

**FRESNO STATE**

Alumni Association

# **Brand Study**

**Focus Group Research Initiative**

**Report of Findings**

**September 2017**

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# Overview and Purpose

University Advancement (UA) and the Fresno State Alumni Association (FSAA) determined there was a need to better understand the perceptions, emotions, feelings, opportunities and barriers to engagement, and narratives of alumni as it relates to their relationship with their alma mater. It was determined that a series of focus groups should be conducted. The FSAA contracted with Janzen Brands to conduct the focus groups. For the past two years Janzen Brands has provide internal consulting, focused on marketing and communication infrastructure, brand positioning, and related messaging strategies.

The purpose of the research project was to gauge the perceptions of Fresno State alumni (graduates) toward their alma mater. To guide the research, four research objectives were developed (below), and five focus groups were conducted. Findings are provided, along with conclusions and recommendations.

## Research Objectives

1. Objective #1 (O1): Understand the *emotional triggers* for alumni engagement and perceptions of their alma mater.
  - a. Understand how our targets connect with *any cause*, not just their alma mater.
  - b. Apply priority opportunities – Determine which are of the highest value.
2. Objective #2 (O2): Understand *roadblocks* to engagement, including their experiences with failed or marginal engagement with their alma mater.
3. Objective #3 (O3): Understand *opportunities* for engagement.
  - a. This includes opportunities for alumni to engage *non-alumni*.
4. Objective #4 (O4): Evaluate how what we learn potentially impacts the university brand.

# Methods

## Oversight committee

1. A committee was formed to oversee the preparation, execution and quality control of the research. The committee consisted of members from the following departments:
  - a. Fresno State Alumni Association – Director of Engagement
  - b. Fresno State Alumni Association – Board member
  - c. University Brand Strategy and Marketing – Director
  - d. University Communications – Senior Editor
  - e. Athletics – Director of Marketing and Fan Engagement
  - f. Janzen Brands – Consultant
2. While not on the formal committee, individuals listed below were given regular updates on the research initiative, and provided insight and direction as necessary:
  - a. University Advancement – Vice President
  - b. Fresno State Alumni Association – Executive Director
  - c. Fresno State Alumni Association – Board President
2. A questionnaire was prepared by Janzen Brands and approved by the committee (Appendix A).
3. Recruitment guidelines were provided by Janzen Brands and approved by the committee.
4. Recruitment was conducted by the FSAA.
5. Focus group sessions were scheduled and conducted in June and July of 2017.
6. Video of each focus group was transcribed into over 400 pages for review and analysis by Janzen Brands to prepare the Report of Findings.

# Focus Group Composition

Below is an overview of the focus group composition. For a detailed overview of terms, definitions, and percent of alumni based on geography, see Appendix B.

1. The committee considered best practices, alumni composition data, and budget to recommend five different compositions of focus group participants, one for each of five group sessions.
2. Within those compositions, alumni were classified as:
  - a. Local: Living within 60 miles of Fresno State.
  - b. Out-of-town: Living over 60 miles from Fresno State.
  - c. Engaged: Having some interaction of relative significance with the University or the FSAA.
  - d. Unengaged: Having little or no interaction with the University or the FSAA.
  - e. Graduation: 1-15 years since graduation; 16-30 years since graduation.
3. Based on alumni composition, the following group parameters were developed:
  - a. Group 1: Local engaged, 1 to 15 years post-graduation
  - b. Group 2: Local engaged, 16 to 30 years post-graduation
  - c. Group 3: Local unengaged 1 to 15 years post-graduation
  - d. Group 4: Local unengaged 16 to 30 years post-graduation
  - e. Group 5: Out of area, unengaged or engaged, any graduation year

## Recruitment

Three recruitment strategies were used to recruit participants: email, phone and personal outreach. Using the criteria referenced in the previous section, 100 alumni were randomly selected from the alumni and donor database for each focus group. Only alumni that had an active phone number and email (according to database records) were included on the final lists.

Five emails were sent to each list over a three-week period. After email marketing was completed, the FSAA conducted phone outreach. In the third strategy, personal outreach, committee members offered names of alumni they knew who met the criteria for each focus group. A total of 56 alumni initially registered to attend one of the five focus groups. Due to last minute cancellations (advance notice provided) and no-shows (no advance notice provided), a total of 44 alumni attended.

### Focus group participant demographics

Demographic composition	#	%
1. Total attendance	44	
2. Sex		
a. Male	23	52%
b. Female	21	48%
3. Ethnicity		
a. Caucasian	23	52%
b. Hispanic	12	27%
c. Asian	7	16%
d. African American	2	5%
4. By College		
a. Craig School of Business	12	27%
b. Arts and Humanities	8	18%
c. Social Sciences	7	16%
d. Lyles College of Engineering	5	11%
e. Health and Human Services	4	9%
f. Kremen School of Education and Human Development	3	7%
g. Science and Math	2	5%
h. Jordan College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology	2	5%
i. Unknown	1	2%
5. By Degree		
a. Bachelor	36	82%
b. Master	7	16%
c. Unknown	1	2%

*(Cont'd on next page)*

(Cont'd.)

6. By Graduation Year (in decades)		
a. 1970-1979	1	2%
b. 1980-1989	4	9%
c. 1990-1999	10	23%
d. 2000-2009	13	30%
e. 2010-2017	15	34%
f. Unknown	1	2%

## Implementation

1. All sessions were facilitated by Gary Janzen of Janzen Brands.
2. No university staff were present in the room during the focus groups.
3. In order to encourage fuller participation and greater candor, focus groups were conducted at the Smittcamp Alumni House (Jensen Library). This provided a more comfortable environment and in a more conversational style, without some traditional focus group characteristics, such as the two-way mirror for observation by “clients.”
4. Focus groups were conducted on weekday evenings, from 6:00-8:30 p.m.
5. Participants were encouraged to tell their stories prior to the official agenda of the questionnaire. This was intended to prime the sessions for a more natural flow of storytelling, where questions and probes became more integrated into an uninterrupted dialogue. This also opened the door to more casual banter, and the opportunity for the injection of humor that kept participants engaged and feeling that their personal stories were important.
6. As a result, the sessions were significantly longer – in most cases up to three hours – but participant expression was deeper and more revealing. Participants were fully engaged for the duration of the focus groups.

## **Moderator observations**

1. The lines of focus group composition (i.e. engaged versus unengaged), became blurred to a degree; this was in part due to the lack of transparency by potential participants in the recruitment process, and the lack of strongly differentiated engagement among Fresno State alumni. In no way, however, was the quality of participation or results compromised as a result.
2. All participants were active participants, some more than others as is typical of focus groups. All were forthcoming and sincere. While recruitment is the single toughest and most imperfect element of the focus group process, participants – non-withstanding blurred lines of composition – gave heartfelt and genuine responses.

# Core Findings

The 13 items below represent major recurring themes that emerged from the prepared questionnaire and subsequent probes. As the purpose of the research project was to gauge the perceptions of Fresno State alumni (graduates) toward their alma mater, responses are organized into two categories, listed below.

1. Perceptions of Fresno State (“University”).
2. Perceptions of the Fresno State Alumni Association (“FSAA”).

## University

1. **Motivation to become involved (or more involved) with Fresno State is strongly related to the desire of alumni to connect with students in their original department of study; not as much driven by social or networking opportunities alone.**
  - a. The invitation to return to campus to share one’s work and life experiences recognizes alumni worth and their accomplishments.
    - i. The willingness among alumni respondents is overwhelming: *“Just ask us, we’ll be there.”*
    - ii. Even though time is precious, the genuineness of the ‘ask’ and message behind it would transcend the many work and personal time commitments alumni have. Though invitations should respect family commitments and, if more social, include family where possible.
    - iii. An ‘ask’ of this kind as often as twice a year would be acceptable even among alumni who have not been engaged previously.
  - b. Alumni perceive staying in touch with former professors is more valuable and easier than making the effort to be in contact with the FSAA.
  - c. Alumni who are employers seek a more structured channel to create a recruitment pipeline with applicable departments at the University;

accommodations by the University for recruitment have been spotty, and not seemingly targeted (e.g. random emails about career fairs without a context for the target—employer or prospective hire). Some inquiries to the University have been ignored (the Gazarian Real Estate Center is noted as one successful exception to the rule, by virtue of its commitment to an entrepreneurial approach and growing worthy recruits).

