How can alumni relations be of greater value to

The Hague University?

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1. INTRODUCTION

While carrying out my work placement in the Public Relations Office of Durham University in the United Kingdom, I was introduced to the concept of “alumni relations”. Alumni is the plural of alumnus (male), which means former pupil or student (The Concise Oxford Dictionary). Alumni Relations, as I will describe in this thesis, encompasses everything that can be associated with building and fostering relationships with alumni.

When I was in Durham, I was surprised to learn that so much emphasis was placed on maintaining relationships with former students. It involved much more than simply keeping in contact with them. Every effort was made to maintain a real relationship, which the Collins Dictionary refers to as a “deep connection” (Collins Concise English Dictionary) between the institute and its former students.

At Durham University, all public movements of former students were monitored and recorded, for example newspaper articles, by the Public Relations Office. I found this impressive, and could not remember having seen anything similar in The Netherlands.

It is considered significant that someone has a degree, but it appears less important where the degree was obtained. For instance, in a published article, the author’s name and title would be mentioned but not necessarily the institution where the author studied.

Upon my return to The Netherlands, and after discussion with my mentor, it was agreed that the ‘Alumni Policy of The Hague University’ would make a suitable topic for my thesis. It was felt that this topic would be particularly pertinent to The Hague University in the present economic climate. The Hague University aims to profile itself nationally and internationally; good alumni relations are considered to be part of this process.

In liaison with my mentor, the main research question was formulated as: How can Alumni Relations become of greater value to The Hague University? In order to satisfactorily answer this question, my thesis needed to be structured by formulating subsidiary questions. These are listed in section 1.3.

* 1. Justification of Research methods

In order to write this thesis, primary and secondary research was conducted. The primary research (field study) consisted of talking to experts to get an understanding of both alumni relations and the nature of The Hague University and its objectives. It also involved talking to those concerned with alumni relations on a day-to-day basis, both within The Hague University and elsewhere, to discover the problems which exist, and how alumni relations is viewed both from within and outside The Hague University.

The secondary research (literature) comprised studying reports concerning the present conditions in The Hague, published literature of The Hague University and reports on alumni relations, both in general and in The Netherlands.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

* Why is alumni relations important?

This chapter illustrates the benefits of alumni relations. It also describes the current view of alumni relations in The Netherlands and why it is necessary for it to be altered.

* How do we maintain alumni relations?

This chapter builds on the idea of the marketing of relationships and how, in any business, relationships between buyers and sellers need to be nurtured, whether it be a university and alumni relations, or a multinational company and its customers.

* What is the character of The Hague University and how is it influenced by the city of The Hague?

This chapter highlights the international character of The Hague, the background as to how this developed, and which aspects could be used by The Hague University. It will demonstrate, based on the mission statement and strategy documents, that alumni relations could be an important part of the strategy of The Hague University.

* What is the present alumni Policy?

This chapter deals with the status of alumni relations within The Hague University. It shows that some individual departments within the university have an advanced alumni programme, but that, in the context of the university as a whole, alumni relations as such, seems hardly to exist. It provides answers to the questions of why alumni relations has not been a priority for The Hague University in the past and why it should be so in the future. It makes an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It concludes by offering communication tools to combat the weaknesses and threats and make use of the strengths and opportunities.

* Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter draws conclusions from the entire paper and includes recommendations for the future. 2. WHY ARE ALUMNI RELATIONS IMPORTANT?

This section outlines the benefits that maintaining alumni relations can have for an institution. It also explains why these benefits are not always apparent, and why educational institutions can be reluctant or unable to give it the required attention. And finally, it addresses what is important when maintaining alumni relations.

The fundamental aspect of alumni relations, from which all its benefits stem, is that it makes use of a resource at the disposal of any educational institution that has existed for long enough to have alumni. That is possible given the relationship between alumni and the institution. Although it may appear more important to attract new students than attend to those who have already departed, this may be short-sighted. There are many ways in which the alumnus can assist the institution.

Alumni provide a readily available source of knowledge which can be used as an additional strength.

It is valuable to know what happens to students after their graduation as it says something about the institution where they achieved their qualifications. It is, for example, useful to know if students find it easy to get a job, whether they succeed in remaining in that job, whether it is a stepping-stone to a successful career or maybe just the opposite (VHTO, 2003). In short, it is a control on the quality of the current organisation.

The following section illustrates why alumni relations forms an essential component of this control.

2.1 What are the benefits of alumni relations?

2.1.1 Alumni as a control on quality

As described in the “Handleiding voor Alumnibeleid”, written by Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, published by VHTO in 2003, the new accreditation organisation, NAO (Nederlandse Accreditatie Organisatie), values alumni relations very highly. It is an essential part of quality control as consulting alumni helps the institution to keep an up-to-date curriculum, well adapted to the needs of the outside world. New alumni can contribute with their recent experiences of starting work after finishing their degree, and will be able to comment on what they felt they lacked, or benefited from during their course. They are judges of the competence, skills and merits of recent graduates. They will have an opinion as to where the curriculum is appropriate and where it needs to change in order to better prepare students for life after obtaining their degree.

Older alumni, on the other hand, have the benefit of experience, and a deeper capacity for reflection. They have also the background of a longer-term career and can evaluate the curriculum in a wider perspective.

The internal quality control function played by alumni relations is especially important for the HBO sector of education, because it is designed to equip for employment. Businesses look specifically to recruit people with a HBO background because they have demonstrated their ability in training, and more importantly, they have the practical knowledge which is of direct use to a company.

2.1.2 Alumni as ambassadors

Alumni can be the ambassadors for an institution. They provide free publicity. Although the word alumni denotes students who have left the institution, this does not mean that alumni relations should start when students leave. Good alumni relations should start no later than when students first join. If they have enjoyed their education, and were keenly involved, they are more likely to remain in active contact after they leave and advise others to follow the same path(Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003). This is a unique form of advertising, because it is personal. The potential for this type of publicity needs to be monitored through alumni relations.

2.1.3 Alumni as information point for potential students

For similar reasons, alumni could also be a source of information for potential students. Within a certain perspective, alumni can provide pertinent details about the course and as to how it will help to prepare for the future. Their influence is likely to be significant, and relevant in the eyes of new students (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

2.1.4 Alumni as mentors

Alumni as mentors to new students could be more effective than employing an older student. Alumni have the benefit of working in a relevant sector and they will be in a better position to give advice on how to be optimally prepared. They will be able to provide examples of graduate life but, also, how it has been tested in real life (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

The term mentor usually implies an older, more experienced person who can guide the development of a younger person. But mentoring should be geared to the needs of the mentee. The relationship should not be hierarchical as that undermines its effectiveness, and a not too great a difference in age and experience is often an advantage (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003). Many alumni could fit this role.

2.1.5 Alumni as guest lecturers

Guest lecturers add another dimension to teaching, because they bring practical elements to the course. Alumni are capable of giving students a picture of their jobs and what their particular positions may entail (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

2.1.6 Alumni as intermediaries between businesses and institutions

In addition to the previous suggestions, there are more ways in which alumni can bring practicality to the degree course. Alumni, in their role as intermediaries between businesses and institutions, can help provide work placements and scholarships. Alumni have a good knowledge of what is offered by the institution and what is required by the business. This is made possible by their appreciation of the respective roles. Their assistance could also be extended to jobs for recent graduates of the institution (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

2.2 Current view on alumni relations in The Netherlands

In The Netherlands, alumni relations has not received the same amount of attention as in some other countries. This could be explained by the fact that universities in The Netherlands receive substantial financial government assistance, so that financial support from alumni has been less essential (van Beem, 2005).

