INTRODUCTION

In his letter to Chapman University alumni announcing the university’s new Alumni Compact, President Jim Doti stated, “Alumni are an invaluable part of Chapman University and an essential part of our growing Chapman community.” This ever-growing population of more than 40,000 knows the university best and has much expertise to contribute to the continued success, impact and stature of this institution.

Chapman University recently made a strategic decision to create a more relevant, rewarding and engaging experience for all alumni in order to better integrate alumni into the life of the university. To accomplish this, the institution researched methods utilized by others in academia to reengage alumni in the life of their alma mater. Research showed that several institutions, notably Georgetown University, had great success with programs that sent current students (future alumni) out to visit and interact with alumni in their hometowns or near campus.

Recognizing the potential for a similar program at Chapman University, a team dedicated to connecting with alumni launched the Alumni Discovery Initiative in the spring of 2012.

The purpose of the Alumni Discovery Initiative was to discover the passions and motivations of alumni in order to link those passions and motivations with engagement in Chapman University programs and initiatives.

The Alumni Discovery Initiative was designed to meet the following goals:

- Establish more effective and efficient avenues for dialogue between alumni and the university and within the greater alumni network
- Discover new areas of interest among alumni in order to identify ways that Chapman University could more meaningfully connect with alumni
- Gain a better understanding of what Chapman alumni value in order to create relevant programs, events and opportunities at various life stages
- Increase alumni engagement with Chapman programs and initiatives
- Provide alumni the opportunity to interact directly with current students and hear first-hand about the student experience today
- Gather information about experiences alumni had as students, the lives they’ve made for themselves since graduation and their perspectives on the university today
- Assess alumni familiarity with current Chapman University programs and priorities
During the spring of 2012, 23 current Chapman students became Alumni Discovery Ambassadors and were trained to engage and re-establish the university’s connection with alumni throughout Southern California and other regional areas through face-to-face interviews. The alumni selected to participate in the interviews had past affiliation or involvement with Chapman, either through attending events, being part of a board, volunteering or other channels, but many had not engaged with the university in recent years. Students conducted interviews in Arizona, Colorado, Hawaii, New York, Southern California, the San Francisco Bay Area, Texas and Washington. The program continued in the summer of 2012 with 21 Alumni Discovery Ambassadors conducting more interviews across the country.

A total of 124 interviews were conducted: 42 in the spring semester and 82 in the summer session. Of the alumni contacted to participate, recent alumni were more willing to take part in the interviews. The majority of the participants interviewed were undergraduate degree recipients. About 50% of those interviewed obtained their degree from the Argyros School of Business and Economics or Wilkinson College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

### 2012 Student Discovery Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Interviewed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979 &amp; prior</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1999</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2000 &amp; after</td>
<td>25%</td>
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</tbody>
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### 2012 Student Discovery Initiative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degrees Awarded by College/School</th>
<th>N=1107</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>N=124</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argyros School of Business and Economics (UG)</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schmid College of Science and Technology (UG)</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Performing Arts (UG)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dodge College of Film and Media Arts (UG)</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinson College of Humanities and Social Sciences (UG)</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of Educational Studies (UG)</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Program (GR)</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown Major</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total: | 1183 | 143 |
| Multiple Majors* | 76 | 19 |

*Degrees from more than one school/college are counted more than once in the college/school distribution.
FINDINGS

During the interviews, Alumni Discovery Ambassadors asked more than 50 questions with the goal of helping Chapman University gain a better and more thorough understanding of its alumni. The interview questions were structured to progress from general topics about the interviewee’s experience as both a Chapman student and graduate to more specific topics about his or her personal interests and values. This report highlights some of the more salient findings and provides direction for next steps to engage alumni.

Perception and Experience at Chapman University as a Student

The first focus when interviewing alumni was to understand their perceptions and experience as a student attending Chapman University. When alumni were asked why they chose to attend Chapman University, 52% said they attended Chapman because of small class sizes, location, and programs. When asked about their most positive experiences at Chapman University, 62% cited the personalized education from faculty and staff, being in campus organizations, and having a “Chapman Family” atmosphere with their peers. Findings also show that 59% of the alumni who were interviewed were involved in campus clubs, Greek life, athletics, or the honor society and found those outlets a rewarding part of their Chapman experience.

When alumni were asked if faculty and staff cared for their welfare and took personal interest in them during their time as Chapman students, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Data shows that close to 80% of the alumni who were interviewed answered “yes” to this question.
The second series of interview questions focused on Chapman’s relationship with alumni and the questions were designed to determine if Chapman influenced what alumni did after they graduated. Of the 124 alumni who were interviewed, 89 began professional careers after graduation, 20 went to graduate school, and the remainder joined the military, took time off, or did volunteer work.

Close to half of alumni interviewed indicated that Chapman University was a contributing factor in helping them secure a job or opening doors to employment. When asked how significant their Chapman experience was to their success, 58% reported “very significant”.

Chapman University’s Influence on Alumni

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Chapman University’s Influence on Alumni

How significant was your university experience to your success?