**2. Alumni want to hear more about the broader accomplishments of the University outside of Athletics, and more about events that could invite them back to campus, for reasons of pride and enrichment; events about which alumni know little except the small percentage of those who are highly engaged in chapters or organizations on campus.**

- a. Alumni wonder why they do not know more about what is going on at the University and why nobody is really asking them to participate in events other than Athletics.
- b. Certain facts or accomplishments that could create interest were tested in context of other group questioning, such as Fresno State's impact on the community (see #4 below), and in context of other questions.
- c. Overall, recall was not consistent on Fresno State's core distinctions and accomplishments.
- d. Few events on campus, such as the Thomas Friedman and David Brooks lectures, or the Summer Arts Festival, could be recalled; though interest in attending these, had alumni known more, is high, and was the perceived halo effect for Fresno State.
- e. However, many respondents mention that having an annual "Dog Days-style" event for alumni, with a 'discovery' feel about what's really going on at Fresno State would be appealing (see #3e below).
- f. Unaided awareness of the rise of Fresno State in the national rankings is moderate, but when aided, recall includes "U.S. News & World Report,"

*"Forbes", and reactions include "proud," "about time," and, "been a great school all along" (more discussion in #6 below regarding perceptions).*

- g. Most alumni *"love"* hearing about Fresno State graduates who have made it; particularly if their story can be made a takeaway for their own journey.
- h. A greater overall knowledge by alumni about the accomplishments of Fresno State and its students' successes elevates the perceived value of their degrees, to the point of wanting to share that information with others to appreciate that value for professional advancement and/or personal pride.
- i. Many respondents suggest this respondent's view: *"We need more ammunition...(to leverage the value of our education at Fresno State)."*

**3. Nearly unanimously, alumni feel tremendous pride in having attended and graduated from Fresno State and feel that has contributed to their success in some way, though they seek a greater value proposition as alumni before seriously considering making a financial contribution to the University in any way.**

- a. There appears to be no roadmap for giving aligned with various levels of an approachable value proposition that alumni can grow into; and no low or middle gear. For example: *"...it's always seems like it's a 'big number', like \$500, \$1,000 or more..."*
- b. There is little or no idea of how gifts to the FSAA are spent, other than those that are specifically scholarship driven; Smittcamp Scholarships and their association to *"higher GPA"* had some limited recall, though it raised the question, *"What about other students who don't have the means?"*
- c. A common feeling among respondents: *"Anything (any sign of appreciation and respect for what we have accomplished) would make us feel more worthy, and say we have a relationship with Fresno State."*
- d. For example, getting a free Alumni Paw Pin was mentioned several times as a first step.
- e. Other examples of potential value for alumni were discounted admission to events on campus; discounted parking; and a free, family-friendly *"Dog Days"*

type event specifically for alumni to bring them up to speed on what's going on with the University and with alumni (preferably within their profession).

- f. Paradoxically, alumni would like to be asked to volunteer their time for events whether University or department related.
- g. Related: alumni do not have a good understanding of where the University's funding comes from and where it goes. Some current donors among alumni feel they would give more if they knew where it was going.

**4. Knowledge of how Fresno State impacts the community is scattered, underestimated and misinformed.**

- a. Some alumni define "*community impact*" as community events. A few of those events cited are not led by the University (e.g. Kids Day).
- b. Other alumni mentioned "*internships*" as community impact; upon aiding, the value of Service Learning was seen as a significant community impact. There was some recall of the statement "*one million hours of service volunteered by students and faculty.*"
- c. The size of Fresno State's true economic impact was unknown; upon aiding, the thoughts were "*from \$70 to \$100 million.*"
- d. There is some isolated knowledge of efforts between Fresno State and K-12 educational partners to build the pipeline, but the term "*Central Valley Promise*" is unknown.
- e. When aided, it seems to make sense to alumni that there are indeed significant partnerships addressing key issues facing the region such as water, air and healthcare, but there is no specific recall of a partnership in these areas.
- f. Partnerships between Fresno State and local businesses & industry were relatively unknown except for Ag; some knowledge of the Jordan Center and the Viticulture program. One alum speculated, "*...because their (grads) professional skills are probably questionable, there may be a lack of partnerships.*"

- g. The more connected alumni are with their department or school, the more informed, amazed and proud they are. Research was cited as one such pride point by a small number of alumni who have been more involved with their departments or chapters.
- h. When alumni were asked if their business might be open to a partnership if approached by Fresno State, alumni were very open to championing such an entrée, whether in a management position or not.
- i. Alumni were also open to approaching Fresno State to partner on research, development of best practices, joint industry promotions on a meaningful level (i.e. “Guarantee Real Estate with Gazarian Real Estate Institute presents a forum on the future of commercial real estate investment”), if there was a clear central contact or clearinghouse for requests. One example of research in need mentioned several times is economic research for both public and private sectors in the Central Valley.

**5. There is no perception of a regular or reliable line of communication between alumni and the University, raising questions about the quality of the University’s database and sophistication in knowing how to communicate.**

- a. Some have received Fresno State Magazine intermittently, only a few regularly, which is perceived as a matter of giving status.
- b. Some have received emails, but cannot recall a particular kind, except a few respondents recall “Dog Bytes,” all of which are perceived as donation driven.
- c. Most participants *follow* Fresno State social media. Fewer *actively check* social media deliberately for Fresno State news (“*too many different Facebook pages to keep track of...*”).
- d. Alumni are uncertain how the University would have their email, except if using their old student email; only more recent graduates have maintained that student email.
- e. Preferred channels of communication were mixed:
  - i. Predominantly email was preferred.

- ii. Social media (in particular video content), or text ranked second.
  - 1. Both Facebook and Instagram were noted, but activity is *“hit and miss in checking for Fresno State.”*
  - 2. LinkedIn was mentioned but with less frequency.
- f. A direct personal call, *“as long as you’re not calling for money,”* was acceptable and welcomed.

**6. Alumni were asked a series of questions for quick recall of perceptions of the University; from its role in political issues and recent controversies, to how the University rates in specific categories.**

**a. Should Fresno State take a stand on political issues?**

- i. Overwhelmingly alumni felt the University should not: *“They should not speak for all of us”; “Fresno State has already allowed for free speech”; “They have done a much better job than many universities in being balanced and fair, most of which are liberal to begin with.”*
- ii. On immigration law and sanctuary issues: feelings are mixed, though most feel that the University should ultimately advocate for students, but not try to interpret immigration law beyond serving the best interests of the students.
- iii. President Castro is seen as impartial in handling political issues. Many responses were like this one: *“I appreciate that he is not outspoken – if you talk with him, you can’t tell if he’s Democrat or Republican, and that’s the proper stance when you’re in that position.”*

**b. How has Fresno State handled recent controversies, e.g. the history professor’s tweets and the free speech ‘chalk’ incident?**

- i. Most responses were of this nature: *“President Castro addressed the situations appropriately with professionalism”; “I’ve heard he wasn’t strong enough, but given the context, I think he’s done pretty well...”; “He has an obligation to do certain things as an employer...”*

- c. How would you rate the University in the following criteria (positive, negative, neutral, mixed):**
- i. Student success
    - 1. Rating: Overwhelmingly positive.
    - 2. Some alumni considered the conclusion hard to qualify or quantify.
  - ii. Graduation rate
    - 1. Rating: Neutral.
    - 2. Many alumni have no context; they know there are different standards based upon number of years spent. Many reactions were of this nature: *"Most people who start, finish at some point...even later in life."*
  - iii. Serving the under-served
    - 1. Rating: Mostly positive.
    - 2. Food Pantry and Clothing Closet were frequently noted as examples.
  - iv. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
    - 1. Rating: Neutral (little or no recall of any specifically).
    - 2. Some recall that Engineering, Ag and Criminology as departments have some role in *"what's going on here"* or producing *"software"* or specific *"technologies"*; Bitwise received a few mentions as a Fresno State partner.
    - 3. Upon aiding, there is a lot of surprise on the part of many participants about active partnerships or interactivity between the University and the community.
  - v. Keeping the community informed
    - 1. Rating: Almost unanimously negative.
    - 2. Exception: Fresno State corn.
  - vi. Staying in touch with alumni
    - 1. Rating: Almost unanimously negative.

