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Multi-Generational Communications: A Research Study of Communication Between Generations

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Multi-Generational Communications: A Research Study of Communication Between Generations

Multi-Generational Communication:
A Research Study of Communication between Generations

A Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
of the Degree of Master of Arts

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Multi-Generational Communication:

A Research Study of Communication Between Generations

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the Degree of Master of Arts.

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Date

Dr. Rodney ~~Dieser~~, Chair

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C H A P T E R 1

Introduction

Over the past 60 years, communications technology has changed significantly. Individuals used to make phone calls to one person at a time, used carbon copy paper to mass produce documents and traveled overnight to attend face-to-face meetings. Business was done in a more personal manner. Eye contact and handshakes were important communication ingredients. Time seemed to move slower. Tasks took longer.

Today, people are connected instantaneously. They can attend meetings anywhere in the world via Skype or other online or satellite powered video conferencing systems, and can scan documents to be shared via the Internet or sent via facsimile. Often people don't see with whom they are conducting business. The person texting or emailing could very well be sitting at home in his or her pajamas.

In the current work force four generations are represented: (1) Traditionalists, born prior to 1946; (2) Baby Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964; (3) Generation X, born between 1964 and 1980; and (4) Generation Y, born between 1980 and 2000. These four generations approach communication, and the technology of communication, in diverse ways, making communication within and among the generations in today's business environment more complex than it was in the past.

Do new technological advances influence people in work or volunteer settings? Is it possible to alter leadership or management styles creating a productive environment for employees or volunteers from different generations? The following data focuses on the differences and similarities between the generations, with an acute focus on communication in the workplace.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of the study is to conduct a comprehensive literature review examining how different generations communicate. Additionally, the study explores what types of management or leadership styles work best for the various generations. Overall, the study is intended to provide guidance for communication management and leadership strategies as they relate to the author's role as the Alumni Relations Coordinator for Allen College in Waterloo, Iowa.

Research Questions and Significance of the Study

To be an effective Coordinator for the Allen College Alumni Association (ACAA), it is vital to gain preliminary insights into the organization's communication strategies and degrees of success. The ACAA volunteer board consists of 17 members

ranging in ages from 21 to 76. The following questions guide my research:

1. *What types of communication, in work related meetings, including volunteer boards, are effective among the four generations of (1) Traditionalists, (2) Baby Boomers, (3) Generation X and (4) Generation Y?*
2. *Could various management techniques, and/or personality analysis be utilized to aid in the communication process between these four generations?*

Personal Narrative

During the past five years, the administrators at Allen College, a small nursing and health sciences college located in Waterloo, Iowa, have increasingly recognized the interrelationship between effective communication and job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is high at Allen College, as illustrated, in part, by a lack of turnover.

The Chancellor and members of the college leadership have assembled a team of employees with positive work attitudes. Job commitment is based on our satisfaction, communication, trust and engagement. "Nurses have a higher than average level of trust in their managers and coworkers and they trusted more in their managers and coworkers than their institutions" (Altuntas & Baykal, 2010, p. 186). Faculty and staff guide future nursing

and health science professionals through their schooling, thus the correlation and clinical relevance is clear: "nursing services will provide guidance to managers, particularly to managers of nursing services, in establishing processes to predict nurses' organizational commitment, job satisfaction, performance, intention to leave and other relevant issues" (Altuntas & Baykal, 2010, p. 186).

Trust, open communication and job satisfaction lies in the organizational framework funneled through the Allen Health System leadership team to my department at Allen College. My superior sets weekly *priority meetings* to discuss current projects, including expectations and achievable goals. Feedback from the leadership team of the College is provided, as well as discussion time for potential projects and direction. An open communication stream is in place to address challenges. The Student Services Department also holds bimonthly staff meetings to achieve the same goal as the individual priority meetings, but on a departmental level. "Trust is crucial in all relationships formed within an organization particularly in relationships between the staff and their managers. Trust, a crucial component of professional life, has favorable consequences for both the staff and the organization" (Altuntas & Baykal, 2010, p. 187).

According to Prince & File (1994), "getting donors involved with the nonprofit a step at a time is key to increasing their personal commitment" (p. 175). Insuring effective communication with an alumni base consisting of four different generational cohorts provides many benefits, including increasing personal involvement, which can lead to a higher fundraising return. "More intense feelings of involvement are associated with the intention to give more" (Prince & File, 1994, p. 185). Additionally, the diversity of the alumni base aids in engagement and information sharing among peers.