More specifically, alumni relations has not, in general, been embraced by vocational universities (HBO) in The Netherlands. Although it has taken time for universities in The Netherlands to start an alumni relations programme, it has taken even more time for HBO institutions to come round to this same way of thinking. In large part this has to do with the distinction between vocational and academic universities (WO), which is both perceived and material (van Beem, 2005). The Netherlands makes a distinction between technical universities and vocational universities . Belgium and Germany operate in the same way. In practice, however, these distinctions are disappearing. This is aided by the recently-implemented Bachelor and Master systems in both types of universities. A HBO education is a more practical form of education and can, for specific areas of industry, be a very conscious choice of education in place of university education (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

HBO universities can take advantage of this to compete with all institutions of higher education. A good alumni relations policy, which to date has not been a real part of the university set-up, would seem a logical development. This would also offer opportunities for The Hague University.

For alumni relations to be fully appreciated, a fundamental shift in perception within higher education in The Netherlands is required. Higher education needs to be seen more as a business, than a public sector institution. Educational institutions in The Netherlands tend not to operate as businesses (Greenberg, 2004). They should realise that students are customers, and customers should be the focus of their attention. If students are dissatisfied with the service they receive, they may take their business elsewhere. They will not recommend the institution to others and will certainly not provide financial support when they become a little more affluent. Good alumni relations starts in-house, it should start while the alumnus is still a student. Linked with this is the philosophy that once the quality of the education and the educational experience improves, so will the willingness and the desire to keep in contact with the institution after leaving (Clotfelter, 2002).

3. HOW DO WE ESTABLISH AND MAINTAIN ALUMNI RELATIONS?

In establishing and maintaining alumni relations, the operative word is “relation”. This is the key that needs to be revered at all times. A relationship needs to be nurtured. We do this is by adhering to a consumer relations practice. There is a need for educational institutions to be consumer-oriented because they are a business and their clients are the students (Greenberg, 2004). The following section will elaborate on this.

Much money can be invested in an alumni relations policy. However, this is only of value if the customer, i.e. the student, is interested. Further, the concept of alumni relations has to be widely supported by all levels of the organisation. Student opinion should be valued, feedback should be obtained and used to improve present practices.

3.1 Relationship marketing

In a relationship-marketing-model, an educational institution is the seller and the student, and later the alumnus, is the buyer. The economy used to be more sellers-oriented, sellers determined what they wanted to sell and consumers had to buy what was on offer. Gradually, the situation has shifted towards the buyers, who make clear what they wish to purchase and sellers are required to supply it. The educational world is now also starting to make this transition. The reason for delay was that education was provided and established on the basis of the reputation of the supplier. Therefore, even if what was available did not necessarily match demand, consumers were not likely to switch supplier. Further, the supply to the market was not developed enough to make switching feasible, that is there were not many similar courses available. There are, of course, still instances where only one educational institution offers a particular subject. However, educational institutions have a growing dependence on end users, the students, who ultimately become the potential alumni. This is because there are increasingly more options open to students, the consumers. In a global market, not only are Dutch students able to seek education abroad, increasing the level of competition, but foreign students also come to The Netherlands to obtain their education (Peelen, 2003).

Relationship marketing demonstrates that there is a way in which consumers and suppliers can live symbiotically, in that there is a way that their relationship can be of mutual benefit.

“The purpose of marketing is to identify and establish, maintain and enhance, and when necessary terminate relationships with customers, so that the objectives regarding economic and other variables of all parties are met. This is achieved through a mutual exchange and fulfilment of promises.” (Peelen, 2003)

The establishment of long-term relationships with consumers provides an organisation with sustainable competitive advantages and results in higher marketing efficiency and effectiveness. Retention of customers and the extension and improvement of customer relationships is attractive for a number of reasons. When customers are retained for a longer period of time and a good relationship exists between them and the organisation, they become more profitable (Peelen, 2003).

3.2 How does Relationship Marketing translate into practical tools?

Putting relationship-marketing theory into practice means setting up a total relationship with the client. Formedia, an advertising agency, investigated the situation of alumni relations in The Netherlands and Belgium. To add breadth to the results, Belgium was used as well as The Netherlands as a case study. It provided the following results which are illustrated in the following table. The table shows the differences between the institutions and how the various ingredients in the marketing mix can make a difference (Derkse, Formedia, 2005).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activities** | **Central Database** | **Central Policy** | **Decentral Policy** | **Interactive Database** | **Alumni Card** | **Life-long E-mail**  | **Alumni Magazine** | **News Bulletin** | **Central Alumni Day** | **Acquiring Funds via Alumni**  |
| **Universities in The Netherlands** |
| Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam | + | + | + | - | - | - | + | + | - | + |
| Open Universiteit | + | + | - | - | - | - | + | + | + | - |
| Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | +/- |
| Rijks-universiteit Groningen | + | + | + | +/- | + | - | + | - | + | +/- |
| Technische Universiteit Delft | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + |
| Technische Universiteit Eindhoven | + | + | + | + | - | - | - | - | + | - |
| Universiteit Leiden | + | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | + | + |
| Universiteit Maastricht | + | + | + | + | - | - | + | - | + | - |
| Universiteit Nijenrode | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + |
| Universiteit Twente | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | - | - |
| Universiteit Utrecht | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | + | + |
| Universiteit Amsterdam | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | + |
| Universiteit Tilburg | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | + | + |
| Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam | + | + | + | - | - | - | + | - | + | - |
| Wageningen Universiteit | + | + | + | - | - | - | + | - | + | + |
| **Universities in Belgium** |  |
| Katholieke Universiteit Brussel | + | + | + | - | - | - | - | + | - | - |
| Katholieke Universiteit Leuven | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | +/- | + |
| Limburgse Universitair Centrum | +/- | +/- | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Universiteit Antwerpen | + | + | + | + | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Universiteit Gent | + | + | + | - | - | - | + | - | + | - |
| Vrije Universiteit Brussel | + | + | + | - | + | - | + | - | - | + |

(Derkse, Formedia, 2005)

3.3 Analysis of the table

It is very noticeable that each university has a central alumni database. This is because most universities do not provide the resources (perhaps one full-time employee) within each department to maintain this database. However, it also facilitates the natural transfer of data, if contact is kept from the date of leaving, the student being enrolled centrally.

It is remarkable that all universities, except the Open University, have both a central and decentral alumni relations policy. Even though students belong to a university, their bond usually develops with their own department. However, practicality dictates that some things are best undertaken centrally. This explains the mix that can be found in this table (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

Most universities in The Netherlands have an alumni magazine. This is a most basic way of reaching all alumni when address details are in order. It is a tangible information tool. Even though it is more quickly out dated than e-mail bulletins, alumni are more likely to read it. An e-mail is more easily deleted or ignored (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003). A magazine is more expensive, however, which could explain why in Belgium only half of the universities has an alumni magazine.

