
What does 'successful' alumni relations look like?

ICARS REPORT 2015

Findings from the International CASE Alumni Relations survey's data for 2014



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1. Introduction

The International CASE Alumni Relations Survey (ICARS), now in its ninth year and with questions developed by senior alumni relations professionals, has been instrumental in documenting the evolving alumni relations landscape in Europe and sharing best practices of successful programmes.

The assessment of the 2014 survey builds on the analytical framework developed for the 2008 survey, which created a statistical picture of what success in alumni relations looks like, i.e., which alumni services and activities are statistically associated with greater success and what successful alumni relations programmes do *more* of than less successful programmes.

What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking involves collecting multiple institutions' data on an issue of common interest, viewing your own institution's performance over time and from the perspectives of what your peers and industry leaders do, and then using the perspective gained for internal continuous improvement. What it is not about are rankings, arms races and beauty contests.

- What are the benchmarking questions?
- How do we compare to the whole population/our peer group/industry leaders/individual institutions-of-interest?
- How "different" are we? Are we different for the "right" reasons?
- What activities are the others doing that we are not? Are they doing the same things but doing them better?
- Who do we look at for best practices?
- How have we changed over time?

2. Findings

2.1. Alumni relations landscape in Europe

This picture of alumni relations in Europe is drawn from 66 respondents to the 2014 survey. These respondents are with institutions in nine countries. More than three-fourths (85 percent) of respondents are from the United Kingdom and 12 percent are from other European countries. Altogether, these 66 institutions served 6.4 million living and contactable constituents, employed 347 alumni relations staff and had an aggregate budget of £7.8 million GBP (British pounds) in 2014. Altogether, these 66 institutions staged 3,010 alumni events, which attracted nearly 65,000 attendees. They have clearly been busy.

On average (i.e. mean figures), they each:

- Offered nine different types of alumni programmes (events, websites, career support, etc.)
- Offered 10 different types of member benefits (library access, social networks, discount offers, etc.).
- Served 97,699 living and contactable constituents
- Had a staff size of 5.3 full-time equivalents (FTEs)
- Had a budget of £1.47 per constituent
- Ran 46 events, which attracted 1,061 attendees

Fifty-two institutions are survey repeaters from 2013. They give us an added perspective on change over time (Table 1). For the group as a whole (the sum), the number of living and contactable constituents is up 8.0 percent; budgets, excluding salaries, have fallen by 2.3 percent; and staffing has increased by 45.5 percent. Relative to constituents served, however, the growth in staffing resources is not quite as strong—median staff per 10,000 constituents fell by 7.8 percent.

One year's change does not make a trend. However, if alumni growth and stable or declining resources continue, we may see increasing economies of scale to alumni services. In other words, we could see that an operational shift towards less labour-intensive services may be necessary to cope with a greater constituent-to-staff ratio paired with a lower constituent-to-budget ratio.

Table 1. Changes in key variables from 2013 to 2014 for institutions that provided data for both years					
<i>(non-zero cases in both years)</i>					
		BASE	MEDIAN	MEAN	SUM
LIVING & CONTACTABLE CONSTITUENTS	2014	51	90,540	102,172	5,210,754
	2013	51	86,853	94,587	4,823,957
	CHANGE (no.)		3,687	7,584	386,797
	(%)		4.3%	8.0%	8.0%
STAFF	2014	52	3.7	5.9	305.7
	2013	52	3.5	4.0	210.2
	CHANGE (no.)		0.2	1.8	95.5
	(%)		5.4%	45.5%	45.5%
STAFF PER 10,000 LIVING & CONTACTABLE CONSTITUENTS	2014	51	0.40	0.73	
	2013	51	0.43	0.66	
	CHANGE (no.)		-0.03	0.06	
	(%)		-7.8%	9.4%	
BUDGET	2014	52	£93,800	£128,714	£6,693,150
	2013	52	£84,561	£131,746	£6,850,780
	CHANGE (no.)		£9,239	-£3,031	-£157,630
	(%)		10.9%	-2.3%	-2.3%
BUDGET PER 10,000 LIVING & CONTACTABLE CONSTITUENTS	2014	51	£11,911	£13,756	
	2013	51	£12,025	£15,232	
	CHANGE (no.)		-£114	-£1,477	
	(%)		-1.0%	-9.7%	

