. “Students also have a stronger sense about the purpose of their education,” an administrator noted. “There is much more intentionality from students about coming out and doing something specific with their degree. The perception is that it is transactional.”

Home students shared that other factors were important when determining which university to attend. They like Enfield because they believe the extra curricular experience provides an outlet that is social, that they will enjoy, and that the community supports. “I also liked the idea that Enfield had a campus, it was green, and near the sea,”
says a young alum that was a member of the surfing club. All things being equal in terms of tuition fees, another alum felt a degree from Enfield would look better on his curriculum vitae than a degree from other universities.

**The Alumni Relations Plan is the University’s Plan**

The alumni relations office has three key messages it wants its alumni to know. First, that the alumni relationship is lifelong and the university needs to care about the quality of their interactions with graduates. Second, that Enfield wants and needs alumni support in a variety of ways apart from the overriding perceptions that universities want alumni to get involved as donors. Enfield is focusing on inviting alumni to volunteer their “time and talents” and get involved with students, alumni and the university on a personal level. The third message is about setting the expectation with students that the alumni are forever part of the university, or as one young alum defined, “alumni relations role is to make you feel that you are a brick in the side of the institution.” Together, Enfield hopes to build a compelling case for increased alumni participation. Alumni Relations and Development units are currently working on a new strategic plan as they prepare for their next capital campaign.

**Reinvesting resources to support career services**

Enfield, like the other universities in England, is shifting both staff, financial, and volunteer resources in the direction of student career services. At issue are laws in the United Kingdom that prohibit unpaid internships that do not offer academic credit, many of which are housed in the communications or charitable sectors. The university is now
focused on how to provide more donor-funded internships that benefit students in these
types of fields and are going to be marketing these types of donor opportunities within
their campaign materials.

This new focus is not an alumni relations and development-owned initiative; rather, the university as a whole considers alumni volunteer support for student employability a priority and remain committed to realigning student activities with alumni career support. During the first days of a fresher’s experience at Enfield during induction week the careers office meets students who desire informational interviews with alumni. An example of this is seen with the structured program co-sponsored by the alumni relations and careers office where students are matched with alumni for ad-hoc advice. Students are encouraged to initiate the dialogue about career preparation. A fulltime career services post supervises this area and reports to both the careers office and the alumni relations area.

Institutional focus on alumni participation

Enfield’s alumni relations officers believe students and alumni expect more from alumni relations because of the increased activity between students and alumni over the last five years common with Buckland and other Russell Group members. Historically, academic departments kept in touch with their program graduates and regularly hosted alumni back to campus to speak to students. The activity within the careers and alumni areas was new such as structured mentoring programs.
The investment in alumni and career services programs is seen in the “Exextra” alumni group specifically formed for alumni of the last 10 years seeking a peer network interested in expanding their contacts and learning relevant skills about career fields and preparing for professional life after Enfield. Young alumni have responded well to Exextra:

I think Alumni Relations could continue to plan the type of career events like I attended and plan these once a month. It was a great way to network with other alumni. I would use social networking to promote Enfield and Alumni communications and invitations to events.

Current Enfield students are also encouraged to attend events with alumni mentors. The alumni relations office further enables these relationships by reimbursing students for travel costs incurred when meeting with their mentors.

**Volunteer program driving change**

Along with supporting institutional priorities, the alumni relations office is focused on developing volunteers and the types of activities that will attract more alumni to get involved. A strong customer services orientation for alumni is integral to today’s focus:

One of our goals is providing really high quality service to our alumni. So we respond within two days to all alumni inquires even if it is to say that we received their inquiry and that will be back in touch with their answers, resources, etc. We have put resourcing in this area to make sure it happens.

Making it happen means that events are well structured with specific attendance and content goals and program managers remain receptive to new ideas from alumni and their colleagues.
Enfield has tracked the economic impact of volunteering and, since July 2011, has take the lead to invite peer institutions to further benchmark the impact of volunteers on their campuses. Volunteers played a significant role in the recent University of Enfield Campaign: *Creating a world-class University together*. In the concept paper about the economic impact of volunteering (confidentially shared December 2011), as of August 2011, Enfield had raised more than 8,500 hours of volunteer time (against a target of 2,012 hours) from more than 1,000 volunteers. That number of hours equates to more than five years of full-time work. Here lies a convincing argument for cultivating more young alumni relationships as the recent graduates have more discretionary time available for volunteering.

**Efforts to attract market share**

Investing in alumni relations would only be possible with an investment in staff to guide new volunteer programs that link alumni to the student experience. Enfield started increasing staff in 2005 and, since then, has witnessed a measurable increase in alumni participation including fundraising, volunteering to host internships, mentor students, and assist with student recruitment. “We’re definitely following the US with alumni relations becoming a much bigger thing in terms of student recruitment,” says a current administrator. Today Enfield’s student prospectus mentions the alumni community and describes the value of joining the university and how alumni are part of the student experience creating a lifecycle of alumni engagement that begins at the applicant stage.

Increased tuition fees have created new efforts to attract market share from under-represented students coming from “B” schools traditionally struggling to compete with
the privates. Enfield is paying particular attention to how alumni can support the recruitment activity from what they call “aspirational” schools. The goal is to have more alumni volunteer to talk to students about their Enfield experience, about higher education in general, and promote their efforts to apply. Although Enfield does participate in a few pilot programs as part of their Access Agreement most do not involve their alumni-at-large. Alumni interviewed in focus groups touched upon the fact that Enfield attracts students from privileged backgrounds and that a change in focus in student recruitment is necessary:

Yes, I’ve heard of the Access Program and I know there is a big focus for universities to expand the bursaries for students.

I would assume they are paying for bursaries through fundraising, corporate sponsorship (b-school scholars) and that the government is giving Enfield more money.  

An opportunity lies herein if alumni believe in the philosophy and merit of these approaches.

**Communicating and leading change**

Enfield was one of the first universities to go public to say they were going to charge the maximum tuition. This sign of transparency was a result of other processes taking place that put the university in the driver’s seat when communicating with students and alumni. Looking back, a young alum respected this mindset: “if everyone is going to do it, why not get out in front of it.”

---

6 Material from young alumni received through a confidential focus group conducted in London, UK on November 4, 2012.
The telefund is the major vehicle Enfield uses to reach its alumni. The conversations student callers have with alumni have changed since the second tuition increase went into effect in 2004. In 2004 some alumni were questioning why Enfield needed to fundraise when tuition was just increased. Others clearly understood how fee income was different from fundraising income and some of these alumni committed to making larger donations.

Enfield’s alumni relations and development teams led this change by training students to engage in a two-way conversation with alumni. Alumni Relations and student services teams promoted the telefund positions and the unique opportunity students have to “meet” alumni before they graduate. “Would you like to make a donation?” has been replaced by “What can Enfield do to help?” The education student callers received during telefund training and their own conversations with alumni have created a strong appreciation for the work of alumni relations and Enfield has seen more students proactively referring their friends to the telefund positions. Students, however, were not responsible for communicating the tuition and fee increase to alumni. Once the tuition increase was announced the alumni relations office mentioned the change in their next e-newsletter. The alumni relations staff also referred alumni to their office for if more information and clarification around the tuition issue. As one administrator recalled, “When the information was explained and they understand how it worked they were much less upset.”

---

7 Material from the University of Enfield’s Office of Alumni Relations received through a confidential interview conducted in London, UK on September 26, 2012.
Vice Chancellor and Student Union

A new Vice Chancellor and Registrar set the tone for much change starting in 2002-2003. The leadership looked inward and asked “how can we improve ourselves to make us better and better?” Subsequent investments in alumni relations and development were part of the equation that moved Enfield along their upward trajectory in the last decade. Alumni picked up on the changes as well and began to volunteer and donate.

Enfield’s leadership remained active in the tuition discussions well past the second tuition increase in 2004. The Vice Chancellor was president of the Universities UK and inherited a perch from which to both advise on government policy and become one of the most informed university leaders throughout the tuition fee discussions. Enfield saw the £9K fees coming for a long time and began to prepare for improving the overall academic and student experience. Big picture policy issues were going to play out on campus and the leadership invited students to participate in the discussions. A debate between the Vice Chancellor and the head of the Student Guild captured administrative and student reactions to proposed tuition increases (retrieved from web-based magazine October 5, 2012).

Enfield attracts a particular type of student. Echoed by students and young alumni alike the student culture is described as “Rah,” an upscale preppy, fashion-conscious, status-conscious, social group of young adults who “want to get involved in as many things possible.” Homogeneity.

However, by 2009 and 2010 when the tuition fees were introduced Enfield was becoming increasingly concerned about the lack of diversity and the fact that the highest
percentage of new students came from private schools. Student leadership was concerned about this as well. If their role was to improve the student experience they needed to advocate for the “haves” and the “have-nots.” When the £9K increase was introduced as a topic many debates ensued. One open debate discussed the topic and the referendum of whether students could go to London to demonstrate with the National Union of Students in the fall of 2010. The students raised larger questions, a former leader recalled:

We would debate about the ethics of charging fees: should only the well off be able to afford a university education? Should education be a public good and be free for all? Perhaps it would be more democratic.

Personally, I disagreed that we should raise tuition to 9K…there is a lot of education needed among Second Form students about the realities of tuition (that you don’t have to pay it back until after graduation, that you may not have to pay back everything if you get a student loan).

In the end, the students decided to demonstrate in London and returned the same night.

The Student Guild actively participates in the discussions today. Members of the Student Guild sit on Enfield’s Budget Scrutiny Group and Budget Policymaking Committee and have a chance to influence how the university spends some of the tuition and fee income. An example of their advocacy was their concern that students taking mandatory fieldtrips (for programs in geography or sciences) did not have to pay extra fees for the trips. Their field trip fees, they asserted, should be included in the overall tuition. Even though their request remains under consideration, it represents a practical approach by students to make sure their peers are getting the best services.
Reactions to a Rise in Tuition

The rise in tuition tested the efficacy of alumni relations programs and services to date. Reaction to the tuition increase varied from student protests, to alumni sympathy, to administrative resolve. For 24 hours a day over three weeks a small group of students occupied a section of one of Enfield’s lecture theaters in a symbolic act of opposition that still allowed lectures to take place in the theater. On a whole, current students had time to digest the reality of rising tuition. Administrators argue that, generally, when students (and the public alike) are aware about how the funding is structured, there is greater understanding and they back down a bit.