- vii. Staying current (i.e. level of innovation and technology)
  - 1. Rating: Mixed.
  - 2. Mention of outdated equipment and methods in the Engineering Department.
  - 3. There is awareness of some improvements in classroom technology, in spite of a perception that classrooms need structural improvement.
- viii. A success the University should get credit for
  - 1. With some aiding, the recent rise in the University's national rankings creates great pride among alumni without exception, and triggers responses like:
    - a. *"I talk to people all over the country...and when I tell them I went to Fresno State they all think it's a great school...you talk to someone in Fresno about Fresno State and they're like, "Oh?""*
    - b. From an alum who's high-ranking contact at the State Department: *"We need more CSU graduates here...you guys have a great work ethic and are so diverse...I have all these people coming in from Harvard and Yale and they're suing me within the first year because they are not getting positions in Paris or London..."*

**d. When you think of Fresno State, you think (frequent responses of the following nature):**

- i. *"Down to earth"*
- ii. *"Lasting friendships"*
- iii. *"Corn"*
- iv. *"Wine"*
- v. *"Small town"*
- vi. *"Homey"*
- vii. *"Welcoming"*

- viii. *"Accessible, excellent professors"*
- ix. *"Great education"*

**7. Alumni memories of their Fresno State experiences are stronger than the perceived efforts on the part of Fresno State to revive or leverage them for an ongoing relationship. The top three most recalled memories, in descending order, are presented below.**

- a. First year experiences in the dorms – building of friendships, a sense of camaraderie – were instrumental in setting a tone and creating value for the rest of their time at Fresno State. This was mentioned by approximately 50% of participants.
- b. Relationships made and residual bonds maintained with professors whose quality and stature rate very high. This was mentioned by approximately 50% of participants.
- c. Respondents feel that they “got a great education” at Fresno State. Also mentioned by at least 50% of participants.

**8. Out-of-town alumni consistently have as strong if not stronger feelings for “their” University than local alumni, and would be more involved if better engaged and/or organized.**

- a. Symbolism, even in small doses, resonates with emotion and attachment. For example:
  - i. Victor E. Bulldog is appealing.
  - ii. Fresno State apparel is valued.
  - iii. “The Green V” feels like home.
- b. Compared to that of peers in similar professional positions who are alumni of other institutions, perception of Fresno State’s tuition value proposition is high among alumni and colleagues.
- c. Distance is not perceived as an impediment to being more involved; for example, mentoring current students.
- d. Unlike many local alumni who are less inclined to give financially to the University without a greater alumni value proposition first, out-of-area alumni

would consider financial gifts to specific student needs, such as equipment or technology.

**9. Alumni do not differentiate the voice or outreach of the University from the voice or outreach of the FSAA. It is largely considered one and the same.**

- a. Without a clear definition of what an alumni association does, any message – other than specific to the alum’s department of study – is seen as a University message and thus considered as a whole in the eye of the alumni target.

## **FSAA**

**10. The role and value of the FSAA is not understood, and is not considered the most meaningful way to feel connected to and become involved with Fresno State.**

- a. Few alumni, except for those involved in chapters, really know what the FSAA does except ask for money, have a booth at Vintage Days, and sell caps & gowns (more on Chapters in #13 below).
- b. Few alumni know what the Smittcamp Alumni House is or what happens there; and those who have some idea think that it is only for use by *“people who give a lot of money.”*
- c. It appears to participants that the FSAA would be a hub for recruitment of graduates by alumni, though it is not clear if that is a formal function or available upon request, i.e. *“Do you know anybody who would fit our job opening?”*
- d. Personal contact by likeable personalities representing the FSAA, such as Peter Robertson and Matt Schulz is well received; it’s one time when the interests of the FSAA seems to be more about alumni and less about money, and often specific project ‘asks’ (not monetary) are made that alumni feel are doable.

- e. Much of the meaningful ongoing contact between alumni and the University remains through former faculty relationships (that are valued), and fellow alumni *outside* of the FSAA.
- f. Not to say that ‘belonging’ to an organization is rejected; in fact, many alumni (more than 50% of participants) feel that a formal membership – with well-articulated benefits as outlined in this report – with a membership card would better define a relationship that could be expanded or evaluated along the way (please see #3e for additional explanation).
- g. Alumni would prefer an immediate bridge after graduation with these benefits as long as the ‘ask’ for money is not a part of it, outside of a modest monthly membership fee. That bridge, though, would be best if it could be suited for alumni at different stages in their career and life development. Example: *“I was a Disney fan, always wanted to know more about them, even maybe work there, and the FSAA connected me with an alum who works there – this connection is awesome.”*

**11. Alumni want to be engaged with Fresno State after graduation, but feel out of the loop, uncertain about how to become engaged, and dogged by ill-timed and/or ill-presented requests for money that leave them cold.**

- a. There’s a perceived lack of a clear pathway for being involved with the University in any way – *“Where do I go and how can I help?”*
- b. This results in frustration, in spite of the fact that Fresno State is widely considered among respondents as a *“good”* to *“great”* education; more so leaning to *“great.”*
- c. With a majority of participants, the lack of a process to become alumni in more than title – from day one after graduation – is surprising. A common feeling is, *“If you start that connection point early, you can cultivate that into donating at the point that (we’re) ready.”*

- d. Alumni overwhelmingly feel that asking recent graduates to give monetarily is insensitive to this stage of life where, among other demands, there is the burden of student debt and young families.
- e. Some alumni have experiences with other college alumni organizations where it's *"all about the alum, and what the college is willing to do for me, without a mention of the money."*
- f. An example of a common response among alumni: *"Why not ask us how we feel? That's the start of understanding how we want to be engaged!"*
- g. Another example of a common response: *"Tell us, here's what we (Fresno State) really are...have to offer...emblazon it on my mind so I'm thinking of this...(then) yeah, I can do more for the University...that appeal isn't really there other than (asking me), can you donate?"*

**12. Communication from FSAA is inconsistent, incomplete of what FSAA really does, and relies too heavily on traditional spirit-led messaging that is not appealing to nor suggests concern for alumni.**

- a. There was no recall of a "brand" message that would indicate what the FSAA stands for.
- b. Messaging recall seems to be limited for the most part to:
  - i. Facilitation of the Grad Box (not seen as necessarily valuable).
  - ii. Asks for money (unpopular in current form and function).
  - iii. Occasional notice of job fairs (seen as valuable, but could be more consistent and purposefully presented and timed).
- c. Certain current messaging that attempts to leverage a connection between alumni and FSAA (or Fresno State) was tested, and for the most part found ineffective:
  - i. *"Bulldog for life"*
    - 1. Seen as patronizing in some cases, not understood in others; in another view, could be redefined positively in terms of career and life results.