Limitations of the Study

When researching the topic of generational communication, it was challenging to identify information that applied specifically to Allen College and the approximate 3,000 living alumni. The ACA Board of Directors, for which I am responsible, currently consists of 17 alumni, one student representative and one Health Sciences faculty member. Most of the existing generational communication research addresses employees in general, not volunteer board members.

The Allen College alumni base is also limited in diversity. The majority of graduates are white females, providing a lack of ethnic diversity. In recent years, however, graduation rates

more than doubled, increasing in number, if not in percentage, the alumni of varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds. When the School of Nursing began, the average graduating class size was 30 students. In 2011, Allen College will graduate over 200 students.

Definition of Terms

Traditionalists -

(Born before 1946) - This generation is significantly influenced by the Great Depression. Believing in saving for a rainy day, employees remain with an organization through thick and thin. Extreme loyalty to leadership is exhibited. Traditionalists are dedicated, hardworking, financially conservative and faithful to institutions (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Baby Boomers -

(Born 1946-1964) Influenced by President Kennedy's assassination, the Vietnam War, and the birth control pill, Baby Boomers feel compelled to change the system. As a result, they are responsible for many of the rights and opportunities now taken for granted. Because of their large numbers, Baby Boomers face intense competition for jobs. They all but invented the 60-hour work week. Their

identity is deeply connected to their career achievements (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Generation X -

(Born 1965-1980) Gen Xers are influenced by tripling divorce rates when they were children. They are technologically savvy, ushering in the era of video games and personal computers. Witnessing their parents being laid off after years of dedicated service instills a sense of institutional distrust and lack of loyalty to an employer. Changing jobs to advance professionally is common. Gen Xers believe work is not the most important thing in their lives. When the clock strikes five, they would rather pursue other interests than put in extra hours at the workplace (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Generation Y -

(Born 1981-1999) Many in this generation are still in school, but the oldest Gen Ys are now entering the work force. This generation has had access to cell phones and personal computers all their lives. Gen Ys are eager to learn and enjoy questioning things. They are confident and have high self-esteem. They are collaborators, favoring teamwork. Rejecting the notion they have to stay within the rigid confines of a job description, they are creative,

and don't hesitate to make career changes or build parallel careers (Smola & Sutton, 2002).

Leader -

One who guides others in an action or an opinion; one who takes the lead in a social movement or nonprofit group (Smith, Stebbins, & Dover, 2006).

Volunteer -

An individual who performs, even for a short period of time, volunteer work in an informal or formal setting as a board member of a nonprofit group, active association member or leader (Smith, Stebbins, & Dover, 2006).

Volunteer Board Members -

Volunteers serving in a formal nonprofit group or volunteer department that sponsors or directs each individual's volunteer action (Smith, Stebbins, & Dover, 2006).

Collaboration -

A situation in which particular forms of interaction among people are expected to occur which trigger learning mechanisms (Williams & Sheridan, 2010, p. 336).

C H A P T E R 2

*A Review of the Literature**Introduction*

The primary need for this research paper stems from the vast age differences of the people comprising the Allen College Alumni Association (ACAA) Board. I am the Coordinator of the ACAA. My literature review includes an in depth look at the differences in generations. What motivates them, how they respond and react in the workplace, their communication styles, and how this research relates to Allen College and the ACAA. My personal goal at Allen College is to increase student involvement during enrollment, leading to continued involvement and commitment as alumni. This will strengthen the potential of giving back to Allen College through time, talent and treasure.

According to research, young people spend large amounts of time online or texting with friends and peers, limiting the amount of time spent in face to face, or even voice to voice, conversation potentially leading to a lack of social skills in which previous generations were rooted (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Generations X & Y are accustomed to being "wired" to communication devices 24 hours a day. They desire flexible work schedules and the tools and information to be more socially active (Smola & Sutton, 2002). Baby Boomers and

Traditionalists are typically familiar with more structured schedules, including meeting in person or talking on the phone.

When looking at the research in regards to employees, much of what is found can be translated to volunteer board members in the same generational groups. Statistics may vary, but they collectively report the average Generation Y employee remains in a job for 3.3 years. Even the steadfast Baby Boomers are now only averaging eight years with an employer (Yost, 2008). The following table illustrates the average tenure at a workplace.