Table 1. Changes in key variables | n = 51 | Source: ICARS Report 2015, CASE

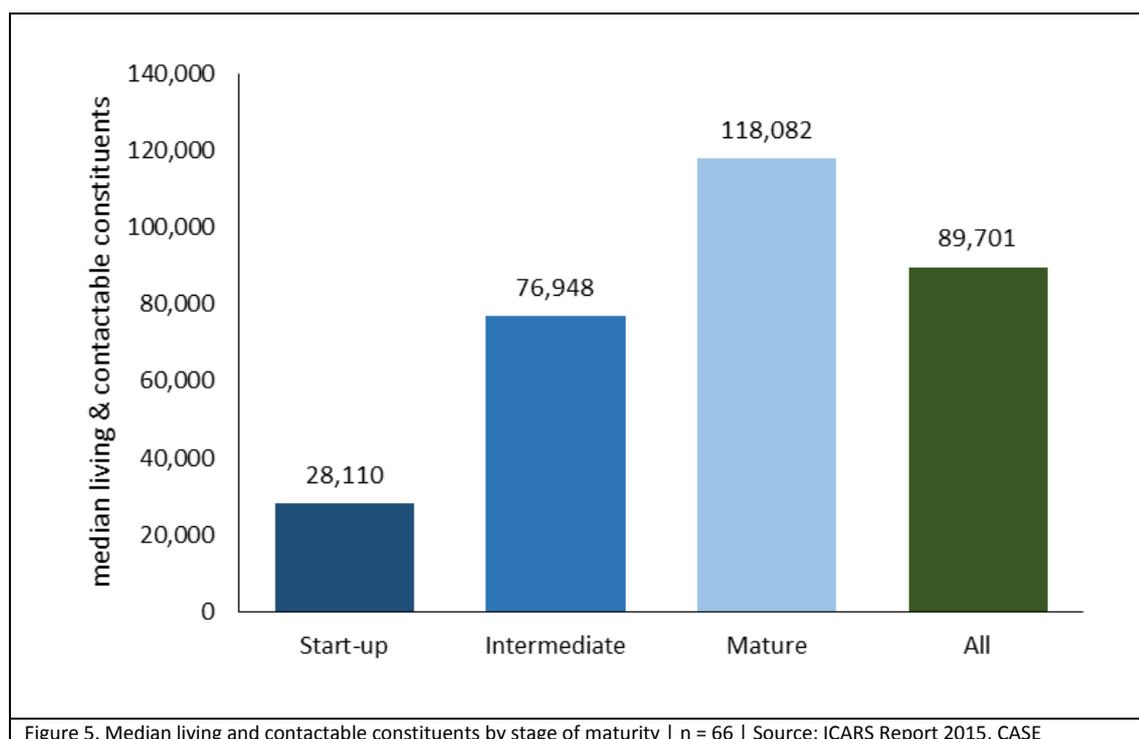
2.2. Stages of programme maturity

The 66 respondents are at different stages of programme maturity and this reflects their capabilities and offerings. The survey let respondents self-assess whether their alumni relations programme is in its start-up stage, intermediate stage or mature stage.

- Start-up: in the first year or two of operations and still at the ground-level stage of building staff and services
- Intermediate stage: in operation between two and 10 years, now gaining recognition but still growing staff and services and experimenting with directions
- Mature: has been up and running for several years with a portfolio of repeated events and services albeit still striving for further improvement and efficiencies in line with good business practices

Respondents are asked to make their choice with a holistic view of their alumni programme, and not just on the basis of the longest-offered individual service.

Of the 66 institutions, 12 percent are start-ups, 50 percent are intermediate and 38 percent are mature. The operational differences between these groups are shown in the charts below. Staff and budget do grow in absolute terms with maturity, but because increased activities are also associated with even more constituents over time, staff and budget appear to decrease relative to constituents as alumni relations programmes mature.



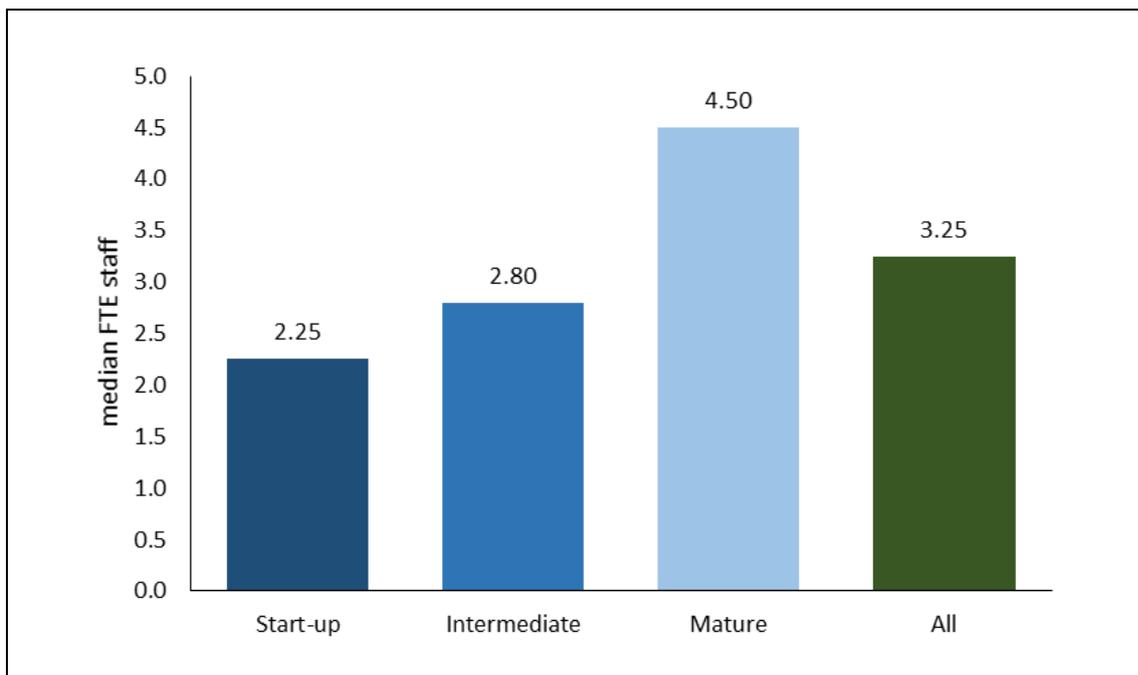


Figure 5. Median FTE staff by stage of maturity | n = 66 | Source: ICARS Report 2015, CASE

