

# ALUMNI RELATIONS

at TH Deggendorf



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## Prefix

America, the Land of Glory, when it comes to terms of fundraising especially in the field of alumni relations. \$400 million in alumni contributions in 2015 for Princeton University not only wets the appetite of competing universities within the US but within educational institutions worldwide. But is it a reasonable approach for German universities to equate alumni relations with fundraising? Is fundraising the only reason for universities to invest in alumni relations? What else can make alumni interesting to German universities, to the DIT? And what does it take to be successful here? What is the status quo of alumni relations at DIT by the beginning of 2020? And what is the strategy behind it.

To answer those questions it is necessary to first have a theoretical look at education, social structures and alumni relation at universities to become a basic understanding:

### 1 Educational systems and the structure of societies in regards of philanthropy

#### A Philanthropy and the welfare state

“Welfare state: concept of government in which the state or a well-established network of social institutions plays a key role in the protection and promotion of the economic and social well-being of citizens. It is based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equitable distribution of wealth, and public responsibility for those unable to avail themselves of the minimal provisions for a good life.”<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a welfare state was introduced to the UK by Lloyd George about a hundred years ago. Taking care of the poor, the old, the children, not as philanthropy of the affluent but as a basic principle of the government, had a growing impact in some states ever since. Several instruments were introduced to assure a general welfare system. But right from the beginning huge differences with the general acceptance of the welfare idea and the implementation of the instruments (e.g. social insurances) could be seen between countries.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/welfare-state>

It was only after WWII that welfare implemented the idea of **free education for all**: since 1948 the right to education is a human right corresponding to the United Nations. Again, the way countries converted this within their society could not be more different, though. Especially in the field of secondary education there are huge differences between the so called industrial nations. On the one hand there are countries where education - starting with prep school up to universities - is completely free to all, like in the Scandinavian countries or in Germany. On the other, there are countries charging fees depending on the reputation of the educational institution, e.g. in England, where a university is allowed to charge up to 9000 £/year (tuition fees were implemented in UK only 1998 with the Teaching and Higher Education Act). On top of this list is the US, tuition fees for renowned universities of the Ivy-League can go up to 60,000 \$/annum.<sup>2</sup> This has to be remembered for the discussion about alumni donations later.

The history of welfare, or its lack/decline within a country, is strongly related to the history of philanthropy. The less the government takes care of the needy the more donations are required. Therefore donating money in general, for all kinds of projects within the society they live in, has a long tradition in the US, a country that has always refused to implement welfare measures with a nationwide impact, e.g. *Obamacare* and its problems of approval. Giving on a volunteer basis is preferred to "forced" giving for welfare purposes in the form of taxes, fees or something similar.

In reverse, philanthropy has almost no tradition in post-war-Germany. The first steps towards a welfare state were taken by Bismarck's social reform at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century introducing social insurances to society. Corresponding to Gøsta Esping-Andersens "The *three worlds* of welfare *capitalism*" theory, Germany is a conservative welfare state with the state as the strong and central institution taking care of its citizens; individual responsibility here is minimized.<sup>3</sup> "The Germans" in general do donate money, but mainly to other countries, e.g. after a catastrophe like a tsunami or an earthquake, or to the refugees that fled a war; in short for humanitarian issues. When asked for money for local needs there is hardly any willingness to give, this - according to the German people - should be covered by the government (central or local) that receive money by taxes paid by the citizens. This cultural behaviour in terms of giving money will change in Germany within the next twenty years - a development that will be based on several changes, for instance less welfare of the government, the increasing

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.topuniversities.com/student-info/student-finance/how-much-does-it-cost-study-us>

<sup>3</sup> Handout 26062007 Esping-Andersen - Universität Rostock, page 1

impact of social media (that offer the possibility to show individual needs better) and a generation of millennials with a different social understanding, which in detail cannot be discussed here.<sup>4</sup> **But so far, Germany is not good at 'donating-money issues'.**

On the other hand, it is proven that Germans volunteer a lot when help/engagement is needed and that they are "good" donators of goods:

"A special survey by the GfK showed that almost every second German citizen over 10 years of age had been active in the cause for refugees – that is around 32 million people. Of this however, at 8%, money donations have played a relatively minor role. But 34% have donated material goods. In addition, approximately 2 million people donated their time for refugee assistance. In this area, it is above all those over sixty who have got involved."<sup>5</sup>

A very good sample of the typical German character was shown during the flood in 2013 in Deggendorf, where neighbors, students and complete strangers from other parts of Bavaria came together to help. The hours volunteers spent during this time are countless; the number of goods given to help the victims of the flood was overwhelming. Compared to that, the money given during the benefit concert with Xavier Naidoo at the DIT Campus was small (although, of course, it was quite a success).

Summarizing, it has to be stated, that the cultural common sense in terms of philanthropy and donations is very different between USA and Germany and that therefore a simple comparison of donated sums of money by alumni makes no sense. It is important to understand the "German character" to be successful in alumni relations; moreover this understanding influences the alumni relation strategy.