Table 2.1: A Generational Cross Section

Generation	Born	National Workforce	Average Tenure
Traditionalists	1920-1945	5%	15 plus
Baby Boomers	1946-1964	45%	6-12
Generation X	1965-1979	30%	3-5
Generation Y	1980-2000	20%	2-4

(Yost, 2008, p. 18)

Managers and facilitators need to be aware of the division between generations within their workforce or volunteer base. Awareness leads to the ability to create a more satisfying experience, with the goal of stretching the tenure statistics and increasing involvement. According to a survey by the career management company Lee Hecht Harrison, more than 60 percent of

employers reported they are experiencing tensions between employees from different generations (Derrick & Walker, 2006).

As previously mentioned, commitment to a job is based on satisfaction, engagement, communication and trust in employers. Not only is trust crucial in an organization, it creates an environment which minimizes stress. This logic can transfer to volunteer management.

According to (Davis, 2009), improvements in staff health and well being can save money by reducing staff sickness rates. "Making sure staff are happy and healthy through methods such as creating a safe environment to work in, well-managed workloads and encouraging healthy eating can pay major dividends" (p. 25). In an article about job satisfaction and one's "calling" in life, primarily positive perspectives such as greater satisfaction, more positive mental health benefits, and lower rates of absenteeism were presented (Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2009).

This example is strengthened in an article addressing management in the workplace. The authors suggest a good manager will garner greater appreciation and loyalty from employees when he or she is able to negotiate discretionary resources as short term rewards. The article lists these possible rewards: making extra funds available to be used for special short-term bonuses, improving short-term work conditions, making special short-term

accommodations in employees' schedules, paid time off, offering exposure to decision makers, or writing a commendation to add to an employee's file (Tulgan, 2009). This research further solidifies the need for positive, effective, management techniques.

Understanding the characteristics of different generations helps leaders understand why employees behave or react the way they do. Understanding what motivates each generation differently can help managers understand how to get employees to perform or respond in a desirable way (Yost, 2008). This research sheds light on the potential avenues to open the doors of communication to our current Allen College students and alumni. Table 2.2 below, from (Yost, 2008), outlines the different characteristics and motivators of the four generations.

Table 2.2: Defining the Generations

Generation	Characteristics	Motivators
Traditionalists	Value consistency, disciplined, respectful of the past	Want to be mentors, seek fulfillment through second career, need experience to be respected

Baby Boomers	Optimistic, team players, uncomfortable with conflict, self-centered	Need to work (career=identity) search for success, satisfied by full engagement
Generation X	Pragmatic, informal, frustrated, confident with technology	Expect recognition for ambition, work-life balance as valuable as cash, want to do it their way
Generation Y	High-tech, confident, independent, attached to home and helicopter parents	Idealistic, hungry for frequent feedback, seek freedom as a sign of respect and trust

(Yost, 2008, p. 19)

Using the above characteristics can help leaders manage employees from different generational groups. For example, when dealing with technology issues, a manager should remember Gen X is motivated by allowing music, Blackberrys and instant messaging to help them remain productive. When working with Gen Y, leaders should encourage suggestions and not inhibit change. Gen Y is more comfortable with technology than any other

generation; managers can learn from their experience to stay on the cutting edge (Auby, 2008). Collaboration between generational cohorts can be advanced by encouraging Gen Y to take the lead sharing knowledge of online social networks. Allow Gen X to focus on keeping face to face meetings short, for the most part try to handle most communication via conference calls, video and web conferencing. "Senior people indentified non-verbal communication as an important aspect of work whereas young people were less likely to see it as important. Young people have not been able to read the subtle non-verbal cues in the workplace and have lost their job over it" (Zevenbergen, 2004, p. 106)

Collaboration is part of sustained shared thinking involving complementary skills to foster creativity, and is an important element of intergenerational communication. Colleagues in an office, or a volunteer association board, find their skills and power more effective if a high level of communication and collaboration is maintained. Teamwork and collaboration are healthy forms of interaction in which people are motivated to learn new concepts. Adding constructive competition to motivate employees and board members could enable people to stretch beyond their own expected abilities (Seridan & Williams, 2006). Competitive people adjust their ways of thinking and are deemed more flexible when dealing with an

outside group. This skill is not found in collaborative people and would need to be fostered by the leader, director or employer of any given group (Williams & Sheridan, 2010).

A Swedish study by Williams and Sheridan (2010) looks at collaborative learning among students. Williams and Sheridan are very aware of the attitudes of both the students and the teachers in the school, stating that values, knowledge, emotions and ways of acting in accordance with people's understandings of collaboration and competition are key to their success in learning. Competition can be used as a motivating factor. However, the word can often instill pressure, stress, and performance anxiety. "When teacher or leader support is lacking, the composition of and competences within a group become critical for patterns of constructive interaction to develop" (Williams & Sheridan, 2010, p. 343). Translated into the workforce, this could lead to a non-effective volunteer board or office setting.