An interview with a current Enfield student who will graduate in 2014 documented his understanding of what he knows is a sensitive topic. He wished that fees were introduced gradually but, altogether, considers the fees an “investment” in himself:

I don’t think that students at Enfield would be put off paying tuition fees. Enfield was the first to announce the tuition fees (my mom almost had a heart attack when she heard the news) and there students are loyal to the university and how it operates. I’m proud of our new facilities…Students don’t talk about it with each other…

The student also pointed to an important factor: the Gap Year. A year off in between secondary school and university has traditionally been a popular alternative for students desiring time to travel, work, pursue an internship, or catch up on academic work. A 2010 graduate’s Gap Year was out of necessity as he decided to work to save money, something his parents strongly encouraged him to do. Another recent graduate mentioned many students in his year wanted to do a gap year but that would position them alongside
the class of 2015 and would have subscribed to the new £9K fees. Most of these students reconsidered their plans.

Young alumni questioned their role at Enfield: “Were we just customers of the university or did we have the right to learn?” they asked. As students they crunched numbers and determined that their eight hours of weekly instruction equated to £60 per hour. Changes to some modules were made because students did not feel they were getting value for their money.

On a whole, Enfield’s management and academic leadership realized that the changes stemmed from current government views and policy, and a pragmatic response to the cuts in teaching grants would affect tuition and fees. Under these conditions, Enfield’s important next steps were to do something to make sure the university continues to thrive. Supporting the student and alumni experience would be at the top of the to-do list.

**Closing: Questions Enfield is Asking**

Young alumni from Enfield view the content of their education to be the smallest part of the value chain:

We’re here to get a key to open some doors. We’re paying a lot of money to help us get something else…no one is going to study for the sake of studying for 9K a year. It was a transaction. I think that’s all it really is.

That is one perception. What other perceptions are coloring the story at Enfield today?

With regard to how staff perceive alumni volunteers they believe they are more than
willing to support Enfield with their time and the alumni relations program and students are a direct beneficiary. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, 15 years ago the number of domestic active alumni was small and under-resourced. Today’s Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) remains mindful of their outreach while tuition has increased 200% since 2004.

Enfield is interested in tracking student and young alumni perceptions in the next three years. The major question they are asking is: When the class of 2015 graduates how will they want to be involved? To prepare for this intake and their satisfaction Enfield has spent £100m to improve the campus and facilities. Their follow up questions are: how will investing in the campus change the students’ experiences, and how will this change when they become alumni saddled with more debt than their predecessors? Another question is how will young alumni feel about paying back their loans and also sharing their time as volunteers? Enfield is heeding these questions and will monitor what happens once the class of 2015 and their successors graduate.

Young alumni shared their opinion about having paid fees and their inclination to volunteer or donate. One alum wanted his money to go to what he feels makes the university distinct. He admitted he is in a unique situation:

I paid tuition fees, I have chosen to come back to work here and I am a donor and I want my $ to go to the research end at Enfield. I want it to go to what actually makes the university great and that’s education.

Another alum described his privileged position of having tuition paid in full by his family each year in advance of the new academic term. He assessed being a donor today:
For me, I’m not in any amazing financial situation at the moment so any thoughts about donating to Enfield will be fleeting. The last time I heard the message about giving was on graduation day. In later years, when I got a full time job, I will think more about that. To be honest, it has never really crossed my mind about where the university gets its money from apart from the government and the fee that the university has charged.

Enfield’s goal is to not be seen as just taking money from alumni. Rather, they want to be seen by more students and alumni as offering relevant programs and services. Enfield want to maintain its reputation as one of the rising stars of the Russell Group and so do students and alumni:

The whole university has an up and coming feel; as a student you feel part of it. Enfield motivates us to be part of the growth and excellence.

I think I made a bloody good choice since, when I applied it was ranked 34th and now it is 9th according to The Guardian League Table.

Reputation alone, however, will not be enough to convince all students that they should apply to Enfield. Student Ambassadors tell stories of hosting groups of 16-year olds entering their second form program that have the opportunity to see what university life is like. Many students, they say, have been “put off” by tuition and feel attending a university will be prohibitive because of the costs. Enfield must manage those perceptions in order to maintain application figures from Home students, already down 62,000, or 17 per cent, on last year’s figures, according to an analysis by Times Higher Education. Enfield wants to be perceived as an institution providing education to all who have the interest and the merits to attend.

The value of a degree today cannot be measured by academic preparation alone and Enfield understands this notion better than most universities. The strong focus on employability and helping students invest early in career preparation garnered the university the title, University of the Year, by The Sunday Times.
University Guide, September 30, 2012). By bridging the academic, co-curricular, and career experiences for students Enfield begins to look much like one of the top 40 colleges and universities in the United States where the focus on the “whole student” has been a administrative mantra since the early 90s. Enfield’s alumni have begun to play a role in each of these areas and, according to the administration, alumni, and students they only see value in maintaining and expanding these relationships.
Overview

Knight’s is a founding member of the Russell Group and is regarded as one of England’s best universities. It is located in London and attracts a large cohort of international students. Popular programs include law, dentistry and/or medicine. Home (or domestic) students have aspired to attend Knight’s because they know its academic reputation and league table rankings will position them well for applying to jobs in the corporate sector or becoming accepted into selective graduate schools.

For over a decade Knight’s alumni relations office has been aware that tuition may have an impact on their relationships with young alumni:

When I started at Knight’s in 2001 we discussed, even then, how would tuition change relationships? How will young people, when they move through the system, come out of their experience? How will we regard the university? So, in terms of the culture, yes we’ve absolutely discussed it. We thought people would be less willing to give back.8

Young alumni have thought about these questions as well affirming Knight’s prediction: “having paid fees they do not feel the need to donate” (personal correspondence, November 28, 2012). Traditionally, Knight’s has not raised money from young alumni, but since the second wave of increases took effect in 2004, alumni relations has struggled to define what their role should be and for whom. This chapter is the story of how alumni

---

8 Material from a former member of Knight’s College’s Office of Alumni Relations received through a confidential interview conducted in London, UK on October 4, 2012.
relations has created a value proposition for students and alumni to remain involved in an era where both institutional and personal resources are under greater scrutiny. The chapter is divided in five sections: the challenging context of an urban university, Knight’s emphasis on fundraising, the development of new resources and student services, a word about how all stakeholders feel tuition and fees have affected students and young alumni, and, finally, reactions to the rise in tuition and fees.

Challenges of an Urban University

Knight’s has been observing the alumni relations practices of universities in the United States and other countries to learn what best practices exist for building relationships with alumni. Over the last decade Knight’s has discussed different theories for attracting participation and support. One such principle was “the more you invest upfront in your education, the higher the value you place on your education and the more important it is for you to continue to invest in the educational experience for others.” The idea is to contribute to the university to help sustain the high value of one’s degree. Another opinion was, the further away an alum lives the more attached they feel to their former institution. This second theory has always been true for Knight’s.

Unlike Buckland and Enfield, Knight’s students did not spend much time on campus outside their classes. The commuter lifestyle was a dominant characteristic of London universities and Knight’s students lived with students studying elsewhere in the city. It was not a fault of Knight’s that the university had a problem with alumni attachment. The city offered many other important distractions such as places to socialize
with students from around the world, study, work and become involved in other programs outside the university. Student unions were challenged with declining membership, something the current Student Union president talks about today. The alumni relations office was concerned and believed their role could help shape some sense of community as long as they focused on the shared experience of a London-based education and thought about ways to drive alumni together through these shared experiences. They turned their attention to where they could achieve scale and developed programs for students and alumni studying the popular academic programs of medicine and dentistry.

The overall sense about the future of alumni relations was that services should be more commercial and more professionalized. To do this, collaborating with other sectors and campus departments would be necessary. Knight’s would maintain their focus on the medical and dental alumni. “They are so important to us and those are going to be engaged. Some studied at Guy’s (before Guy’s Medical College merged with Knight’s) and we’re not going to change that and they will always retain their affinity,” a former alumni administrator shared. “I feared we may lose it, but we’ve played a good game with those people and we’ve maintained our connection.”

Support from the top buttressed new efforts to connect with students and young alumni. When the tuition fees were announced what was most important to the Principal and the Vice Principal of Student Affairs was that financial options for paying for university were communicated clearly so every family could help their students remain educated and informed about the new process. Knight’s leadership recognized the
paradigm shift within higher education in England and wanted to make the best of the situation. Supporting alumni relations efforts was one way of strengthening the college community during a tumultuous time. Knight’s admittedly never had much success with engaging young alumni but then again in the early 2000’s, there was not a precedent for inviting young alumni to become volunteers and donors. What was evident to the team was this understanding: if students were engaged at university they would be engaged as alumni; if students were not engaged at university, they were not likely to be interested in staying in touch with Knight’s.

The 2008 recession coincided with these discussions and, looking back, the alumni relations and development offices were concerned about some topics more than others. Conversations about fundraising eclipsed topics about young alumni:

Did we think about whether there was an opportunity to become closer to young alumni? Definitely, but I don’t think they was our foremost conversation, but something that the earlier team worried about was what were we going to offer to alumni and how would they stay involved. We started some of the classic programs such as mentoring and efforts to gather enough data to know whether we should focus on certain alumni for fundraising (we always did that at Knight’s).

One hand certainly knew what the other was doing: the budding alumni relations office integrated their activities with development. It was just a matter of time to assess the return on their investment and to build a new strategic plan that would coincide with the new tuition increase.
Knight’s careers program was positioned to expand annually. Alumni relations worked with the head of marketing and the head of career services at Knight’s to roll out the program to students and young alumni. This work positioned Knight’s well to carry on with today’s work with alumni. As the current head of alumni relations recalls:

“Because we already had it within our plan to develop those alumni and student relations programs everything was a natural progression, and because of the awareness shift of tuition and fees at the college-level, it dovetailed nicely because, obviously, employability was number one on the college agenda and a lot of the programs we started could demonstrate that we support that agenda, if not, drove that agenda.”

Knight’s current five-year vision for alumni relations is influenced by the belief that the department and university want to accommodate and welcome all alumni and stress that Knight’s alumni can make a difference. The university knows they have work to do to influence student and young alumni perceptions in the challenging environment but managers are confident in their own efforts as well as the efforts of their colleagues in students services to increase student satisfaction. Like Buckland and Enfield, the value of the overall student experience can now be evaluated under more stringent measure because of the rising price tag of attending Knight’s.

Student dis-engagement outside of class

In recent history the student experience was not great and students were underserved to a point that directors of development were expressing their concerns that current alumni programs and student activities were not going to produce the type of engaged alumni Knight’s has depended on in the past. However, donor demand was not
as important then as it has become today. As previously mentioned, the nature of an urban campus competed against the alumni relations goals for students and alumni.

Today, students are described as more driven and ambitious than other university students in England. Many come from wealthy families and a majority of the leavers are job searching with an added sense of confidence that their Knight’s credentials will put them a few steps ahead of other university candidates. Many students study at Knight’s, live at home, and work part-time jobs in London. Ajaita was a commuter student from an Indian family who became very involved with Student Union. She described the student culture and how she felt about paying tuition:

When I was a student we were outgoing, daring, outspoken, but I didn't even know we had a careers service. Today, students are focused, less daring, more confident, more tech savvy, and worldlier about what they can do with their lives...

