

*Original Paper*

## How Universities Use Alumni Resources to Help Students'

### Growth: China Perspective

Xiaohua Ning<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Development Planning, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China

\* Xiaohua Ning, Department of Development Planning, Central University of Finance and Economics, Beijing, China

Received: March 16, 2020

Accepted: April 6, 2020

Online Published: April 14, 2020

doi:10.22158/wjer.v7n2p33

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v7n2p33>

#### **Abstract**

*As an important force of social cooperative education in colleges and universities, alumni are not only the embodiment of high school achievements, but also an important educational resource in colleges and universities. By grasping the advantages of alumni as educational resources, alumni education should be carried out throughout the whole process of alumni work, and the concept of “all staff, all process, all aspects, all society and all heart” service for students and prospective alumni should be established. A high-quality alumni education team should be established, rich alumni education programs should be developed, key alumni education fields should be focused, intensive alumni education resources should be expanded, and a win-win cooperation mode between universities and alumni should be established. Taking the initiative to transform the advantages of alumni resources accumulated over a long period of time into the advantages of continuously improving the quality of personnel training, providing a solid social foundation for the school's education work.*

#### **Keywords**

*the “five-service” concept, cooperative education, alumni resources*

#### **1. Introduction and Literature Review**

Alumni are not only the embodiment of high school achievements, but also an important educational resource in colleges and universities. By grasping the advantages of alumni as educational resources, alumni education should be carried out throughout the whole process of alumni work, a brand-new concept of alumni education should be established, a high-quality alumni education team should be established, a wealth of alumni education projects should be developed, the key fields of alumni education should be focused,

intensive alumni education resources should be expanded, a win-win cooperative education mode between universities and alumni should be established, a cooperative education mode based on alumni work, service management should be promoted, and two-way demand should be oriented should be established, which is the connotation embodiment of “combination of science and education, cooperative education”, and is also an effective way for universities to deepen the “full, whole and all-round” education pattern.

At present, scholars at home and abroad have discussed the characteristics of alumni and their educational effects from many aspects. Yan Xiaofeng (2011) believes that the development and management of alumni resources is the core content of alumni work in colleges and universities. The success or failure of alumni work depends first on whether there is a correct and sufficient understanding of alumni resources. Ke Ting, Ye Zhanhang, and Yan Qian (2014) through a comparative study of the development and management modes of alumni resources at home and abroad, believe that the school should form an important information network at home and abroad by strengthening the ties between the school and alumni, so as to fully develop alumni resources and promote the rapid development of the school. Jiang Quanhong (2006) pointed out in his research that alumni are unique resources and priceless assets of universities. Universities should strengthen the development of alumni resources by subdividing alumni, strengthening the management of alumni relations, incorporating alumni resources into the school’s human resources planning, and promoting school-enterprise cooperation by alumni. Zhan Meiyuan and Lou Jianyue (2013), taking Zhejiang University as an example, pointed out that alumni resources in universities are divided into intellectual resources, financial resources and human resources, which play an important role in moral education, employment guidance and feedback in universities. Chen Jinbo (2019) can make full use of university alumni resources in the new situation by digging deep into the campus economy, contacting alumni in various forms and channels, boosting university-industry-research cooperation, and developing overseas alumni resources. Alumni resources can be used to raise funds for running universities, exchange information inside and outside universities, and promote ideological and political education in universities. Jessica Holmes (2007) found that the degree of alumni contribution to the school mainly depends on the reputation of the school. Meneses, S (2013) find that university alumni play an important role in increasing school funding and supporting school development. Therefore, universities should actively establish partnership with alumni to expand their financial capabilities. From this point of view, most of these studies focus on the direct effect of alumni on universities, but seldom on how to fundamentally improve alumni’s sense of belonging to schools to develop alumni resources.

Then, with the vigorous development of higher education and the changes in the scale and structure of alumni resources, how to carry out alumni work in a targeted manner, utilize alumni resources, explore the mode of cooperative education between universities and society, help schools to educate people, help schools to develop talents, realize mutual benefits and win-win results between schools and alumni, and promote the construction of “double first-class” schools have become important issues

facing all universities.