The life-long e-mail address, as the table shows, is not a common tool used for alumni relations. It can be more easily carried out when alumni provide funds, since it would cost money for a university to keep e-mail licenses, which would only increase over time. With the current communication technology, most people have an e-mail address anyway, so the need to keep one through the university is not necessary.

Fundraising through alumni relations is a priority for 10 universities in The Netherlands, most likely to cover the costs of any alumni activity undertaken, such as publishing an alumni magazine or organising an alumni day. Belgium does not raise funds through alumni relations in many universities, as not many of the activities undertaken require additional funding.

There are a variety of tools that can be used in an alumni relations programme and universities use these tools in different combinations. The level of commitment and the combinations used can depend on which goals need to be attained through alumni relations.

3.4 What are the practical difficulties of establishing and maintaining alumni relations?

This section refers mainly to an interview conducted with Ellen Vroemen of the Technical University of Delft (TU Delft). Mrs Vroemen and The TU Delft were chosen because the TU Delft’s alumni relations policy is known to belong to the most advanced in The Netherlands. Her testimony is pertinent because the University of Delft has experienced both the highs and lows of alumni relations; when alumni relations was a high priority and when it was not.

The TU Delft is a university that, in the past, devoted considerable energy to alumni relations. It spent a lot of money, time and resources on it. It had an extensive network. However, during a re-organisation of the university, it became a lower priority. As Mrs Vroemen pointed out, when something like this happens, it is just like starting again. If relationships between the institution and alumni are not maintained and nurtured, they will not survive. Maintaining alumni relations requires a sustained effort, and must, however difficult in practice, continue to receive high priority in times of change. Even on a practical note, the contact database needs to be maintained continually, because as soon as this flounders, contact details are out of date and very difficult to retrace.

Mrs Vroemen highlighted the need for effective alumni relations. From much of the available literature on alumni relations, the impression is gained that effort is matched by effectiveness, but there is little point in spending money on organising things which are not appreciated by alumni. TU Delft drew up an alternative plan of action with regard to consumer orientation, including alumni relations. This followed an in-depth survey of what alumni desired from the university and the degree of contact they would appreciate.

The Hague University can learn from the developments concerning alumni relations that TU Delft has experienced. The interview demonstrated that an organisation needs to use energy effectively to establish and maintain alumni relations.

4. What is the Character of The Hague University and how is it influenced

 by the City of The Hague?

This chapter elaborates on the character of The Hague University, its objectives and strategies which lay the groundwork for explaining how alumni relations can be applicable. Firstly, however, it is devoted to the city of The Hague as a setting for The Hague University, in so far as it influences the nature of The Hague University and colours its goals and strategies.

The city of The Hague is an administrative capital rather than a centre of learning which explains why The Hague University does not have a rich student history. However, it is the third largest city in The Netherlands. H.M. Queen Beatrix lives and works in the city, and it is home to government ministries and embassies, as well as many national and international organisations. The international character of the city is important to The Hague University as becomes clear in this chapter.

4.1 The Hague as City of Peace and Justice

The Hague, following the world’s first-ever Peace Conference in 1899, became the seat of the Permanent Court of International Justice, now the International Court of Justice, and has since become a centre of international legal arbitration (Wikipedia, The Hague, 2006).

The municipality of The Hague wishes to be known as the “justice capital of the world” and the fourth United Nations city after New York, Geneva and Vienna (Wikipedia, The Hague, 2006). In order to achieve this, its position paper, “Working on the world in The Hague”, published in 2005, outlines the required investments to accomplish this goal.

4.2 Paper “Working on the world in The Hague”

This paper shows the considerable impact which international organisations have on the economy of The Hague. As well as the legal international organisations just mentioned, several companies, such as Royal Dutch-Shell, one of the largest oil companies in the world, and several other major international and national companies have their headquarters in The Hague.

Approximately 12,000 people are employed by the international organisations.

In total, international organisations and their employees generated an income in excess of €1.5 billion in 2004. The 12,000 jobs represent 5% of The Hague’s employment and 3% of that of the region. International organisations added 5.9% to The Hague’s gross product and 3.7% to the region’s(Decisio and Bureau Louter, 2005).

The presence of many other international companies and institutions and the support of both national and local government are important factors for organisations in the choice of location.

Also, there are various internationally-oriented schools in the region which provide international primary and secondary education for the children of international employees. These children might be future students of The Hague University, if there were suitable opportunities for higher education.

The Hague University could and should play a role in providing this higher education for the international community. But educational aspirations aside, and, from a simple business point of view, if these international students can be attracted to study at The Hague University, they could end up working throughout the world. The Hague University could then be in contact with global alumni.

4.3 What are the Objectives of The Hague University?

This section provides some insight into The Hague University. It shows the character of the organisation, helps to explain the status of alumni relations in the university, and provides an understanding of problems that may arise.

The Hague University, as it is now, came about in January 2003 through a merger between The Hague College (Haagse Hogeschool) and Technical College Rijswijk (TH Rijswijk). As a whole, it provides education for over 16,000 students (De Haagse Hogeschool, de feiten, 2005).

The Hague University is governed by a Management Board (De Haagse Hogeschool, Jaarverslag 2004, 2005) consisting of three members.

Degree courses are grouped according to subject into departments known as Academies of which there are fourteen in total. The degree course leads to a Bachelor’s Degree, or a Master’s Degree; Professional Master or Master of Science (De Haagse Hogeschool, Jaarverslag 2004, 2005). The Hague University offers a wide variety of courses leading to a diverse range of professions. The Hague University can, therefore, attract a wide range of students.

The Hague University has nine “lectoraten”. These lectoraten are committees which are designed to promote innovation within HBO education. They aim to achieve this by developing strong cooperation with local businesses with a particular slant towards “professional re-invention” and the development of a practical research function (De Haagse Hogeschool, Diensten, 2006).

In addition, there are eight educational support departments which specialise in specific aspects: support for the Board, Communication and Marketing, Information and Communication Technology, Financial and Economic Affairs, Education and Student Affairs, “Facilitating Company”, Personnel and Organisation, and Contract Activities (The Haagse Hogeschool, Diensten, 2006). There is no separate alumni office.

It is important to understand this structure, because it indicates that the Board is at the top of the umbrella structure and all decisions and policies filter down in some form or another to the various departments. Academies however have a certain level of autonomy.

4.3.1 Strategy Document

The Hague University produced a very comprehensive document ‘Het Perspectief’, which sets out its strategy. Even though this document was published in 2002, and other documents have been compiled since, it has lost little of its pertinence or merit. In fact, a more recent document, HOP 6 which the university published in 2004 to cover the years 2005 to 2009, serves as a supplement rather than a replacement. Together, these documents provide a comprehensive view of the current goals and policies of The Hague University.

4.3.2 Mission Statement

In its mission statement, The Hague University expresses the desire to function as the “knowledge institution” for the region and provider of innovative education. The Hague University believes it is essential to incorporate three elements; “the development of talent”, “experience” and “forming a bond” for all those who study and work at The Hague University.

The Mission statement focuses on the students and their development.