Due to personal financial reasons I have ended up with the same debt students who lived out of home have left university with which is annoying...I think this question will be answered differently by different people according to the culture they were brought up in, their financial background, and the type of parents they have.9

Another young alum shared that the main difficulty with paying tuition was that his parents paid the fees and they were less able to help pay for accommodation. However, this 2006 graduate points out the fees were small compared to rent and cost of living in London (personal correspondence, December 19, 2013).

---

9 Material from a young alum received through a follow up correspondence to an electronic survey, November 28, 2013.
Home students are joined by a sizeable (25%) cohort of international students each year. The international students have become a growing priority since they pay higher fees and international alumni have traditionally been more engaged with the university. Knight’s alumni relations and development staff travel regularly abroad to meet international alumni and encourage their involvement in identifying prospective students. Domestically, the office of alumni relations is doing the same by identifying UK-based alumni to volunteer at admissions fairs and Open Days in England.

**Fundraising During Fees**

After the second round of tuition increases the university integrated their operations much like their counterparts in the United States. By the mid-2000s, the Knight’s advancement unit (alumni relations, fundraising, research and communications) grew to 12 staff members. The unit was viewed as a large operation at the time for universities in England. Efforts to improve data on recent graduates and young alumni were enhanced with the goal of establishing more relationships and better contact information. Knight’s started to sponsor an annual young alumni event but connecting and sustaining ties with recent graduates proved challenging and, as the global recession hit, emphasis shifted once again. Measuring alumni engagement became a new key performance indicator (KPI). Knight’s was focused on understanding the linkage between alumni relations and fundraising, generating more gifts, measuring their success, and finding ways to be more relevant. The big question was: *Do any of our alumni relations efforts make sense and do any of our efforts work?*
The first campaign for Knight’s generated £44M and involved large donors and a selective approach to generating the greatest returns on staff time. Young alumni were regarded as a low priority because, as a group, they were not going to support the campaign. During this campaign, alumni relations marketing materials paid little attention to giving (something that has changed in the current campaign).

More full-time development officers who focused on cultivating large gifts from older donors guided the shift toward more targeted fundraising. Knight’s was also betting on the returns of more engaged medical students. The merger of Guy’s Medical College and Knight’s in 1998 could have resulted in splintered affinity with one set of graduates not feeling a sense of cohesion to the larger institution. Knight’s understood this risk, focused on bringing medical alumni together regularly and, today, the current campaign invites this cohort to participate in annual giving and membership in the Medical Circle by contributing at least £1000.

Staff also questioned the utility of social media, such as LinkedIn or Facebook. The questioned whether social media could help facilitate the university mission, whether they could control or influence the conversations between alumni, and whether they could utilize this growing method of communication to benefit their programs and fundraising goals. For example, could social media offer alumni an outlet for career advice and would alumni feel that is a relevant service? The irony is that young alumni are a group that needs career assistance more than others but, up until recent years and the announcement of the £9000 tuition rate, recent graduates were undervalued. Today,
this has changed to the extent that support for students and young alumni are new factors in annual assessment.

Each year an Index of Engagement is created with new percentage targets developed for tracking participation as expressed through factors such as contacting the alumni office, volunteering, and giving. Major KPIs include donor cultivation, young alumni engagement and international alumni programs. The success of alumni relations and fundraising may be measured by greater alumni participation:

Just from working hand and glove with fundraising colleagues we could see alumni who had volunteered had also joined one of the high-level giving circles…they are invested in a way that leads to hardship funds supporting bursary scholarship…

2011-12 statistics provide baseline measures for improvement in the alumni relations program: at the bottom of the pyramid, 15 percent of the approximately 136,000 addressable alumni (by post, telephone, and/or email addresses) contacted the office of alumni relations; 2500 alumni attended any one event; and 1200 more alumni attended more than one event. At the top of the pyramid, the number of active alumni has doubled as reflected in more alumni volunteering for mentoring programs, career panels, and international admissions interviews.

Developing Resources to Become More Relevant

Alumni Relations is a long-term game and one of the advantages afforded to Knight’s in recent years is leadership support for investing in student services that could

---

10 Material from Knight’s College’s Office of Alumni Relations received through confidential interviews conducted in London, UK on September 25, 2012 and November 6, 2012.
support students as they prepare for careers after graduation. Throughout the 2000s when tuition grew from £1000 to £3000, and leveled off through the height of the recession, student services were underdeveloped and students, themselves, were not focusing on the relationship between tuition and satisfaction. This concerned alumni relations and development officers:

Back then, the student experience was not great and students were underserved…to a point that Directors of Development were starting to talk to people around the college as to “we’re not sure what is happening here is going to produce people we’ve had in the past.” But, remember: donor demand was not that important because it wasn’t the income generator that is has become today.

2010 marked a crossover point for Knight’s. With the announcement of the next tuition increase Knight’s knew it had to develop the relevant resources quickly to counteract the impact of this seismic change in a both an increasingly competitive admissions and job market.

The alumni relations staff began to deliver more services focusing on developing volunteers and young alumni. In addition, mentoring programs for students were born out of new collaborations with the careers office.

In 2010 the alumni relations office created a volunteer alumni manager position with the responsibility of centralizing volunteer resources and services and enhancing the overall volunteer satisfaction. The new position also signaled a shift towards realigning old programs to newer initiatives aimed at enhancing the student experience and introducing young alumni to what are referred to as “springboard engagement events” such as young alumni/student pub quiz nights co-sponsored with the Annual Fund.
The focus on young alumni increased with more resources. Initial programming success helped Knight’s head of alumni relations prepare a business case for a new Volunteer Assistant to support the growth of the program. Qualitative growth, as she cites:

So, although, on the event side, there wasn’t a significant amount of growth, it was more about consolidating and streamlining. The biggest area of growth in the annual (alumni relations) plan was in the volunteer program. Building relationships with alumni would enable Knight’s to track engagement and show the direct influence of alumni relations on fundraising. These priorities remain timely, as greater focus would be placed on students.

Mentoring programs were tested during the volunteer manager’s first year. These types of programs can be demanding on staff time and Knight’s knew it was important to develop a model that was scalable so that it could be rolled out across the alumni and student community. Some of the initial programs aimed at bringing alumni and students together were networking events in London centered on a topic (e.g., “life sciences”) or a specific field (e.g., Law). Usually successful, the next step was developing a formal relationship with Career Services.

The current head of alumni relations started the partnership with career services three years ago. Over time the work has become more collaborative. The main activity binding the two units is through alumni volunteer identification and cultivation. For example, alumni speakers are invited to speak at career forums with the goal of providing helpful advice to student audiences. Their tacit knowledge about experiencing career
shifts at the height of the recession provides major gains to students and alumni alike. Another example is the growing mentoring program promoted to current students by the careers office. This program is particularly focused on helping students gain more knowledge about less profitable entry-level careers such as those in media and the non-profit sector.

There is also the alumni career network called Knight’s Connections, a database of alumni who have signed up to be contacted by current students about their careers through email. Unlike the mentoring program the network is not actively promoted to students because of the inherent challenges in monitoring student activity with the database. The alumni office can track alumni participation but, because of the way it was developed, the students were given clear instructions about the appropriate number of contacts in order to provide some parameters. Knight’s Connections is currently under review with the alumni relations office asking these questions: how can we give students access but, at the same time, how can we evaluate the program? Was it helpful? Was it utilized?

A question one may ask in today’s climate is: What about developing more career services for young alumni? Today is it assumed all students who graduate will know how to manage their job searches? One young alumna offers this advice:

Knight’s should allow alumni to have their support in finding careers until at least two years of finishing university. If I hadn't become a sabbatical officer I would have been jobless when I graduated. A lot of my non-active or non-involved friends from university didn't know about things like alumni relations and career services. It would be very good if alumni had access to Knight’s careers service up to two years of graduating.
The cumulative efforts at Knight’s have garnered major accolades from the same major London newspaper that commended Enfield. *The Sunday Times* reported that nearly 92% of 2011 graduates had a graduate-level job within 6 months of graduation. The university was named top university in the UK for graduate employability (*The Sunday Times University Guide*, September 30, 2012).

**Student and Young Alumni Perceptions**

Alumni managers believe how students feel about recent changes to tuition will depend on their educational backgrounds, financial standing, and motivations for attending Knight’s. The same may hold true for the most recent graduates. Students that come from fee-paying colleges (e.g., high schools) will be more aware of alumni relations because there is usually an alumni relations program for elite colleges where affinity to one’s school is developed before students graduate. The goal for Knight’s is to create an awareness among all students that there are advantages to studying at Knight’s and that advantage is directly tied to their chances of employability upon graduation and that the university will remain relevant for their rest of their lives. That last notion - lifelong engagement – may be harder to sell with current students.

The question of whether higher fees create higher stress was also discussed among alumni relations staff. One perception is that students will be able to deal with the stresses of higher tuition because they are all experiencing the same phenomenon. Students have a sense of affinity to each other and it could “create a more positive community.” However, others would argue that describing the student community is not apples to apples. Family financial circumstances could require full bursary support and
that creates more stress. Some students will have to find part-time jobs and others may have to live at home.

The Browne Report cites Six Principles that guide the tuition increase proposal (Brown Report, 2010). Principle number six reads: *Part Time Students should be Treated the Same as Full Time Students for the Costs of Learning.* Prior to the recent changes part time students were required to pay upfront, a potential barrier from obtaining a degree and for developing more courses that combine work and study. The proposal eliminated this requirement so that students of all ages may access higher education in more flexible ways conducive to their personal situation. Due to the nature of their lives and responsibilities outside of school, mature students may experience more stress than traditional-aged incoming students. However, the new policies provide greater incentives for older students to remain registered and complete their degree and urban universities, like Knight’s.

Alumni relations managers believe future young alumni perceptions will be colored by students’ motivations for attending Knight’s and wanting to stay involved. They cited three scenarios: one, some are very proud of attending Knight’s and want to repay their gratitude by supporting the university; two, there is a perception that some students’ idealism creates a desire to stay involved so they can “make a difference;” three, student leaders will become alumni leaders and may be the voice of the growing majority asking what the impact of higher tuition will be on students. Alumni managers see the situation resulting in a transactional relationship between Knight’s and the consumer (student). Expectations also shift as consumers are more aware of the value for
their money. Reactions that may surface soon could question the academic quality of teaching at Knight’s. Does the quality increase as the educational price tag increases?

Altogether, Knight’s remains invested in creating a positive student experience. Alumni relations is banking on satisfied young alumni who find value in accessing alumni benefits and services. Until the announcement of £9000 tuition fees, the alumni relations and careers office were beginning to create volunteer opportunities for alumni to give back in terms of time and talent. Now, more than ever, Knight’s acknowledges that recent graduates are also important consumers. Young alumni want to speak to someone who is more established in their career and can give them advice to help them advance their own career path.