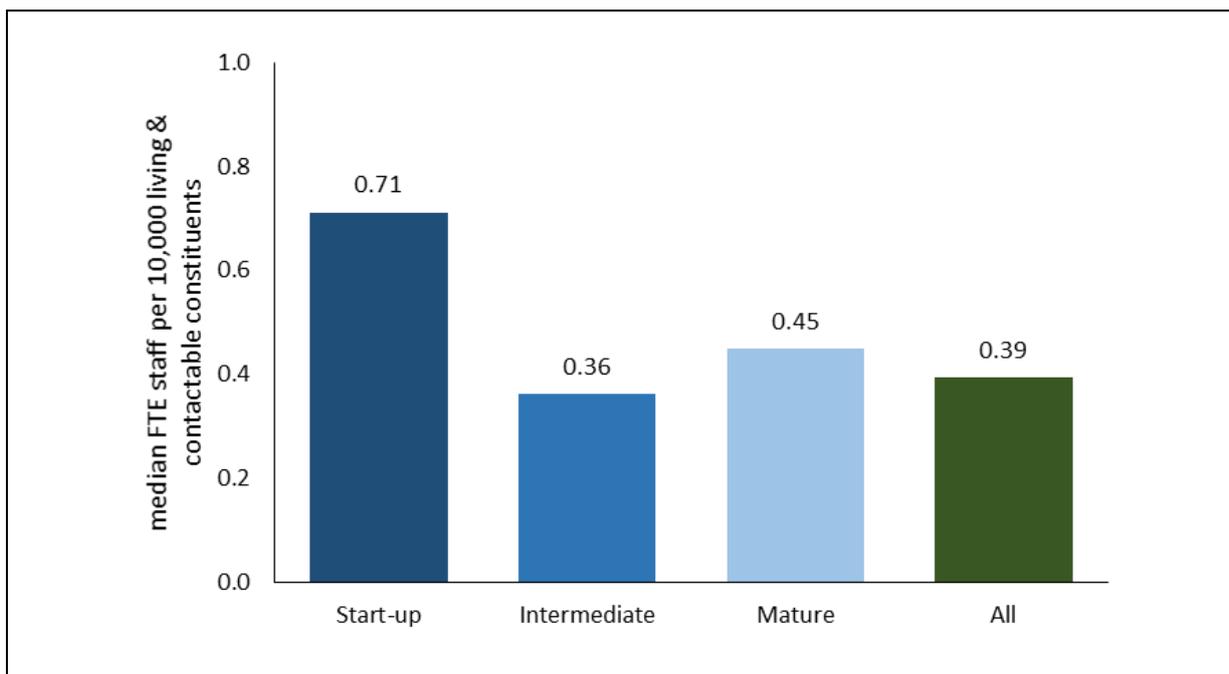


Figure 5. Median FTE staff per 10,000 living and contactable constituents by stage of maturity | n = 65 | Source: ICARS Report 2015, CASE

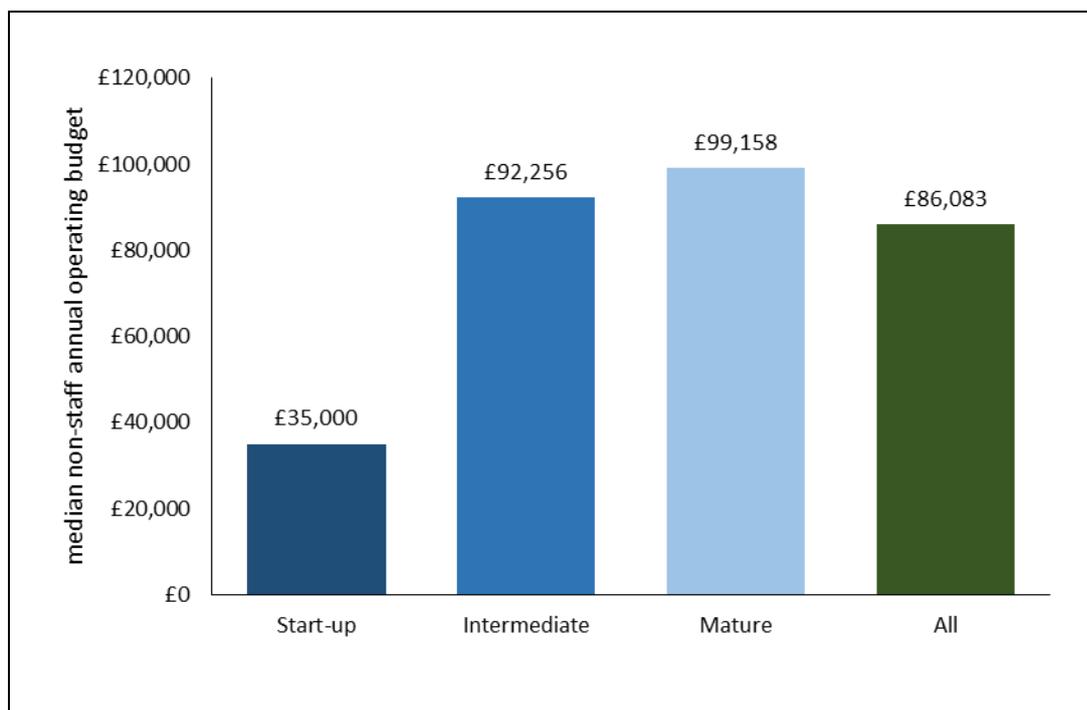


Figure 5. Median non-staff annual operating budget by stage of maturity | n = 66 | Source: ICARS Report 2015, CASE