“The development of talent”, to build a future capacity to operate successfully in a future working environment, is implicit in the student learning.

“Experience” refers to the social and interactive experience between students and their lecturers during their study.

“Forming a bond” is the connection between students and their alma mater. It indicates a shared interest, looking together for the development of special talents within a prospective profession, paying particular attention to social involvement.

In bringing these elements together, the mission statement states the following: “The Hague University offers high quality, innovative, higher vocational education, geared to the optimal development of the talent of its students. As a modern institution of knowledge, it educates its students to be qualified, independent professionals for society and the labour market, paying special attention to the area of The Hague as an economic, administrative-judicial and multicultural centre.” (De Haagse Hogeschool, Het Perspectief, 2002). The Hague University uses this quality to distinguish itself from other institutions of higher education.

4.3.3 Core Values and Core Capabilities

The core values form the identity of the institution. These are: being focused on the student and the environment, being concerned with quality and innovation.

Furthermore, it means the development and utilisation of abilities such as teaching, didactic and coaching skills to steer operations (De Haagse Hogeschool, Het Perspectief, 2002).

4.3.4 HOP 6 2005-2009

HOP 6 is the University Development Plan, edition 6. It serves as a guide for the years 2005-2009. It details how the ambitions for developing talent are to be realised. There are three policy themes: educating professionals, widening participation and the institution of knowledge (Kennisinstelling). With these policy themes, The Hague University complies with the educational agenda in Europe for instance, by introducing the internationally-oriented system of credits and the new Bachelor and Master system (HOP, De Haagse Hogeschool, 2004).

4.3.5 Educating Professionals

As a result of national and international influences, the need for change is becoming greater and more urgent. New competences and skills are demanded of professionals to allow them to function beyond the boundaries of their profession. In view of the unending search for improvement, today’s professionals will spend their lifetime learning. This is true for the young and up–and-coming professionals, but also for those who are in the middle of their career (“permanent education”) (HOP, De Haagse Hogeschool, 2004).

The Hague University wishes to contribute by striving for its graduates to fulfill the following criteria:

1. To cross the boundaries of disciplines and professions, nationality, language and culture and know how to bring people together. From the beginning of the course, the student experiences work in the real world.
2. To perform within an international and multicultural context and perspective.
3. To develop self-awareness and be responsible for own development as a professional, the development of the profession and organisation as a whole and the contribution to society in general (HOP, De Haagse Hogeschool, 2004).

4.3.6 Widening Participation

The Hague University wishes to see the number of students enrolling increase, and more importantly, it intends to facilitate their study by introducing new ways of learning, more flexible ways of learning and providing more guidance. This will enable more people to enjoy higher education, but also enable them to leave with a degree achieved in the apportioned time (HOP, De Haagse Hogeschool, 2004).

4.3.7 The Knowledge Institution

The Hague University intends to contribute significantly to the goal of the government to ensure that The Netherlands moves towards becoming a knowledge society (HOP, De Haagse Hogeschool, 2004). This means that those who have studied at The Hague University are capable professionals who can adapt to, and function efficiently in, a work environment. They will try to achieve this by building on the “lectoraten” and by providing more and better work placements, so that the students will be able to function effectively more quickly.

This strategy and mission statements of The Hague University have many essential components designed to support the desired results and growth. Although both are extensive documents, there is a notable omission. There is no reference to a proper alumni relations policy. In the next sections, the basic principles of alumni relations will be explained. It will also be demonstrated how a good alumni relations plan is both fundamental and complementary to the strategy of The Hague University and, for that matter, any university. The ways in which The Hague University could use alumni relations to support its goals more efficiently and effectively will be set out.

5. WHAT IS THE PRESENT ALUMNI POLICY?

5.1 The Hague University and Alumni Relations

Educational institutions around the world are discovering the value of maintaining contact with those who have completed their education.

The established universities and schools in both the U.K. and the U.S.A. have traditionally built up an impressive network of former students. It is not surprising that this network is somewhat mockingly called ‘the old boys’ network’. It has proved an excellent way to find quality employees and/or colleagues, in industry or politics, guaranteed to have been educated in accordance with own traditions and values. In other words, you knew where to go to get what you wanted and the chance of success was also substantially increased.

More recently, these same networks have been able to provide these institutions with a stream of additional income, and a continued support of the ‘old’ school.

As high-quality education has become more expensive, and government funding is decreasing, other educational institutions are beginning to see the benefits of establishing good alumni relations.

In the published literature concerning the policies of The Hague University to which this paper has already referred at some length, there is hardly a mention of alumni relations (Het Perspectief, 2002, HOP, 2004). Contact with alumni is only referred to once in the HOP 6 2005-2009. This does not mean, however, that there are no relations with alumni. There are several departments that have very active alumni associations.

Interviews with Mr Hoekveen and Mrs Vreeburg, who are in charge of developing alumni relations for their areas of The Hague University, IBMS and Small Business Management respectively, confirmed that the Board considers alumni relations as very important especially in the light of accreditation. The NAO accreditation criteria regard alumni relations as an important component of ongoing checks on quality within universities (VHTO, 2003). So specific departments have set up their own alumni associations. This is most notable in the studies which have an international flavour, where the need to keep contact is more immediate because students usually leave the country on completion of their degree.

However, it is still far from being a top priority for departments. This is somewhat understandable, as education is the main focus.

The different departments that have appointed someone to be in charge of alumni relations have attempted to set up alumni relations programmes. Those departments have each devised their own plans on how to fulfil the accreditation criteria that the Board wishes them to fulfil. Some have active alumni associations, and some organise occasional gatherings. Others put out leaflets.

An inventory was made of these activities by the student affairs department, but because there is no structure to any of these activities this inventory was out of date before it was even published (Osse, Triest, Krijnen, 2005).

Any effort on alumni relations needs to be a structured and well thought out effort, or it is a wasted effort.

5.2 Why have alumni relations not had a higher priority in the past?

Interviews were conducted with people within The Hague University involved with alumni relations on different levels, to gain insight into the current state of alumni relations within the institution. This was to represent a variety of perspectives, based on those who instigate the commitment to alumni relations and those who carry it out.

The interviews showed that it is recognised that putting energy into alumni relations is a good idea. However, the ideas on how this can and should be done are not so clear, and the level of commitment and understanding of the subject also differ.

Mr Prince, the former director of Education and Student Affairs, believes that a reason why alumni relations has not had the attention it perhaps deserves is because of the diversity within The Hague University. Different departments and studies are at very different stages regarding alumni relations, both academically and developmentally. It is difficult to instil a level of urgency regarding alumni relations in a department which is relatively new.

Mr Prince also believes that the main problem is the lack of resources given to alumni relations and, therefore, its level of priority. Most of the other interviews I conducted confirmed this either because it was specifically mentioned as a problem, or because it was implied in statements about the role of alumni relations.

There is no dedicated alumni relations officer in any of the departments of The Hague University. No one in the university has alumni relations as their main task. Therefore, it is seldom the main priority. It is the task which remains when the main business of educating has been achieved. Many working in education will be able to tell you that this moment never comes.

Mr van Tongeren, the director of Government, Law and Safety, indicated that the level of priority is also in large part due to how the director of the department communicates with his alumni officers. People are not used to thinking and acting with an economic goal in mind. One can often lose sight of the long-term goal when dealing with the short term necessity of educating.