**Reaction to Changes in Tuition and Fees**

Similar to the other case studies, both the alumni relations staff and young alumni felt that the government missed an important opportunity when communicating the tuition and fee increase. The government’s initial focus, some said, was that the relationship to universities will change in the form of increased funding allocation for students who will need new or additional aid. In their opinion, the government was not thinking about alumni and how paying more upfront and/or owing more upon graduation would impact their propensity to donate in later years.

Announcing the tuition increases gave rise to student protests in London organized by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts. Alongside protests were demands for a more transparent student experience in terms of explaining how new fees
would be used and how universities would enhance student services, such as career placements. Prospective students and families were also caught at a crossfire of confusion about the reason tuition was going to increase so dramatically. Even though the government had set a precedent for individuals to contribute more to their education, the alumni relations staff at Knight’s knew they were going to have to manage the government’s most recent message tactfully.

It is safe to say that reaction from the alumni-at-large was mitigated by the fact that every university was entering the same challenging environment. For those alumni who did share their opinions, the reaction to the increase in tuition and fees varied from pointing fingers to empathising with students. One young alumna wrote:

I blame the government entirely. They saw this coming for decades but only acted when it hit crisis point. I have always thought we needed fees but it is naive to think we could keep going with free education in today's world. We need to be head of research not on a national scale but on a global scale, a whole level higher particularly with the Ivy League in the US. But I don't like the jump in fees; it should have been a steadier increase and started much earlier in time.

Unlike Buckland and Enfield, Knight’s did not survey alumni for their reactions nor did they issue a letter explaining the changes in tuition policy. Alumni contact to complain about the tuition increases was largely unsolicited.

In today’s economic climate, young people are disproportionately affected by the jobless rate. When the rate increases were announced Knight’s students expressed fear about what the new tuition would mean in terms of their earning power and their ability to pay for their education. Prospective students shared the same trepidation. Moreover, a
growing percentage of prospective students from England would soon be applying to
Knight’s and would require some form of financial assistance. “How much debt could I
incur and at what point would I see a return on my investment?” some asked.

Closing: Questions Knight’s is Asking

The evolution of tuition in the 2000s prompted the alumni relations and
development offices to ask some important questions about what services would they
sponsor, which alumni would they cultivate, and how would they attract more volunteers.

Today, the rise in tuition prompts more questions. Administrators feel the student
services market is changing to meet rising student demand. What next for alumni
relations?

One developing trend and a new initiative for Knight’s is to create stronger
linkages between academic departments and alumni relations. Unlike the Buckland
model that has created alumni managers for academic colleges with dual reporting
structures to deans and alumni relations, Knight’s has a looser relationship to academics.
Knight’s head of alumni relations describes the relationship as many academic
departments creating alumni coordinator roles whom serve as contacts to central alumni
relations. Alumni relations wants to ensure alumni information is tracked effectively and
that both offices work together to ensure the best way to organize events and flag
opportunities for alumni to get involved within the academic department. The next step of
the volunteer management process is to match alumni to well-suited events and
opportunities to help students. A young alumna believes building intentional connections
with third-year students is the right approach. Overall, building a program together may lead to more support in terms of volunteering and, perhaps, fundraising.

There are limitations to what alumni relations can do for students in the new era of tuition. Some are concerned that the government has not thought through the effects of the increase and, in three years, there will not be enough advice and support to help the first batch of affected graduates. Other administrators acknowledge that getting students through the system today is the first hurdle; fundraising with young alumni will be a longer-term goal. Fundraisers believe older alumni will more likely want to be involved. Knight’s is using the “today’s students have it harder” appeal and asking alumni in their 40s and 50s to contribute to student scholarships. What was typically a hard ask (asking alumni for scholarship money) has become less difficult.

Finally, the growing perception among administrators is that the new fees will benefit a top-ranked institution like Knight’s. The rationale is that students will be more invested in their education and will be able to afford to pay back the fees with good-paying jobs. Additional arguments believe students will become better informed about their educational experience and more satisfied. These predictions are just that: estimated guesses based on the recent growth of student services and alumni relations programming. The future is not protected and an unanticipated effect of the economy or government policy could affect tuition fees one more.
Will alumni services be sophisticated enough to serve a new cohort of young alumni who potentially adopt the consumer attitude? Knight’s attitude is both pragmatic and optimistic:

You know we don’t know what’s going to happen but we can speculate. I have my own thoughts on this and I think it could be a very positive outcome on the overall college community and certainly on the alumni-student community…there is a real need and desire from alumni to do more to get involved to help the next generation -- maybe a little guilt, which they didn’t create but it’s there.

In the coming years, Knight’s is going to determine what they can do to take advantage of this momentum and create relevant opportunities to connect alumni and students.
CHAPTER 5
CASE ANALYSIS

Overview

This research showed how alumni relations approaches to young alumni in the last 15 years have changed and how young alumni themselves perceive their relationship to alma mater in spite of their experience of paying tuition. Whether anticipatory or not, each institution’s response to the fee increase was a test of how successful its strategy for investing in alumni relations was during a time of change. The experience in England is further testimony to the abiding nature of culture and how the responsibility of managing or fixing expectations in a time of public policy change is no longer just the government’s responsibility. The Americanization of higher education in England – the changes in the market prompting tuition increases and building more private donor support – may instruct other countries’ stakeholders considering similar change.

This final chapter focuses on the linkages between tuition and affinity across the three campuses by briefly reviewing the commonalities and differences between alumni relations offices approaches and the ways in which young alumni are feeling about becoming part of their university during this new era that affects them and the next generation of young alumni. A look toward additional challenges and opportunities afforded by the new financial climate in higher education concludes this study.
Commonalities and Difference across Campuses

Across all three campuses, alumni relations offices are focusing on building volunteer engagement programs, creating linkages to academic departments, and are creating new relationships with prospective students. Enfield and Knight’s have invested human and financial resources into creating volunteer management positions to better track alumni participation in terms of time, talent and treasure. Paying closer attention to the how alumni feel about getting involved as volunteers does not go unnoticed by alumni themselves. Enfield and Knight’s are seeing more alumni donate, especially when they understand that the institutions want to raise more money to support student bursaries and scholarships. The rise in volunteer and donor numbers supports the correlation between alumni participation and giving.

Each of the universities in the study are actively working with academic departments to create community with students while they are engaged with their peers and faculty. Alumni involvement at Welcome Meetings, alumni speakers in the classroom, and the role of college alumni managers are all ensuring that the messages about the benefits of the alumni network are shared early and often.

The application process in England has traditionally been competitive. The tuition increase is prompting more students to apply to Russell Group schools and get the best value for their money. One method that Buckland is employing to improve their yield rate is to create ways for applicants to meet current students. Buckland uses current students to call recently accepted students to provide some early “customer service” and access to current and realistic student opinions of what it is like to study and live at the
A very small percentage of students transfer between institutions. At Knight’s, recent conversations about tuition and retention have focused on ways to convert undergraduate students to post-graduate students (Interview November 5, 2012). The alumni relations office is aware that the institution would like more students to stay at Knight’s for their professional training.

The study demonstrated that different approaches to building student and young alumni affinity are due to student culture. For Enfield and Buckland, student culture has been built around the campus quad, the halls of residence and student societies. Knight’s has the challenge of building community across an urban campus as reiterated in an interview with the current head of alumni relations:

What has been unique to London universities is that there has been a crunch on accommodation. That we are not able to offer every first-year student a place in accommodation, and the limits colleagues in accommodation have drawn are that students from the M25 are not given that service because it is seen that they are within commutable distance. But that has nothing to do with domestic versus international; it has to do with proximity.

She and her colleagues acknowledge that bonding between students occurs where community is built: in halls of residence.

More recently, universities perceive differences among their ability to attract a diverse student body. Along with charging £9K for tuition universities were required to demonstrate they could provide financial aid to all students who were eligible under a Widening Participation program. Knight’s perceives this as a challenge because the new law was issued as a blanket policy treating universities the same without taking into

66
account their current student population and how institutions are already offering access. Universities with a history of more Widening Participation programs are, today, getting more government support and thus are able to attract top-qualified students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. The access programs are giving both needier students and universities a competitive advantage.

**Future Implications: Challenges and Opportunities**

Around the world there are increased calls for cost sharing as governments look to students and families to bear a portion of the higher education price tag (Altbach et al., 2010). For the three selected universities in England featured in this study both alumni relations officers and young alumni feel there are some benefits to higher tuition. Students will be motivated to choose a program that will meet their career interests. Students will also be encouraged to complete their degree on time. These parties also predict alumni relations programs will be enhanced to assist students and young alumni in their early careers. However, the latest rise in fees is not perceived by all to be a good thing. The case studies mentioned how the lack of complete information about affordability and financial aid options are dissuading some prospective students from applying to universities. What other challenges exist in today’s environment in England? What new opportunities can universities seize in order to ameliorate the effects of this greater cost sharing?

**Challenges**

Before the government finds another reason to raise tuition and fees it is important to address three major challenges: managing the expectations of the key
stakeholders in today’s tuition game, understanding how a flat rate of £9,000 is creating a greater market-centered approach to enrollment management, and protecting the arts and humanities programs that more students may opt out of when making value judgments about their diplomas. Strategic thinking about these three considerations should continue beyond this first year of higher tuition.

The responsibility for communicating the changes in tuition policy fell to the government, the institutions, and, in some respects, to the media. There is still work to do to help manage the expectations of students and families as this last increase has prompted a significant shift in the attitudes of students. Students are consumers of both education and information and young alumni interviewed in focus groups feel universities must do a better job communicating the real costs for different degrees:

I suspect there will be further increases and once we get a sense of clarity about what the programs actually cost it will help minimize the concern. Perhaps there will be different tuition scales.

Alumni relations offices will continue to be under a brighter spotlight. First, institutions will be expecting improved constituent relations: will more alumni be asked to volunteer and help current students in their job searches? Moreover, how accurate is the alumni contact information? Second, alumni relations will now translate a true need for greater donor participation among graduates: what kind of proactive approaches will be necessary to ease the stigmas felt by younger graduates who have recently paid for their education? Which alumni cohort shows the greatest potential for donating in the future?

Next, the experience of admissions is different in England compared to the United States but there are signs of ‘strategic enrollment management’ practices beginning to
emerge in today’s climate. How may this impact the future of higher education institutions in England? British universities are asking themselves to define how their institutions are perceived in the market, their institution’s perceived brand, and their competitive strengths and weaknesses. As a result, processes are created to buttress the market position and market profiles of institutions. Their academic, financial and enrollment profiles have been highly predictable for many years. Even with new tuition increases in 1998 to £1,000 and another in 2004 to £3,000, the admission process in England has been standardized to afford students a regulated degree of choice based on their secondary school academic program and test scores. The increase of tuition to £9,000 now creates a more competitive environment for universities as they fulfill new preconditions of developing more ‘access agreements’ with schools from lower-socioeconomic communities and more student scholarships.