## **B** A brief history of alumni relations

The USA is and has always been a role model for alumni relations not only in regards of fundraising successes but in engaging alumni as volunteers for their Alma Mater. This goes back to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century where first groups (at Yale University) started to organize themselves in order to stay connected after leaving university. It was in 1913 that the first Association of Alumni Secretaries (AAS) was formed in US while Europe was busy facing World War I.<sup>6</sup> Donations to universities exist as long as alumni relations do,

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.betterplace-lab.org/en/the-secrets-of-the-german-philanthropy-market/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.betterplace-lab.org/en/the-secrets-of-the-german-philanthropy-market/>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.case.org/About\\_CASE/CASE\\_History/100AnniversaryAAS/100AnniversaryExplore.html](http://www.case.org/About_CASE/CASE_History/100AnniversaryAAS/100AnniversaryExplore.html)

as a matter of fact both were put together by universities who decided to institutionalize alumni relations to make alumni money a fixed number in their universities households.\*

So, the USA is successful in collecting money from its alumni, but how is the situation in Europe?

During the annual alumni-clubs.net conference (the umbrella organization for alumni relations in DACH) in 2011 in Konstanz, Peter Agar, Director of Development and Alumni Relations of Cambridge University, England, reported that alumni work came to the UK only about 30 years ago. He reported that even "big" universities like Cambridge are struggling to be as successful as *the Americans* in alumni relations, whereas the amount of donations was his only instrument to measure the success. Other British alumni/fundraising colleagues reported, that successful alumni relations and fundraising not only took it's time to grow, but was accompanied by a change within society: university fees rose very high within a short period of time, welfare measures were cancelled or reduced to a minimum one by one and people got used to donate money. The current situation in the UK is that some renowned and outstanding universities do quite well in collecting money, some universities have only just started with fundraising projects and most of the universities are not yet that successful.

In Germany alumni relations finally made it into the minds of nearly all institutions of higher education. But there are huge differences in how universities deal with alumni relations and how important they take this topic in general. Fundraising in most of our country's universities is not a big issue yet, although, of course, there are first successful examples/exceptions. So alumni relations in Germany is in the process of being implemented and will find its own way of merit and rules but there is still some way ahead.

A first indicator of how serious institutions of higher education take the opportunities alumni relations may offer is the number of staff they employ for this department.

Alumni relations at the University of Yale for instance with a staff of 50 in New Haven plus several alumni officers all around the USA plus other alumni offices all around the world, make in total almost 100 alumni officers taking care of 120000 alumni.

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\*Although alumni relations and donations are a part of all American Universities it is mainly the Ivy-League that serves as a model, for most of the universities alumni fundraising is a hard job.

Apart from that the fundraising department in Yale offers work to more than 100 fundraisers, too.

The reason why alumni relations and fundraising are treated separately will be explained later. So far it is important to acknowledge the high amount of resources, mainly human resources, successful universities put in to have a satisfying fundraising output.

This engagement leads to completely new jobs. The stewardship officer, for example, is a person who takes special care of major donors and can end up in taking elderly ladies for afternoon Tea.

In summary: Money (in the form of employees, events, implemented measurements, a budget...) has to be invested first to get a financial output. This finally leads us to the **first rule**: alumni fundraising is a matter of appreciation and personal engagement of the head/board of each institution of higher education and prevenient to alumni fundraising there must be a huge amount of work done by alumni relations.

## 2 Alumni Relations

As mentioned before, fundraising is not the same as alumni relations. Peter Agar from Cambridge University explained during his presentation in Konstanz: there can be alumni relations without fundraising but there cannot be alumni fundraising without alumni relations blazing the trail. Following this idea, alumni relations has to be defined first and its possibilities introduced.

### A Definition of Alumni and Alumni relations

"The term *alumnus* (m; Pl.: -i) respectively *alumna* (f.; Pl.: -ae) has its origin in the Latin language. It means "pupil", literally "the nurtured" (origin: alere: nurture). Originally students of a so-called "alumnat", a boarding school, were called *alumnae/alumni*."<sup>7</sup>

"It is important for your institution to decide how it defines an alumnus and to document this to avoid any confusion.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.alumni.uni-stuttgart.de/ueberuns/begriff\\_alumni/index.en.html](http://www.alumni.uni-stuttgart.de/ueberuns/begriff_alumni/index.en.html), accessed 15.12.2016

The classic definition of *alumnus* is a graduate or former student of a specific school, college or university. Different institutions develop their own definitions of what alumnus means

- Some restrict the term to graduates.
- Others widen the definition to include all former students (even those who failed to finish), retired staff and other associates.”<sup>8</sup>

DIT so far defines **alumni** as the group of former students who graduated from DIT, regardless of their academic title.

The society AlumniNet e.V., though, has other rules regarding possible memberships. Students can become members (and don't have to pay fees as long as they are studying), former students with or without a final degree, professors, staff, they all are eligible to become a member of AlumniNet. e.V. The special role of AlumniNet within the Alumni relations of DIT will be discussed later.

**Alumni relation** in the first place are the personal relation of a graduate to the institution where he/she graduated. Within this paper it is further defined as all work done by this very institution to build up a relation to each alumnus/alumna, to maintain this contact and to intensify it.

In this very same context, alumni relations can also be understood as the department at an institution of higher education where the employees take care of all kind of alumni work, starting with data collection/administration to the development and implementation of strategic alumni projects/plans. Alumni relations in Deggendorf is part of the department International and Alumni Affairs in the Centre for International Affairs and introduces its work since 2015 as **THD-Alumni**.