The interview with Mrs Vroemen of the TU Delft, and indeed also discussions with other people within The Hague University, clarified that an understanding of alumni relations is important before one can expect commitment. This, of course, is often experienced when new ideas are promoted. It is not enough for an institution to decide that alumni relations is a good idea, without creating sufficient room to achieve the required level of enthusiasm. At this moment, there is insufficient awareness of the value of alumni relations among the staff of the The Hague University. Alumni relations is primarily seen as something that needs to be done to satisfy the accreditation process, and the implementation is seen as requiring too great an effort.

In the interviews with both Mrs Vroemen and Mrs Vreeburg, the difficulty of attracting the recently-graduated was discussed. This group is at a stage in their life where they are eager to move on and have yet to see the value of establishing and maintaining close contact. However, it is this group, if contact can be kept, where the potential is great. The contact details are still up to date and their memories still alive. Mrs Vreeburg made a point of suggesting that events and gatherings should be designed for both alumni and final year students, so that the transition from student to alumnus is made more naturally and more effortlessly.

5.3 Why should alumni relations have a higher priority for The Hague University?

This section analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of The Hague University with regard to alumni relations, and how these need to be addressed and exploited, leading to the communication tools that can be used to achieve this.

The Hague University is in a unique position. It offers the highest level of education that can be enjoyed in The Hague, an internationally influential city. Many of the students at The Hague University come from The Hague and surroundings (about 50%) and, although many might stay in this area, graduates are also employed by international organisations and/or move abroad (De Haagse Hogeschool, 2005). And, of course, many come from other areas of The Netherlands or from abroad. With the help of alumni relations The Hague University can make use of this diversity. For instance, by offering more internationally-orientated courses, and by altering the curriculum to forge partnerships with international organisations, as these play a large role in the economy of The Hague (Decisio and Bureau Louter, 2005). The Hague University would remain in the memory if the course was enjoyed and seen as worthwhile. Foreign students will then recommend The Hague University when they return to their home country. Asian students, in particular, come to The Hague to learn about Europe, and to provide extra qualifications for jobs in Asia. If they enjoyed their time with The Hague University, their recommendations are something which advertising could not achieve. And external promotion is important for The Hague University.

In the theme of educating professionals, which is important for The Hague University, alumni relations can be instrumental as it builds on the idea of widening participation, attracting people to higher education, even after entering employment. By maintaining contact with alumni, the ability to provide opportunities for additional courses or a Master’s degree is strengthened. This fits with the context that learning never stops and that qualifications need to be kept up to date in today’s society. (HOP 6, 2004).

The objectives set by The Hague University in “Het Perspectief” and “HOP 6” are well thought out, but they could be given more substance by incorporating alumni relations, as each objective embodies something which also applies to alumni relations. Alumni relations appears to be a common link between the goals and objectives of the two (Boo, Smits van Waesberghe, Joukes, 2003).

It would seem, therefore, that The Hague University should incorporate alumni relations in its overall strategy. A database for an interactive website has already been acquired and it is in use, but there is no common practice in place for determining how each department should use this information. There are many departments with varying disciplines. This tends to create a mixture of practices with little overview.

Further, the mission statement of The Hague University, as already mentioned, combines three elements, namely developing talent, forming a bond with the students, and developing the experience of studying at The Hague University. If these are achieved, then alumni relations could follow naturally or, preferably, alumni relations could facilitate their achievement even better.

The purpose of the “lectoraten” embodies the essence of what good alumni relations aim to achieve (Haagse Hogeschool, DIensten, 2006). The combined effort of The Hague University and industry to produce an effective curriculum could be greatly enhanced by seeking the opinions of alumni, who can evaluate the existing curriculum against the demands of the working world.

The same applies to the courses on offer. As I have mentioned, there are many and the range is great. There needs to be a mechanism for testing their value (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe and Joukes, 2003).

The Hague University has an active and dynamic staff, which means that they are more likely to take on any challenge or project with the necessary fervour. So if they perceive the possibilities of alumni relations, and they have the means to use this, alumni relations could be developed both thoroughly and efficiently. This is aided by the fact that most of the university’s main departments are located in the same building, facilitating good communication. What needs to be taken into account though, is that the rate of turnover of staff is high, and thus knowledge could be lost quickly. Staff training is essential in making sure that knowledge is being gathered continually.

In order to make sure that the policy suits the needs of both the alumnus and the university, it is necessary first to investigate the interests of the alumni. This could be incorporated in an on-line framework which enables them to keep their address details up to date (Booy, Smits van Waesberghe, Joukes, 2003).

 The word ’relation’ in the context of alumni relations implies a level of understanding between the alumnus and his alma mater. This level of understanding should be created by a knowledge of what can be useful for both parties. The relationship implies a level of give and take that is both useful and desired (Peelen, 2002).

If set up properly, the alumni relations programme for each department can be tailored to the character of that specific department, thus increasing the usefulness of the programme for both the organisation and the alumni. This is not easy because within The Hague University, and this is both a strength and a weakness, as there is no tradition of alumni relations. It is, therefore, necessary that alumni relations activities which are undertaken are properly planned, because there is no supporting prior practice. The positive side of lack of convention is that it is then possible to fit alumni relations policy to whatever the university requires, in this case to encompass a varying range of courses and departments.

In an institution with such a wide selection of courses on offer, the common bond, referred to in the mission statement, is not so obvious. Alumni have a bond with their faculties, but much less so with The Hague University as a whole. Alumni relations is a way to develop and nurture this lost bond. With an umbrella structure, The Hague University can establish the bond between the departments, and at the same time maintain the link with the actual course studied. This provides the necessary framework for providing a deeper relationship with past students, which may well be long lasting, possibly life-long. The university has an advantage in that many of its courses are in the first stages of development, so students have been actively involved. Not only does this make them more likely to stay in touch, it gives them a vested interest in their progress (VHTO, 2003).

Increasing the level of innovation is one of the main aims of The Hague University, following the impulse from Europe (Lisbon Accord). Alumni relations could help to improve this. Innovation would be stimulated by good contact with businesses. This can only be strengthened by involving alumni. Not only can contacts be established but also an in-depth knowledge of how The Hague University operates is then an advantage. In partnerships between business and higher education in the U.K., alumni are often involved.

There are people at central level who are convinced of the value of alumni relations and its potential to improve the quality of The Hague University. However, within the departments, its potential is not as clear. This is due to a combination of an unsatisfactory understanding of the benefits and opportunities of alumni relations, and the lack of resources to tackle the situation. At central level, and within the departments, the task of establishing an alumni relations plan has been delegated to staff who also have other jobs. It is understandable that alumni relations may not be at the top of their priorities. Therefore, alumni relations tends to be a side-line. In addition, the people concerned often then experience too little time for their actual jobs. The benefits of alumni relations and their results then become more of a long-term aspiration than a short-term commitment.

All of the above depends on whether the resources and time are available to set up an alumni relations policy, and to maintain it. In this, the staff are the key, as they are the face of the university. Whether they have the tools, knowledge and motivation will play a large role in how far alumni relations could be successful.