2. Many respondents cannot escape the gang connection.
  - ii. *"Bulldog born, Bulldog bred, I'm a Bulldog till the day I'm dead"*
    1. Seen by many as morbid, archaic and as more nostalgic of 'older athletic fans', rather than "relationship-driven."
    2. Many respondents cannot escape the gang connection.
  - iii. *"Alum from Day One"*
    1. Unanimously considered *"meaningless."*
  - iv. Overall, responses reinforce that the FSAA may be out of touch with what many alumni want and need, and that the FSAA relies more on traditional collegiate and spirit-oriented formulas with which to communicate, not necessarily the kind that motivate or connect with alumni, even those 16 years or more out of school.
- d. Other messaging, albeit from the University, was voluntarily recalled:
- i. *"Bold"*
    1. For the most part, a University attitude with which alumni want to be associated.
    2. Some respondents felt they did not have enough evidence yet to consider Fresno State "bold."
    3. President Castro was positively associated with the term by a few respondents.
  - ii. *"The Red Wave"*
    1. Several alumni (10 years or more out of school) wondered what happened to this phrase and felt that it strongly captured a bigger thrust of what Fresno State can do, and what impact it can have if called upon to make a difference in the region; others felt it had *"momentum"*.
  - iii. *"The Green V"*
    1. Many respondents recall seeing it on athletic programs, uniforms, and other applications (e.g. Victor E. Bulldog's collar), and felt (unaided) that it represented an immediate

sense of pride in the Valley, and wondered why it is not thoroughly explained or made more prominent among symbols of the University.

iv. Kleenex TV commercial for the Renaissance Program

1. A number of alumni recalled this video/commercial, recall what it was about, and felt that it was compelling enough to make them give and feel good about their university.
2. One respondent: *"...it's (demonstrating) student impact...student need...it's real...it was very personal."* Others felt similarly: *"...it was like, 'Oh my gosh'...what can I do to be a part of that...how can I give...if there was something that followed it that said, 'Here's what you can do to get involved'...I would."*

v. *"Just the Ticket to Build Our Community"*

1. TV spot from the Athletic Department.
2. After mentioned by an alum or two, a number of alumni recalled the spot. It resonated with them because it said the University has impact beside sports.
3. One respondent called it *"more than the typical athletic message...now they're talking about student athletes and how ticket sales help support student rather than the athletic department...more of a global identity."*

vi. *"Top Dog"*

1. Arguably the FSAA's most visible event, had extremely low recall of what it is and why it is important; though, upon explanation, many alumni expressed interest in knowing more and potentially attending.
2. *"Top Dog Talks"* also resonated highly when aided as an opportunity to be engaged.

3. With aided recall, there was mention of seeing Top Dog videos posted on social media, to which responses indicated a desire to hear more about success stories of Fresno State alumni “*to aspire to*” – and that if not for the video posts, respondents would likely not have known about the Top Dog event.

**13. FSAA Chapters by department are significantly under-developed and off the radar, though they appear to be the most consistently successful form of engagement by alumni with the University.**

- a. Chapters invite huge loyalty and when those chapters reach out, there is high rate of response to any invitation or call-to-action.
- b. Perception of Chapter outreach:
  - i. *"...these are real people who call for 'me' – even for an invitation to a tailgate, that's a start!"*
  - ii. *"A natural for recruiting, both for alumni looking for a job and for businesses looking to hire."*
  - iii. *"Because Fresno is not a corporate town, chapters create a legit channel to do what's right to help others, beginning with those in your own industry and/or your own company where it matters most."*
  - iv. Much more potential exists for departments with active Chapters to engage local and regional industry clusters and build stronger alumni channels for engagement and support of the University.
  - v. Chapters have value in particular for ethnic groups, as many 'first-gen' students lack an existing network for recruitment and mentorship after graduation.
  - vi. Potential exists for Chapters to be a source of continuing education for alumni, even as an enterprise (ie has a cost).

# Additional Findings

In addition to the Core Findings, the information presented in the following section represents recurring themes from more fluid, unaided responses outside of the questionnaire dialogue.

## 1. Vintage Days

- a. Vintage Days has high recall, but needs revitalization and perhaps redefinition. Right now, it is about food, beer and buying things; pretty standard fare.
- b. Many go to the event out of anticipation of the past, and find even then what they remember has faded. The FSAA could bring it alive.

## 2. Preparation of Fresno State interns and graduates

- a. In response to knowledge of or potential for partnerships between local businesses and the University, it has been heard that interns from the University are lazy, have questionable work ethic, need to be better prepared.
- b. It seems known that many graduates are not prepared for the workplace.
- c. Writing skills were mentioned as poor and professional skills questionable.

## 3. Faculty distinction

- a. Fresno State has a very accomplished faculty, many of whom have top credentials that are little known and seldom recognized.

## 4. Raising the community's low self-esteem

- a. Efforts to better engage alumni, and raise their knowledge of what the University is doing could in turn elevate what is considered a generally low self-esteem within the community.

- b. An effort to raise this self-esteem through Fresno State could also help fight what is perceived as “brain drain” in the Valley.

#### **5. Grassroots efforts at engagement**

- a. What if there was a more Bernie Sanders-type grassroots effort to engage alumni? Asking for smaller donations, offering more accessible and relevant engagement opportunities can add up, and can directly support development of alumni in their careers.
- b. Among similar comments was this one: *“If even non-alumni can get fired up enough to wear Fresno State apparel, why can’t there be a way to engage alumni in a (visceral) way...”*

#### **6. Awareness that Fresno is no longer a small community**

- a. As a whole, we need to rely on alumni other than the patriarchs of *“the old Fresno families like the Smittcamps and the Lyles”* to grow the University and the impact it can have on the community now that the University is increasingly world class. That is going to take people of many different walks and capacities for contributing.
- b. Even with non-alumni, we need to invite the second and third generations of the *“Graying Wave”* (see Fresno Bee article) to participate at some level, based on the impact the university has on this community; where their family and/or family businesses will grow in the future. Even though these targets may likely have attended and/or graduated from more prestigious schools out of town.

#### **7. Pathways to parent (non-alumni) engagement**

- a. Find ways to get parents of current Fresno State students involved, whether alumni or not. This can have far-reaching effects on many fronts, from partnerships to fundraising (*“give them a closer look at what good is going on with their kids.”*).

**8. An incubator for innovation and problem-solving**

- a. Once aided, recall revealed a growing research commitment on campus.
- b. The suggestion was made to create a place where management-level alumni could come to share their challenges in business and seek a 'roundtable' discussion or input of some kind; even if the only result is to engage the problem-solving skills of students.

**9. FSAA sponsorship of signature events that attract people to Fresno, and at the same time, showcase Fresno State talents and re-engage alumni.**

- a. For example, an event like the "Maker Fair" held in San Mateo where inventors, makers, modelers, creative developers, etc., from all over the world show off what they've done; perhaps built around Fresno State's outstanding departments.

**10. Perception that corporate recruiters "skip Fresno State."**

- a. Apple was mentioned twice as an example of corporations that do not recruit at Fresno State, "but do visit schools like Cal Poly."

**11. Parking issues at Fresno State**

- a. If parking was perceived as easier, and there was a discount for alumni, more alumni would consider coming to campus for events.

# Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations are provided. Consistent with the presentation of findings, conclusions are presented by category. Research objectives are presented and correlated with each conclusion.

## **Research Objectives**

1. Objective #1 [O1]: Understand the *emotional triggers* for alumni engagement and perceptions of their alma mater.
  - a. [O1a] Understand how our targets connect with *any cause*, not just their alma mater
  - b. [O1b] Apply priority opportunities – Determine which are of the highest value
2. Objective #2 [O2]: Understand *roadblocks* to engagement, including their experiences with failed or marginal engagement with their alma mater.
3. Objective #3 [O3]: Understand *opportunities* for engagement.
  - c. This includes opportunities for alumni to engage *non-alumni*.
4. Objective #4 [O4]: Evaluate how what we learn potentially impacts the university brand.