One interview in the study by Williams and Sheridan is extremely thought provoking; it is with a middle school student who emphasizes the importance of a relaxed climate with mutual encouragement to do well. The student stresses the importance of fellow classmates motivating one another leading to an environment where collaboration and constructive competition can develop. Competition develops between people who perceive

themselves as equals, irrespective of the positions they have in their class. All individuals in a group must have knowledge both of their own expertise and its relation to others' skill sets. Research shows that, in unequal groups, members can collaborate but individual members can dominate group thinking, something that can be constructive or destructive to the group (Seridan & Williams, 2006).

Collaboration leads to leadership and the tie between good leadership and communication. Communication effectiveness is a prime indicator of a professional who is well trained and willing to continue working toward being an excellent leader (Wentz, 1998). According to Wentz, "effective communication includes written, verbal and nonverbal communication, listening skills, the use of technology to assist in efficient communication and methods of evaluation whether the communications are effective" (Wentz, 1998, p. 113).

Continuing to examine the role of communication and leadership, the following is an example of research studying leaders who make an effort to understand their style of leadership. Researchers (Rooke & Torbert, 2005), use a concept called *Action Logics* and a survey tool called the *Leadership Development Profile*. Using this tool, participants in the study were asked to complete 36 open-ended sentences. The findings were then grouped into the following table:

Table 2.3: Seven Ways of Leading

Action Logic	Characteristics	Strengths	%Profiling
Opportunist	Wins any way possible. Self-oriented, manipulative	Good in emergencies & in sales	5%
Diplomat	Avoids overt conflict. Wants to belong, rarely rocks the boat	Good as supportive glue in an office	12%
Expert	Rules by logic & expertise. Seeks rational efficiency	Good as individual contributor	38%
Achiever	Meets strategic goals. Effectively achieves goals through teams	Well suited to managerial roles, action & goal oriented	30%

Individualist	Interweaves competing personal & company action logic	Effective in venture & consulting roles	10%
Strategist	Generates organizational & personal transformations	Effective as a transformational leader	4%
Alchemist	Generates social transformations	Good at leading society transformations	1%

(Rooke & Torbert, 2005, p. 47)

Participants in the study were between the ages of 25 and 55. They worked at hundreds of American and European companies, as well as nonprofits and governmental agencies. The researchers found three types of leaders associated with below average company performance (*Opportunists, Diplomats and Experts*). They account for 55% of the sample. These leaders are significantly less effective at implementing organizational strategies than the 30% who measure as *Achievers*. The final 15% of the managers (*Individualists, Strategists and Alchemists*) show the capacity to innovate and successfully transform their organizations (Rooke & Torbert, 2005).

Improving communication is the main goal of Terrence Martell, a finance professor at City University of New York's Baruch College. Mr. Martell is frustrated at the lack of his students' ability to write persuasively about what they had learned in class. Although the papers are well organized, they show little evidence the students understood the assignment's audience or its purpose. Turning to Baruch College's Communication Institute, Martell helped create communication intensive courses (CIC) focusing on oral, written and computer communication (Warner, 2008). The Institute isn't housed in any one department; it works with the idea that communication is everyone's responsibility.

"Learning that it is not only what you say but how you say it that will make a difference, these students will eventually leave the college and they must learn to communicate without fear" (Warner, 2008, p. 30). In the school of business at Baruch, students take four CICs, one in each year of their studies. Research shows there is, on average, significant improvement over the course of one semester in a CIC. Tests were conducted showing the amount of change in the quality of students' writing were statistically significant (Warner, 2008).

The profile of a typical volunteer is likely to be someone above average in education and income, active in church and likely to be a parent (Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998). The

study by Janoski, Musick and Wilson shows volunteer work undertaken in high school has long-term benefits, as does social participation. "We see nothing wrong with finding ways of encouraging children to get involved in social clubs and community service organizations while in school. The payoff from this kind of activity in later years is clear. The benefits continue to grow throughout the first half of the life-cycle and, possibly, beyond" (Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998, p. 517).