Persons working in alumni relations are called alumni officers or alumni relations professionals. In English-speaking countries being an alumni officer is a well-known position in higher education whereas in Germany we still lack a common term. The job descriptions go from *Alumni-Referent* to *Alumni-Koordinator*, *Zuständiger für Absolventen* or simply *Alumni*, just to mention a few. This proves how little established the whole field still is in Germany.

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<sup>8</sup> [http://www.case.org/Publications\\_and\\_Products/Fundraising\\_Fundamentals\\_Intro/Fundraising\\_Fundamentals\\_section\\_1/Fundraising\\_Fundamentals\\_section\\_12.html](http://www.case.org/Publications_and_Products/Fundraising_Fundamentals_Intro/Fundraising_Fundamentals_section_1/Fundraising_Fundamentals_section_12.html), accessed 15.12.2017

## B Basic Alumni relation knowledge

It was stated earlier that alumni relation is a pre-condition to successful alumni fundraising. It seems logical that a university will not be successful in asking for money twenty years after graduation as the first and only contact that was ever made to the alumnus. Some preliminary work has to be done. But what kind of activity can it be, when should the graduates be initially contacted and what can be offered to 'keep them on board'?

The interest of how to build up a strong and successful alumni relation became an intricate issue within the USA worth a huge amount of research funds.

The first step is to analyze the motives of alumni for their engagement at their home University. This quote might give an initial idea: "What makes the business model for alumni relations interesting is that we have the advantage of powerful nostalgia, pride, and a built-in sense of community."<sup>9</sup>

Or, in other terms, **Emotion**.

From a German point of view, it seems easy for American Universities to stir such emotions due to the special and – compared to Germany – very different way to study.

First of all, it seems that the higher the **tuition fees** the more proud the students feel to belong to this **elite** circle. Maybe this is an effect of a clever marketing strategy, a kind of positive brain wash, financed by alumni donations (as a return of investment measure).

This, of course, is a severe understatement; it needs a lot of marketing knowledge to get this right.

During a visit at Northumbria University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK, in March 2017 the fences around the construction areas, were covered with banners all around the issue: Reasons to be proud.<sup>10</sup>

While crossing the bridge from law school to the city center the logo of Northumbria University is all over the floor, so the students are constantly aware that this bridge is still part of their university and was built for them, to make access to the city center easier. All those seem to be "easy" measures, but they work, they give the students the feeling that

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<sup>9</sup> <http://blog.satmetrix.com/from-student-to-supporter-the-lifecycle-of-alumni-loyalty-in-higher-ed>, accessed 16.12.2016

<sup>10</sup> [https://c1.staticflickr.com/5/4193/34801094363\\_d6ecfa60a7\\_b.jpg](https://c1.staticflickr.com/5/4193/34801094363_d6ecfa60a7_b.jpg)

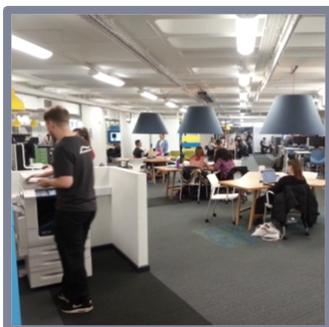
they are highly estimated and part of something special. [Tuition fees for Northumbria University are £ 9,000/annum for a bachelor degree].



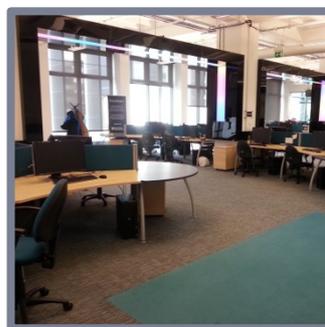
A second aspect that creates emotions is the way of studying in the USA. The campuses of the Ivy League Universities are huge and include not only the Universities buildings, such as lecture rooms or the library, but all kind of different dormitories, student union houses, shops, stages, pubs, leisure activities, gyms and restaurants. Therefore the student spends most of the time **on campus** with all the other fellow students. This helps to create an **identification** with the university. Please see attachment No 1, an ancient map of Harvard University which gives a good impression of how wide spread the campus is, a city of its own.

Open community spaces, with fancy furniture and easy access to WIFI where students meet in their spare time, sit together not only to talk but to develop ideas, is a "smaller" opportunity and can be found at almost each UK University. Rumor has it that in one of those community spaces at Abertay University the idea for *Grand Theft Auto* was born.

Most of the German universities have none of these advantages:



Northumbria University,  
Newcastle Upon Tyne



Abertay University,  
Dundee



Staffordshire University,  
Stoke on Trent

no tuition fees, no “complete life on campus” possibility. DIT cannot even offer a community space which invites students to stay, in case a lecture is cancelled.

In contrary, the DIT has to face a special situation: A lot of students don't move to Deggendorf during their studies but stay at their parents' home, keep on playing for their home football team and continue visiting the bars in their home village with their old school mates they happen to know since kindergarten. This makes it extremely challenging to create an emotional relation to their Alma Mater. Instead of being “real” students – leaving home for the first time, behave and act self-dependently, willing to meet new friends and create a first professional network – they act more like pupils that go to school and head home after classes. The experience showed that it is hard to include those former students in the alumni network.