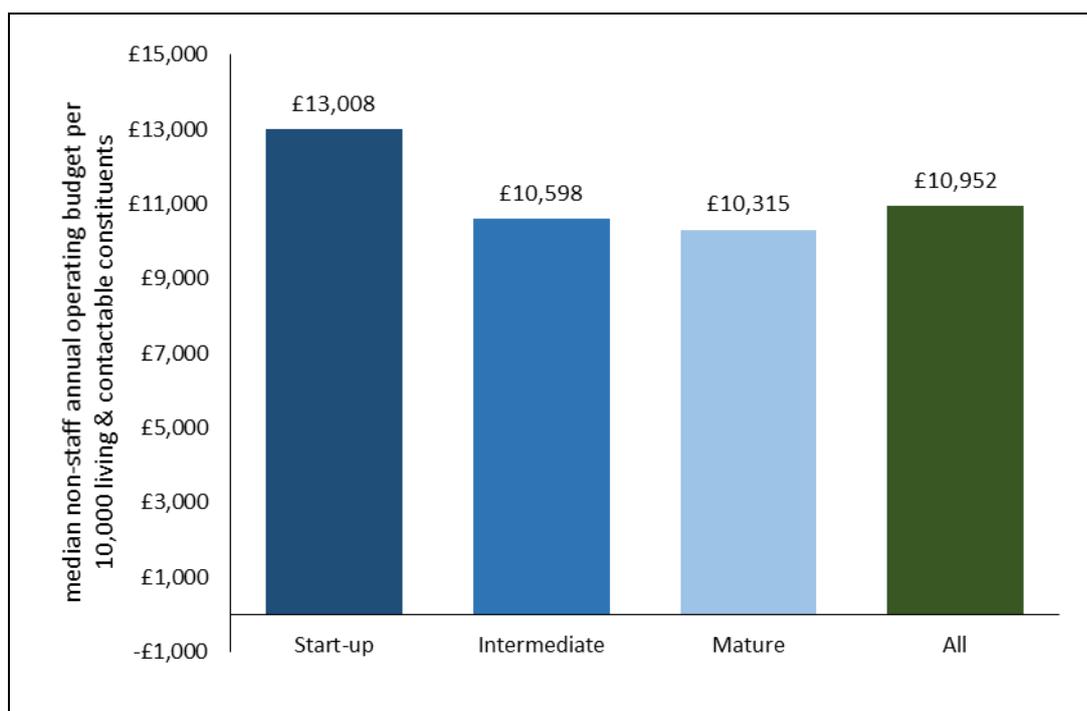


Figure 5. Median non-staff annual operating budget per 10,000 living and contactable constituents by stage of maturity | n = 65 | Source: ICARS Report 2015, CASE

2.3. Successful alumni relations programmes

We now know from these statistics how the size and shape of alumni relations programmes at institutions in Europe are evolving, but what makes a successful alumni relations programme? If we want to identify what factors contribute to a successful programme, we first have to define what constitutes success and then be able to measure that. The survey's advisory group of seasoned alumni relations professionals decided on three measures of success: the number of attendees, volunteers and donors in the last 12 months (variables G7, J11 and K3; all expressed per 10,000 constituents, to standardize for size). The group was interested in identifying links between the activities under their control and these three measures of success.

In years prior to 2010, we measured event attendees per 10,000 constituents in the last 12 months but volunteers and donors per 10,000 constituents over time. The survey analysis changed in 2010 to show each variable per 10,000 constituents during the past 12 months. This should give organizations a clearer picture of their own performance in the current year and will allow organizations to compare their own results (as well as compare themselves against other institutions) year-on-year going forward.

We looked at a list of 26 individual variables associated with constituent databases, programmes offered, resources, communications, events and member benefits for their degrees of correlation with each of the three success measures. Our statistical indicator of any association is the *r* value, and Table 2 shows which alumni relations variables are significantly associated with success.

The *r* statistic, also known as the Pearson bivariate product-moment correlation coefficient, measures the statistical covariation (strength of relationship) between two variables, i.e., the extent to which one variable changes in value as the other variable changes. The *r* statistic can vary between -1.0 (indicating perfect negative correlation), through 0.0 (no correlation at all) to +1.0 (perfect positive correlation). Subject to the relationship being statistically significant, a higher *r* statistic is better (i.e. it has a low probability the number was obtained by chance when there is no real relationship). Statistical significance is checked at 0.01 level and 0.05 level. The 0.01 means that there is a 1 percent chance that the result was obtained by chance; and at the 0.05 level, there is a 5 percent chance. It must be noted that the *r* statistic measures association, not causation, and there is no direction of influence to the relationship between the two variables.