## University

### **1. The overwhelming 'pull' of Fresno State alumni is to their departments/schools of study.**

- a. Research objective correlation: O1, O3
- b. This is where they see the most relational and professional value to being alumni; more so than to the University as a whole, and particularly more appealing than to a third-party association (i.e. the FSAA).
  - i. Experience of alumni with Chapters, considered largely valuable and successful, confirms this conclusion.
- c. RECOMMENDATION
  - i. Reposition the voice, and restructure the outreach of the FSAA to communicate and operate through channels associated directly with Fresno State departments and schools; from ongoing messaging to events and resources for alumni development, to 'asks' of any kind; whether aside from Chapters or by reinventing the Chapter system.
  - ii. Consider ways to reorganize FSAA accordingly, including the option to transform FSAA into pockets of department/University specific engagement.

### **2. Alumni have a strong desire to connect with the University, primarily with their time and professional resources.**

- a. Research objective correlation: O1, O3
- b. There are very few inherent obstacles to participation, only those self-inflicted by ill-timed or ill-positioned 'asks' for money. This is a golden opportunity to prime successful short and long term engagement.
- c. RECOMMENDATION
  - i. Develop pathways, directly from departments/schools, to ask alumni to be involved with current students and/or in partnership between

their companies, industries and departments, mentoring students, sharing real-life career experiences, volunteering, continuing education – demonstrating respect of alumni worthiness and accomplishments.

- ii. At the same time, re-vamp current fundraising strategies, messaging and tactics to very specific ROI that impact student success in ways that are measurable.
- iii. In these ways, the nurturing of alumni will create a greater and more natural propensity to give of both time and treasure, while directly benefiting students and significantly increasing alumni evangelism for the University by having a real, active relationship.

**3. The University lacks an accurate, effective database of alumni, and a strategic marketing plan to leverage it.**

- a. Research objective correlation: O2
- b. This acts an inhibitor to drive low-hanging fruit for engagement; including for event participation that could have revenue impact at some level, and for alumni employers to recruit and develop students for hire and/or build partnership opportunities.
- c. RECOMMENDATION
  - i. Audit alumni databases and acquisition methods.
  - ii. Develop a plan and budget for overhaul and execution, based upon objectives and tactics of an updated FSAA marketing and communications plan.

**4. The University's marketing and communications efforts are still not consistent enough or penetrating the market deeply enough to sufficiently leverage the University's accomplishments, events and opportunities.**

- a. Research objective correlation: O2

- b. This acts as an inhibitor for alumni and non-alumni to engage and become evangelists and supporters at many levels. In short, many alumni, including those who you would expect to be reasonably informed, know very little about what is really going on at the University.
  - c. RECOMMENDATION
    - i. Revisit University-wide marketing and communication plans and budgets, including those of departments and schools, to find unity and economies of scale as well as additional budget against clear and deeper integrated marketing objectives.
- 5. A wide variety of messages – some too generational, some underdeveloped, some lingering for lack of evolution – are associated with the University and shape fragmented perceptions of the University mission, currency, growth, impact and distinction.**
- a. Research objective correlation: O2
  - b. Though messaging from the University is showing more continuity, e.g. *“bold,”* one surprise: the *“3-D’s” (Discovery, Diversity and Distinction)* which was executed with tremendous continuity, garnered no specific recall in questions and probes.
  - c. In fact, even with ethnically diverse focus group participants, *“diversity”* was not a characteristic associated with Fresno State in any related questions that might yield such a response.
  - d. RECOMMENDATION
    - i. Conduct a University-wide messaging audit, and take steps to better consolidate and unify University and allied messaging (e.g. departments, schools and divisions) behind the chosen brand.
    - ii. Make tough decisions on what messaging aligns best with current University, UA, Athletic and FSAA business and marketing objectives, and edit accordingly.

**6. In spite of significant lapses in communicating with and nurturing engagement with alumni, the image of the University and the value of its education for alumni remain strong.**

- a. Research objective correlation: O4
- b. RECOMMENDATION
  - i. Take every opportunity, in strategies and tactics, to better leverage it.
  - ii. Give credit where credit is due: particularly, by better lifting up and celebrating the high caliber and contributions of faculty.

## **FSAA**

**7. The FSAA has no current and leverage-able brand position. It is viewed as primarily a fundraising arm of the University, not a service organization for alumni. The one exception is in relationship to Chapters and Clubs. This is not surprising considering that the majority of respondents considered the voice and identity of the University and FSAA as one (the University).**

- a. Research objective correlation: O1, O2
- b. RECOMMENDATION
  - i. Take the opportunity to introduce a new more robust value proposition without obligation to give.
  - ii. Develop more inviting messaging, create a marketing and engagement plan with clear objectives against average and younger alumni, and re-imagine where possible to get closer to targets' real lives and, in turn, relationship-building.
  - iii. As part of an overall re-positioning of the FSAA, change the public-facing name of the organization to "Alumni Relations."

## Next Steps

1. Committee reviews Report of Findings, Core Conclusions and Recommendations.
2. Based on Recommendations, a phase two is contemplated to prepare action items and plans.
  - a. The purpose and function of the FSAA should be considered, and operational implications explored.
  - b. Establish a clear brand position for the FSAA.
  - c. Identify and prioritizing marketing objectives in support of that brand.
  - d. Develop tactics and a plan to meet the marketing objectives.
3. Complete the Alumni Attitude Survey (AAS)
  - a. The FSAA is participating in the CSU-wide AAS.
  - b. Certain content in the survey can be used and evaluated against the Report of Findings for additional insights.
  - c. The AAS is scheduled for implementation in October, with results provided to each CSU in December. In March 2018 the firm provides its comprehensive report (CSU wide) to the Chancellor's Office.

# Appendix A: Interview Questions

## Group 1: Local Alumni, engaged, 1-15 years since graduation

1. In what ways have you been involved with Fresno State since your graduation, other than Athletics?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Over what period of time (and how long after graduation)?
    - ii. If your involvement has been more about attending Athletic events, is it because you're a sports fan, or some other reason?
2. What has motivated you the most to become involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Was there a single event that had exceptional impact on you?
    - ii. If it took a while after graduation to become more involved, why do you think it took so long?
    - iii. How does nostalgia or school spirit resonate with you?
    - iv. Would you have been as motivated if you were not alumni?
3. What would motivate you to become more involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more social, in what ways would it be appealing? With fellow alumni, local networking, other?
    - ii. If in Academic-oriented events, what kind?
    - iii. If in Athletic events, how so?
    - iv. If in Fine Arts or other events, what kinds are appealing and why?
4. If you were asking a fellow alum who is not involved to any great extent with Fresno State to get more involved, what reasons would you give?

- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
5. What is the value of the alumni association to you?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What do you think it does now?
    - ii. If you could re-create the alumni association from scratch, what would be your most important priorities for it and why.
6. What factors would make it important enough for you to contribute financially to the University?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If you've already supported the University financially in some way, share your reasons for contributing.
    - ii. If not, what measures of ROI would make you consider support?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Where do you think the University's funding comes from?
    - ii. When the University asks for support from you now, how does it make you feel?
    - iii. How does it rank above or below other priorities for you, and why?
7. Consider for a moment, whether alum nor not, what is the value of Fresno State to the community?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more than providing higher education, what roles do you think Fresno State plays in this community, and who do you think is affected the most?
    - ii. If there's one role you think Fresno State should emphasize more, what might that be?
8. What do you think should motivate the University to take a stand on any issue—local, statewide or nationally? Or, should the University remain neutral in all issues, or just some?

- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. How do you see the views of Fresno State? Are they representative of our Valley?
    - ii. How do the views of Fresno State affect your willingness to participate with and support the University?
9. Has anything changed in your mind about the University in the last few years—positive or negative?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What's the single most important accomplishment of Fresno State in your recent memory?
    - ii. What's the single biggest misstep, if any?
    - iii. How would you rate the University in the following criteria:
      - 1. Student success
      - 2. Graduation rate
      - 3. Serving the underserved
      - 4. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
      - 5. Providing value to graduates
      - 6. Keeping the community informed
      - 7. Staying in touch with alumni
      - 8. Staying current
      - 9. A success they should get credit for, but don't?
10. You are now the President of Fresno State. If you could change anything about the University for the better, what might that be?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
11. In a word, or a few words, how do you describe Fresno State?
12. When you hear that Fresno State has risen in national rankings, or had an impact in the community, how do you feel?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses

- b. OTHER PROBES:
  - i. If you're in business, and you hear of Fresno State partnering up with regional businesses or industries in general, what opportunities come to mind for your business, or do you think nothing more of it?
  - ii. How do you hear about the growing prominence of Fresno State, other than anything Athletic or in Fresno State Media outreach?
  - iii. What kind of news from Fresno State most interests you? How do you prefer getting that news?

13. What is your fondest memory of your time at Fresno State?

- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
- b. OTHER PROBES:
  - i. In the spirit of those memories, any ideas come to mind on how to create new ones at Fresno State?

## **Group 2: Local Alumni, engaged, 16-30 years since graduation**

1. In what ways have you been involved with Fresno State since your graduation, other than Athletics?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Over what period of time (and how long after graduation)?
    - ii. If your involvement has been more about attending Athletic events, is it because you're a sports fan, or some other reason?
2. What has motivated you the most to become involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Was there a single event that had exceptional impact on you?
    - ii. If it took a while after graduation to become more involved, why do you think it took so long?

- iii. How does nostalgia or school spirit resonate with you?
    - iv. Would you have been as motivated if you were not alumni?
- 3. What would motivate you to become more involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more social, in what ways would it be appealing? With fellow alumni, for local networking, other?
    - ii. If in Academic-oriented events, what kind of event would be appealing?
    - iii. If in Athletic events, what would interest you beside just being a spectator?
    - iv. If in Fine Arts or other events, what kinds are appealing and why?
    - v. What if your involvement was more about benefiting the community in some way, how would that make a difference?
- 4. If you were asking a fellow alum who is not involved to any great extent with Fresno State to get more involved, what reasons would you give?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
- 5. What is the value of the alumni association to you?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What do you think it does now?
    - ii. If you could re-create the alumni association from scratch, what would be your most important priorities for it and why.
- 6. What factors would make it important enough for you to contribute financially to the University?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If you've already supported the University financially in some way, share your reasons for contributing.
    - ii. If not, what measures of ROI would make you consider support?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:

- i. Where do you think the University's funding comes from?
  - ii. When the University asks for support from you now, how does it make you feel? (PROBE responses)
  - iii. How does it rank above or below other priorities for you, and why?
- 7. Consider for a moment, whether alum nor not, what is the value of Fresno State to the community?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES
    - i. If more than providing higher education, what roles do you think Fresno State plays in this community, and who do you think is impacted the most?
    - ii. If there's one role you think Fresno State should emphasize more, what might that be?
- 8. What do you think should motivate the University to take a stand on any issue—local, statewide or nationally? Or, should the University remain neutral in all issues, or just some?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. How do you see the views of Fresno State? Are they representative of our Valley?
    - ii. How do the views of Fresno State affect your willingness to participate with and support the University?
- 9. Has anything changed in your mind about the University in the last few years—positive or negative?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What's the single most important accomplishment of Fresno State in your recent memory?
    - ii. What's the single biggest misstep, if any?

- iii. How would you rate the University in the following criteria, based on what you know or perceive:
      - 1. Student success
      - 2. Graduation rate
      - 3. Serving the underserved
      - 4. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
      - 5. Providing value to graduates
      - 6. Keeping the community informed
      - 7. Staying in touch with alumni
      - 8. Staying current
      - 9. A success they should get credit for, but don't?
- 10. You are now the President of Fresno State. If you could change anything about the University for the better, what might that be?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
- 11. In a word, or a few words, how do you describe Fresno State?
- 12. When you hear that Fresno State has risen in national rankings, or had an impact in the community, how do you feel?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you're in business, and you hear of Fresno State partnering up with regional businesses or industries in general, what opportunities come to mind for your business, or do you think nothing more of it?
    - ii. How do you hear about the growing prominence of Fresno State, other than anything Athletic or in Fresno State Media outreach?
    - iii. What kind of news from Fresno State most interests you? How do you prefer getting that news?
- 13. What is your fondest memory of your time at Fresno State?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:

- i. In the spirit of those memories, any ideas come to mind on how to create new ones at Fresno State?

### **Group 3: Local Alumni, unengaged, 1-15 years since graduation**

1. What involvement, or contact if any, do you have now or have since graduation with Fresno State other than Athletic events?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per response
    - i. If there's been little or no involvement with Fresno State, explain your reasons.
    - ii. Are you open to becoming involved, and if not explain why?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you have gone to a Fresno State Athletic event, what reasons other than being a sports fan might there be for attending?
2. What might motivate you to become more involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more social, in what ways would it be appealing? With fellow alumni, for local networking, other?
    - ii. If in Academic-oriented opportunities, what kind would be appealing?
    - iii. If in Athletic events, what would interest you beside just being a spectator?
    - iv. If in Fine Arts or other events, what kinds are appealing and why?
    - v. What if your involvement was more about benefiting the community in some way, how would that make a difference?
3. Is there something in particular that might have made you more interested in becoming involved with Fresno State right at or after graduation?
  - c. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
4. Have you any contact with the alumni association?

- d. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - i. If so, describe your experiences
- e. OTHER PROBES:
  - i. When you get communication from the alumni association, what do you think about it or do with it?
- 5. What is the value of the Alumni Association to you?
  - f. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - g. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What could make it more valuable to you, personally or professionally?
- 6. What factors would make it important enough for you to contribute financially to the University?
  - h. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If you've already supported the University financially in some way, share your reasons for contributing.
    - ii. If not, what measures of ROI would make you consider support?
    - iii. What if giving to the University was more about supporting the community, rather than University programs alone?
  - i. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Where do you think the University's funding comes from?
    - ii. When the University asks for support from you now, how does it make you feel?
    - iii. How does it rank above or below other priorities for you, and why?
- 7. When you hear that Fresno State has risen in national rankings, or had an impact in the community, how do you feel?
  - j. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - k. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you're in business, and you hear of Fresno State partnering up with regional businesses or industries in general, what

- opportunities come to mind for your business, or do you think nothing more of it?
  - ii. How do you hear about the growing prominence of Fresno State, other than anything Athletic or in Fresno State Media outreach?
  - iii. What kind of news from Fresno State most interests you? How do you prefer getting that news?
8. Consider for a moment, whether alum nor not, what is the value of Fresno State to the community?
- l. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - m. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more than providing higher education, what roles do you think Fresno State plays in this community, and who do you think is impacted the most?
    - ii. If there's one role you think Fresno State should emphasize more, what might that be?
9. What do you think should motivate the University to take a stand on any issue—local, statewide or nationally? Or, should the University remain neutral in all issues, or just some?
- n. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - o. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. How do you see the views of Fresno State? Are they representative of our Valley?
    - ii. How do the views of Fresno State affect your willingness to participate with and support the University?
10. Has anything changed in your mind about the University in the last few years—positive or negative?
- p. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - q. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What's the single most important accomplishment of Fresno State in your recent memory?

