

Alumni Prize

Signs of increasing appeal.

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The Alumni Prize was launched in 2015, the 10th anniversary of AlumniBasel. It is endowed with a CHF 10,000 prize by an alumnus and patron and aims to show the many ways in which University of Basel alumni go on to enrich society after completing their studies.

When AlumniBasel was set up in 2005 by the President's Office and Senate, the topic of alumni was relatively unknown in Switzerland – in contrast to Anglo-Saxon areas, where organizations for former students have been an integral part of universities for over 100 years. Would this work in Switzerland, where the higher education system has a completely different structure? The idea of following Harvard's example and tapping wealthy alumni to fill the university's coffers was extremely enticing but – as quickly became clear – nothing but a pipe dream. Admittedly, AlumniBasel didn't get off to an easy start. Initial attempts to arrange large, cross-faculty events like the successes of ETH Zurich (Homecoming Day) and the University of St. Gallen (Alumni Ball) turned out to be hasty. The event programs may have been attractive, but in a city like Basel with a disproportionate number of events for its size, attendance simply wasn't good enough.

Starting small

Smaller events did prove successful, such as the general assembly and the increasingly popular fall event, which focuses on university policy issues and has been held since 2010 in collaboration with the Frei-

willige Akademische Gesellschaft (FAG) and the Förderverein Universität Basel. These occasions have allowed alumni to slowly but surely make themselves known and increase their visibility.

Yet AlumniBasel still lacked a glamorous event to show how important alumni can be for the University of Basel. The idea of an Alumni Prize was developed to boost its profile and raise awareness. This was to be presented during the Dies academicus, the University of Basel's biggest annual celebration. Here too, various obstacles had to be overcome. After taking office as President in 2015, Professor Andrea Schenker-Wicki allowed the first Alumni Prize to be awarded at the Dies academicus, and for that we thank her. The five alumni who have received the prize in the intervening years show that the University of Basel can certainly hold its own in the top academic leagues. They have made a far-reaching impact in a wide variety of fields and have helped the University of Basel to national and international acclaim. The Alumni Prize is a way of promoting their achievements.

Education and loyalty

AlumniBasel membership has increased significantly since 2005 and there are currently around 6,000 active members. The growth of the specialist alumni groups ("Fachalumni") is particularly pleasing. Now numbering 14, these groups have been consistently founded by younger alumni who get involved for two main reasons: they recognize the value of networks and wish to express their pride as University of Basel alumni. The new specialist alumni groups are actively supported by the teaching staff, establishing a much more intensive connection between alumni, students and lecturers.

And so we come full circle, culminating in the Alumni Prize: the education students enjoy, the loyalty they develop – and the fact that graduates are viewed positively and seen as relevant in the university's social environment – encourage alumni to actively identify with the University of Basel. ■

alumnibasel.ch/de/netzwerk/alumni-preis