## 2. The Meaning and Characteristics of Alumni Education Resources

In a general sense, “alumni” refers to people who have studied, worked and studied in the same school, university or research institute. Judging from the articles of association of alumni associations of various universities, “alumni” mostly refers to undergraduates, graduate students, overseas students, college students (including full-time and correspondence evening students), various professional certificates and various non-academic education and training personnel, as well as teaching staff who have worked in the school, visiting professors employed by the school and honorary professors granted by the school, which is a broader concept. Alumni resources refer to the value of alumni as human resources and the sum of financial, material, information, cultural and social influence resources possessed by alumni.

As an important achievement and unique resource of running a university, alumni resources have their unique characteristics in the process of educating students compared with other running resources:

One is the specificity of the alma mater. Alumni resources are not public resources, but unique resources for specific schools. The important foundation for the existence of this kind of resources is the alma mater. Alumni are influenced by the school culture, motto and ethos from the beginning of entering the campus. They are deeply branded with the alma mater and have natural feelings and connections with the alma mater. This special emotion based on “learning affinity” makes alumni care more about and support the development of their alma mater.

Second, it has a natural affinity. This kind of affinity is reflected not only between alma mater and alumni, alumni and alma mater, alumni and alumni, but also between alumni and students. Alumni are brothers and sisters who come down in one continuous line to the students. Their learning experience and background are similar to those of the students. Therefore, the alumni share their growth and struggle experiences with the students, making the students feel more friendly and more receptive to the suggestions of the alumni, thus stimulating their internal motivation and helping them to grow into talents in the school.

Third, it has a distinctive industry color. For many colleges and universities, due to their development history and school-running characteristics, they have formed relatively distinct industry school-running traditions or service characteristics. Most of the alumni trained are concentrated in certain industries, such as financial colleges and universities, medical colleges and universities, transportation colleges and universities, transportation engineering systems, and normal colleges and universities. This distinctive feature of the alumni industry is conducive to the formation of a good tradition of “spreading, helping and bringing” between alumni and students.

Fourth, the sustainability of alumni resources. The status of “alumnus” is lifelong. The relationship and emotion between alumnus and alma mater are eternal, and will not disappear with the change of other things or the passage of time. On the contrary, the longer the graduation time, the stronger the emotion

to alma mater. On the other hand, as long as colleges and universities still exist, with the development of colleges and universities and the expansion of enrollment scale, groups of new students will be welcomed, and groups of alumni will naturally be sent away. The quantity and quality of alumni will continue to improve, and alumni resources will continue to flow.

Fifth, the diversification of alumni resources. The diversity of alumni resources stems on the one hand from the diversity of alumni groups in terms of region, level, age gradient and social influence. On the other hand, from the perspective of industry, alumni of a university may be distributed in all sectors of society, and the role of alumni resources in the social relations of the country, schools and individuals is diverse, and there are great differences in social influence. This diversified feature also reflects that alumni resources are particularly exploitable, requiring universities and relevant departments of alumni work to attach importance to contacts with alumni and the development and utilization of alumni resources.

### **3. Innovate the Educational Concept of Cooperation between Universities and Society**

Then, how can colleges and universities use the rich alumni brand, information, financial resources, human resources and intellectual resources to serve the education cause of colleges and universities and guide and help college students to grow up? This paper puts forward the idea of “five-in-one” education concept to do a good job in college education. The so-called “five-service” concept means that in the education work in colleges and universities, the working concept of “all staff, all process, all aspects, all society and all heart” is used to serve students and promote the development of education work in colleges and universities.