- ii. What's the single biggest misstep, if any?
  - iii. How would you rate the University in the following criteria:
    - 1. Student success
    - 2. Graduation rate
    - 3. Serving the underserved
    - 4. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
    - 5. Providing value to graduates
    - 6. Keeping the community informed
    - 7. Staying in touch with alumni
    - 8. Staying current
    - 9. A success they should get credit for, but don't?
11. You are now the President of Fresno State. If you could change anything about the University for the better, what might that be?
- r. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
12. In a word, or a few words, how do you describe Fresno State?
13. What is your fondest memory of your time at Fresno State?
- s. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - t. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. In the spirit of those memories, any ideas come to mind on how to create new ones at Fresno State?

#### **Group 4: Local Alumni, unengaged, 16-30 years after graduation**

- 1. What involvement, or contact if any, do you have now or have since graduation with Fresno State other than Athletic events?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If there's been little or no involvement with Fresno State, explain your reasons.
    - ii. Are you open to becoming involved, and if not explain why?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:

- i. If you have gone to a Fresno State Athletic event, what reasons other than being a sports fan might there be for attending?
2. What might motivate you to become more involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more social, in what ways would it be appealing? With fellow alumni, for local networking, other?
    - ii. If in Academic-oriented opportunities, what kind would be appealing?
    - iii. If in Athletic events, what would interest you beside just being a spectator?
    - iv. If in Fine Arts or other events, what kinds are appealing and why?
    - v. What if your involvement was more about benefiting the community in some way, how would that make a difference?
3. Is there something in particular that might have made you more interested in becoming involved with Fresno State right at or after graduation?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
4. Have you any contact with the alumni association?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If so, describe your experiences
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. When you get communication from the alumni association, what do you think about it or do with it?
5. What is the value of the Alumni Association to you?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What could make it more valuable to you, personally or professionally?
6. What factors would make it important enough for you to contribute financially to the University?

- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If you've already supported the University financially in some way, share your reasons for contributing.
    - ii. If not, what measures of ROI would make you consider support?
    - iii. What if giving to the University was more about supporting the community, rather than University programs alone?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. Where do you think the University's funding comes from?
    - ii. When the University asks for support from you now, how does it make you feel?
    - iii. How does it rank above or below other priorities for you, and why?
7. When you hear that Fresno State has risen in national rankings, or had an impact in the community, how do you feel?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you're in business, and you hear of Fresno State partnering up with regional businesses or industries in general, what opportunities come to mind for your business, or do you think nothing more of it?
    - ii. How do you hear about the growing prominence of Fresno State, other than anything Athletic or in Fresno State Media outreach?
    - iii. What kind of news from Fresno State most interests you? How do you prefer getting that news?
8. Consider for a moment, whether alum nor not, what is the value of Fresno State to the community?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more than providing higher education, what roles do you think Fresno State plays in this community, and who do you think is impacted the most?

- ii. If there's one role you think Fresno State should emphasize more, what might that be?
- 9. What do you think should motivate the University to take a stand on any issue—local, statewide or nationally? Or, should the University remain neutral in all issues, or just some?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. How do you see the views of Fresno State? Are they representative of our Valley?
    - ii. How do the views of Fresno State affect your willingness to participate with and support the University?
- 10. Has anything changed in your mind about the University in the last few years—positive or negative?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What's the single most important accomplishment of Fresno State in your recent memory?
    - ii. What's the single biggest misstep, if any?
    - iii. How would you rate the University in the following criteria, based upon what you know or perceive:
      - 1. Student success
      - 2. Graduation rate
      - 3. Serving the underserved
      - 4. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
      - 5. Providing value to graduates
      - 6. Keeping the community informed
      - 7. Staying in touch with alumni
      - 8. Staying current
      - 9. A success they should get credit for, but don't?

11. You are now the President of Fresno State. If you could change anything about the University for the better, what might that be?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
12. In a word, or a few words, how do you describe Fresno State?
13. What is your fondest memory of your time at Fresno State?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. In the spirit of those memories, any ideas come to mind on how to create new ones at Fresno State?

### **Group 5: Out-of-area Alumni, unengaged or recently engaged**

1. What involvement, or contact if any, do you have now or have since graduation with Fresno State other than Athletic events?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If there's been little or no involvement with Fresno State, explain your reasons.
    - ii. Are you open to becoming involved, and if not explain why?
    - iii. Have you adopted a University closer to where you live, and how do they win your loyalty?
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you have gone to a Fresno State Athletic event, what reasons other than being a sports fan might there be for attending?
    - ii. What might make Homecoming, for example, more attractive for someone like you to travel to attend?
2. What might motivate you to become more involved?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more social, if what ways would it be appealing? With fellow alumni, for business networking, other?

- ii. If in Academic-oriented opportunities, what kind would be appealing?
  - iii. If in Athletic events, what would interest you beside just being a spectator?
  - iv. If in Fine Arts or other events, what kinds are appealing and why?
  - v. What if your involvement was more about benefiting the community (hometown?) in some way, how would that make a difference?
- 3. Is there something in particular that might have made you more interested in becoming involved with Fresno State right at or after graduation?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
- 4. Have you any contact with the alumni association?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If so, describe your experience.
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. When you get communication from the alumni association, what do you think about it or do with it?
- 5. What is the value of the Alumni Association to you?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What could make it more valuable to you, personally or professionally?
- 6. What factors would make it important enough for you to contribute financially to the University?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
    - i. If you've already supported the University financially in some way, share your reasons for contributing.
    - ii. If not, what measures of ROI would make you consider support?
    - iii. What if giving to the University was more about supporting the community, rather than University programs alone?

- b. OTHER PROBES:
      - i. Where do you think the University’s funding comes from?
      - ii. When the University asks for support from you now, how does it make you feel?
      - iii. How does it rank above or below other priorities for you, and why?
- 7. When you hear that Fresno State has risen in national rankings, or had an impact in the community, how do you feel?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If you’re in business, and you hear of Fresno State partnering up with regional businesses or industries in general, what opportunities come to mind for your business, or do you think nothing more of it?
    - ii. How do you hear about the growing prominence of Fresno State, other than anything Athletic or in Fresno State Media outreach?
    - iii. What kind of news from Fresno State most interests you? How do you prefer getting that news?
- 8. Consider for a moment, whether alum nor not, what is the value of Fresno State to the community?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. If more than providing higher education, what roles do you think Fresno State plays in this community, and who do you think is impacted the most?
    - ii. If there’s one role you think Fresno State should emphasize more, what might that be?
- 9. What do you think should motivate the University to take a stand on any issue—local, statewide or nationally? Or, should the University remain neutral in all issues, or just some?
  - a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses

- b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. How do you see the views of Fresno State?
    - ii. How do the views of Fresno State affect your willingness to participate with and support the University?
10. Has anything changed in your mind about the University in the last few years—positive or negative?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:
    - i. What’s the single most important accomplishment of Fresno State in your recent memory?
    - ii. What’s the single biggest misstep, if any?
    - iii. How would you rate the University in the following criteria, based upon what you know or perceive:
      1. Student success
      2. Graduation rate
      3. Serving the underserved
      4. Partnerships with local businesses and industries
      5. Providing value to graduates
      6. Keeping the community informed
      7. Staying in touch with alumni
      8. Staying current
      9. A success they should get credit for, but don’t?
11. You are now the President of Fresno State. If you could change anything about the University for the better, what might that be?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
12. In a word, or a few words, how do you describe Fresno State?
13. What is your fondest memory of your time at Fresno State?
- a. NATURAL PROBES: per responses
  - b. OTHER PROBES:

- i. In the spirit of those memories, any ideas come to mind on how to create new ones at Fresno State?

# Appendix B: Terms, definitions, composition

## 1. Definitions

a. For purposes of scope and proportionate representation, the following definitions are applied (see table below for a region-based breakdown of alumni):

i. Local: Alumni living within one hour (60 miles) of Fresno State.

This encompasses the following counties: Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Tulare, Kings counties.