Along with looking at the changing profile of prospective students, English universities are increasingly going to be asking themselves these three questions: 1) do our academic programs prepare students for today’s workforce demands, 2) which universities are emerging competitors, and 3) what is our market position relative to our competitors? The three institutions involved in this study and other members of the Russell Group will always be in demand due the recognized quality of the teaching and the fact that they’re research-driven institutions. In today’s job climate there are many jobs that bar people from applying simply because they do not hold a university degree. Young alumni involved in this study agree:
Some employers recognize certain institutions above others and that’s when we’ll see when the market and the fees start to work against some of the newer institutions or the ones that don’t have such a well-regarded reputation.

If numbers don’t increase then the pressure is on schools to differentiate themselves even more, and those schools that are less-established may close and there could be less number of education providers (and the tuition price will be kept high).

In 2009, three non-Russell Group universities realized that the crowded marketplace coupled with uncertainty around funding and student numbers created a need to help universities communicate their distinctiveness. The Distinct Project (www.distinct.ac.uk) attracted government funding resulting in an on line suite of tools and resources to help institutions “have a clear sense of who they are, as an organization, and what they have to offer to various stakeholders” (retrieved from website, February 2, 2013).

Overall, England is very conscientious about making sure the population at-large is educated and prepared to enter into local job sectors. England should also be concerned that higher tuition is prompting Home students to look outside the UK for a university education. Students may be able study in the U.S., Australia, as well as those outside the EU (Switzerland and the Nordics) for lower cost. These countries could become emerging competitors and some English universities will begin to think about their market position relative to both the domestic and international landscape.

Another concern is how higher tuition shifts the balance of studies on each campus. “Students and families parents want to know whether the additional expenditure required to study a particular subject, go to a particular institution, and/or pursue a
particular degree is worthwhile as compared to another choice,” writes Roger Brown, professor of higher education policy at Liverpool Hope University (2011). Students mindful of the utility of their more expensive degrees may choose programs such as law, engineering or computer science over English literature or history. However, how equipped are students at 17 and 18 years of age to be ready to make such decisions? Is the English economy ready to inherit a new generation of young professionals trained in applied sciences and academic programs? How will universities respond to a potential change in demand from students? Will alumni relations and career services units adequately forecast student and young alumni demand for more alumni networking and mentoring programs?

**Opportunities**

The tealeaves in England represent a new “normal” for universities and the students they serve. The phenomenon described in this study calls upon alumni relations offices to take the lead in a number of ways: through demonstrating the impact of alumni relations on students, on young alumni, on fundraising and within the offices’ respective campuses. This study has also uncovered a new opportunity for England to better assess and acknowledge the role that alumni play in helping students find their first job.

Across the higher education sector alumni relations offices can provide examples of their effectiveness and importance especially in today’s economy. A recent case from Enfield described how engaged alumni helped the university bid for and win a £4.2M research grant that will help their business school lead a project on “projections of risk
and ambiguity (Interview, November 11, 2012).” Mentioned above in the introductory chapter, the Pierce Report (Pierce, Ibid.) strongly encourages higher education institutions in England to invest in their relationships with alumni to increase fundraising. The report also alludes to the fact that the sector does not yet know what the impact of the large fees will be on individual giving. Gifts, over time, may be reduced but that should not diminish universities’ goals for increasing overall alumni donor participation. Therein lies a significant opportunity for the next few years to assess fundraising efforts and results.

The three case studies demonstrated how alumni relations is working closely with the careers offices and, in some cases, the academic colleges. This work must continue. A more segmented network of alumni may be created from former society presidents and sabbatical officers. This cohort gave their time and talents to the university as students and may be more receptive to becoming actively involved in helping current students create a more meaningful student experience. A former Guild of Students officer’s reflection (personal correspondence November 5, 2012) represents another way of describing the vision:

I strikes me therefore that there is a great opportunity here to build a stronger connection between the University and the student from a much earlier point, rather than at the point when they become Alumni. This seems to be all about creating an enriching student experience where the student understands that the University is not simply a vehicle to academic achievement, social mobility or a fun time but is also about being part of a much larger community, where those who have been before contribute to the experiences of those there in the present. And leading from that, there is a sense that each current student has their role to play in continuing this until it genuinely becomes the heritage and culture of the institution. Perhaps that is the vision (or part of it) that I would like the University of Buckland to have for Alumni and Student Affairs.

Cumulative efforts such as these will become parts of a growing menu of student services
that directly impact the student experience and thus student satisfaction.

Finally, this study provides a timely recommendation to the creators of the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey administered six months after graduation. The current version of the DLHE survey includes a question about “how graduates in employment found a job.” Students currently choose from the following responses:

- Recruiting agency/website
- Personal contacts, including family and friends, networking
- Employer’s website
- Already worked there
- Own institution’s Careers Service
- Speculative application
- Newspaper/magazine advertisement
- Other
- Don’t remember

The response “Personal contacts, including family and friends, networking” can be changed to include “alumni networking,” or a stand-alone response that lists “Alumni mentor, contact, or network/group” can be added to the choices above. By specifying the impact of alumni on one’s job search, students are helping institutions better assess the importance of alumni relations during these challenging times. Buckland’s Alumni Leadership Mentoring Program set a goal of helping students find jobs within six months of graduation. A simple change to the next DLHE could capture a program’s effectiveness such as the one piloted at Buckland.
Closing

The growing number of college and university students in the United States saddled with higher tuition costs has been a topic at the highest levels of government and academic policymakers. Two 2012 studies on the impact of student financial aid and debt on alumni giving shift the focus towards how alumni feel about donating. The first study, “Does Generosity Beget Generosity? Alumni Giving and Financial Aid,” authors Jonathan Meer and Harvey S. Ross found that individuals who took out student loans are less likely to make a gift because they resent the fact that they are burdened with loans. This, they coined, is the “annoyance effect.” Using a national representative sampling of alumni, researchers Margaret Platt Jendrek and Jean M. Lynch (Report on Student Debt and Alumni Giving, 2012) focused on perceptions about debt and annual giving noting that recent graduates were less likely to donate than earlier graduates and similar feelings of burden (as mentioned above) create a barrier between participating and not.

England is not going to be far behind the United State in studying the same issue. In fact, in January 2012 The Sutton Trust, a foundation with an education research agenda since 1997, formed an Independent Commission to review the impact of tuition and fees on application and admissions trends on Home students, particularly students from middle and lower income backgrounds. After one year of study, the Chair of the Commission, Will Hutton, reported:

Although it is too early to draw any firm conclusions, this study provides initial evidence that increased fees have an impact on application behaviour. There was a clear drop in application numbers from English students when compared to their counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. On a positive note we are
pleased to see that, at this stage, there has been no relative drop-off in applicants from less advantaged neighbourhoods. We will continue to monitor a range of indicators as the fee increases work their way through the system (personal correspondence March 1, 2013).

The Commission also carried out a survey, undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), investigating attitudes and intentions among perspective university students between the ages of 15 and 18. The survey found that just under three quarters (74%) of 15-17-year-old students (in years 10-12 in England) said they were very or fairly likely to apply to go to a university, while 77% of 18-year-olds (in year 13) said they had applied to go to a university in the UK. Nearly 60% of students said that the increase in tuition fees had influenced their decision whether to go to university in the UK. The Commission may find a growing number of students feeling “more burdened” and that may continue to shift Home application figures downward. The Commission’s work continues through 2014 and, at that time, England may have a clearer understanding on how the new tuition and fees impacts enrollment and completion rates.

This study has begun the scholarship on how the experience of paying tuition and fees impacts the other “A” – affinity. The case studies here provide stories of how three peer institutions prepared themselves to address this new phenomenon and how young alumni perceive their current relationship with alma mater. Dovetailed with other studies, such as The Sutton Trust’s currently underway, further related research on the relationship of tuition and fees and alumni affinity can continue to educate, motivate and lead.
APPENDIX A

Literature Review

Introduction

Academic fees are accelerating the pace of change for what is expected in Britain’s higher education system. Once a public good provided at no cost to students, economic austerity measures introduced by ruling governmental parties have created new price tags for higher education institutions (HEIs) that have grown exponentially since the inception of the first fees of £1,000 in 1998. Thus there is a new consumer relationship between institution and its undergraduates or future alumni.

“There is a growing interdependence between students, institutions, the economy, employers and the state. We believe that this bond needs to be more clearly recognized by each party, as a compact which makes clear what each contributes and what each gains.” (Dearing Report, 1997, introduction, item 9). The Dearing Report was the first public document introducing students to the notion of personal fiscal responsibility for their education. In this report “contributions” for students and graduates include greater financial contribution to the costs of tuition; however, under “benefits” there is no mention of access of and membership in an alumni network. Rather, the benefits are described as ‘better information and guidance to inform decisions’ and ‘fairer income contingent arrangements for making a financial contribution when in work.’ Up until recently there has not been a culture of alumni relations, at least not in the same sense we have in this country.
The central thrust of the literature on the impact that tuition has on building affinity, participation and support with students and young alumni is found in theories ranging from institutional identity and the impact on alumni affinity to more mainstream journals and trade publications treating current applications of engagement practices.

Tuition and alumni engagement are two phenomena operating in Britain that are less than 15 years old. The impact of tuition on the later leads to several questions: Has tuition in Britain given its recent alumni a bad taste in their mouth, negative enough to discourage affiliations with their alma mater? Have alumni relations offices been able to successfully cultivate young alumni engagement regardless of tuition? What is it that British universities need to do to build alumni loyalty, build the “brand” and create a culture of affinity among alumni with their colleges/universities?

**History of Tuition Fees in the UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**

Scott (in Warner & Palfreyman, 2001) compares the evolution of the British HE system to, first, Europe, and today, the United States. In Europe HEIs are “binary” in nature where there are universities and vocational education institutions. Since the time of former British polytechnics became universities in 1992, HEIs has been classified under seven institutional types:

1) Oxford and Cambridge
2) The University of London
3) The old ‘civics’ established in the Victorian period, mainly in the North and the Midlands
4) The ‘redbricks,’ founded in the first half of the twentieth century, generally in the South
5) The new universities built on Greenfield sites during the 1960s
6) The technological universities, the former colleges of advanced technology, and
7) The ‘new’ universities of the 1990s, i.e., the former polytechnics

Carpentier (2003) writes that the post-1973 era demonstrated a conflict between the need to continue the educational development begun after the WWII and the economic capacity or political will to provide ever-increasing public resources for education. The 1988 Education Reform Act was an example of the Conservative government’s determination to apply market principles to education (Knight, 1990). Public expenditure on education grew more slowly in absolute terms from 1973, and showed significant reversals in policy in some sectors. For example, in higher education, grants were replaced by loans and fees were introduced. Between 1973 and 1999 the percentage of university income received from central government declined from 80% to 50%, while the proportion received from fees rose from 4% in 1975 to 22% in 1999. Although overall enrollments increased, expenditure per student declined substantially in the 1970s and 1990s, the share of full-time courses declined from 80% to 60%, and there was an increase in the student-teacher ratio (Knight, Hodgson, 2005). Britain witnessed political conflicts from 2006: “the Government says that it values the diversity of universities and colleges, understands the importance of their autonomy, and wants to cut bureaucratic interventions…but the Government is also committed to raising standards in the public sector as well as ensuring that our economy functions properly” (p. 5).