On the other side there is the group of students that do live in Deggendorf and one of the advantages Deggendorf has to offer is its small size. Everything is in a walking distance; the students meet inevitably on campus and in the evenings in the bars all around the city center. Therefore, for those who live in Deggendorf, the impression of a strong community and an omnipresent DIT leads to a strong feeling of togetherness, the perfect breeding ground for alumni relations.

This particularly applies to international students, regardless if they are regular or exchange students; they enjoy their stay in Deggendorf very much and have a strong relation to Deggendorf for the rest of their life.

A best practice sample here is the strong relation and active exchange programme between the Soochow University in China and DIT. Built and arranged by Prof. Dr. Günther Benstetter, DIT, and Prof. Dr. Mario Lanza, Institute of Functional Nano & Soft Materials, Soochow University, who wrote his Master thesis in cooperation with DIT and is a “fan” ever since (and an alumnus of e.g. Stanford University). Although still very young he plans to move to Deggendorf, once he retires.

This fact calls for an even wider definition of DIT alumni: it includes all international students, even the exchange students and requires a special programme and offer.

## C Alumni relation tools and possible strategy goals

What makes it difficult to the alumni officer seems to be the more or less complete lack of a job description with concrete measures and tasks. Everything seems possible, applying successful tools of other universities might not necessarily work for this university; measures that failed somewhere

else can be the key to success at another institution. It's a try and error, a nonstop creative and trying process and requires employees willing to work at evenings and weekends (when alumni are available) with a high level of social competence but still able to develop and follow a strategy. Alumni relation officer is not a 9-5 job and much more than pure event management. But events are an important tool, as are social media, information platforms (newsletters, magazines) or to provide job related offers like seminars, just to mention a few. Everything seems to be right, as long as it makes the alumni stay connected:

"... we apply an engagement paradigm commonly known as Time, Talent, Treasure. Time is what alumni spend at events, Talent is what they give as volunteers, and Treasure is financial support. We also think about it in terms of Informing, Involving, and Investing. "<sup>11</sup>

Another approach is friend raising ⇒ brain raising ⇒ fundraising.

Whatever it is called or what kind of offers will be made, it will always follow the principle that **first** there has to be a contact from the university offering something that hopefully arouses the interest of the alumnus/alumna. The answer of the alumni to an e-mail or the participation in events, is the *time part* mentioned above and a universal strategy: keep in touch with as many alumni as possible. Simultaneously it is an important tool that serves the next step.

This second step aims at the talent of the alumni. When volunteering in a business programmeme, e.g. the mentoring programmeme, job shadowing or taking part in a job fair, the alumni offer their talent (professional performance, social skills) for the students or the university's sake. Although collected money from the fundraising department is always an advantage for universities (see below) the donation of time and talent from the alumni to their Alma Mater and its students must not be underestimated. Every graduate in a company not only represents his/her university there. He/she is part of a professional network. Offering time and passing on expertise to the students increases the employability of these students: it helps them to make the right decisions e.g. by choosing the perfect matching major or going abroad, it makes it easier to find a first job after graduation offered by the alumni network and it helps to perform better on the job right from the start, since they have a mentor at their side answering crucial questions they don't dare to ask their new colleagues. Staying in close contact to the university also keeps them informed about further educational training and

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<sup>11</sup> <http://blog.satmetrix.com/from-student-to-supporter-the-lifecycle-of-alumni-loyalty-in-higher-ed>, accessed 16.12.2016

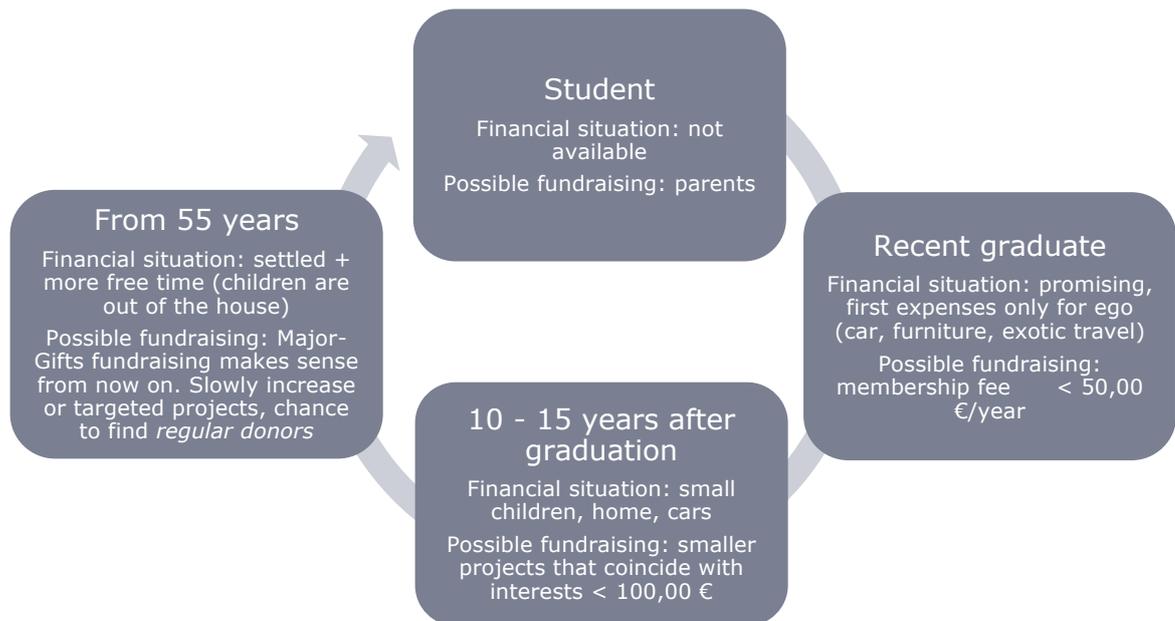
the university is always aware of the state-of-the-art in job skills, recruiting tools and employment trends.