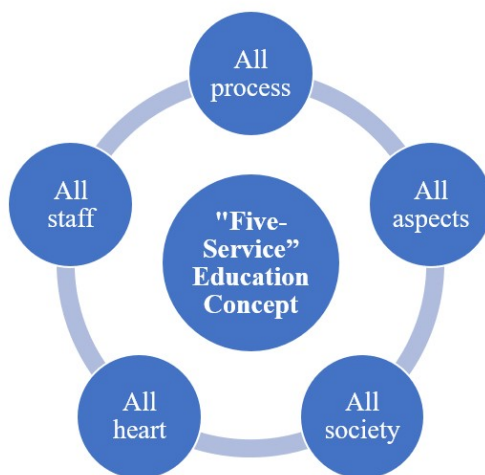
“All staff” refers to the school’s teaching posts, administrative posts, logistics posts, alumni staff and other staff in all positions should provide careful and meticulous service to students, so that students can feel the alma mater’s care everywhere in the school.

“All process” refers to all kinds of care and help given to the alma mater at all times when students enter school, go to school and graduate.

“All aspects” refers to providing life, study and work assistance to students through various platforms, special activities and various detailed services to improve their comprehensive abilities.

“All society” refers to not only mobilizing the strength in the school, but also gathering the strength of the alumni, alumni enterprises, social loving people and partners to help the school to develop talents.

“All heart” refers to serving students wholeheartedly in every educational subject, every educational link, every educational process and every educational node, improving alumni awareness of prospective alumni, cultivating the culture of alma mater, and laying a solid foundation for alumni work.



**Figure 1. "Five-Service" Education Concept**

#### **4. How to Build a Cooperative Education Path between Universities and Society**

##### *4.1 Establishing a Quality Education Team to Serve Students*

First, teaching posts teach and educate students. School teaching should be people-oriented, pay attention to the all-round development of people, emphasize the development of people's potential, and take the sustainable development of people as the first need. In the teaching process, excellent courses are continuously offered to allow more students to share quality services. To build a service-oriented teaching staff, teachers should not only master the contents of textbooks and teach them to students, but also care about students' ideological and moral character, make three-dimensional and humanized contents, and guide students to grow up in an all-round way. According to the training objectives, through systematic analysis and timely feedback of students' learning process and results, we should make value judgments on students' reality and future development to help students develop in an all-round way. In a word, we should establish the educational concept of "student-oriented", put the students' requirements first, and strive to serve the students and improve their comprehensive quality.

Second, administrative post serve students. In terms of management, every detail of the school will affect the impression and feelings of the students on their alma mater. Therefore, the management of students in colleges and universities should be more people-oriented, democratic and humanized, breaking the previous rigid management mode and paying attention to the all-round development of students. It is necessary to change from an authoritative and regulatory organization to an affinity and service-oriented organization, to establish the awareness of serving students in an all-round way, and to take the all-round development of morality, intelligence, body and beauty of college students as the goal, so as to truly respect, understand and care for students, create a good space for the all-round development of students, and help college students realize their life goals and values.

Third, rear service and education. Logistics work in colleges and universities is related to students' food, housing, transportation and many other aspects of their lives. Every detail will affect students' feelings

and memories of their alma mater. Therefore, logistics work in colleges and universities is particularly crucial to enhance students' centripetal force towards their alma mater. Therefore, the staff of the logistics post must focus on the customers with teachers, students and employees as the main body in their work to improve their service awareness and service level.

Fourth, alumni staff serve students. Alumni staff should set up the concept of alumnus work, treat students as relatives, change from management to service, provide all kinds of thoughtful, meticulous and considerate services to students with enthusiasm, and cultivate the alumni and alma mater feelings of students from the time they study in school.

#### *4.2 Developing Diversified Education Programs to Serve Students*

Alumni education should not only start with students, but also run through the whole process of students' career. Through the "whole program" of alumni care from admission to graduation, it helps students to grow into talents in school.

First, before entering school. Alumni work departments of colleges and universities can call on alumni associations around the country to hold new seminars to send off new students and establish "new parents group" in addition to welcoming new alumni, so as to realize the "whole process" service goal, so that new students can feel the warmth of alumni associations and the cohesion of their alma mater before entering the school. In addition, during the freshman opening ceremony or the enrollment education process, relevant alumni can be invited to return to their alma mater to send messages to the freshmen or to start the freshman's first lesson in the university, so as to lead the students to spend their college life in a full way.