Table 2. Correlations between alumni relations operations and success measures 2014				
66 Respondents		MEASURES OF SUCCESS		
		n = 61	n = 38	n = 56
POTENTIALLY RELATED VARIABLES		Attendees per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	Volunteers per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	Donors per 10,000 living & contactable constituents
		G7 / (C5/10,000)	J11 / (C5/10,000)	K3 / (C5/10,000)
Database:				
With phone numbers per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	C6 / (C5/10,000)	0.050	0.021	0.020
With mobile/cell numbers per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	C7 / (C5/10,000)	0.020	0.105	-0.104
With postal addresses per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	C8 / (C5/10,000)	-0.103	-0.048	0.137
With email addresses per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	C9 / (C5/10,000)	* 0.274	** 0.478	0.224
Programmes:				
Number of different programmes	D1 + ... + D14	0.106	0.163	* 0.283
Resources:				
Budget per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	E4 / (C5/10,000)	** 0.578	* 0.401	** 0.434
FTE staff per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	E1 / (C5/10,000)	** 0.489	** 0.702	** 0.527
Communications:				
Issues of magazine a year	F1	-0.027	-0.085	0.252
Percent of living & contactable constituents receiving magazine by post	F2 / C5	-0.111	-0.219	0.177
Percent of living & contactable constituents receiving magazine electronically	F3/C5	-0.089	-0.081	-0.124
Years offered dedicated e-newsletters	A9	-0.026	0.251	0.112
Frequency of e-newsletter sent each year	F6	-0.137	0.073	0.190
Percent of living & contactable constituents receiving e-newsletter	F6 / C5	* 0.251	** 0.423	0.110
Years offered dedicated website	A10	-0.179	-0.031	-0.104
Events:				
Years offered dedicated events	A8	-0.139	-0.090	0.056
Number of events per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	(G1 + G2 + G3) / (C5/10,000)	** 0.532	** 0.614	0.058
Total expenditures per event	G12 / (G1 + G2 + G3)	-0.026	-0.039	0.203
Percent of living & contactable constituents invited to events/reunions	G5 / C5	0.261	0.167	-0.156
Percent of living & contactable constituents attending events/reunions	G7 / C5	** 1	** 0.643	0.127
Reunions org'd globally by alumni, per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	G8 / (C5/10,000)	0.121	** 0.515	** 0.816
Prof. devpt./career networking events, per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	G9 / (C5/10,000)	0.163	** 0.567	0.072
Personal interest/hobby-based events, per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	G10 / (C5/10,000)	0.242	-0.048	0.068
Holiday/excursion events, per 10,000 living & contactable constituents	G11 / (C5/10,000)	-0.145	0.329	** 0.718
Benefits:				
Number of member benefits offered	I1 + ... + I20	-0.044	0.179	0.194
Opportunities offered:				
Years offered volunteering opportunities	A11	-0.030	-0.029	0.006
Years members asked to support fundraising	A12	-0.005	0.036	0.003

* significant at 0.05 level; ** significant at 0.01 level.

Not surprisingly, staff and budget are positively correlated with number of attendees and volunteers as alumni relations programmes with more resources can support more events and engage more volunteers. It is also interesting to note that staff and budget are correlated with donors. It should be emphasized that we are talking about alumni relations staff here, not fundraising staff, but the inter-connected responsibilities mean that alumni relations staff have an effect on donor numbers, it is key for them to keep their alumni engaged who may then go on to become donors when contacted by fundraising staff. Although some alumni relations staff work on cultivating current and prospective donors, this is not their principal charge. Among the communication variables ‘receipt of e-newsletter’ seems to have a strong relationship with attendees and volunteers.

Certain types of events, such as professional development and career networking events, are correlated with volunteers while holiday/excursion events are correlated with donors.

The number of benefits is not associated with any of the three success measures, although the number of events are correlated with both attendees and volunteers. Completeness of the constituent database with regard to phone number and postal addresses also seems to have no relationship either; however, the completeness of email addresses is significantly related to the number of attendees and volunteers.

The main messages in Table 2 seem to be:

- (1) To increase the number of attendees, instead of increasing the size of the same existing events, you need to have sufficient staff and budget to put on more events and be able to connect with potential attendees via email and e-newsletters;
- (2) To increase the number of volunteers, you need to be able to connect with them via e-newsletters and have sufficient staff and budget to offer more events and a range of events to engage volunteers; and
- (3) To increase the number of donors, you need to have the staff and budget to offer relevant programmes

Do not expect your benefits or events to provide the magic bullet. Be prepared for a long haul. Years of having frequent, dedicated e-newsletters and asking for financial support are correlated with the number of donors. It is also important to recognise the contributions that alumni are making to institutions’ strategic objectives through contributions of time: 94 percent of universities (and 100 percent of business schools) offer alumni volunteering opportunities. Practices across the sector suggest that alumni are mostly engaged in the activities relating to student recruitment and student employability, alongside supporting the running of alumni groups. Universities have 43 alumni volunteers per 10,000 constituents (143 in business schools).

While anecdotal evidence points towards the value of these programmes, there is currently limited evidence about the most effective models of alumni volunteer engagement, and the scale of impact that graduates are achieving for institutions. CASE is working with thought leaders in the sector to develop metrics that measure the impact of these volunteer contributions, using a standardised approach that will enable benchmarking and assessment of efficiency.

