

MU CAFNR Alumni group on Facebook

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In less than a year with a minimal investment of effort, our Facebook MU CAFNR Alumni group is now 400 members. We use the group to promote our events and collect information about our alums. It's an enhancement, not a replacement, for our other communication methods. Two of the most useful benefits are mass-messaging and photo sharing. Our goal is to for the group's growth and vitality to continue.

We started our group as an experiment in the spring of 2008. We have an alum on staff who is active on Facebook so she created the group and added three more CAFNR Office of Advancement and Communications staff as admins. We also created a neutral profile for the College as a whole under the name Aggie Truman.

We individually invited alumni from our own friend lists and included a link on the main CAFNR Alumni page for the group. Through this low-key method, our group has grown to more than 400 members and continues to grow. We plan to invite this year's graduates to join the group this spring.

Our goal for the group was to build relationships with our young alums, which we consider to be people out of school 15 years or less. Our Facebook group is a valuable means of data collection because we don't always have current e-mail addresses for these young alums or they prefer Facebook as their method of communication. We can see the connections between our group members and discover the super-networkers. These super-networkers can be significant contributors for increased attendance at our events.

We consider Facebook to be an enhancement to our communication strategy, not a replacement for other avenues such as e-mail or the Web site. Our goal is to let alums know about events going on with the College so redundant information is OK. We promote our alumni events using multiple methods. For example, we included our annual scholarship fundraising auction event in a targeted e-mail, on the Web site and on the main page of the Facebook group.

The mass-messaging ability of the Facebook group should be used for important announcements. We are careful to not abuse it by sending messages too frequently and thus diluting their impact. We generally send out messages from the Aggie Truman profile.

We recreate a sense of the physical atmosphere of campus through uploading event photos. Tagging people helps the photos to show up in news feeds.

Our goal with the group is to continue growing in members and using the group as a method to strengthen ties with our alumni. We would like for it to be even more useful for upcoming events, event photos and relevant alumni resources. For example, we are currently featuring career development information because our alumni told us that is something they would value. We are fortunate to have two staff members who are young CAFNR alums so they've been a big part of our Facebook group's success.

Questions to consider about your own Facebook presence

- What is the goal for your Facebook group or page? How will you measure if your efforts are working?
- Have you considered privacy and accountability issues? Profiles might be true or might be invented. See this article about fake alumni profiles at Cornell: [Facebook Highlights Dangers of Social Networking \(Cornell University\)](#)
- Who will supply up-to-date content and monitor your group? Who will set the group's tone? There are the same issues of libel, copyright, spam, scams and viruses as with other online sites. Obvious marketing attempts are viewed negatively in a social networking environment. Strive to be organic and authentic.
- How will you handle negative messages or possibly offensive content, such as photos of alums flipping off the camera? See this article about OSU allowing negative comments after criticism about deleting posts: [OSU to allow posts on Facebook page](#)
- Who will build the relationships? Staff, students, faculty, alumni, a mix? The medium matters less than the behavior and energy put into the relationships.
- How will your Facebook group fit into what you are already doing? Facebook and other social networking tools are only as good as the people using them. They can be a great enhancement but they aren't a replacement for the other aspects of reaching alumni.

Resources

News, research and opinions about Facebook

- [Facebook Stats](#)
- [Facebook Trumps Most Photo Sharing Sites With 10 Billion Photos](#)
- [Facebook Timeline: 2004 - present](#)
- [New Media, New Influencers and Implications for Public Relations, A Research Study by the SOCIETY FOR NEW COMMUNICATIONS RESEARCH](#) (PDF)
- [Facebook affects academic relations \(University of Alabama\)](#)
- [College Alumni Magazines Struggle to Compete With Facebook \(NYT\)](#)
- [Facebook Groups: the Internet Expression](#)

Other examples from Mizzou

- [Mizzou Alumni Association](#)
- [MU Alumni Association -- Boone County](#)
- [College of Engineering](#)

Examples from other schools

- [University of Delaware on Facebook \(Web site page with multiple Facebook group links\)](#)

- Many members: [University of Kansas Alumni](#)
- Lots of photos: [Tocal Ag College Alumni](#)