The conclusion is that there are many strengths and opportunities for The Hague University. Much depends on the resources available to exploit them, to strengthen the weaknesses and circumvent the threats (see the following table).

5.4 SWOT Analysis for The Hague University (with regard to alumni relations)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths** | **Weaknesses** |
| * The alumni database and website is in place.
* Objectives of the university are flexible enough to incorporate alumni relations.
* ‘’Lectoraten’’ are already being used. They have the same goal as alumni relations.
* An impressive central building which houses most of The Hague University’s operations.
* Flexible, dynamic environment – young teams ready to learn.
* Many courses are in the first stages of development, so alumni are still easy to contact.
* Few traditions to uphold – free to interpret alumni policy .
* Location – in a very international City.
 | * Great diversity of courses, students and staff.
* No tradition of alumni policy, so no routines to fall back on.
* Lack of resources to date for alumni relations.
* Low priority given to alumni relations.
* Lack of knowledge and practical experience of alumni relations among staff.
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Opportunities** | **Threats** |
| * Knowledge can be gathered, for example in the form of a questionnaire, to understand the alumni and to tailor the alumni policy to their needs
* Benefit from free global advertising through alumni
* Improvement of the curriculum through active feedback
* Creation of form of unity in

university through alumni policy* Unrestricted interpretation to alumni policy based on the needs of the university at present and in the future
* Tailoring alumni policy to reflect character of each department
* Because of proximity of most departments, communication can be potentially facilitated and exploited – ease of knowledge transfer and exchange of ideas among staff
* The previous point could be enhanced by staff training
* Motivation among staff to commit to alumni relations can be stimulated
 | * If communicated poorly or staff are not properly trained – possibility of staff discontentment
* If alumni relations is not made a priority –staff disillusionment and lack of motivation
* If not properly thought out and tailored to the university and individual departments , they will go their own way
* Alumni relations is not yet a habit, and initial work could lose momentum.
 |

* 1. What Communication tools are available to ensure that alumni relations has a higher priority in the future?

This section looks at a selection of communication tools which could ensure that The Hague University both plays to its strengths and exploits its opportunities. The main weaknesses and threats that The Hague University has are to do with availability of information and communication. The following set of communication tools could ensure that information is complete, and an alumni relations programme can be set up effectively.

5.5.1 Policy Handbook

One way to ensure that alumni relations is of equally high priority for all departments is to create a Policy Handbook, just as a company needs a manual specifying the use of a company logo. There would be a comprehensive set of steps that alumni officers are obliged to follow that would ensure that each department was acting similarly. The actual content of the activities would be department-specific to conform with each department’s own characteristics.

5.5.2 Workshops

Another tool would be to organise periodic workshops. Within any institution staff turnover can be less than desirable. Whenever staff leave, they take away knowledge and there is a risk that is not is effectively transferred. Workshops are a good way for existing staff to share their knowledge in a large forum. With effective interaction there can and will be a greater exchange of ideas and there is also a practical way to ensure that all areas are covered (Derkse 2005).

5.5.3 Staff Training

It is also important to devote resources to staff training. There are nationally and internationally organised seminars dedicated to alumni relations. In order to remain up to date with what is happening in the rest of the world in this area and to maintain innovation it is important that key staff have the chance to enrich their knowledge. It will also show that the university is serious about alumni relations.

5.5.4 Questionnaire

And lastly, a questionnaire could be drawn up to discover what exactly alumni desire , to direct resources to the desired activities. An example of a contact form can be found in the appendices, which is based on a similar form for Solent University in Southampton, United Kingdom. It contains questions relating to the types of activities alumni would like to take part in (Derkse 2005).

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Initially, the idea for writing this thesis was to investigate the status of alumni relations within other vocational universities in The Netherlands and to compare this with the achievement of The Hague University. This would have led to establishing the gaps and visualising opportunities which could be exploited. However, the plan had to be revised. Alumni relations is not yet sufficiently developed among vocational universities in The Netherlands to enable a good comparison to be made. Instead, one could conclude that The Hague University could look more towards the universities in The Netherlands, which have progressed further, although not nearly as far as their counterparts in, for instance, the U.K. or the U.S. In this state of underdevelopment, The Hague University has still every chance, and should aim, to be market leader in The Netherlands.

The thesis was designed to provide the answers to a number of questions. These questions are:

* Why are alumni relations important?
* How do we establish and maintain alumni relations?
* What is the character of The Hague University and how is it influenced by the city of The Hague?
* What is the present alumni policy?

In reply, it can be concluded that:

* alumni relations is important not least because it can provide a quality control for the university;
* it is necessary to create understanding of the importance of alumni relations in order for the efforts to establish and maintain it to be successful;
* the international aspect of the city of The Hague as a “United Nations” city and, particularly, as a city of Justice and Peace, can strengthen the diversity of The Hague University. Alumni relations can play an important role in this;
* there is an alumni policy but this is not embraced by all departments;

It can also be concluded that The Hague University has definite strengths and opportunities in the area of alumni relations. Furthermore, alumni relations can play a role in helping to achieve the objectives of The Hague University.

The following recommendations can be made:

The Hague University should take steps:

* to incorporate alumni relations in the objectives of The Hague University’s strategy;
* to set up a central alumni office and appoint a central alumni officer as well as designated alumni officers within the departments, especially the departments with international course. A budget for this is necessary, of course.
* to develop a Policy Handbook on alumni relations;
* to support the idea that alumni relations starts before the student has graduated. Carry out regular quality surveys to ensure that the supply of education matches the demand. The results should be analysed on their merits and bring about improvements where indicated.
* to ensure that alumni relations has a higher priority. This means that a greater understanding about the long-term benefits should be created for staff within the departments. This process of understanding requires transparency, an opportunity for discussion and interaction, including staff training. Training could come in a number of forms, i.e.
	+ workshops concerning specific success cases of alumni relations. This will help to create the motivation needed to sustain relationships. It will allow the transfer of knowledge and the exchange of ideas.
	+ information for those employees dealing with alumni relations on the link with the mission statement of The Hague University. The short-term goals need to be placed in the context of the bigger picture.
* A survey should be carried out to find out exactly what alumni want from their alma mater. This is a basic marketing tool to ensure efficient use of resources, and the successful implementation of any policy. This is important. It identifies the practical steps which can be taken.

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Executive Summary

This thesis explores the subject of alumni relations with the aim of demonstrating how alumni relations can be of benefit to universities. It also goes into the difficulties that could present themselves with alumni relations both in the shorter and the longer term. This is supported by the testimony of practitioners in this field.

Maintaining contact with alumni of the university can be achieved by making use of a number of resources at the disposal of the University, including the connections which the University has with its alumni. Alumni can assist the University in, for example, the areas of advertising, quality control, mentoring, providing internships and guest lecturing.

This thesis goes on to determine how alumni relations fits into the plans, goals and mission statement of The Hague University, being situated in The Hague, the “ International City of Peace and Justice”. It is made clear how an investment in alumni relations would match with the goals, plans and mission statement of The Hague University. It also points out why the necessary attention has not been forthcoming. Rather surprisingly alumni relations has been omitted from these plans.