So what’s happening with donors?

The general lack of correlations within this survey between much of what alumni relations does and the number of donors to an institution is puzzling and surely problematic for any senior alumni relations professional hoping to justify budget requests with a direct or indirect payoff in terms of donors. There are several possible explanations.

First, the way that alumni relations works with fundraising/development at European institutions is highly varied and often unclear. In many cases, fundraising is not directly part of alumni relations’ mission, which focuses more on making and keeping relationships and on alumni engagement. In some institutions, fundraising is not even indirectly expected of alumni relations. And the history of fundraising at these

institutions is likely to be much shorter and less systematized than that of alumni relations. So it is not surprising that there is little correlation to be found. Second, giving is a highly personal decision often influenced more by the individual donor's condition and relationship with key individuals at an institution than by institutional events or programmes. Third, it is important to recognize that the number of donors is not the same as the value of donations.

But if alumni relations departments can more easily attract attendees and volunteers through activities, could it be that those types of individuals are also more likely to become donors? The lack of statistically significant correlations with donors found above may be because we are comparing variables all in the same year. If we look instead at relationships over several years, as in Table 3, we do see statistically significant relationships. The long-term links between attendance, volunteering and donations display an interesting pattern. According to the correlation results across three years of data (2012, 2013 and 2014) for the 38 repeating respondents, attendance seems to predict future attendance, and to a more limited extent, an increase in volunteers from 2013 to 2014. The number of attendees in 2012 was positively linked to the number of attendees in both 2013 and 2014. These relationships suggest that attendance, as a form of engagement with minimal investment, has an enduring quality.

Simply attending events, however, does not appear to foster a path of ascension to other philanthropic activities. The correlations between the number of attendees at events in 2012 was not significant with the number of donors in future years. On the other hand, engaging alumni who make the progression into volunteering or gift-giving tends to remain at that level, at least for the immediate future. The number of volunteers in 2012 was highly correlated with the number of volunteers in 2014. Although the data does not suggest a long-term connection for donors, both volunteering and events seem to have more positive impact in the near-term.

		2013	2013	2013	2014	2014	2014
		Attendees	Volunteers	Donors	Attendees	Volunteers	Donors
2012	r	** 0.643	0.268	0.027	* 0.378	0.068	-0.047
Attendees	N	33	32	33	34	24	22
2012	r	0.176	0.085	* 0.472	** 0.519	** 0.736	0.395
Volunteers	N	24	24	24	26	21	19
2012	r	-0.083	0.029	0.281	0.222	0.256	0.270
Donors	N	32	31	33	33	22	22
2013	r				** 0.671	0.048	-0.116
Attendees	N				35	24	23
2013	r				0.152	0.244	-0.112
Volunteers	N				34	24	22
2013	r				0.208	0.339	-0.040
Donors	N				35	24	23

* significant at 0.05 level; ** significant at 0.01 level.

2.4. What are 'successful' alumni relations programmes doing more of?

Another way of asking about success is to identify institutions with successful alumni relations programmes and then to examine what they are doing more than anyone else. The survey group defines a successful alumni relations programme as one in the top one-third of the distribution of survey results on a given success measure. The absolute numbers for these cut-offs are shown in the sidebar. Institutions recording higher numbers than those shown are in the top one-third for that measure and are successful.

Your alumni relations operation would be in the top third of each measure of success (per 10,000 constituents. See Table 4) if you have more than:

- 149 attendees
- 45 volunteers
- 137 donors

Thirty-five of the 66 respondents are among the top-third (successful) on at least one of the three measures (attendees, volunteers and donors) with 21 of the 35 being successful on just one measure. Clearly, different institutions emphasize different aspects of success, and there is hope that most institutions can be successful at one of the measures.

Of note:

- Ten of the 66 institutions were successful on any two of the three measures; four institutions were successful on all three (Table 5 and 6).
- Forty percent of those successful on two of the three measures were at the intermediate stage of maturity and 50 percent were mature.
- From the institutions that were successful on all three variables two were mature and two were at the intermediate stage.

The recurring message: staff, budget and time spent developing programmes and hosting events build relationships (attendees, volunteers and donors) that lead to success.

Measures of Success		Base	Median	Mean	Min	Max	33 rd percentile	66 th percentile
Attendees per 10,000 contactable constituents	G7 / (C5/10,000)	61	101	140	5.2	891	65	149
Volunteers per 10,000 contactable constituents	J11 / (C5/10,000)	38	22	41	0.9	250	16	45
Donors per 10,000 contactable constituents	K3 / (C5/10,000)	56	112	182	0.0	2,850	51	137

Maturity stage	Respondents in survey		Attendees per 10,000 constituents		Volunteers per 10,000 constituents		Donors per 10,000 constituents	
	Base	%	Base	(%)	Base	(%)	Base	(%)
Start-up	8	12.1%	3	14.3%	1	7.7%	0	0.0%
Intermediate	33	50.0%	10	47.6%	5	38.5%	7	36.8%
Mature	25	37.9%	8	38.1%	7	53.9%	12	63.2%
Total	66	100.0%	21	100.0%	13	100.0%	19	100.0%

Table 6. Successful Respondents (i.e., in top one-third of distribution of a success measure)	Any two of the three success measures		All three success measures	
	Base	(%)	Base	(%)
Start-up	1	10.0%	0	0.0%
Intermediate	4	40.0%	2	50.0%
Mature	5	50.0%	2	50.0%
Total	10	100.0%	4	100.0%

The facets of greatest difference in the operations already listed in the correlations table (Table 2), between successful institutions and the rest, are generally the same for all three success measures. Table 7 presents, for 29 of the survey variables, the median values for the top-third institutions on the three measures of success versus the other respondents.