Hodgson concludes universities and colleges should, on the basis of a clear vision about who does what, make sure they develop their governance, audit and management so they are fit for purpose – as the sector has been doing with great success over the last decade – and that data needed for their own management purposes is timely and useful.
Can the elite-mass British system survive in an environment where there are more students seeking higher education when the public investment in the ‘public good’ is decreasing? Up until 1998 a college education in the UK was free. Political and economic forces changed that in 1998 with the first tuition of £1000 per year (Dearing Report, 1997). In the report (section 111) the government laid out their reasoning for requiring students to contribute to tuition:

- Students are likely to be more demanding of institutions if they are contributing;
- It would help to level the playing field between full- and part-time study and would put full-time higher education students on a more similar basis to adult further education students;
- If graduates are contributing to the costs of their tuition there will be a clearer expectation that the funding released should be spent on higher education.

Johnstone (2005) discusses “fear and loathing of tuition fees” from the perspective of the author who researched the topic for 20 years. Most interesting is his perspective about the prolonged erosion of student grant support in the 1980s and 90s, beginning with the elimination of subsidized tuition fees to overseas students and the loss of eligibility of most students for general social welfare grants, followed by the freezing of mandatory grants and the inauguration of ‘top up’ loans to take the place of the missing annual increments and, finally in 1997, the abolition of maintenance grants altogether and their replacement by loans.

In 2004 tuition increased to £3000 per year (Higher Education Act of 2004). Jones (2006) focuses on the problems generated by the increase of tuition fees in 1998. The
introduction of tuition fees in this year shifted more of the cost of higher education upon students and their families. As the burden of education was transferred to students, their expectations escalated regarding the facilities and services that (provide alongside classes. Jones sets a context for tracking student expectations for greater institutional transparency regarding student services and how resources will be used during the most recent cycle of rising tuition. This may lead to questioning the role of student as consumer, alumni as consumer of alumni services, and how do HEIs differentiate their alumni services to meet the demands of a growing and diverse alumni body.

In October 2010, the ruling party issued a report directing higher education institutions to consider raising their tuition 200% to £9000 per year (Brown Report, 2010), effective July 2012. When institutions began publicly announcing their fees, the first three were Oxford University, Imperial College, and the University of Enfield. According to Holly Peterson, deputy director of alumni relations and development at Enfield, it was only Enfield alumni who voiced their opposition to their decision (personal communication, London, February 17, 2012).

The institution of tuition in Britain signaled a major change that required careful management and communication practices with stakeholders. Management of change process varies according to organizational culture and history of HEIs. From the literature on management of change, Bolman and Deal (1997) discuss the topic of organizational governance by matching frames to specific change initiatives. Perhaps Britain may be considered a more loosely coupled system than before with government attempts over the last few years to loosen control and let market forces and student choice impact HEIs. In writing about change and leadership Luddeke’s (1999) comments about the approaches to
communicating the first tuition increase to students included that “current challenges facing HE in UK today have prompted review bodies to determine the universities’ future role, structures and priorities.”

Theoretically, applying constructivism (Olssen, 1996) - where outcomes depend upon the prior knowledge and interests of the learner (and) involves the construction of meanings in a continuous and active way - may aid Britain’s leadership in expanding approaches to management. Luddeke (1999) appears to agree: “In today’s world higher education must learn not only how to adapt to external and internal circumstances but also to act – with increasing resolve – creatively in generating solutions to problems, pedagogical and otherwise.” Michael and Kretovics (2005) continue to probe the situation in Britain by asking if leaders have acted in ways to mitigate unanticipated consequences of new public policies around higher education funding. Finally, Peter Senge’s contributions (1990) may be paired with Luddeke (1997) regarding change models for higher education. Consider the term “openness.” How open is the British government with their communications to HEIs and the public and how open are the HEIs with their students and alumni? As quoted in Luddeke (1997), “Senge distinguishes between participative openness and reflective openness, both of which need to be integrated or else “the behavior of being open will not produce real openness.”. He continues: “reflective openness means ‘looking inward and starts with the willingness to challenge our own thinking, to recognize that any certainty we ever have is, at best, a hypothesis about the world…It involves not just examining our own ideas, but mutually examining others’ thinking (Senge, 1990).’
A long tradition and experience of low tuition fees has created a strong sense of entitlement to low-cost higher education even amongst the most affluent (Ward, 2005). Since 1998, not one pound has been paid in advance or concurrently with their education by student and families; in the UK tuition is paid upon graduation when an alum earns a minimum salary as determined by the government.

Britain’s fee structure may create a cause-and-effect reaction with alumni. A current student in a UK institution today is moreover a consumer justified to ask “what do I get for this tuition that is different from my predecessors?” For alumni relations offices, this heightened concern may make it more difficult to entice and engage future young alumni. The recent 200% increase effective July 2012 could require alumni relations offices to take different approaches to convincing alumni to join, to associate, and to support alma mater. Generational differences could exist between young alumni and older alumni who experienced less financial deprivation.

**Building Institutional Affinity with Undergraduates and Alumni**

Toma, Dubrow and Hartely (2005) write about the interrelationship of brand, institutional identity and institutional culture. Culture actively works to support the goals of external relations, such as alumni relations, in that it encourages “strong identification and clear brand and the benefits that accompany them,” as stated in their introduction of their ASHE Higher Education Report. Additional scholarship on institutional identity, brand equity, and institutional culture leads to further questions about how these topics are realized today in Britain.
Dutton, Dukerich, and Harquil (1994) define “perceived organizational identity” as what people know about their own institutions and “construed external image” as what people perceive others to know. Organizational membership - the more contact one has with their organization - is a central and frequently used basis for self-definition: self-continuity, self-distinctiveness, and self-enhancement. One wonders how young alumni in Britain view their alumni associations and how they understand their peers’ views of the alumni association. Do young alumni seek more contact with their institutions as a result of their perceived organizational identity? Do alumni associations predict low levels of engagement and try different approaches to engage alumni to at least be “aware” and have “contact?” National surveys of students in their last semester ask about the quality of the student experience. Six months after graduation the annual destination of leavers from higher education survey asks graduates to share their current status and geographic location (Brennan, Williams & Woodley, 2005). Both forms of student and alumni studies provide data that may be used by institutions to better inform their practices.

Aaker (1991) describes brand equity in terms of how the attachment of a name or symbol creates the difference between products such as automobiles, or a university. In Britain students are now asked to enter into a relationship with their university that has already determined a set tuition. The set tuition is eliminating the chance for students to get to know the value of the institution in the marketplace and the value to themselves as products of their education.

Aaker (1991) writes about a four-part model of brand equity that creates value to constituents: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations.
Did British HEIs establish brand loyalty before introducing tuition in 1998? Toma, Dubrow & Hartley (2005) focus on the probable tangible benefits of creating a strong brand in higher education. These include awareness, associations, loyalty, perceived quality (brand equity), contact, cooperation, attachment, and loyalty (institutional identification). Awareness, contact and association are what British HEIs are focusing on today in the new era of creating alumni relations programs for their graduates.

Institutional culture is taken up again by Toma, Dubrow & Hartley referencing Toma (2003): “Institutions must convince tuition-paying students (or their parents), private donors, and state legislators (if public) that they are worthy of support. These characteristics make building institutional identification - both internally (with students) and externally (with alumni) - and enhancing the equity that comes with a strong brand so critical.” Furthermore the essence of “…external relations in American higher education is to advance the congruence of institutional goals with the goals of individuals who are associated with the institution. Developing a strong institutional culture and image (Sevier, 1988) is of paramount importance.”

Much is known about building affinity with undergraduates and the role of alumni relations in inspiring a lifelong interest in their alma mater. In the last 60 years the role of the alumni affairs professional has become more sophisticated and so too have programs to recruit students, or “alumni-in-training.” What are the things that make people feel a connection to the institution where they do their undergraduate studies? There is the notion of the brand that is inculcated through academic reputation, famous faculty and well-known alumni. Institutions are deliberately promising a certain type of experience and value for students (Moore, 2010). There is also the notion of school spirit, also
inculcated and developed in a number of different ways (school colors, loyalty to athletic teams, etc.) such as homecoming and the iconic labels that last a lifetime such as a “Yalie,” from Yale University or an “Old Etonian” from Britain’s famous independent school for boys, Eton College, where the strong campus culture characterized with rituals and ceremonies engenders a lifelong connection between alumni and the College. Much evidence exists to confirm the recipe for affinity as described by Gallo (2001). Colleges and universities are the parties proactively seeking support and participation from their student bodies.

Alumni relations offices and student affairs departments work together in a number of ways today to promote student-alumni interaction (Rissmeyer, 2010; Jablonski, 1999). Greek life programs are supported by national alumni associations for the fraternities and sororities. Career services offices offer one of the most visible and valuable linkages to alumni as students become increasingly more interested in their employability opportunities as their college career develops.

The notion of lifelong affiliation or the “alumni cycle” begins with students. It is critical to build awareness for an alumni relationship at each stage of the student experience (Gallo, 2001). Returning to the notion of brand, admissions officers are also tapping the sense of “association with excellence” during their recruitment practices. Alumni engagement through lifecycle interests focuses on a continuum of involvement with an institution beginning as soon as a student enrolls (if not before) and extending through a graduate’s life, with programs provided for all ages and a diverse set of interests. Studies show that nurturing this bond with young alumni paves the way to consistent and increased philanthropic support over time (Napa Group, 2010).
Alumni associations are also measuring the level of alumni engagement through the use of traditional metrics such as reunion attendance as well as newer social media tools that help track how alumni are communicating with each other and their institution online (Allen, 2012). Surveys and focus groups may assess whether students and alumni are hearing and/or reacting to messages sent from their alma mater. The Oregon State University’s College of Business created The Building Community Initiatives (BCI) survey (CASE Currents, October, 2011, p. 6). The BCI creates a score card for alumni affinity based on four key measures: OSU’s identity and brand (wearing clothing and responding to logos); the institution as a whole (do they agree and respect the direction of the leadership?); peers (are they in touch with former classmates?); and their educational experience (has their education helped them in their profession?).

Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) write further about organizational and institutional culture: the emotional part of organizational life. Several questions arise from their scholarship: What is the organizational culture of British HEIs? How do the British HEIs’ alumni relations units define culture? How is a young alumni sub-culture developing in Britain? These authors’ research reveals the literature on subcultures in higher education focuses primarily on students or faculty. Taken a step further, Britain may not realize today’s climate resulting from tuition and fees is engendering a sub-culture of students and young alumni who share a different experience than those students who studied 5-15 years ago. Student interactions with their study and work environment are also significant in understanding culture (Toma et al.). In Britain, most students commute the majority of their educational career thereby their transient existence on campus is further strengthened.
Schein (1992) suggests that cultural elements can work at cross purposes with other elements, “leading to conflict and ambiguity.” He writes, “This may result from insufficient stability of membership, insufficient shared history of experience, or the presence of many subgroups with different kinds of shared experiences.” Communicating the tuition increases created tension between students and administration as evidenced by student protests in London throughout 2011. Student-to-alumni subculture should be managed in a careful way.

Finally, a call to action comes from the trade journals (Crow, 2012): “But beyond making the case for support broadly, advancement professionals must articulate the unique identity, mission, values, and goals of their respective institutions. The irreducible core of any college or university is the human relationships within its scope, and these must be informed by a shared vision, which in turn shapes institutional identity. From this institutional identity, all aspects of mission, values, and goals emerge, as well as organization, operations, and practices. Advancement professionals play a critical role in communicating the unique profile of the institutions they represent.”

**Building Alumni Identity in the 21st Century**

Another contemporary topic involves the ways alumni identity has been developed and sustained in the last decade. The majority of literature on new practices is found in higher education trade publications. Social media and alumni career services are two areas of expansion for alumni relations programs. A recent survey of 951 Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) members reported that most
advancement professionals believe social media helps them achieve their goals of alumni engagement and strengthening brand image (Doak, 2011). The notion of blogging has also crept into higher education advancement practices. Popular faculty are guest bloggers on alumni sites sharing their latest research and classroom discussions with alumni enjoying the chance to reconnect with a favorite professor or reminisce with other former classmates about former times on campus (Fernandez, 2012).

Alumni associations have begun to develop targeted alumni career service programs in response to the recession and the changing nature of entry-level jobs today. Major universities in the United States created alumni networking nights for their alumni that tied targeted programs to a major sporting event (Herek, 2011). Alumni would network before a basketball game around career areas such as journalism, health care and non-profits and then sit together in a reserved section to watch the game and resume their conversations held an hour before. Feelings about alma mater can change over one’s lifetime and an institution has an opportunity to host these opportunities to enhance their professional lives while promoting the alumni relationship.

Web-based services have also developed in the last decade. Georgetown University in the United States has developed webinars for their alumni seeking specific tips for their careers and can track over 6,500 alumni participating in 48 webinars in 2010 (CASE, 2011).

Opportunities for alumni to influence, enhance and add personal experience (such as guest lecturers) are some of the most powerful ways alumni feel connected to the overall success and well-being of their alma mater. Amherst College sponsors inexpensive and easy ways for alumni to interact with faculty (Langley, 2010). One is an
online book club featuring faculty writing, and another is a program “Amherst Connects,” which allows alumni to join a professor on a webinar that features a classroom-style presentation followed by a question and answer period.

Another relevant issue is discussed in the literature is whether colleges and universities try to build connection to their alumni by demonstrating that there have been improvements to their alma mater (or need to be) that should be supported and maintained and that philanthropy can be creative. Strout (2007) highlights an example from the University of Wisconsin at Madison whereby 13 individuals gave a collective $85 million so that the School of Business would retain its traditional name for another 20 years. This non-traditional approach creates a group mentality around their institutional support.

Alumni Expectations about Support for Higher Education

The vast majority of students in the United States are traditional consumers and have always paid to attend a college or university with the assumption that “they got what they paid for,” and what they were paying for was the value of their education and the lifelong relationships they, as alumni, will have with alma mater. Changes to financing higher education in the United States have had an impact on student attitudes about their relationship as alumni.

Bloom, Hartley & Rosovsky (2006) state that in the United States there has been a shift in emphasis from the public benefits of higher education - the common good - to private gains in the form of more lifetime income, increased personal status, and more
personal and professional mobility. No doubt this represents an ideological shift, heavily reinforced by the difficulties of measuring or even defining public benefits. Students today are focused on the bottom line of their investments: employability. In Britain the private rate of return (the direct cost of schooling while foregoing work) is hard to calculate since tuition is paid after graduation and only when one earns a minimum salary. Calculating the social rate of return may be what the British government is focused on as it encourages more adult and part-time students to enroll in higher education.

American institutions promote a reciprocal relationship with their alumni and, in turn, alumni are not surprised by when solicited for donations. However Weerts (2007) reminds institutions that giving is associated with an alum’s experience firsthand in financing their undergraduate education with financial aid programs such as work study and grants. Alumni donors who benefited from financial aid while in school are more likely to give to their annual fund.

Weerts (2007) and colleagues also studied what motivates alumni to give and volunteer. Their conceptual framework was constructed around three theories: social exchange theory, an expectancy theory, and an investment theory. In the social exchange theory alumni support is association with the perceptions about the value of current and past experiences with the institution. The relationship is thought about in economic terms whereby relationships are evaluated in terms of a “give and take” transaction and it comes down to whether the benefits are equal to or outweigh the costs in getting more involved. Today the cost of attending HEIs in Britain has increased 200% and students are beginning to monetize their experiences as students and new consumers of their
education. With expectancy theory, alumni have expectations about the value of their support and these expectations predict and impact future participation. Alumni decide whether to give money or volunteer based on how they feel about the institution’s current fiscal status and whether they feel their gifts are linked to a “positive relationship between their efforts, performance, and a desired outcome (Weerts).” Britain’s institutions can strive for greater transparency among students and alumni in how they portray their distinct institutional purpose and how their educational role leads to targeted student services that prepare both student and young alumni for jobs and graduate school opportunities. Finally, the goals of an investment model assume that there will be wins and losses rooted in a history – a history of reciprocity only just recently felt by students. Alumni relations programs such as mentoring programs can provide a more useful way of realizing the intrinsic aims of time, emotional involvement, or money.

Britain’s higher education leaders have taken steps to ask their institutions to provide details and examples of ways they can make meaning of a social construct relationship. Students and families are joined by alumni to ask for transparent and tangible examples of the transactions between themselves and alma mater (retrieved from National Union of Students, www.nus.org.uk).

**Changes in British Student Populations and Expectations of Education**

A new classification of student has emerged in the last 20 years in Britain. The traditional notion in Britain that the exams one takes defines one’s path for life is not entirely true. University education was once thought of as something for the elite (e.g., Oxford/Cambridge) but more British are educated today than in any other time. Britain's
changing demographics (more immigrants, more middle class) have also meant changes in university education. From 1985 to 2001, this “massification” in HE grew by 85% for managerial and professional class families with college-bound 18 year old as compared to 15% of children from families from the manual labor classes. The middle class’ relatively free education in 2001 was being paid for by all taxpayers (Palfreyman, 2001). However, Peter Scott (2001) posits the British higher education system is still largely latching on to its elite traditions such as degree completion. Even with the doubling of student enrollments in the mid-1980s to mid-1990s the non-completion rates only increased from 14 to 18%. A national report in 2003 cited another measure, the non-continuation rate, as below 10 percent for traditional-aged undergraduates at three-quarters of UK institutions (retrieved from http://www.hefce.ac.uk/Learning/PerfInd/2003/guide/t3.asp). More than a decade ago Scott believed British completion rates were stabilized by three notions: first, non-completion was regarded as a failure to the system and a waste of taxpayer dollars; second, HEIs are using more accountability measure to track “success” and completion has been included as a performance indicator; and third, faculty regard non-completion as a sign of their failure to teach and/or establish rapport with students, a traditional reference to the days of the college masters and their Oxford or Cambridge communities.

Scott, however, quickly moved to another comparison:

“The attention paid to the ‘student experience’ in the British system may partly reflect a new emphasis on students as consumers and on ‘customer service,’ but it also represents a reworking of traditional assumptions about academic intimacy, ultimately embodied in the ideal of the Oxbridge tutorial system, which seems out of place in a truly mass system.” (Scott, 2001, p.194).
Oxford and Cambridge have remained model HEIs for institutions around the world. What contributes to the overall success of Oxford students? Palfreyman (2001) discusses a performance indicator model for Oxford that describes a computational equation of inputs, processes and outputs (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: A Performance Indicator Model for Oxford**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INPUTS</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>PROCESSES</th>
<th>→</th>
<th>OUTPUTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>↑</td>
<td></td>
<td>↑</td>
<td>↓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students (academic achievement/potential and social capital)</td>
<td>the tutorial</td>
<td>employable graduates + research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ staff</td>
<td>+ peer pressure</td>
<td>+ research</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ infrastructure (including the concept of the collegiate university)</td>
<td>+ collegiality</td>
<td>+ a wider social role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ money (extra taxpayer Funding plus endowment income)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Palfreyman’s model is valuable as it provides a blueprint for new constructs, measurement and interpretations of performance indicators for current HEIs in Britain. Moreover, levels of engagement and satisfaction between students and HEIs as well as the perceptions of these levels by HEIs tell a story of changes in the transaction of teaching and learning today.

Families are taking notice of the fee increase as well. According to a global banking survey of British customers in the final quarter of 2010, families started to save more money in anticipation of the fee increases (CASE Currents, September, 2011). 13%
of parents started a university savings fund and 10% increased an existing university fund savings; however, closer to 25% of 16-17 year olds said they were reconsidering higher education because of the fee increase and 13% of families with teenagers were evaluating the prospect of a university education for their children.

**Conclusion**

The history of the majority of alumni relations programs in Britain and history of tuition are both less than 15 years old. With a majority of HEIs having nascent alumni relations programs in Britain (excluding Oxford, Cambridge and Imperial College) further research may differentiate the scope of impact further tuition increases have on the relationship between alumni and their alma mater. Specifically, the experience and the personal stories of the most recent graduates may lead to an analysis of best practices for alumni relations programs as well as important pitfalls to avoid in building affinity programs.

Miller (2010) asks whether future governments will adopt a conservative or rational approach to the development of British higher education. The answer to this will inevitably reflect personal beliefs about the role of education, but there are three conflicting elements to consider: vision versus progression, intervention versus mediation, and positivism versus pragmatism. In Britain, the ideas of one ruling party may be altered by the progress made at the institutional level; government policies surrounding tuition could be influenced by collective bargaining rights of student unions; and conservative fiscal ideals may be challenged by higher education advocates who deem the status quo as supporting student access and completion. I can now consider
whether I agree with the author when he says variable tuition fees resulted from a process of conservative evolution, notwithstanding rhetoric of rationality. Further research may discuss the implications of this for the future direction of British higher education policy.