- Very: 58%
- Somewhat: 25%
- A little: 4%
- Not at all: 1%
- Indifferent: 10%
- Neutral: 23%
- No: 27%
- Yes: 49%
When alumni were asked what they thought about the cost of their Chapman education compared to the quality of their education, 64% said they got more than or somewhat more than what they paid for.

**Alumni Perceptions of Chapman University Today**

Shifting the focus of the questions to the present, Alumni Discovery Ambassadors asked alumni how they currently view Chapman University. When asked what traits and qualities make Chapman distinctive, 56% of alumni said it was the small and personal class sizes and the investment in students. If alumni could go back and fix one thing about Chapman University, more than 50% said they wouldn’t change a thing. The rest said they would improve on programs such as career development and alumni events. Alumni were also asked where they would like to see Chapman University in 10 years; 52% expressed that they wanted to see Chapman continue to grow academically and in other programs.

**Current Alumni Involvement at Chapman University**

Almost half of the alumni interviewed reported feeling well informed through alumni communications about what is going on at Chapman University today. When asked what kind of interaction they have had with Chapman, most alumni said they attended campus and alumni events such as reunions, Homecoming Weekend, American Celebration, Economic Forecast, lectures, seminars and regional events. Some also said they were involved as donors or as members of Chapman organizations like the Chapman University Alumni Association Board.

**Future Engagement**

Following the interviews, the Alumni Discovery Ambassadors asked whether each alumnus or alumna they interviewed had the potential to become more engaged with Chapman University. The Alumni Discovery Ambassadors provided high rankings for 41% of the alumni which suggests Chapman has an opportunity to engage alumni further.

**Findings Summary**

The findings from the 124 interviews conducted during the Alumni Discovery Initiative shed light on a number of alumni insights about Chapman University: 95% of alumni interviewed enjoyed their Chapman experience and 84% believed that Chapman was a significant factor in their success outside of their undergraduate career.
The majority felt that Chapman's personalized approach to education, along with its strong faculty and opportunities for undergraduate involvement, provided alumni far more than what they paid for. In addition, findings also indicate that 90% of alumni who participated in the Alumni Discovery Initiative interviews would be open to more engagement from Chapman.

When asked what types of events would most likely engage alumni, the majority of participants responded that they would like to see more alumni-centered events. Many alumni voiced their interest in wanting to become more involved in undergraduate programs, networking events, career development programs, regional events, reunions, seminars and student mentorship.

In addition, alumni are very philanthropic and are involved with charities outside of Chapman. Specifically, 37% of alumni reported that they are passionate about charity work such as providing resources and medical research for children and the less fortunate.

The insights produced by the Alumni Discovery Initiative reveal that alumni want more activities that are targeted specifically for alumni. Chapman University will work to continue to improve and focus on better communications, career services, internship offerings, networking mixers and regional events for alumni.

In line with the Alumni Compact and its promise to make real and lasting changes in alumni relations, the Alumni Discovery Initiative will continue conducting student interviews of alumni on an on-going basis regionally during semester breaks and locally in Southern California throughout the year. This exploration will continue to inform and reveal areas of interest and need, allowing for authentic and relevant initiatives to be undertaken for alumni throughout their post-graduate connection to Chapman University. These findings will be reported back to Chapman University alumni on an annual basis throughout the duration of the program.

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Volunteer Opportunities included fundraising, hosting an event, donating, being a guest speaker, or serving on the Alumni Board.

Campus Activities & Sports included attending or sponsoring lectures and seminars, participating in campus events and attending athletic events.

Outreach to Students included assisting with campus tours, supporting Greek life and mentoring.

Alumni Involvement included regional activities and participation, and assisting with alumni communications.

Alumni Events & Reunions included events, dinners, galas and reunions.

Career Engagement included mixers, networking events, career development and providing internship opportunities.
After conducting 124 alumni interviews in regions all over the country, a great amount of valuable information was gathered. In connection with the Alumni Compact, the main goal of the Alumni Discovery Initiative was to discover what alumni valued most about their time at Chapman in order to create more relevant activities that lead to increased alumni engagement with the university. The responses from alumni indicate that they had a positive experience during their time as Chapman students, and many would like to continue their involvement with Chapman as alumni. Alumni said they would like to see Chapman grow in programs and concentrate on events that reconnect them to the university and current students in a meaningful way.

Chapman University values this important feedback from alumni and is excited to grow the Alumni Discovery Initiative program to continue to deepen its understanding of alumni, their needs and to foster active dialogue. Alumni are an integral part of Chapman University’s success and the findings from the Alumni Discovery Initiative have helped the university take an important step toward revitalizing alumni engagement while reinforcing the university’s commitment to alumni and their important role in the Chapman Family.
As an academically distinguished center of learning, Chapman University offers:

- A vibrant and stimulating intellectual community;
- A personalized academic experience;
- Opportunities for students to grow, learn and discover alongside remarkable faculty; and
- Preparation for a lifetime of personal achievement and career success in a global environment.