**A strategic goal to increase the number of involved alumni therefore is to tie a professional alumni network - as close-knit as possible, i.e. with many participants as possible.**

But since the quality of a network is hard to measure it makes more sense to take this as a guideline and stay for the strategy on something more countable.

Donating money to an Alma Mater is, as explained before, not very common in Germany. But it is very likely that in the future every university in Germany will have to deal with fundraising. The Deutschlandstipendium is a first sign that fundraising finally arrived in the academic world, although the start of the Deutschlandstipendium, completely out of the blue and without a proper preparation period given by the government, proves too, that there was - and still is - a huge lack of knowledge and experience in this highly sensitive area. But while a lot of institutions of higher education had a hard time fulfilling their Deutschlandstipendium-quota in the beginning, fundraising was introduced at once and created new job profiles at large universities. A lot of former alumni officers became fundraisers because this challenging task proved to be impossible to be done additionally but required full attention. The Deutschlandstipendium immediately became a full time job for staff in universities with a quota of more than 100 scholarships right from the start.

But this is only a first step. Alumni donations are mainly private donations. They can be small donations, like crowd funding, supporting a very special project, regular donations in the form of membership fees or large donations. A view to the graphic below shows, that age is a part of alumni donations not to be underestimated. While a membership fee is a fundraising tool that can start immediately after graduation, giving for a special project requires a bit more settled alumni. "Real" fundraising generally starts with alumni aged 55+:



In short: donations by alumni offer a lot of opportunities and can be used to provide universities with state-of-the-art-equipment. This will influence the decision of future generations where to study, an important aspect in the age of demographic transition. So it's important to be prepared. And DIT is well prepared.

The first alumni officer was hired in 2006, only seven years after the first graduates left. The situation at the beginning could not have been better: the small number of students, the close contact to the professors and the university staff, the creative "anything goes" policy of the early years offered the best possible conditions for an emotional binding. It should therefore not come as a surprise that those alumni are still connected among each other and to the "Fachhochschule Deggendorf". It was them who founded the society AlumniNet e.V. in 2001 in order to stay connected after leaving Deggendorf (unconsciously following the sample of Yale University in 1913). Additionally the DIT started digital, E-Mail was already a common communication tool and nearly all digital contact details of the first graduates could be collected.

An important result of a survey among AlumniNet-members in 2016, showed that the majority of alumni associates "familär" with their Alma Mater. An ideal starting point for alumni relations, because there are no stronger ties than family, and this answer is pure emotion.

As DIT grew in the last years - and is still growing - the task to transport this family sensation becomes more demanding. The loss of the possibility

to build up a strong personal relation to a big number of students throws THD-Alumni back to basic alumni theories and demands a strategic plan.

## Alumni relations at DIT

### A Fundraising

At DIT fundraising has always been a part of the financial strategy. Lecture rooms and buildings named after companies bear witness to this. The donors so far are companies with a strong relation to DIT and it has always been a matter of the president himself to contact those major donors.

In general it's an advantage that DIT is a young university, for alumni relations, too. But alumni fundraising aiming at "big" single donations will need more time, since the average age of DIT alumni is between 30 and 40 and we learned before that the "perfect age" for alumni fundraising starts at 55. This gets the alumni officer in the comfortable position not to beg for money so far but concentrate on the time and talent part, mentioned in the quote above. Once it comes to terms of alumni fundraising as a serious strategic goal with a fixed amount of money to collect, the alumni department necessarily has to grow in number of employees.

So far alumni donate only small amounts in form of a membership fee for the alumni society AlumniNet. This society uses those fees to become a donor of the Deutschlandstipendium – so far four students are financed by alumni every year.

So fundraising – considered by many people to be THE goal of alumni work – is not the main focus of alumni work at DIT, although it might be one day.

### B The Alumni Strategy of DIT

Alumni relations at DIT became its own department within the Institute for Career, International Affairs and Languages (KIS) in April 2018. The first Alumni officer started to deal with alumni in 2007. In 2011 a second part time officer joined the department. Another full time employee became part of the team in 2018. The DIT Career Service in 2013 was awarded with the "Arbeitgeber-Preis" for its excellence in creating tools that help to pass necessary transitions (from school to university, from university to the first job) as smoothly as possible. Alumni relations was a part of the Career Service then and highly motivated to create a soft start in the professional world for all students at the end of their studies.

Important alumni tools here are the alumni annual *Absolventenbuch*, the mentoring programme and the job shadowing, just to mention a few.