Treuren and Anderson's study demonstrates more complexities to communication between the generations. The article reviews the evidence to the existence of a difference between Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y, testing employment expectations of students to determine employment attitudes. The authors state the amount of literature on generations always gives definitions on how different the separate age groups are. Gen Ys are "fussy job-holders" (Budd, 2008) with limited loyalty to a single employer, and are single-minded in their pursuit of career advancement and greater entitlements (Amble, 2006) (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). The authors go on to state perhaps the behavior of Generation Y is the same behavior of previous generations at that age, as argued by life stage theorists. But behaviors vary within the radically different set of lifestyle and career opportunities available to those entering the

workforce at the start of the 21st century (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). In fact, literature from the 1960s and 1970s mirrors the current generational argument. It is seeking to respond to the emergence of that generation's counterculture, while threads of the same can be found in ancient literature (Treuren & Anderson, 2010).

The Treuren and Anderson study uses three hypotheses:

- That Generation Y students will demonstrate significantly different employment preferences from Generation X and Baby Boomer students.
- That Generation Y students will rate Generation Y employment attributes more highly than non-Generation Y students.
- If Generation Y are a distinct group with distinct employment preferences, then a three-solution non-hierarchical clustering process will find a cluster substantially dominated by those within Generation Y, another cluster substantially dominated by Generation X and another by Baby Boomers (Treuren & Anderson, 2010, p. 53).

The study separates the generation based cohorts by distinguishing Gen Y as including all people under the age of 30 years old. Baby Boomers include all respondents 45 years and older. The results for the first hypothesis center on the Gen

Ys having less desire for interesting work, work-life balance or employment flexibility than Gen Xers or Baby Boomers. Thus, they did not rank their "typical" preferences higher than Gen Xers or Baby Boomers. The third hypothesis tests the proposition the Gen Ys, along with the other cohorts, would cluster together and the findings were that "in this data set, there is no statistically significant difference in age-cohort proportions between clusters; the third hypothesis is not supported" (Treuren & Anderson, 2010, p. 56).

The limitations of the study include the sample surveyed were all university students, which might not accurately represent their age cohort in the workforce. Also there could have been different interpretations in the questions asked. For example, flexible work arrangements, sociable work culture and work-life balance could mean different things to different cohorts, leading to attributing different consequences to the varying questions (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). The authors also point out several fields of work (nursing, accounting, marketing and human resource management, for example) require undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications for career progression. People starting at a time before formal qualifications were required (Baby Boomers) may undertake study later in life, enabling promotion to improve their employability (Treuren & Anderson, 2010). This could cause a limitation in

the study due to the fact those surveyed were students. The study highlights the point the ACAA board is comprised of individuals with one similarity: they all graduated from Allen College. Yet they are all unique individuals with varying communication styles.

Weiss (2010) points to outlying factors contributing to the difference in generations, young people tend to be pushing away from organized religion and the belief in politics are steering them that way. Current statistics show one in four members of Gen Y are unaffiliated with any particular faith. It is not because Gen Ys don't believe in God; it shows young adults are simply staying clear of religious institutions at a rate unprecedented in U.S. history (Weiss, 2010). Popular political movements in the generational cohort are encouraging young adults to lean to the left. They are more open to change and more tolerant of differences than their older counterparts.

Could a generationally tiered marketing and volunteer management structure be beneficial to Allen College for engagement of students and alumni? According to this research the four generational cohorts are seeking varied communication and reward options.

Leaders and managers must pay attention to not only the different generational groups in a given organization, but to gender differences as well. The majority of the Allen College

student population is comprised of female students. Only 5% of the student base is male. The bulk of the volunteer labor forces from previous decades is women. Women who were not in the paid labor force had the most volunteer hours at their disposal. Now, with more and more women entering the paid labor force (especially at Allen College), the ACAA leadership is challenged to cultivate interest in volunteering.

As the world view opens, exposing people to more new ways of thinking and communicating, the traditional forms of management and communication for the ACAA will be impacted and will require reevaluation and, potentially, restructuring.

Summary of the Research

The research outlines a need for competent leadership, collaboration and communication to create a successful work environment and/or volunteer organization. The data presented highlights a difference in the way generational groups perform tasks. There is also research outlining the issues with technical advances. "Given the high tech world that students will enter once they leave schools, there needs to be recognition of the new demands of these changed workplaces" (Zevenbergen, 2004, p. 99). Leaders and managers must be aware of the different skills employees or volunteers might bring to the office or boardroom.

To become an effective leader, one must be able to identify personal leadership styles. An example of leadership styles is given in Table 3, showing the characteristics and strengths outlined in Rook and William's *Seven Ways of Leading*. Once the leader or manager's style is determined, the communication between the leadership and the employees, or volunteers, is developed. Again, it is crucial to note what generations are in the given workforce, or volunteer setting, in order to be effective in a leadership role.