Second, in the process of schooling. One is to hire alumni mentors to lead students to success. By inviting outstanding alumni to serve as mentors for students in school, alumni can combine their own resources and practical experience, guide and help students through various forms, share career experience and life insights, help students grow and develop their careers, and comprehensively improve their overall quality. During his tenure, alumni tutors often communicate with students in various ways, establish psychological identification, and carry out targeted education and guidance, which not only enable students to learn how to study and live, but also enable students to truly feel the warmth of the school and play a better role in spreading, helping and leading. The second is to guide students' growth through the alumni forum. Through the alumni forum, the school set up an interactive platform for communication between alumni and students. On the one hand, the school enables students to listen to alumni's beneficial experiences in life, society, career, life and other aspects from a distance. On the other hand, the school enables students to contact with the real world of the workplace through alumni answering one-on-one questions about postgraduate studies, career planning, industry development and other aspects. The third is to encourage students to go back to their hometown to investigate alumni enterprises and interview outstanding alumni during the summer and winter vacations, which not only well publicizes the deeds of alumni and promotes the spirit of alumni, but also enables students to be guided by outstanding alumni and set an example. The fourth is to invite

alumni who set up a grant fund to return to their alma mater regularly to attend the award ceremony, to establish a good interaction mechanism between donors and beneficiaries, to cultivate students' gratitude, to set up a model of public welfare donated by alumni, and to inherit the donation culture of the school. The fifth is to invite alumni to return to their alma mater to serve as judges for various student activities or competitions, so as to improve alumni's sense of identity, participation and centripetal force towards their alma mater.

Third, when leaving school. One is to fully promote student practice. Make full use of alumni resources, contact alumni associations and enterprises around the world, fully explore alumni and alumni units and enterprises resources, build internship practice information platform, through docking industry, reforming majors, leading employment and encouraging entrepreneurship, truly provide valuable opportunities for students to practice in actual combat, increase their innovative practical skills, effectively help students to obtain employment in internship, grow together with alumni and make common progress. The second is to promote the employment of students and help the development of enterprises "win-win" by holding a special job fair for alumni enterprises. In order to comprehensively enhance the employment competitiveness of graduates, cultivate students' good career choice ideas and broaden employment channels, the Alumni Association of the Central University of Finance and Economics, in conjunction with the College Students' Employment and Career Development Guidance Center of the Student Affairs Department, holds two job fairs for alumni enterprises each year. Nearly 100 alumni units have provided over 800 jobs in investment and financing, financial management, project operation, product development, market expansion, risk review, legal affairs, administrative personnel, information technology, etc. Covers more than two-thirds of the school's professional disciplines. Through a job fair for alumni enterprises, many students have successfully found their favorite jobs. Some even joined the alumni entrepreneurship team and worked hand in hand with outstanding alumni. Third, during the graduation ceremony, distinguished alumni are invited to greet and send messages to new alumni, to convey the spirit of their alma mater, to build up professional confidence and to enhance the sense of honor of new alumni. Fourth, encourage alumni associations around the world to accept new alumni. Every graduation season, local alumni associations are assisted to actively welcome new alumni in various ways, helping new alumni to solve various difficulties in life and work, so that new alumni can feel the warmth of their alma mater wherever they go.

#### *4.3 Focusing on Key Education Fields to Serve Students*

Education in colleges and universities involves all aspects of students' growth, and every field may have a vital impact on students' development. Therefore, in the planning of cooperative education work, colleges and universities should fully consider the points and aspects of education work, make full use of all kinds of alumni and social resources, handle the relationship between the first class and the second class, in-school education and out-of-school practice, students' knowledge education and skills acquisition, learning and life, and avoid "blind spots" in education work.