Interviews with the staff of The Hague University with alumni relations credentials give insight into why alumni relations has not had high priority in the past, and what difficulties might lie ahead as a result of this.

This thesis provides an analysis of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats concerning alumni relations for The Hague University. This leads to suggesting a number of communication tools which could be used to build on the strengths and exploit the opportunities. These tools build upon the importance of information and communication with alumni. However, to carry out alumni activities through, for instance, workshops and meetings, staff need to be properly trained. The communication tools also help to give more certainty that the alumni activities undertaken by The Hague University will be effective, in so far that they are both desirable and useful for alumni.

This thesis concludes by suggesting that in order for alumni relations to be fully exploited, more emphasis needs to be placed on alumni relations centrally within The Hague University. This is in order to coordinate the activities within the departments with which the alumni has the principal bond. This will cement the belief that The Hague University can still achieve as much, and perhaps more, with alumni relations as has been demonstrated by universities in other parts of the world.

APPENDICESMeeting with Mrs Vroemen, Head of Alumni Relations at the TU Delft

Delft has many departmental alumni associations, just like The Hague University.

Five years ago Delft started a general alumni database, for everybody to use, and it contained 40,000 addresses.

Alumni were partly members of the departmental alumni association and partly members of the general alumni association.

Ellen advised for any university setting up its alumni policy to establish one central database, and one central portal with links to the departmental alumni associations. And to conduct a survey to see what alumni want. It is pointless investing in things, that have no value to the group you are trying to attract.

Setting up the alumni relations policy was a wish of the university council, which they pushed through at all levels. It was part of an overall Customer Relations Management Plan, modelled on more an American formula.

To initiate this phase, they started with a market survey, to see what Alumni were looking for. This was a massive research project, involving not only questionnaires but in-depth interviews etc. This took 6 months.

This renewed interest in alumni relations came after a reorganisation within TUDelft. Before the reorganisation TU spent a lot of time on alumni relations, 3.5 fte. Now they only have 1 fte. Although this is still more than most universities in the Netherlands, it represents a big reduction. Now with the new customer relations plan of attack it has become a major focus again.

Ellen stressed the importance of alumni relations, and in particular the manpower necessary to maintain the database, because in any such institution there is an average of 150 changes to records per week. This means that if it is not maintained properly, it can quickly become out of date, and contact can be easily lost.

She also said that it is easy to get caught up in short-term results, but that alumni relations really is all about the long term. One must not expect to see concrete effects of your efforts until 4 or 5 years later. It requires a commitment.

With TU Delft, it was the board of directors who initiated the need for a more consumer oriented approach, and realised that alumni relations was a part of this. Support from the top makes it easier to attempt such a big project.

Ellen emphasised that the biggest problem when maintaining alumni relations is the recently graduated students. This group has just left the university, and very often is not interested in maintaining close contact. It is a chapter of their life which they have just closed. They are not usually prepared to stay actively involved.

Meeting with Mr Hoekveen, Alumni Office for IBMS

Jan Hoekveen is a person who has been somewhat involved with alumni relations for his study within The Hague University. I talked to Mr Hoekveen to get a better idea of the perception of alumni relations within The Hague University, what the general level of commitment and understanding there was, rather than the specific people that are working with it on a institution-wide basis.

Mr Hoekveen stressed the fact that his study was developing the alumni relations plan based on the accreditation process. It is an integral part of any quality control that is valued highly in the accreditation process. The main driver comes from a central source.

Mr Hoekveen believes the main benefit to be gained from employing alumni relations is to keep contact with alumni, to be able to bond them to their study. He does not think that people have a bond with the institution, but does think that maintaining contact with alumni will keep them connected to their study.

Meeting with Mrs Vreeburg, Alumni Officer of Small Business Management

Leontien Vreeburg works for Small Business Management which forms part of the department of Commerciele Economie.

According to all the alumni relations employed by this study is carried out through their website and not through the website set up by The Hague University for the benefit of alumni relations. Until last year they did nothing at all to promote alumni relations.

According to Mrs Vreeburg it is too simple to say that the main reason for beginning to deal with alumni relations is the accreditation process.

She feels that alumni relations for the study of International Business Management is difficult because of the many foreign students. They go back to their own country after finishing the course and contact is not easy.

Alumni Relations with Small Business Management is also difficult as it is the first year that there are any alumni, the study being so new.

She feels that the alumni culture does not really exist yet within The Hague University, not as it exists in other universities. She thinks that the way to make it more accessible and attractive for people is to organise events and activities for alumni and final year students. That way the transition from student to alumni is smoother, it is a continuation of a habit that already forms part of their life.

She is also of the opinion that the specific department should have the contact details of the alumni, rather than a centralised database. Furthermore, all events, activities, publications and suchlike, should be department-based, as students do not normally have a connection with the institution as a whole.

For a study like IBMS, anything planned with regard to alumni activities should take into account that there are many foreign students who will not stay in the country after they have graduated. This fact could have both advantages and disadvantages.

She believes the way to create a bond with the institution is “studie verenigingen” or associations with a focus on the study. This way people from the same study get together socially, and therefore their study will feature in their social life, and may then transcend to their working life.

Meeting with Mr Prince, Director of Education and Student Affairs

Mr Prince was responsible for education and students and with that comes the support of the studies and academies. He is also involved in the in and outflow of students.

There are a variety of reasons to take an interest in alumni relations: to offer students a place to meet other people for their further development, both professionally and socially, in the pursuit of becoming a “world citizen.” It allows an educational institution to become a mini-community.

By having contact with alumni there are possibilities of offering Masters courses and employing a sort of after-sales bonding for all involved.

Mr Prince was involved to some extent with the setting up of alumni relations at The Hague University, but he was not the principal initiator.

There are some issues which hamper the forward momentum of Alumni Relations within The Hague University. These are the following: people are very involved with their own academies, are primarily concerned with the day to day running and educating their students. They are not used to thinking and acting with an economic goal in mind. After all Alumni Relations requires a lot of input with very few short-term rewards.

Also, the different academies are at different stages, both on an educational level and with their alumni relations. Some academies have not existed long enough to have alumni relations. The academy Facility Management is the furthest in this.

What Mr Prince thinks would resolve some of these issues would be to focus on the academies which are furthest in their development of an Alumni Relations programme and create a kind of ‘best practice’ for the others to aspire to.

Meeting with Mr van Tongeren, Director of Government, Law and Safety

Mr van Tongeren is the Director of this Academy and as such is responsible for everything that has to do with it. Three of the four studies in this academy are mature, that is to say that they have been established long enough to have alumni. The alumni association of this study has been established for some time and has its own funding.

He thinks alumni relations is very important and tries to encourage it wherever possible. Ideally he would like alumni to be more involved with graduation and career trajectories. His academy is setting up a database for students to consult. This is slightly different from other studies because the specialisation towards a particular career or profession is earlier in the study, so the database needs to be broad.

The reason why the academy has done so much for alumni relations is, as with the other academies, accreditation-fuelled, but it is important. He was been very involved in alumni activities and has personal contact with a lot of his alumni.

“Alumnus” comes from the Greek to feed.