They are part of the overall goal: **to create a professional network**

- For students: students will find a network of alumni (= former students) supporting them to find their first job. Once the students experienced a strong relation to alumni and companies during their time at the university they tend to come back as soon as their companies are in need of an intern or a new colleague. This loop is already very successful and will become even better with measures taken in the future.
- For alumni: alumni are considered to be our “ambassadors” in companies all over the world. They benefit from the fact, that their job offers are always welcome at DIT and will be spread to the students, which leads very often to successful recruiting. This way the standing of the alumnus/alumna within the company is enhanced, too. Being a mentor or offering job shadowing serves them personally: to provide help to others always includes personal benefit, offering help to a student of their Alma Mater proves to themselves that they have a successful career and it helps them to stay in touch with “young” ideas and a young state of mind. Apart from that, they are official representatives of the DIT and their company, what makes them proud. Last but not least, if they are looking for another job they, too, can access the network.
- For the university: as mentioned above, alumni are ambassadors of the university in companies all over the world. A widely spread alumni network means a global company network. To be in good terms with companies is important for the DIT. As mentioned above, companies are sponsors of buildings or seminar rooms, are donators of the Deutschlandstipendium and DIT students are their future employees. In addition, the companies send representatives to DIT to give lectures about soft skills, the application process etc., which in sum make one important part of the seminar offers of the DIT Career Service. Employability is a key factor for universities’ success, having a strong nit company network is inevitable for each university with an up-to-date internationalisation strategy. Worldwide internship- and job offers provide the students with intercultural competencies, a crucial skill when it comes to Employability. A global company network is a strategic necessity in order to be an attractive place to study for future students from all over the world.

## C Basics and Figures

THD-Alumni is the name of alumni relations at DIT and refers to the sum of all alumni that have ever left DIT with a degree.

AlumniNet e.V. is the alumni society where DIT students, staff and alumni can become a member.

Alumni officers at DIT are: Ulrike Sauckel (office B217), Heidi Seyschab and Stefanie Lex (both office B203).

Ulrike Sauckel: full time, Head of the Department International and Alumni Affairs. In charge of Alumni work, head of Board of AlumniNet e.V., product owner of Internationalisierungsstrategie 4.0.

50% of her work is for Alumni affairs, 50% for International affairs

Heidi Seyschab: 15 h/week financed mainly by THD-Alumni with a contribution of AlumniNet

Stefanie Lex: full time for THD-Alumni

In total alumni relations is provided with 75 h/week at DIT, taking care of almost 12.000 alumni with +900/year (as of July 2020).

The combination of being a student advisor (international affairs) and alumni officer turned out to be very helpful. Students get in touch with Ulrike Sauckel from their first day of studies and when first measures of alumni relations are taken, the person that contacts the students/alumni is not a stranger to them.

## D Alumni Data

Active data are the core of successful alumni work. The first step is to get the actual contact details once the @stud.th-deg.de address has been switched off.

To administrate the increasing number of alumni the CRM CAS was bought by DIT in 2013.

Measures to get the contact details [all DSGVO compliant]:

- E-Mail to students end of February and September in order to inform them about how to save mails, stay in touch and service still provided after leaving DIT

- Contact card attached to the bachelor/master grade after graduation, free of charge when send back
- Profiles in the Graduate Annual (in German: *Absolventenbuch*)
- Personal contact during and after their graduation ceremony
- Social media search (Xing, Facebook, LinkedIn)
- Alumni contacting the Career Service to offer a job from their company
- Regular mailings are a necessary tool to learn which address became invalid in the meantime. Alumni that automatically come back to their university to inform them about a new job/new address are small in number.

## E Alumni programmes/offers

### Homecomings

Homecomings are a welcome event of alumni relations. Once in a while the alumnus/alumna returns to his/her Alma Mater. Experience has shown that a gathering of former students with the only purpose to come together and have some drinks is not very attractive to them. A meeting that implicates professional networking/experience-sharing is far more successful.

### AlumniNet Association

In 2001 a group of students was about to leave the "FH" and founded the students club AlumniNet e.V. with the goal to stay in touch after graduation. At the beginning of 2020 AlumniNet has about 950 members. The association includes students, graduates/alumni and professors or staff or to put it in a nutshell, all those who gained experience at DIT and/or brought it to DIT. The university generally benefits from the input of all those and profits from their experience and knowledge. The most important goal of the association is to make use of the existing synergies between students, alumni and the (local) economy. Beyond that, AlumniNet is a community that provides a network for private or business life. It also organizes events to foster the network or to increase professional skills. Furthermore, AlumniNet organizes events in several other cities within Germany, to enhance the already existing network and to offer students the possibility to gain knowledge from companies our alumni work for.

## **Alumni Business Trip**

Another focus of AlumniNet is the annual Alumni Business Trip. THD-Alumni organize a behind-the-scenes tour through a company of an alumni who works abroad. What makes it even more special is that these companies are global players in neighboring countries. The trip to a company is usually combined with a visit of the host city. Out of a group of strangers, they become friends, students and alumni enjoy a voyage of discovery in a foreign town and extend their network. In the past the association visited e.g. Google in Dublin, ABInBev in Prag, Cisco in Amsterdam or LaLaLab in Paris.