Communication is the key ingredient to a successful organization. How will the employees or volunteers be trained on adequate communication skills? According to the researchers and professors at Baruch College, these skills are lacking in their students prior to the implementation of the CICs. We know Baruch is graduating students competent in their communication skills, but what about the other people comprising our nation's work and volunteer force? The bottom line is we don't have any assurances we will have effective communicators on our team. From the research it is unclear what other "outside" factors could contribute to the thinking and characteristics of generations. As is indicated in Treuren & Anderson, what if we can't pinpoint the attributes or characteristics of the different generations? What about the issues of outside influences such as politics or religion?

Communication within the generational cohorts remains challenging. However, if leaders and managers are open minded, willing to improve upon their leadership skills, have highly trained communicators as their employees or within their volunteer base, and continually deal with the inevitable outside factors influencing them, communication can flourish.

C H A P T E R 3

*Literature Review - Summary Analysis**Introduction*

This literature review examines the different generational cohorts (1) Traditionalists, (2) Baby Boomers, (3) Generation X, and (4) Generation Y, and analyzes possible management and communication techniques to aid the effectiveness of the ACAA. The questions guiding the research also focus on potential management techniques to aid communication between the generations. During the past four and a half years I have been working with the ACAA, we have made numerous changes. For example, bylaws were written, committees were formed, branding strategies and an organizational logo were created. These changes established the ground work for eliminating communication issues; however, more needs to be done. The ACAA bylaws were last approved in 2008. They should be re-examined with a renewed focus on the communication effectiveness. The board has been strategically diversified; however, it should also be scrutinized again, obtaining a well rounded cross-section of the alumni population. Finally, a clear path for improved communication within the ACAA board is needed to facilitate better participation by ACAA members.

Summary Analysis

The ACAA bylaws were reviewed in 2007 immediately after I began my work with Allen College. They should be revisited to identify potential changes in regards to communication. A section of the ACAA bylaws is included below (with spelling, punctuation, and formatting as found in the actual document):

Allen College
Allen College Alumni Association
Revised February, 2008

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I - TITLE

The name of the organization shall be: "Allen College Alumni Association" (hereinafter referred to as ACAA).

ARTICLE II -

MISSION STATEMENT

Allen College Alumni Association will promote and support
Allen College and celebrate its heritage.

VALUES

Compassion is recognizing others' moment of need and
reaching out to comfort and heal.

Accountability is taking responsibility for one's attitude
and behavior.

Respect is showing honor, esteem, and consideration.

Excellence is being better than the rest of the field.

SERVICE

We value the role of volunteers and support opportunities to serve our college and community.

LIFELONG LEARNING

We advocate and promote activities that foster lifelong learning

DIVERSITY

We embrace, celebrate, and encourage respect for diversity throughout all aspects of our mission.

QUALITY

We uphold the pursuit of excellence as a framework for our endeavors

LEADERSHIP

We recognize the important role of leadership in shaping our vision, advancing our mission, and inspiring our service.

TRADITION

We honor the heritage of Allen College by nurturing school spirit, celebrating campus traditions, and encouraging student, faculty, staff, and alumni support.

ARTICLE III - PURPOSE

3.1 To advance the mission of Allen College

3.2 To involve all graduates of Allen College in Alumni activities.

3.3 To support Allen College student recruitment and retention.

3.4 To assist with fundraising efforts that benefit Allen College.

3.5 To advise Allen Health System marketing and communication staff on ideas of how to promote the alumni image and the College to the community.

3.6 To involve alumni in a variety of activities including, but not limited to, continuing education, scholarship activities, guest speakers, and Alumni events.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

- A. All graduates of Allen College and its predecessor schools shall be members of the ACAA.
- B. Allen College Chancellor, Foundation Director, and Alumni Affairs Coordinator shall be ex-officio, non-voting members.
- C. Any other person shall be an honorary member of the Association if he or she has received an honorary degree from Allen College or is or has been a faculty member.

ARTICLE V - GOVERNING BODY/OFFICERS

- A. The management of the Association and its activities shall be vested in its officers and its Board members. The Board shall have the power to appoint committees to carry out its purposes, to direct the officers of the Association and to fill the unexpired terms of the elected officers and the Board members at large.
- B. Term of office for the Board members shall be for no more than 2 consecutive 3 year terms. A minimum of 4 Alumni Board members shall be elected annually at the annual November meeting of the Association. Allen members of the Board shall be dues paying members of the Association.

