



RICE ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION OF RICE ALUMNI

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

May 14, 2011

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Association of Rice Alumni (ARA) is to engage alumni in the life of the university by building a continuing relationship between Rice and its former students with the objective of enabling them to contribute and to share in the advancement of the university. The ARA achieves this objective by stimulating alumni intellectual and social participation, encouraging alumni contributions to the university's enhancement, promoting concern among its members for the welfare of the university, and strengthening the bond of understanding between the university and its alumni community.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Create a distinctive identity for Rice alumni
2. Enhance communication and use technology to build a strong community for all Rice alumni
3. Build a Rice alumni network
4. Embrace continuous learning
5. Celebrate the achievements of the Rice community
6. Welcome members of the greater Rice family, including students, parents and friends of Rice into the alumni community

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

KEY GOALS

- Establish Rice as a university known for its vibrant network of alumni support.
- Overhaul alumni.rice.edu to create a vibrant, engaging, and interactive online experience that highlights the rich traditions of and pride alumni have for Rice, while providing a one-stop shop for information and connectivity to the Rice Alumni community.
- Connect with international alumni and friends by facilitating easy formation of groups and providing communication tools. Host collaborative events when faculty members are traveling internationally and receptions abroad with Rice's president and other university leaders.
- Revitalize and grow flagship programs such as Homecoming & Reunion and Alumni College, attracting greater numbers and more comprehensive participation while continuing to appeal to the core constituency these programs traditionally attract.
- Develop a more robust student program that systematically engages undergraduate students throughout their career at Rice, from admittance through graduation.

KEY METRICS

The Association of Rice Alumni will measure success in implementing its strategic plan according to the following key benchmarks. Additional metrics are provided in this document.

- An increase in the number of valid alumni email addresses in our database (currently 59%).
- An increase in metrics pertaining to the ARA website, such as site visits to the home page and to individual program pages.
- An increase in metrics pertaining to ARA emails, such as open and click rates.
- An increase in unique overall attendance at events and programs, and in the number of programs a given individual attends in the course of a year.
- We will double the membership of ARA LinkedIn membership to at least 10% of Rice alumni through enhanced promotion of networking in general and the effective use of shared interest subgroups.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #1

CREATE A DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY FOR RICE ALUMNI

The Association of Rice Alumni is committed to creating a distinctive Rice alumni identity that reflects the stature of Rice University as an educational and research institution of international prominence.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Build a global identity • Develop pride • Express the “voice” of alumni
Enhance activities and programs • Support shared-interest groups

ACTION ITEMS

- *Establish Rice as a university known for its vibrant network of alumni support.
- *Create a Rice ring program that connects students and alumni and adds value to an already distinctive ARA asset. (See Strategic Objective #6 for detail.)
- *Strengthen the identity of the ARA and its programs through the systematic oversight of visual identity and branding, including comprehensive branding across program platforms and shared interest groups.
- Establish legacy programming, recognizing and bringing together cross-generational alumni families, such as:
 - A multi-generational gathering during Homecoming & Reunion.
 - *An Alumni Legacy lapel pin presentation at Families Weekend.
 - A Legacy Medallion to be worn at Commencement.
- Revitalize and grow flagship programs such as Homecoming & Reunion and Alumni College, attracting greater numbers and more comprehensive participation while continuing to appeal to the core constituency these programs traditionally attract.
- Explore year-round reunion opportunities, such as inviting “Golden R” graduates (50+ years post-graduation) to march in Commencement and be recognized by the Rice community.
- Connect with international alumni and friends by facilitating easy formation of groups and providing communication tools. Host collaborative events when faculty members are traveling internationally and receptions abroad with Rice’s president and other university leaders.
- Establish a Houston ARA group or enhanced centralized programming for Houston alumni.
- Reinvigorate and adequately support shared-interest groups that are currently underserved, including ethnicity-based groups and 2.0, recruiting additional leaders and working to promote vibrant, effective programming for these communities.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

- *Launch professional and other shared interest groups within larger regional groups to more effectively connect alumni in meaningful ways. Explore corporate alumni chapters where sufficient numbers of alumni may exist.
- Facilitate communication between leaders of similar regional and shared interest groups to facilitate sharing of ideas and best practices.
- *Reach out to alumni worldwide via the web through video content such as faculty lectures and campus speakers.
- *Conduct regular evaluations of alumni communications, such as a yearly or biennial communication survey and/or focus groups, to determine the appropriate balance between print and digital media, types of information, and the appropriate timing of various messages.
- *Take advantage of social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Facebook to extend the Rice network by growing our main sites and expanding into professional and personal shared-interest subgroups.
- Develop more robust, turn-key templates for volunteers to form new groups in consultation with ARA staff and to plan and implement events.
- Provide online volunteer tools that will equip regional and shared interest group alumni to connect with their members and lead effectively using ARA-branded tools and consistent standards. This should include email tools, web templates, social media standards, invitation guidelines, etc.
- Provide for more consistent recruitment, both by fellow alumni and by alumni staff, and effective training of volunteers so they are engaged, educated, and motivated to lead.
- As the Rice alumni and student demographics change, ensure that the ARA board recruitment and nominations process sufficiently tracks these changing demographics, including representation of graduate-degree alumni.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #2