## **Seminars for young professionals**

It is all about experience. In cooperation with THD-Alumni, AlumniNet offers seminars in the areas of professional and personal skills as well as additional qualifications since 2008. The spectrum ranges from seminars for presentation skills over personality tests to time-management.

## **Seminars for leaders**

This series of seminars was introduced in the beginning of 2019 when alumni no longer only covered the term "young professionals" but became leaders, CEOs or work in other jobs with responsibility. Consequently, "seminars for leaders" address DIT alumni who have already five years or more of work experience and are working in a leading position. Participation is open to all alumni regardless of an AlumniNet e.V. membership. The seminars touch upon issues such as leadership skills, the leader as coach, leadership of employees and other topics that are important for leaders.

## **Alumni fund students – Deutschlandstipendium**

The principle of alumni work and alumni fundraising has its origin in the US and provides students with financial and non-material support. With the Deutschlandstipendium local, regional or national businesses or private individuals sponsor young talents with a pledge of 150 euros per month. The Federal Government of Germany matches this amount with another 150 euros, so every scholar receives 300,00 Euro per month for the duration of one year. AlumniNet invests a major part of its membership fees to support DIT students by becoming a sponsor of four Deutschlandstipendien. The scholars can be found here:

[https://alumninet.th-deg.de/?page\\_id=435&lang=de](https://alumninet.th-deg.de/?page_id=435&lang=de)

## **Online Seminars**

The THD-Alumni department introduced online seminars in cooperation with the student and academic counselling department in 2019. Topics of the online seminars range from general information about DIT, the study programmes (especially Master's), promotion at DIT, time management and other topics that are of use for students and alumni. Participation is free and open to all interested people. The online seminars that are especially for alumni, are furthermore promoted and distributed among our THD-Alumni and on our social media platforms (more about those below). Since there is no restriction in participation, everyone who registered with THD-Alumni and got the link from us can participate in the webinars.

## **Social Media (e.g. Facebook, YouTube, Xing, LinkedIn) & Messaging**

THD-Alumni uses all kind of social media, but the most important one is LinkedIn, as it offers the possibility to identify THD alumni only by them mentioning in their profiles, that they once studied here. Another important media is the Facebook page called "Absolventen der Hochschule Deggendorf". This page contains information about events for alumni and/or students as well as news about the department and everything that is somehow connected with DIT and interesting or useful for students and alumni. This includes such news as further studies, certificates, prizes DIT alumni won, seminars organized by THD-Alumni and AlumniNet and much more.

The DIT marketing department operates the DIT YouTube channel, which THD-Alumni also uses to share content. The videos on alumni or the Graduate Annual for example are on YouTube to inform people about our work.

In addition to these classic social media channels, THD-Alumni also runs a Xing group.

As THD-Alumni uses four different channels to promote content on social media the content and the different channels are interconnected to ensure consistent communication and to enhance visibility.

New from autumn 2020 is a special messaging service for all AlumniNet members. News and information about events of THD-Alumni and AlumniNet will be sent to their mobile phone conveniently via WhatsApp messenger. A new and easy way to stay informed about all news and events

at the THD especially for alumni. Members who want to use this service can easily register for it (all necessary information can be found on the AlumniNet homepage). A deregistration is possible at any time. Since October 2020 AlumniNet also has an Instagram Account.

### **Homepages of THD-Alumni and AlumniNet e.V.**

DIT has an official homepage and there is a section dedicated to THD-Alumni. The alumni section is on the DIT landing page, the button "Alumni" can be found on the upper left corner, and links easily to all THD-Alumni topics. The homepage provides information about alumni work at DIT, THD-Alumni events, profiles and videos of alumni, called Alumni Stories. It is also the platform used to distribute publications such as the e-magazine "Post Graduate" and the "Graduate Survey" (see below). Further alumni related content can be found under the website section "after graduation". Information about the Absolventenbuch, the Graduation ceremonies etc. can be found here.

The AlumniNet e.V. homepage promotes the association and gives details about the association's work. It features a gallery with pictures of events, provides information about the Deutschlandstipendium and the scholarship holders so far, invites to order the WhatsApp Messenger Newsletter. Future members find the membership declaration here, to be filled in digitally. THD-Alumni edits both homepages.

### **Alumni-Stories**

The quite well received "Alumni-Stories" is a series of YouTube videos that are about 2 to 3 minutes each. Alumni talk about their experience in Deggendorf, their studies at DIT, how they gained work experience and they give the viewers some tips on how to go your way after graduation. These "Alumni-Stories" can be found on the DIT homepage, too, as an important part of THD-Alumni work and a good marketing opportunity for the course of studies DIT offers.

### **Alumni-Profile**

In addition to the "Alumni Stories" a series called "Alumni-Profile" can be found on the THD-Alumni pages. This series consists of short written profiles of DIT alumni, referring to their professional career and their time at DIT. They are divided into the study programmes and faculties, making it easier

to find alumni from a specific field. This series is also part of THD-Alumni services.