As can be seen in Table 7, the top one-third of institutions put on more events and invited a higher percentage of constituents per event than other institutions. They also have larger budgets and more staff. In addition, more of their constituents receive invitations to reunions/events and attend them. They organize more reunions globally.

In general, the top one-third of successful institutions provide somewhat more programmes and benefits and have been offering a dedicated website and dedicated events longer than the other institutions. Again, time spent developing events and cultivating volunteers and donors leads to success; the long haul pays off.

Statistics can provide powerful support for our beliefs about how different phenomena relate to each other in the world, but they also need to be accompanied by some cautions over interpretation. The *r* values used here measure strength of association, which is not necessarily the same as a direct causal relationship: other intervening and unmeasured variables may explain some of the relationships found. A more complex statistical technique, like multiple regression analysis, might give a better picture of other relationships.

Many of the measures here are taken at the aggregate or group scale, and that is not the same as the individual mind of the alumnus or donor. We have uncovered “average relationships,” but the results of individual institutions may vary, and there is no deterministic outcome in the sense of a reunion automatically generating donors. We have also measured things that are easily measurable on a quantitative scale—number of emails, events, attendees, etc. Aspects like quality, satisfaction and personal experience are intangible factors that are just as important in determining future connectivity and engagement.

Table 7. Median Values on Key Variables for the Top Third and Others, 2014, All 66 Respondents

POTENTIALLY RELATED VARIABLES		MEASURES OF SUCCESS					
		Attendees per 10,000 constituents		Volunteers per 10,000 constituents		Donors per 10,000 constituents	
		G7 / (C5/10,000)		J11 / (C5/10,000)		K3 / (C5/10,000)	
		Top Third	Others	Top Third	Others	Top Third	Others
Database:							
With phone numbers per 10,000 contactable alumni	C6 / (C5/10,000)	7020	7316	6149	5688	6627	5389
With mobile/cell numbers per 10,000 contactable alumni	C7 / (C5/10,000)	1772	3320	1751	2544	2827	2257
With postal addresses per 10,000 contactable alumni	C8 / (C5/10,000)	8328	9593	7539	7152	9525	6955
With email addresses per 10,000 contactable alumni	C9 / (C5/10,000)	4277	5689	3708	4432	5102	3989
Programmes:							
Number of different programmes	D1 + ... + D14	10	9	11	9	11	9
Resources:							
Total operating budget	E4	£92,256	£82,166	£98,998	£79,850	£108,800	£75,000
Budget per 10,000 contactable alumni	E4 / (C5/10,000)	£14,679	£9,466	£12,104	£10,374	£16,381	£9,921
FTE staff	E1	3.9	3.0	5.5	3.0	4.6	3.0
FTE staff per 10,000 contactable alumni	E1 / (C5/10,000)	0.58	0.32	0.58	0.37	0.58	0.35
Communications:							
Issues of magazine a year	F1	1	1	1	1	2	1
Percent of contactable alumni receiving magazine by post	F2 / C5	78%	75%	76%	76%	82%	74%
Percent of constituents receiving magazine electronically	F3/C5	1.2%	1.4%	0.4%	1.5%	1.6%	0.6%
Years offered dedicated e-newsletters	A9	5	7	6	7	7	6
Frequency of e-newsletter sent each year	F6	4.5	5	9	4	6	5
Percentage of contactable alumni receiving e-newsletter	F6 / C5	51%	49%	51%	49%	52%	49%
Years offered dedicated website	A10	10	12	13	11	12	11
Events:*							
Years offering dedicated events	A8	14	14	18	14	20	13
Number of events	(G1 + G2 + G3)	56	28	55	29	45	28
Number of events per 10,000 contactable alumni	(G1 + G2 + G3) / (C5/10,000)	8.4	2.2	7.8	3.1	5.7	3.4
Total expenditures per event	G12 / (G1 + G2 + G3)	£361.7	£378.1	£332.5	£382.0	£461.5	£335.0
Percentage of contactable alumni invited to events/reunions	G5 / C5	40%	29%	35%	30%	33%	30%
Percentage contactable alumni attending events/reunions	G7 / C5	1.9%	0.6%	1.7%	0.9%	1.4%	0.7%
Reunions org'd globally by alumni, per 10,000 contactable alumni	G8 / (C5/10,000)	2.06	0.71	2.30	0.60	1.60	0.70
Prof. devpt./career networking events, per 10,000 contactable alumni	G9 / (C5/10,000)	0.67	0.27	0.59	0.30	0.48	0.30
Personal interest/hobby-based events, per 10,000 contactable alumni	G10 / (C5/10,000)	1.22	0.12	0.84	0.28	0.84	0.20
Holiday/excursion events, per 10,000 contactable alumni	G11 / (C5/10,000)	0.00	0.00	0.36	0.00	0.00	0.00
Benefits:							
Number of member benefits offered	I1 + ... + I20	10	10	12	10	10	10
Opportunities Offered:							
Years offered volunteering opportunities	A11	13	10	13	10	15	9
Years members asked to support fundraising	A12	12	10	13	10	16	9

