St. Lawrence alumni feel very good about their alma mater and remain connected to the University through a range of increasingly electronic communications while still holding dear the printed alumni magazine and its most popular feature, Class Notes, a new survey shows.

Near the end of last year, the University conducted a survey to gauge alumni satisfaction and communications preferences. It was a follow-up to a comprehensive survey conducted in 2008, the results of which helped direct St. Lawrence in how it engages with alumni. As such, the 2011-12 survey focused on communications but repeated questions about alumni perceptions and collected information on affinity group interests.

Satisfaction, Primary Role

Consistent with the findings from 2008, the update found high levels of alumni satisfaction:

- 90 percent of all alumni reported having “very positive” or “positive” feelings toward the University.
- 94 percent said they were “very satisfied” or “generally satisfied” with the education they received from St. Lawrence.
- 87 percent indicated they would “definitely” or “probably” encourage a high school senior to apply to St. Lawrence.

Alumni who responded cited networking (23 percent) and athletics (11 percent) as the primary roles that St. Lawrence plays in their lives, followed by career enhancement (mentioned by 6 percent of young alumni) and being a parent (cited by 6 percent of the class years 1970-1989).

Use of Social Media by Class Year

Satisfaction, Primary Role (cont., 9)
Communications

Social media and the web continue to grow in importance but alumni still value printed materials. The University’s most popular communication continues to be the St. Lawrence magazine.

- 99 percent of those who responded to the survey said they read the magazine.
- A third reported reading it “always and immediately after receiving it.”

These findings, similar to those from the 2008 survey, supported the University’s decision to bring back the winter issue of the magazine after many years’ absence.

The magazine’s Class Notes remain by far the most popular content of St. Lawrence communications, cited by 92 percent of respondents as being a topic of high or medium interest. News about alumni achievements (81 percent) and alumni events (81 percent), reports from the president (73 percent), academic department news (69 percent) and sports news (67 percent) followed. Based on this and other feedback, a redesign of both the University and alumni community websites, and plans to better promote both, are under way.

Alumni still prefer email to all other forms of communication for staying in touch with the University. Fewer alumni prefer regular mail than in 2008. At the same time, more alumni prefer social media, which was not measured four years ago.

Social media platforms are becoming increasingly important, particularly among younger alumni, though their use among all generations is growing. The most used are Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, in that order.

Events, Affinities

More than half of all alumni said they had visited campus within the last five years; 78 percent indicated having attended at least one on- or off-campus St. Lawrence event since graduating.

Survey respondents also expressed a high interest in multiple affinity groups:
- Academic major (48 percent)
- Athletics (41 percent)
- Greek life (31 percent)
- Study abroad (28 percent)
- Singing groups, such as the Laurentian Singers and Singing Saints or Sinners (6 percent).

“The investments we have been making in student experiences and engagement efforts once students become alumni have begun to show results in the high satisfaction ratings and increasing levels of alumni engagement,” says Kim Hissong ’94, executive director of Annual Giving and Laurentian Engagement.

“The survey results support our continuing to invest time and resources in this area.”

More than 3,700 alumni, or 23 percent of alumni with email, responded to the online survey, including a representative cross-section of class years and gender.

The project was a collaboration between the Alumni Executive Council and the offices of Annual Giving and Laurentian Engagement, University Communications and Institutional Research.

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