- C. Each year an undergraduate student shall be selected by the Alumni Board to serve a two-year term of office as a voting member of the Board.
- D. The Alumni Board shall consist of the Board chair, vice chair, and at least 15 members.
- E. The Board chair, vice chair, and committees chairs shall form the Executive Committee of the Alumni Board.

ARTICLE VI - AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the By-laws may be made at any meeting of the Alumni Board by a majority of the votes cast. Notice of the proposed amendments must be given in the official announcement of the Board meeting.

To better serve the ACAA, I recommend the following additions and revisions to the bylaws:

Under the heading *Diversity*, add "the board will strive to include minority students, adding at least one member who is either male or of non-Caucasian ethnicity."

Under *Leadership*, add "the Alumni Relations Coordinator and the board will strive to communicate using the latest technology. Email, conference calls or Skype will be used when conducting ACAA board business." This addition levels the playing field for all involved leading to improved, concise communication on ACAA board issues.

Under *Article IV (Membership Eligibility)*, add a fourth section, stating the ACAA board will attempt to have a

representative from each decade on the board, allowing for generational diversity. This addition could also be included in *Section C (Board Members)* listed below:

ACAA BY-LAWS (continued)

I. APPOINTMENTS, NOMINATIONS, AND ELECTIONS

A. Chair of the board

1. Board chair shall appoint a Nominating Committee comprised of at least two representatives from the Board, a representative from Allen Foundation and the Alumni Affairs Coordinator.
2. The Nominating Committee shall be chaired by a board representative appointed by the Board Chair.
3. Candidates for the position of vice chair shall be selected from Alumni Board members who have served a minimum of two years on the Board. If candidates cannot be obtained within these restrictions, then any at-large member of the Board may be considered.
4. The vice chair shall be elected by majority vote of the Board upon the recommendation of the Nominating Committee.
5. At the end of the chair term of office, the vice chair shall succeed.
6. The chair's term of office shall be three years.

B. Committees and committee chairs

1. Alumni Board committees may be established at the discretion of the board chair.

2. The chairs of committees shall be appointed by the board chair each year for a one-year term.
3. Committee chairs are eligible for reappointment.

C. Board Members

1. Alumni of Allen College, as defined under membership, are eligible for election to the Alumni Board as members.
2. A Nominating Committee (as described under *chair*) shall consider candidates for the positions of members and shall make a recommendation to the Board. Nominations shall be made with a view to achieving a broad representation of graduates.
3. Alumni can be elected as members on more than one occasion, but cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. A board member who has served two consecutive terms may be re-elected to the board after a one year hiatus.

D. Faculty

1. A representative of the faculty is to be elected every three years.
2. The Nominating Committee shall consider faculty representative candidates and shall make a recommendation to the board.

II. MEETINGS

- A. Meetings of the ACAA may be called by the Board chair and vice chair.

- B. Announcements of such meetings of the ACAA shall be generated by the Alumni Affairs Coordinator.
- C. The Alumni Board shall meet at least 6 times each year
- D. A simple majority of the Alumni Board shall constitute a quorum for all its meetings.
- E. In addition to the scheduled meetings, the Alumni Board and/or its committees may convene in person or by conference call, at the discretion of the Board chair, vice chair, or committee chairs.
- F. The Executive Committee may meet prior to or following any meeting of the Alumni Board.
- G. The Executive Committee shall be authorized to make provisions for regular and special meetings of the ACAA and/or Alumni Board.

III. MISCELLANEOUS

- A. During the academic year, the Board chair or other representative of the ACAA shall address the graduating classes and encourage membership of the ACAA.
- B. Financial contributions to the ACAA shall be referred to and processed by the Memorial Foundation of Allen Hospital, to be used for the purpose designated.
- C. Expenses
 - 1. The Foundation will reimburse the cost of travel, lodging, and meals incurred by members of the Alumni Board for special meetings or alumni related business including personal visits to out-of-town alumni through the work of the Foundation.
 - 2. The Allen College will provide all meals during the meetings of the board.

3. Board members are not required, but are encouraged to consider gifting the above expenses to the Foundation.

IV. AMENDMENTS

The Alumni Board may amend the By-laws by a majority vote and shall publish such amendments on the Allen College website.

Alumni Association By-laws

Revised: October 2007

Revised: October 2007

Revised: February 2008

The technology component also could be added to the *Meeting* section above, as well as, the *Leadership* article as previously mentioned.