### **Graduate Survey (in German: Absolventenbefragung)**

THD-Alumni conducts the graduate survey every year. The survey is aimed at graduates who graduated three years ago [e.g. in 2019 graduates from 2016 were the target group]. This time gap is because after three years the average graduate has finished a potential Master's degree and finally started to work. The survey is digital, the tool used is EvaSys. Graduates are invited first via a mailing, with a letter personally signed by the president of DIT and sent by THD-Alumni. Subsequently, the alumni team begins to encourage graduates to participate in the graduate survey via e-mails and through contact in the social media platforms. Once the survey is closed, THD-Alumni evaluates the results and compiles presentations for each single course of studies plus a presentation with the overall results for Bachelor- and Master degrees. The results can be found on the THD-Alumni page.

### **Job Shadowing**

The DIT Job Shadowing programme offers students the opportunity to catch a glimpse into their dream job by following DIT alumni in their job for a day. The programme is most helpful for students who are not yet sure in what field they would like to work in after graduation or which major to choose in their study programme. A student visits an alumnus/alumna in her/his company and after a short introduction about the company and the workplace the student follows the alumnus/a around the whole day. A specific characteristic of this programme is that the student is like a shadow and does not actively participate in the daily operation of the company.

This way the student sees what a normal workday in this job looks like. Furthermore, the student has the opportunity to ask questions and gain inside information about the specific field of work. The Job Shadowing programme is not only quite helpful for students, but it also helps the university to keep in touch with alumni and maintain good relations with firms on local and supra-regional level.

## Graduation Ceremony (DIT and ECRI)

In December 2018, the first master students graduated at ECRI. This was the perfect opportunity to introduce a pure Graduation Ceremony at THD in general and the ECRI in specific. The Graduation Ceremony takes place twice a year at ECRI and once a year at DIT. This festive ceremony is a worthy conclusion to their studies at DIT, which the graduates enjoy celebrating with their families. The ceremony also marks the starting point of the lifelong alumni connection between the university and the alumnus/a.



Graduation ceremony January 2020, Stadthallen Deggendorf

## Networking Events

In addition to the regular, fixed events there are also various different networking events. These events take place every now and then and there is always room to try something new. There is also not a strict division between AlumniNet events and THD-Alumni events. Some are for AlumniNet members, but alumni who are not a member of the association are also free to participate. In some cases, the participation fee for non-members is a bit higher, but that depends on the specific networking event.

Some of these networking events take place every year, like the AlumniNet bike tour and the regular's tables for example. Then there are also events that take place sporadically such as pub-crawl, potluck, picnics or excursions. The aim of these events is to connect alumni and students and get to know fellow AlumniNet members or alumni, if THD-Alumni host the event.

## **AlumniNet kulinarisch**

AlumniNet introduced a new event line called "AlumniNet kulinarisch" in 2018: networking events paired with a culinary component. The idea behind it is that people tend to talk more freely and get to know each other better over food or drinks. However, it is not only about eating and drinking together, it is always in combination with a guided tour and background information about the location, the production of the food or drink and a tasting. This way the participants learn about the food or drink and then have the opportunity to exchange views and opinions about it. Examples for such events are a visit to UNESCO World Heritage "Staatlicher Weinkeller Würzburg" or a visit including a guided tour to SLYRS, an award winning Whisky distillery in Upper Bavaria.

## **Graduate Annual (in German: Absolventenbuch)**

The Graduate Annual is a book that contains CV's of DIT graduates of all faculties. The book gets published each year around April and is then sent to DIT's cooperation companies. The aim is to show the companies how many well-trained and educated graduates DIT has and to provide a platform for the graduates to present themselves to potential employers. Companies often contact graduates who created a profile in the Graduate Annual and it sometimes leads to an entry job for the graduate. The Graduate Annual therefore is a great tool to connect the university and its graduates with economic players. Apart from that it is a great memory of their student time, especially parents love the book that shows their daughter/son within the university frame among other successful students.

## **Post Graduate**

The Post Graduate is the Online Alumni Magazine that provides news from DIT three times a year. Possible content is an Alumni Profile, new Professors, new Study Courses and a summary of all past and upcoming alumni events. All issues can be found on the DIT website. It was first published in 2009.

## **Alumni Talks**

Alumni Talks is another event series of THD-Alumni (formerly "The best jobs in the world"). Upon invitation, alumni of DIT return to their Alma Mater for

a lecture. These lectures are part of the THD-Alumni offers for students. The alumna/alumnus introduces their employer (such as Red Bull, Amazon e.g.) to the students and reports on application process, necessary skills, the possibilities and their everyday working life at the company. Afterwards the students have the opportunity to ask questions and to get into exchange with the alumna/alumnus.

## F Resume

The DIT's alumni strategy is based on the idea of maintaining relations between alumni and the university, but also between the alumni themselves. Our alumni are worldwide ambassadors, can point out career paths and are a valuable part of our university's family due to their expertise and experience.

Through our programmes and offers, we want to maintain contact with our alumni and build a lifelong relationship. Always with one eye on the networking idea, which is created by meeting former fellow students but also by professional exchange. Networking is very valuable for alumni of all ages. Through our wide range of activities and events, we address a large number of alumni. Already in the last stages of student life, we get in contact with the soon-to-be alumni through various activities. The offer then continues in the professional life. Our range is designed to match all kind of interests, always depending on his or her own wishes and expectations and the degree to which they want to get involved. When the alumni are asked about the values they think the THD stands for (in the graduate survey), the overwhelming majority say: Family. That is the nicest compliment they can pay us: to have the feeling of being part of a big family.