ENHANCE COMMUNICATION AND USE TECHNOLOGY TO BUILD A STRONG COMMUNITY FOR ALL RICE ALUMNI

In order to build a stronger Rice alumni community that supports the Association of Rice Alumni's diverse and changing membership, the ARA embraces all forms of communication, including technology-based communication, to provide outstanding opportunities for alumni to communicate with each other and with the university.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Stay up to date through technology • Become a leader in technology to achieve strategic objectives
Promote professional and personal networks globally
Facilitate electronic communication with alumni

ACTION ITEMS

- *Overhaul alumni.rice.edu to create a vibrant, engaging, and interactive online experience that highlights the rich traditions of and pride alumni have for Rice, while providing a one-stop shop for information and connectivity to the Rice Alumni community.
- *Conduct regular evaluations of alumni communications, such as a yearly or biennial communication survey and/or focus groups, to determine the appropriate balance between print and digital media, types of information, and the appropriate timing of various messages.
- Employ ongoing analytics in digital media to determine alumni interests, communication effectiveness, and best practices.
- Ensure strategic and vibrant use of social media and web services such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, iPhone apps, customer relationship management software, and appropriate emergent technologies.
- Develop and sustain initiatives to collect and confirm alumni data, especially email addresses.
- Ensure timely, efficient delivery of print materials when appropriate as part of the overall strategy for specific program efforts.
- *Strengthen the identity of the ARA and its programs through the systematic oversight of visual identity and branding, including comprehensive branding across program platforms and shared interest groups.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #3

BUILD A RICE UNIVERSITY ALUMNI NETWORK

The Association of Rice Alumni is committed to building a mutually supportive global network of alumni, committed to advancing the strategic objectives of Rice University.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Connect Rice alumni across the globe • Support professional and personal networks
Communicate with alumni through networks
Engage alumni through networks in support of Rice strategic objectives

ACTION ITEMS

- *Establish Rice as a university known for its vibrant network of alumni support.
- *Overhaul alumni.rice.edu to create a vibrant, engaging, and interactive online experience that highlights the rich traditions of and pride alumni have for Rice, while providing a one-stop shop for information and connectivity to the Rice Alumni community.
- Launch the new website with an aggressive promotional campaign emphasizing the Rice Connection.
- *Take advantage of social media outlets such as LinkedIn and Facebook to extend the Rice network by growing our main sites and expanding into professional and personal shared-interest subgroups.
- Develop and launch a more robust career networking tool to connect alumni and students to share and receive information on careers and graduate school planning.
- Develop and launch an online career tools suite, to include job and resume postings.
- Provide for continued promotion and awareness of an enhanced online alumni directory and use of the ARA LinkedIn site.
- *Launch professional and other shared interest groups within larger regional groups to more effectively connect alumni in meaningful ways. Explore corporate alumni chapters where sufficient numbers of alumni may exist.

METRICS

- Grow the customer relations management networking site to comparable peer levels. Increase site alumni.rice.edu traffic overall by 50-75% and double traffic to the alumni directory.
- Grow the Rice Alumni Facebook site to 100% of current levels.
- Double membership in the ARA LinkedIn site and observe a vibrant, participatory community.

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STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #4

EMBRACE CONTINUOUS LEARNING

The Association of Rice Alumni is committed to providing our constituents lifelong opportunities to develop their potential through continuous learning.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Assess and modify existing programs • Provide additional opportunities for alumni of all age groups
Offer opportunities for cities with significant alumni populations
Present opportunities through technology

ACTION ITEMS

- Rebrand and reevaluate Alumni College, considering the need to appeal to a larger and wider audience, including parents and friends.
- Consider expanding the reach of Alumni College by reducing the Houston program to every other year and taking Alumni College to our regional alumni groups consistently every other year: perhaps even two per year.
- *Reach out to alumni worldwide via the web through video content such as faculty lectures and campus speakers.
- Explore new educational opportunities, such as an alumni or faculty author series, online book club, and the like.
- Explore collaborations with campus partners such as the Jones School of Business to offer new or enhanced learning opportunities.
- Rebrand the Rice Alumni Travel/Study Program as the Rice Travel/Study Program, expanding the appeal beyond the alumni base. Explore collaborations with campus partners and other organizations to further expand our marketing base. Grow the program, offering participants a unique and well-branded learning experience that further enhances their engagement with Rice.
- Provide for effective practical training for volunteers and education with regard to the ARA's strategic goals, perhaps in connection with the ARA's Conference for Alumni Leaders.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #5