In order to fully understand the individual leadership potential of the ACAA board, professional development evaluation could prove beneficial. Utilizing the information outlined in Table 2.3: *Seven Ways of Leading*, it would be worthwhile to understand the characteristics our individual board members possess to aid in the communication between all members of the ACAA board. The ACAA needs to evaluate our action logics. It would be extremely advantageous to hold a retreat and administer personality profile tests. A common test is the DiSC test with the following categories:

Discover DiSC Styles:



Dominance - The D style is direct, self-confident, and determined.



Influence - The i style is enthusiastic, warm, and optimistic.



Steadiness - The S style is calm, patient, and consistent.



Conscientiousness - The C style is careful, reserved, and accurate.

When taking a DiSC profile test, participants answer a simple questionnaire about personal behavior. These might be forced choice (this word describes me most, this one describes me least), or a rating scale (I strongly agree, agree, am neutral, etc. that this term describes me). Individuals are regarded as the experts on themselves. There are no right or wrong answers. Each profile report also includes information about the other DiSC styles, encouraging participants to learn more about others as well. Facilitators might use Group Reports, or other available reports, to provide a greater understanding of a team, group, clients, or colleagues. This evaluation will lead to better communication within the ACAA board. The board will learn about themselves as individuals, as well as learning

differences from the colleagues, leading to better communication and collaboration (Discprofile).

Recommendations

Goals for the Allen College Alumni Association Board of Directors for 2012 include identifying key Allen College alumni to sit on the ACAA Board of Directors. These key individuals will fit into a hand selected group containing at least one representative from each decade the school has been in existence, if possible. Additionally, the board will seek out and recruit at least one male or ethnically diverse alumnus to serve on the board. As per the current bylaws, the board should continue nominating at least one student representative to serve. Once board members are selected, we should hold an orientation or retreat to administer a personality characteristic test (such as DiSC), identifying strengths and weaknesses of individual board members, using these key personality traits to better understand communication differences, enabling advanced collaboration, trust and productivity of the ACAA board.

A personal goal moving forward with my work for Allen College is to continue finding ways to link my various roles and responsibilities. For example, identify the link between the CELL (Center for Engagement, Learning and Leadership) and ACAA.

As Service Coordinator for the CELL and as Student Life Coordinator, along with being the Coordinator for Alumni Relations (all responsibilities in my job description), I need to find ways to engage students and continue that engagement throughout their life as alumni. I have started discussions of alumni activities at new student orientation. I have also begun planning events welcoming students, and then graduates, into the Allen College alumni family. Through work with the CELL, I teach key components of philanthropy, initiating the thought process of students giving back to Allen College. Most of the work with the CELL revolves around service or service learning within the community. The education and principals of being a productive citizen are driven home via the Allen College curriculum, within the message of the CELL, and continue into the ACAA.

The following table will help focus my efforts on organizational change to enhance the effectiveness of the ACAA.

Table 3.1 Communication/Structure Changes for the ACAA

Potential change to implement	Enhancing	Neutral	Threatening
Use of Skype	Gen X & Y	Boomers	Traditionalists
Requiring all board members to have email	Gen X & Y	Boomers	Traditionalists

Personality profiling	All	N/A	N/A
Recruitment diversity for the ACAA	Gen Y	Gen X & Boomers	Traditionalists (due to lack of diversity in their class years)
Collaboration within Allen College & Hospital	All	N/A	N/A
Send invitations to events via email, Facebook or texts	Gen X & Y	Boomers	Traditionalists
Continue hard copy invitations to events	Traditionalists	Boomers, Gen X & Y	N/A
Establish online mentoring programs for alumni	Gen X & Y	Boomers	Traditionalists

According to the table above, there will be pros and cons when implementing changes to the communication of the ACAA. As technology advances, however, so must the ACAA. The number of Traditionalists alumni we have will inevitably decrease while the Gen Y population will increase. Changes need to be implemented focusing on the advancement of our younger graduates, while at the same time not forgetting our older alumni. Eventually, a new generation (post-Gen Y) will be defined, with its characteristic strengths and weaknesses adding to the diversity of the ACAA as a whole, and we will need to

incorporate representation of this "new generation" into the ACAA board.

Working with multiple generations can present many difficulties; however, it can also provide years' of knowledge, experience, and loyalty to any organization. I am fortunate to be at Allen College, and I look forward to using the expertise gained while researching literature for this paper in future years in my profession. My goal, wherever I am in my career, is to strengthen the communication and collaboration for the nonprofit organization I represent. I will strive to fulfill its mission to the betterment of the lives in our communities.

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