How to Use This Table: Another way of asking about success is to identify institutions with successful alumni relations programmes and then to examine what they more than anyone else. The survey group defines a successful AR programme as one in the top one-third of the distribution of survey results on one or more of the three success measures—number of attendees, number of volunteers and number of donors. This table presents, for 29 of the survey variables, the median values for the top-third institutions on those three measures of success versus the other respondents. For example, looking at successful programmes as measured by number of donors, the top one-third have more mobile/cell numbers recorded in their databases than do the other programmes.

3. Participating institutions

Sixty-six institutions participated in the 2014 ICARS survey.

Aarhus University
Anglia Ruskin University
Birkbeck, University of London
Birmingham City University
Brunel University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Central European University
City University
Delft University of Technology/TU Delft
Glasgow Caledonian University
Guildhall School of Music & Drama
Heriot-Watt University
Keele University
KTH - Royal Institute of Technology
Lancaster University
London South Bank University
Loughborough University
Lund University
Maastricht University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Newcastle University
Oxford Brookes University
Queen Mary, University of London
Queen's University Belfast
Regent's University London
Richmond, The American International University in London
Sheffield Hallam University
Swansea University
Teesside University
The Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA)
The Robert Gordon University
The Royal Veterinary College
The University of Nottingham
The University of Sheffield
Tilburg University
Trinity College Dublin Foundation
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
University Campus Suffolk
University College Dublin
University College London
University of Aberdeen
University of Abertay Dundee
University of Amsterdam
University of Bath
University of Brighton
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
University of East Anglia
University of Essex
University of Exeter

University of Glasgow
University of Greenwich
University of Huddersfield
University of Kent
University of Leicester
University of Liverpool
University of Manchester
University of Oxford
University of Portsmouth
University of Reading
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of Surrey
University of the West of England
University of Warwick
University of Wolverhampton

4. Methodology

The ICARS Survey Committee reviewed the survey and approved a final version. The survey was created in the CASE Benchmarking Toolkit. This seventh year of benchmarking invited over 200 institutions from CASE's database to participate in an online survey in autumn 2014. The survey was closed on 18 December 2014. Sixty-six schools completed the survey with all results being finalised for the report. All the data submitted to the survey is self-reported data; it is not audited.

Not all participating institutions provided usable responses to every question in the survey. The number of institutions given in the base in tables and figures refers to the number of institutions answering a particular question or set of questions, rather than the total number participating in the survey. Where a table or chart brings together responses to a number of different questions, the smallest base size is always reported.

Data processing was carried out by CASE. Data checks were included in the online survey. A further data management procedure was carried out to check outliers and to resolve observable errors. Where possible, missing or inconsistent data was queried with the schools to check that they were correct before analysis was performed.

Some institutions may have found it difficult to collect the appropriate data for submission or may have misinterpreted some of the guidelines for completion. Therefore, CASE contacted institutions whose data raised some issues and in many cases the data returns were improved. A systematic and multi-stage checking process was also implemented in an effort to improve the quality of the data.

There was a variation in results between the institutions. This meant that the mean figures were usually much higher than the median figures. Median figures should be used as the preferred benchmarking measure, but we have also retained mean figures in our findings for reference purposes.

Further analysis across questions helped get a better understanding of alumni relations performance. It must be noted that this analysis was done by using answers submitted in the survey, and thus it suffers from the same bias that might be present in the original answers. The sample size of 66 institutions is not robust enough to make any conclusions when analysing data across sub-groups and any figures reported in this manner should only be used as a guide.

CASE Europe compiled this overview report (this document) which was disseminated in August 2015. Individual reports were also available to participating institutions from March 2015. These reports allow each institution to benchmark its results against other similarly structured schools using the [online CASE Benchmarking Toolkit](#).

5. Acknowledgements

Firstly we would like to thank all the institutions and alumni relations office staff who gave their time to complete the *ICARS Survey 2014*.

We would also like to thank members of the ICARS Survey Committee, who have been involved in the development of the survey from the very beginning, and Nicholas Miller (The Bridge Group) for reviewing the report. Between them, they have helped chair committee meetings, provided design advice for the online survey, contributed content for this overview report and gave moral support, wisdom and guidance throughout.

6. About CASE

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) is the professional organization for advancement professionals at all levels who work in alumni relations, communications and marketing, development and advancement services.

CASE's membership includes more than 3,600 colleges, universities and independent and secondary schools in more than 80 countries. This makes CASE one of the largest non-profit education associations in the world in terms of institutional membership. CASE also serves more than 60,000 advancement professionals and staff of member institutions and has nearly 15,000 individual "premier-level members" and nearly 170 Educational Partner corporate members.

CASE has offices in Washington, D.C., London, Singapore and Mexico City. The association produces high-quality and timely content, publications, conferences, institutes and workshops that assist advancement professionals to more effectively serve their institutions.