Colleges and universities can not only take advantage of alumni resources to participate in students'

second class through alumni forums, alumni mentors, alumni internship bases and other educational programs to expand students' knowledge and help students establish a scientific world outlook, outlook on life and good moral values, but also support the development of the school's educational cause by setting up various educational fund programs to receive financial and material donations from alumni and social loving people. These donations can be used to reward outstanding students, aid poor students, aid various activities beneficial to the development of students' comprehensive quality, help students to study abroad and exchange studies, or support the improvement of teaching and research facilities in schools, aid the development of international cooperation projects and international academic conferences in schools, and set up various award funds, which can not only solve the worries of poor students, but also greatly stimulate the enthusiasm of students in respecting teachers and loving schools, studying diligently and serving the society, and play a positive role in promoting the further development of school education. For example, after the death of his mother, Lin, a rural student from Fujian province in the central university of finance and economics, his father ran into a major car accident in three rounds, and the perpetrators escaped, leaving Lin and his two sisters alone. His father was seriously injured and hospitalized, and his medical expenses could not be paid. When learning of the student's difficulties, the alumni association contacted the local alumni association and alumni for the first time, not only donating a sum of medical expenses to Lin, but also mobilizing various resources to bring the perpetrators to justice through various channels, thus safeguarding the rights and interests of Lin's family and eliminating worries for the students.

#### *4.4 Expanding Intensive Educational Resources to Serve Students*

For colleges and universities, social cooperative education resources are not existing, but need to be continuously cultivated, excavated, condensed and mobilized. Therefore, in the education work of colleges and universities, alumni and social resources need to be condensed through rich alumni platforms and perfect working mechanisms, so as to improve alumni' centripetal force to the alma mater and their enthusiasm for serving the alma mater's education work, to enable alumni to have a correct understanding of their own functions and tasks, and to enable alumni to have an easy consideration of what contribution they can make to the alma mater. From the micro level, we can build an intelligent alumni service system through service platforms such as alumni magazine, alumni website, alumni community, alumni enterprise alliance, alumni WeChat public number, etc. At the same time, we can do a good job in alumni back-to-school fellowship activities, innovate and deepen alumni activities and service contents with alumni career development as the core, so as to pool alumni strength, excavate and integrate alumni donation resources, education resources, information resources, image resources, talent intelligence resources and public relations resources. From a macro perspective, colleges and universities should, under the guidance of the "community of destiny" alumni working concept, build a strong and sustainable resource integration platform, establish an interactive integration mechanism of various high-quality resources such as schools, alumni, social cooperation units, students, people, money, materials, information, etc., through organizational restructuring,



resource integration and mechanism innovation, realize complementary resource advantages, efficient docking, and generate the superposition effect of resources of all parties. To achieve the two-way flow of high-quality resources by efficient and platform-based cooperation services, to achieve the strategic goal of mutual benefit and win-win in promoting the dual-class construction of the university, assisting the development of alumni career, improving the core competitiveness of the cooperators and boosting the growth and success of students, and to provide conditions for raising external resources for the dual-class construction of the university.

For example, the University of Chicago has increased the service of alumni re-education after graduation and the alumni career network, fully utilized social resources such as alumni, provided employment information for students and graduates, and provided rich employment opportunities for graduates through the alumni network.

#### *4.5 Forming a Spirit of Educating with Concerted Efforts to Serve Students*

The students in the school are living people, people in development, people in culture, people in relationships, people in real society, people in the world background, and even future alumni of the school. Education should serve students, the quality of teaching and the growth of students. Education is a rational service, a responsible service and a service with lofty mission. Therefore, no matter in administrative posts, teachers' posts or alumni' posts, no matter in admission, study, graduation, study and life, we should uphold the concept of "serving the students wholeheartedly" to form a situation in which the whole staff, the whole process, the whole society cares for the students, cares for the students, cares for the students, respects the students, understands the students, guides the students to educate and gives them the slightest care. Only with sincere care and love for each student, only when the students recognize our work, can the students feel the strong centripetal force of their alma mater, when they leave school, can they be filled with deep attachment to the alma mater and be grateful to the alma mater.