The literature also revealed several examples of how institutional affinity can develop over one’s lifetime. Alumni perceptions are influenced by institutional identity, institutional brand, and institutional culture, and how they are developed might alter perceptions. Despite the critical importance of how institutional identity is developed and deployed, the evidence of its effectiveness in building alumni engagement is anecdotal and not academically documented. Furthermore, the majority of the literature that exists documents the ways in which alumni engagement has been built, cultivated and maintained in the United States, not in Britain. Recent case studies and trade publication reports make up the alumni relations literature as it extends to the current-day realities in Britain.

Further questions and considerations to help assess the impact of tuition fees on young alumni engagement Britain include:

- What exactly do students and young alumni want from their alma mater?
- Beyond jobs, do they want their alma mater to exist as a healthy institution posed to exist globally in all areas: academic, co-curricular and external relations?
- Will a shared understanding about the transaction between institution and students and young alumni -- what each party gives and what each party gets -- become part of this new scholarship?
• At what level will young alumni support their alma mater given the fact they paid tuition?

Another important aspect of institutional culture is what constitutes information in an organization and how it is disseminated (Kuh and Whit, 1998). This is a critical piece of the story in Britain as information may be shared with students and alumni through the uses of institutionalized culture in the form of alumni programs such as reunions or new student orientation. This may lead to a new question of whether tuition affects the intended uses of institutional culture in new ways and whether the alumni associations recognize this and respond in creating new rituals and, thus, a new culture.

Because of the structural change in fee structures in British higher education, this is a prime time to be taking theories and applying them to current day realities, seeing the extent to which what is known about alumni engagement in other countries can be applied to the case of British universities.
APPENDIX B
METHODOLOGY

Research Design, Setting and Rationale

The preferred methodology for this research was a qualitative analysis using a case study approach guided by document analysis and an interview protocol. The research question was explored by conducting case studies at three separate institutions that share similar characteristics within a bounded system.

There were some major reasons why qualitative analysis was the right approach. I investigated a small sample but conducted an in-depth analysis of an emerging phenomenon. Moreover, there was not a lot of research published on the topic therefore making it necessary for me to produce an in-depth analysis of which relatively little is known.

For this particular study, purposive sampling was chosen because the universities studied were similar in student composition and enrollment. Typical case sampling is the purposive sampling technique employed as I was interested in patterns of the typicality of the units (e.g. people, cases, events, settingsgetContexts, places/sites) (Patton, 2002). I had the ability to compare the findings from the study using typical case sampling with other similar samples (i.e. comparing samples, not generalizing a sample to a population). In this study, I did not use the sample to make generalizations to a population of undergraduates and young alumni as a whole, but plan investigated how the sample could be representative of other similar samples.
During the one-on-one interviews, participants were asked to discuss specific print and electronic documents and publications that their institution used to discuss the tuition increase with their alumni. I gathered data from three comprehensive national institutions (used as case studies):

- University of Enfield (Contact: Holly Peterson)
- University of Buckland (Contact: Claire O’Sullivan)
- Knight’s College London (Contact: Megan Bruns)

Selecting this peer group of institutions provided a clear set of sample parameters from which I explored institutional history, alumni relations practices and interview results. I selected these institutions because they educate similarly qualified students in England and are banded together as members of the Russell Group, a consortium of research intensive universities. I interviewed former and current heads of alumni relations at the selected institutions to gain both historical and current-day knowledge of the development of alumni relations since 1997 and to understand the particular nature of their institutions’ approach to young alumni engagement.

This approach was appropriate given the fact that this both tuition and alumni relations are emerging topics and the history of both is found in governmental policy documents and institutional literature and practices. Moreover, the nature of this topic in the media today, and the recent (in the last 15 years) focus on developing alumni relations programs as a pipeline to fundraising warranted independent review.
Research Data Sources

This study combined both independent analysis and anecdotal evidence to create qualitative information that may be applied to the current phenomena of the impact on English tuition on young alumni engagement.

The following sources were reviewed and documented: institutional strategic plans and annual reports from 1997 to today from University of Enfield, University of Buckland and Knight’s College London; alumni relations newsletters and magazines from each of the participating universities; institutional websites; additionally, press releases and news articles about both the institution’s and their alumni attitudes towards the tuition increases in the last decade. In this stage of document analysis I was interested in how alumni relations materials have developed and whether there have been marked shifts in language, tone, and topical focus for alumni, particularly young alumni.

I carefully reviewed the government documents communicating the policy changes with regard to implementing tuition in 1998 (the Dearing Report published July 23, 1997), the first increase in tuition effective 2004 (Higher Education Act of 2004 inspired by Clarke, C. white paper on January 22, 2003), and the most recent report, The Browne Report (October 12 2010), calling on higher education institutions to raise their fees up to £9,000. This third and final report’s recommendations were further debated in Parliament in December of that year and the laws for the tuition increase were easily passed, effective July 2012.
New modes of administrative collaboration create data that has increasingly been used to reflect institutional effectiveness in the area of employability. The Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey is an excellent data source publicly available. Careers offices distribute the mandatory to graduates by email six months after graduation. The purpose of DLHE is to track young alumni in graduate-level jobs. I was interested in whether DLHE captured any data on the influence of alumni relations and alumni in graduates job searches and/or appointments. Access to the most current DLHE data was retrieved from the current heads of alumni relations. One ongoing challenge is data integrity in securing the best contact information for recent graduates. The three universities all confirmed that their administrative processes are becoming more aligned so that alumni relations can refer the most updated alumni records to the careers office prior to distributing each year’s DLHE (interview October 19, 2012).

The Council for the Support of Education (CASE) Europe was another source of current information. CASE is the professional association serving alumni relations officers represented in England, the UK, and throughout Europe. CASE has produced reports and benchmarking studies on topics of alumni engagement.

**Data collection and Analysis Methods**

Document analysis yielded preliminary results in the early stages of analysis. This early data was refined throughout the research process specifically during the interview stages (Yin, 2009). In addition to reviewing individual documents and preparing a timeline for the interview protocol, next steps included working with interview subjects and
their home institutions. These parties played an influential role in their interviews as the institutions and professional representing alumni relations functions could decide what types of documented materials will be acceptable to share and discuss.

Throughout the document analysis I looked consistently across documents for patterns. During this stage of research I read the documents to see the story they told. Just as important I also read with the intention of determining critical pieces of missing information from the story. For example, if graduating students complete student satisfaction surveys about their perceptions of their institution in the last 3 years, how do the survey results become translated into young alumni programs? During the document analysis new interview questions were developed and categorized for subsequent interviews.

The strength of a research approach using document analysis is that it is systematic and replicable. One can take the same methodology used in this study in England and approach different countries and a sample set of universities for comparison. Educational documents from other universities can be analyzed using the same methodology.

Document analysis continued while interviews and focus groups were conducted. It was necessary to schedule the interviews and focus groups in advance to best coordinate as many opportunities for data collection as possible during several trips to London that took place between September 24, 2012 and November 12, 2012. There were nine interviews with former or current alumni relations managers or officers. In
September and October, I interviewed both the former and current alumni officers (see Appendix C for a list of interview questions). The objective for these first interviews was to prompt individuals to discuss the research topic in a colloquial manner and to share stories about how their institution has reacted to changes over time.

Focus groups and second interviews with current heads of alumni relations were held in November. For those young alumni not able to participate in focus groups, the research was supplemented by individual interviews and an electronic questionnaire. Both the additional interviews and questionnaire were guided by the same set of questions used in the young alumni focus groups. The second round of interviews with each institutional head of alumni relations occurred after a short interval of time allowing for synthesis of earlier data. During these final interviews I clarified information and facts found in the research and reviewed major themes with each head to check my own understanding about their institution’s perceptions and reactions to the research question.

I personally recorded, transcribed and coded each interview, focus group and questionnaire. The content of each conversation and electronic communication remained in my possession during the entire research period.
APPENDIX C

Sample Interview Questions

Interview with former heads of alumni relations and development during 1997-2004/5 -- the first two cycles of tuition increases (representing the three institutions):

Sample questions:

• How you feel tuition impacted your work in building relationships?
• If you operated with a strategic plan was it influenced by the decision to charge tuition?
• What worries you about the relationship between tuition and alumni engagement?
• What advice did you give to your successor?

Interview with current heads of alumni relations and development (representing the three institutions):

Sample questions:

• How have institutional university employees reacted to the sudden increase in tuition? How have students reacted? Alumni? How do they know?
• What are three key messages you want your alumni to know? Why? On what basis are you making these judgments? Are these different for young alumni? If so, why?
• Do you have a strategic plan and, if so, has it been impacted by the decision to raise tuition?
• How do expect alumni are reacting to fees in terms of their employability concerns? How do you know?
• Do you believe that your institutional leadership “gets the issue?”

Additional questions to consider including in both types of interviews:

• Has the government done a good job communicating the changes and anticipating student and alumni reaction?
• Do you believe the rise in tuition will cause more stress among students and, in turn, more mental health issues will be treated via counseling?
• From this year’s intake figures, has there been a drop in student numbers?
• Do you think that the incoming students from 2012 will expect different services and benefits from alumni relations?
APPENDIX D

Sample Focus Group Questions

1) Was the university’s reputation important to you when you were an applicant? Why or why not?
2) Was the university your first choice? Why or why not?
3) Did you commute from home to the university or did you live in campus housing or a house/apartment near the campus?
4) If you lived on campus what made your experience positive? Were there any negative experiences?
5) If you lived at home or in a house/apartment what made your experience positive? Were there any negative experiences?
6) Describe the university student body when you were a student with a few key words. Are you able to describe today’s student body and, if so, does the description change and why?
7) Describe how you felt when you had to pay tuition. Do you feel tuition changed your feelings about your experience as a student? Why or why not?
8) Do you feel tuition changed your feelings about your experience as an alumnus? Why or why not?
9) No one likes the tuition and fee increase, in general, but do you feel they are being administered reasonably?
10) What do you believe to be the role of the alumni relations office?
11) When was the last time the alumni relations office contacted you? What happened and how did you feel about the office contacting you?
12) Do you believe the alumni relations office should offer job search services for alumni?
13) If you were able to give advice to the current head of alumni relations at your university what would you say?
References

Council for the Advancement and Support of Education www.case.org

The Sutton Trust www.suttontrust.com

Universities UK www.universitiesuk.ac.uk


Dearing Report (July 23, 1997)


King’s College London [www.kcl.ac.uk](http://www.kcl.ac.uk)


*The Birmingham Magazine*, 2011-12, (23), 25.

The Distinct Project (www.distinct.ac.uk).


University of Birmingham www.birmingham.ac.uk

University of Exeter www.exeter.ac.uk