CELEBRATE THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE RICE ALUMNI COMMUNITY

The Association of Rice Alumni celebrates the achievements of the Rice alumni community at all levels and endeavors to showcase their accomplishments.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Evaluate programs • Expand programs
Use technology and networks • Reflect global diversity

ACTION ITEMS

- Continually establish the ARA Laureates as the premier awards on campus by constantly evaluating and enhancing such things as the physical awards themselves, the award categories and their desirability, and the awards ceremony.
- Develop a dynamic and informative Laureates website that celebrates the achievements of our Rice Laureates, and also other accomplished alumni, with photos, articles, and biographies.
 - Include a student section that lists Marshall Scholars, Rhodes Scholars, and recipients of other acclaimed awards.
 - Use RSS feeds from rice.edu to feature stories on current students of interest.
 - Include a listing of alumni who have received other notable external awards such as Nobel Prizes.
- Explore an expanded publicity plan for the Laureates Program, including such options as:
 - Explore digital media opportunities such as an e-card invitation with photos of the Laureates, humorous clips from Laureates' speeches, or links to short interviews with Laureates.
 - Feature the Laureates by award category in @Rice over multiple issues rather than all at once.
 - Issue a press release on each Laureate for potential media use, especially by out-of-town newspapers.
- Enhance the nominations process to promote more and more effective nominations by exploring such options as:
 - Providing a template for what should be included in nomination letters.
 - Providing sample letters or guidelines.
 - Researching nominees to augment nomination letters.
- As our alumni and student demographics change, continue to seek nominations of Laureates candidates that are inclusive of all communities of Rice alumni and friends.
- Seek ways to meaningfully involve the Rice community beyond the Houston area in the Laureates program, including internationally, by:

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

- Seeking nominations among the global population of Rice alumni and friends.
 - Using technology to include global alumni in celebrating achievements when travel costs might otherwise preclude their participation.
- Build synergy between ARA student programming and the Laureates program by exploring options for interaction between the Laureates and current students, such as having a speaker at a Convocation Luncheon.
- Establish a “distinguished young alumni” award for professional and/or civic accomplishments.
- Provide meaningful and systematic volunteer and perhaps group recognition for regional and shared interest group efforts.

** Indicates action items included in more than one strategic objective*

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE #6

WELCOME MEMBERS OF THE GREATER RICE FAMILY, INCLUDING STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND FRIENDS OF RICE, INTO THE ALUMNI COMMUNITY

The Association of Rice Alumni has a special obligation to Rice alumni but the Association also embraces all members of the Rice University family, including students, parents, and friends, welcoming them into its programs.

SUMMARY OF GOALS

Educate students about the importance of alumni engagement • Engage Rice parents
Welcome the greater Rice family

ACTION ITEMS

- Develop a more robust student program that engages undergraduate students throughout their four-year career at Rice, from admittance through graduation. Highlights to explore include:
 - Student Send-off parties in cities with sufficient numbers of admitted students.
 - Rice Opening Day party for freshmen.
 - Professional development series for sophomores.
 - Rice ring reception for juniors.
 - Senior Gala, Young Alumni Happy Hour with seniors.
- *Create a Rice ring program that connects students and alumni and adds value to an already distinctive ARA asset. Such a program should:
 - Include both undergraduate and graduate students.
 - Connect alumni and students in meaningful ways, through traditions such a Ring Ceremony, ring recycling, and involving legacy alumni.
 - Create traditions that add even more meaning to the ring. For example, having the rings “spend the night” over the Sallyport, in the Campanile, or some other meaningful campus location before the ring ceremony.
- Increase the saturation of alumni forwarding account usage by assigning alumni.rice.edu accounts to students as they matriculate at Rice.
- Consider “linking” each Rice class, upon matriculation, to a class that graduated a specified number of years before it. This “linking” would be continued throughout the class’ progression through Rice. Representatives from the “linked” class would be present at notable events, starting with matriculation and culminating at events surrounding Commencement.
- Appeal to graduate-degree alumni by emphasizing opportunities related to their profession, such as networking and ARA events tied to industry conferences.
- Consider a freestanding Parents’ Association, separate but complementary to the ARA.

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- Involve Rice parents on host and planning committees for major ARA events such as Alumni College and regional presidential visits.
- Reach out to parents and friends through general-interest activities such as athletics pregames, presidential visits, and continuous learning programs.
- Consider opportunities for ARA involvement in Families Weekend, such as:
 - *An Alumni Legacy lapel pin presentation.
 - A ring ceremony involving parents.

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