

On a personal note

Alumni are part and parcel of the university.

Text: Bettina Volz,
Head of AlumniBasel

The goal is to involve graduates more in university activities. This new university strategy is the first to explicitly mention alumni as an integral and valued target group. At universities across Switzerland, alumni are playing an increasingly substantial role in both friendraising and fundraising. The President's Board and the University Council have also come to view alumni as an asset of growing importance to a university. Consequently, for the first time, the University of Basel's Strategy 2022–2030 specifically identifies alumni as a target group in several places throughout the document. Over the past year, this issue was the subject of intensive discussion with the President's Board, and as a result, an initiative was launched to restructure the relationships between AlumniBasel and the university.

Expansion of the alumni strategy

One critical question for the university is how to remain in contact with all of its graduates after they have completed their studies. After all, the success of an academic institution is not based solely on its academic ranking; it also depends on the career opportunities available for its graduates. In the future, the university aims to be in a position to conduct surveys on the current careers of its alumni, even many years after they have graduated.

This means maintaining contact with all new graduates through the alumni organization, even if

they are not initially registered as members of AlumniBasel. On an operational level, this would require all graduates to be provided with an alumni email address to be issued free of charge after completing their studies. The Board of AlumniBasel had been considering this issue for several years, but the path was fraught with technical and institutional hurdles. Now, thanks to rapid developments in IT-supported alumni management, that situation has finally changed for the better.

The fruits of digitalization

For AlumniBasel, this meant updating its digital alumni platform and shifting away from its former service provider of the past 15 years. The project will require increased cooperation with the university in order to coordinate a much broader array of alumni-focused activities, which are designed to serve the interests of both the alumni and the University of Basel. The Alumni Strategy 2021–2025, which will reflect these new priorities, is currently being drafted. These measures will be outlined in a service portfolio for existing member groups and expanded to include the target group encompassing new graduates and non-members.

Spring member survey

The future service portfolio will place increased emphasis on gathering and incorporating options and feedback from members. What expectations do you have for an alumni organization? What kinds of activities and offerings do members enjoy? Do the available offerings meet your expectations? Do you have suggestions for improvement? Ultimately, member satisfaction with available offerings governs the success of any alumni organization. The survey will be sent to around 6,000 members of AlumniBasel in Spring 2021. Results and findings from the survey will appear in the fall issue of UNI NOVA. ■