## **5. Conclusion**

The education work is an undertaking that all employees in the school must participate in, work together, and devote to it. All the links involved in student learning and development should be educating people. Therefore, we must firmly establish the concept of "all staff, all process, all aspects, all society and all heart" to serve students and prospective alumni. In line with the principle of "complementary advantages, resource sharing, serving the society, and common development", it closely focuses on the national strategy, highlights the characteristics of colleges and universities, and establishes alumni interests Community and resource integration and win-win mechanism to achieve efficient docking and collaborative linkage of internal and external resources, stock resources and incremental resources, real resources and potential resources, tangible and intangible resources, and actively build all-round interaction between alumni, society and students. The platform continuously guides and assists alumni and social related resources to support the school's talent training in various

ways, and actively transforms the advantages of alumni resources accumulated over a long period into the advantages of continuously improving the quality of talent training, providing a solid society for school education basis.

### Acknowledgements

This research was supported by 2017 Theoretical Research Project of Central University of Finance and Economics "Practice and Thinking of Applying Alumni Resources in Education" (DJA17001).

### References

- Chen, J. B. (2019). On New Ways to Develop and Utilize Alumni Resources in University Development. *Comparative Study on Cultural Innovation*, 003(001), 144, 153.
- Cui Yingjing. (2015). Practice and Exploration of College Talent Cultivation Based on Alumni Resource Development. *Talent Resource Development*, (16), 173-173.
- Fang, P. (2015). On the Construction of University Alumni Cooperative Education Mode. *China Education Journal*, S2, 365-266.
- He, M. Y., Guo, L., & Qian, X. K. (2004). Reconsideration of Alumni Resources in Colleges and Universities. *Tsinghua University Education Research*, (6), 78-82.
- Jessica, H. (2007). Prestige, charitable deductions and other determinants of alumni giving: Evidence from a highly selective liberal arts college. *Economics of Education Review*, 28(1), 18-28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2007.10.008>
- Jiang, Q. H. (2006). Reflections on the development of alumni resources. *Jiangsu higher education*, (5), 47-49.
- Ke, T., Ye, Z. H., & Yan, Q. (2014). Comparative Study of University Alumni Resources between China and Foreign Countries. *Journal of Jiamusi Institute of Education*, (6), 160-161.
- Liu, Y. X., & Cao, J. (2016). Thoughts on Constructing a New Mode of Cooperative Practice and Education between Universities and Society. *Education and Teaching Forum*, (10), 23-28.
- Meneses, S. (2013). *Alumni resource development for community colleges: A fundraising management model*. Dissertations & Theses Gradworks.
- Wang, D. F. (2004). Effective Use of Alumni Resources in University Employment. *Education Review*, (6), 49-51.
- Wei, D. G. (2008). Research on the Functions of Alumni Association and Effective Development of Alumni Resources. *Journal of Guangxi University (Philosophy and Social Science Edition)*, (1), 148-153.
- Yan, Xi. F. (2011). Evolution of Alumni Work in Chinese Universities and Analysis of Alumni Resources. *Economic research guide*, (21), 311-312.
- Yan, Z. S., Dong, P., & Zhang, F. C. (2007). Exploration of Exploiting Alumni Resources to Promote College Students' Growth Education. *Higher Agricultural Education*, (7), 47-49.

- Zhan, M. Y., Lou, J. Y., & Zheng, C. (2013). Practice and Reflection on the Application of Alumni Resources in Education-Taking Zhejiang University as an Example. *Research on Ideological Education*, (4), 86-89.
- Zhou, J. T. (2010). On the role of alumni resources in the development of colleges and universities. *Education Exploration*, 2010(12), 80-82.
- Zhu, S. Y. etc. (2015). Some Thoughts on Cooperative Education in Colleges and Universities and Its Mechanism Construction-Taking Anhui Agricultural University as an Example. *Higher Agricultural Education*, (7), 43-46.