1. Within these counties, due to the fact that *Fresno County* represents 43% of all alumni living in CA, Fresno County will be given proportionate representation in the focus groups.

2. Due to statistically insignificant numbers of alumni living in the following counties, these counties were excluded from consideration: Inyo, Mono.

ii. Southern California: Kern, Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Orange, Riverside, San Diego, and Imperial counties.

1. Due to statistically insignificant numbers of alumni living in the following counties, these counties were excluded from consideration: Imperial. This county accounts for *less than* 1% of all alumni in CA (0.05%).

iii. Northern California: Sacramento, Santa Clara, Contra Costa, Alameda, Placer, Sonoma, San Mateo, San Francisco, Solano, El Dorado, Marin, Napa.

1. Due to statistically insignificant numbers of alumni living in the following counties, the following counties were excluded from consideration: Yolo, Butte, Shasta, Nevada, Humboldt, Calaveras, Sutter, Mendocino, Amador, Siskiyou, Lake, Tehama, Yuba, Lassen, Plumas, Mono, Del Norte, Colusa, Glenn, Trinity, Modoc, Sierra, Apline. Combined, these counties account for *less than* 1% of all alumni in CA (0.28%).

- iv. Engagement: Any activity that Fresno State has record of from the alumni and donor database. This includes: board/advisory council participation, event attendance, giving history, etc. These activities are not weighted in their value.
- v. Young alumni: Graduated 1-15 years.
- vi. Older alumni: Graduated 16-30 years.

2. Exclusions

- a. In addition to counties listed above that fall within the designated territories, due to statistically insignificant numbers of alumni, and due to the limitations on focus groups and financial resources, the Central Coast region (San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Monterey, Santa Cruz) was eliminated. This region account for only 4% of all alumni in California.

<b>Alumni by Region</b>	<b>Ttl.</b>	<b>% in CA</b>	<b>% of All</b>
<b>Central Valley</b>	91,612	62%	39%
<i>Fresno County</i>	64,009	43%	27%
<b>Central Coast</b>	6,573	4%	3%
<b>Northern CA</b>	27,573	19%	12%
<b>Southern CA</b>	23,082	16%	10%

<b>60 mile radius (from 93740)</b>	90,130	61%	39%
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3. Composition/Segmentation

**Groups      Composition/Segmentation**

G1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition: Local alumni, engaged</li> <li>• Segmentation: 1-15 years since graduation</li> </ul>
G2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition: Local alumni, engaged</li> <li>• Segmentation: 16-30 years since graduation</li> </ul>
G3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition: Local alumni, unengaged</li> <li>• Segmentation: 1-15 years since graduation</li> </ul>
G4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition: Local alumni, unengaged</li> <li>• Segmentation: 16-30 years since graduation</li> </ul>
G5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Composition: Out of area alumni, unengaged or recent engagement</li> <li>• Segmentation: 5 Northern California, 4 Southern California</li> </ul>

4. Outreach Emails – Scripts

a. Script: Groups 1 and 2: Local alumni, engaged, 1-15 and 16-30 years graduation

i. Insert the dates below into each email message:

- 1) Date of Group 1 focus group: Tuesday, June 13, 6:00-8:30 p.m.
- 2) Date of Group 2 focus group: Wednesday, June 14, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

*Hi XXXXXXXX,*

*Fresno State and the Fresno State Alumni Association are conducting a brand research study, and your input matters.*

*The goal of the project is to help ensure our brand is authentic and meaningful, and we're looking for local alumni interested in being considered to participate in a 2-hour focus group held on-campus at the Smittcamp Alumni House. We value your involvement in Fresno State and want to know your thoughts, feelings and perceptions of your alma mater.*

*Please consider participating in this important research study.*

*As an expression of our appreciation, each participant will receive a \$50 cash card.*

**Event details**

*Date of focus group: June XXXXXX*

*Time: X:XX p.m. – X:XX p.m.*

*Location: Fresno State, Smittcamp Alumni House  
2625 E. Matoian Way*

*Snacks and beverages will be provided.*

*If you would like to be considered for participation, please register here.*

*[links to online form]*

*Questions? Feel free to contact Matthew Schulz, Director of Engagement,  
[mschulz@csufresno.edu](mailto:mschulz@csufresno.edu).*

- b. Script: Group 3 and 4: Local alumni, unengaged, 1-15 and 16-30 years graduation
  - i. Insert the dates below into each email message:
    - 1) Date of Group 3 focus group: Tuesday, June 20, 6:00-8:30 p.m.
    - 2) Date of Group 4 focus group: Wednesday, June 21, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

Hi XXXXXXXX,

Fresno State and the Fresno State Alumni Association are conducting a brand research study, and your input matters.

The goal of the project is to help ensure our brand is authentic and meaningful, and we're looking for local alumni interested in being considered to participate in a 2-hour focus group held on-campus at the Smittcamp Alumni House. We value your thoughts, feelings and perceptions of your alma mater.

Please consider participating in this important research project.

As an expression of our appreciation, each participant will receive a \$50 cash card.

**Event details**

Date of focus group: June XXXXXX

Time: X:XX p.m. – X:XX p.m.

Location: Fresno State, Smittcamp Alumni House  
2625 E. Matoian Way

Snacks and beverages will be provided.

If you would like to be considered for participation, please register here.

[links to online form]

Questions? Feel free to contact Matthew Schulz, Director of Engagement, [mschulz@csufresno.edu](mailto:mschulz@csufresno.edu).

- c. Script: Group 5: Out of area alumni, unengaged or recent engagement
  - i. Insert the dates below into each email message:
    - 1) Date of Group 5 focus group: Friday, June 23, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

*Hi XXXXXXXX,*

*Fresno State and the Fresno State Alumni Association are conducting a brand research study, and your input matters.*

*We want to know your thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of your alma mater, so we're looking for alumni in Northern and Southern California interested in being considered to participate in a 2-hour focus group, held on-campus at the Smittcamp Alumni House.*

*So if you have you been looking for a reason to make a trip back to Fresno, this might be the perfect opportunity!*

*In consideration of your time and travel, we are providing a one-night stay at the Hilton Garden Inn, and will reimburse you up to \$200 for travel. As an additional expression of our appreciation, each participant will also receive a \$50 cash card.*

*We value your insights, experiences and feelings, so please consider participating in this important research on your alma mater.*

**Event details**

*Date of focus group: June XXXXXX*

*Time: X:XX p.m. – X:XX p.m.*

*Location: Fresno State, Smittcamp Alumni House  
2625 E. Matoian Way*

*Snacks and beverages will be provided.*

*If you would like to be considered for participation, please register here.*

*[links to online form]*

*Questions? Feel free to contact Matthew Schulz, Director of Engagement, [mschulz@csufresno.edu](mailto:mschulz@csufresno.edu).*

5. Contact form

- a. In order to best ensure the focus group registrants are kept segmented, five different forms will be created. The link in the email will link to the relevant form.
- b. Copy on form landing page: *Thank you for submitting your name to be considered for participation in our upcoming focus group. So that we can stay in contact with you, please complete all of the information below. Should you have any questions, please contact Matthew Schulz, Director of Engagement, [mschulz@csufresno.edu](mailto:mschulz@csufresno.edu).*
- c. Form contents (all form contents will be required form fields)
  - i. First name
  - ii. Last name
  - iii. Last name, if different while attending school
  - iv. Year of graduation
  - v. Major
  - vi. Home address
  - vii. City
  - viii. Zip
  - ix. Home phone
  - x. Mobile phone
  - xi. Email address
  - xii. Occupation [open form field]

xiii. Ethnicity [optional; drop down menu; please use the same list used by Fresno State]

- b. Script - Confirmation Page and Confirmation Email: *Thank you for submitting your name to be considered for participation in our upcoming focus group. We will select randomly from all alumni submissions and will be in contact with you within in the next two weeks.*