Mr van Tongeren thinks that more money should be put into alumni relations. He thinks the most worthwhile things are events for students of particular academies that have an added value. They had an event which the Prime Minister, Mr Balkenende, attended. He would also like to see life-long membership of the library for any alumnus, and an alumni book that shows everybody’s career path.

Mr van Tongeren believes that the biggest problems with implementing proper alumni relations at The Hague University lie with the communication between the director of an academy and the people who have to deal with the implementation of alumni relations. He believes that if people are not motivated to make alumni relations happen, because they are caught up in the day to day running and education of the students, has to do with the fact that they are not fully convinced of the value and long-term rewards of alumni relations. Directors should talk to their employees and should continue to monitor the situation. He also thinks that the success stories of alumni relations should become a focus.

Meeting with Mrs v/d Werke, Director of Healthcare

Mrs van de Werke believes that the key for successful Alumni Relations lies in the study and whether students enjoy their time while at the institution. It is impossible to keep them if they have not had a profitable time.

Alumni are needed for PR and informing and bringing prospective students, for giving form to the “Haagse Bachelor”

Mrs van de Werke sees the value of Alumni Relations but thinks that even though it is pushed within The Hague University, as the Board was the initiator, she feels not enough money or resources are available. Because it is not made a priority, and because you do not see instant results, many people put it off until there is time to concentrate on it, but that time never comes. She feels that education is the reason why they are there, and that should remain the focus. Alumni Relations is great if done correctly, but cannot stand in the way of education.

Mrs van de Werke thinks that specific alumni activities need to take place at a university level, but that they need to be given form by the individual academies. So that each academy has similar activities, a uniform approach, but that the event is given the flavour of the study chosen by the alumni.

Also, with alumni events an added value needs to be given, for example in the form of a workshop, but it needs to be more associated with the present education, so that feedback for what is being taught at The Hague University can be incorporated.

**ALUMNI QUESTIONNAIRE OF**

**THE HAGUE UNIVERSITY**

Please return this questionnaire to the school so that we may maintain an accurate and comprehensive database of our former students. The information you provide will help us compile a profile of The Hague University alumni which will help us provide services which are beneficial to former students and provide information which will be of use for present students.

*All information stored under the Data Protection Act and will not be disclosed to any external parties without your permission*

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| **Personal Details** |
| Title (Mr, Ms, Miss, Dr, Professor, etc)  |  |
| Surname |  |
| First name (s) |  |
| Maiden name (if applicable) |  |
| Date of birth |  |
| Marital Status |  |
| Home tel number |  |
| Mobile tel number |  |
| E-mail |  |
| Children | Yes/No  | Name(s) and age(s) |

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| --- | --- |
| **Mailing address** | **Alternative mailing address (e.g. parents’ address)** |
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| **Contact Service** |
| From time to time, former students contact us to re-establish contact with old friends. Would you like us to pass on your details to fellow Alumni when requested? Yes/No*(Your address details will not be disclosed without your consent)*  |

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| **Academic details for time at The Hague University (HHS)** |
| When were you at HHS? (e.g. 1997 – 2001)  |  |
| Courses studied and at what level (e.g. BA, MA) |  |

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| **Further education details** |
| Did you attend any other institution for higher education since HHS? | Yes/No (If not, please continue to next section)  |
| If so, which course(s) did you follow? Where? (e.g. MA in International Relations in Bath, UK) |  |
| **Career** |
| Current employment status |
| * Salaried
 | * Self – employed
 | * Voluntary
 | * Unemployed (if so please continue to nxt section
 |
| * Student
 | * Managing a house/family
 | * Retired
 | Other (please state) |
| Employment details |
| Job title |  |
| Name of employer (if applicable)  |  |
| Description of work (e.g. Classroom teacher at a secondary school) |  |
| Work address |  |
| Any additional comment necessary to describe your work |  |
| Please indicate below the main activity of the company you are employed by |
| * Accounting/Legal Services
* Aerospace Industry
* Agriculture/Forestry/Horticulture
* Armed forces/ Police/Emergency Service
* Banking/Insurance/Financial/Investment Services
* Broadcasting/Publishing/Entertainment
* Building/Construction/Architecture/Surveying
* Church
* Education/Training
* Electricity/Water/Gas Supply
* Engineering
* Fashion
* Property Services
* Food/Beverage Manufacturing
* Glass Manufacture
* Heavy mechanical Engineering
* Hotels/Catering
* Information Services
* Wholesale/Retail/Sales
 | * Local Government
* Pharmaceuticals
* Management Consultancy
* Marketing Services/Advertising/PR
* Mining/Metals industry
* Motor Industry Manufacturing
* Manufacture/Assembly of Electric Components
* Non profit
* Provision of Healthcare
* Printing/ Packaging
* Petroleum/Petrochemicals
* Design
* Security Services
* Social Services/Welfare
* Sports
* Scientific/Research and development
* Transportation Services
* Telecoms/Computer Services/IT/IS
* Investment Services
 |
| * Other, Please Specify
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| Please tick the word or words which best describe your own particular work or activity at your organisation |
| * Artist/Musician
* Accountant
* Advisor
* Administrative
* Assistant
* Broker/Trader
* Buyer
* Clerical
* Consultant
* Director
* Deputy
 | * Design
* Doctor/Nurse
* Engineer
* Estimator
* Executive
* Factory
* Financial
* Head of
* Junior
* Laboratory
* Line Management
 | * Lawyer
* Management
* Maintenance
* Marketing
* Manual
* Operator
* Production
* Planning
* Personnel/HR
* Public Relations
* Research
 | * Service
* Senior
* Supervisor
* Surveyor
* Scientist
* Sales
* Site
* Trainee
* Teacher
* Technical/Statistical
* Writer/Editor
 |
| The above employment information may be used for creating networking opportunities. If you do not wish to be involved in this please tick the box |  |

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| **Present interests** |
| Please give details of your current sporting and leisure activities and interests, including any achievements in the space provided |
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| **Alumni Events** |
| Please tick the box if you would be interesting in attending any alumni events if organised |  |
| If so, please tick which of the following events you would like to attend:* An annual alumni reunion ball
* An alumni dinner
* A course specific reunion
* A department specific reunion
* Sports events
* Public lectures
* Other (please specify)
 |
| **Alumni Activities** |
| Please tick which of the following activities you would like to take part in:* Be part of a networking group of peers in your profession
* Write for an alumni magazine
* Offer (careers) advice to current students
* Offer work placement opportunities to current students
* Return to give guest lectures
* Give feedback on your course structure, its contents and relevance
* Other (please specify
 |

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| **Alumni Ambassadors** |
| Would you like to join our staff at education fairs and pass on knowledge and advice to prospective students | * Yes
* No
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| **Alumni E-Newsletter** |
| Would you like to receive the alumni e-newsletter? (please ensure that you have provided your e-mail address on page 1) | * Yes
* No
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| **Professional/Academic Development** |
| Would you be interested in furthering your professional or academic development at HHS? | * Yes
* No
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| **Your Comments** |
| Please use this space for any general comments you wish to make about alumni related issues or about your time at The Hague University |  |

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| **The Hague University Developments** |
| Please tick the box if you would like to be kept informed of current The Hague University related developments |  |

Please send this form back to The Hague University, Postal Address: Postbus 13336, 2501 EH Den Haag