

ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS AND OPINIONS OF OSU

COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES MAGAZINE:

A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

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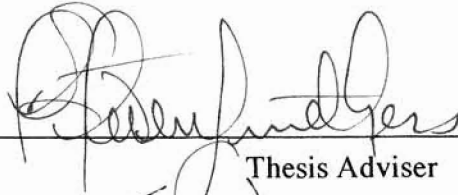
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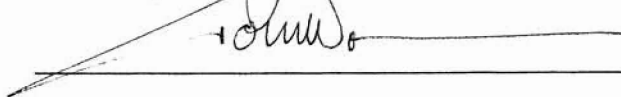
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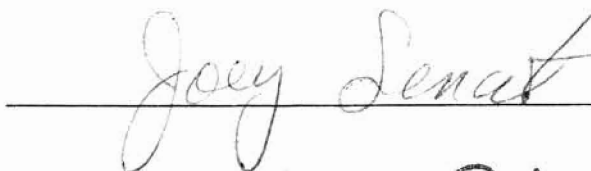
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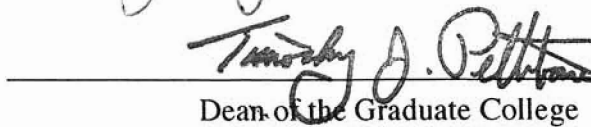
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PREFACE

This study was conducted to discover what value readers placed on the content of the newly developed OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and what suggestions could be made to improve the magazine's content. Additionally, this study explored a reader's propensity to donate funds based on the content of the magazine. Three focus groups were conducted from a purposive sample of Arts and Sciences alumni to explore opinions and preferences of magazine content and the reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College. A demographic questionnaire was also used in each focus group to gather opinions regarding individual gifts to an alma mater. The data from each focus group was transcribed and analyzed for common and differing opinions. Based on this research, it is hoped that an improved publication may be produced that better suits the needs of the University and its alumni. It is also hoped that this study will help the University administrators create a communication tool capable of providing more effective and efficient fund-raising efforts, as well as creating an avenue for two-way communication between the Development Department of the College of Arts and Sciences and Arts and Sciences alumni.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

General

Effective communication is a key factor in building and retaining alumni relationships and financial support. Public four-year universities often rely on financial support to sustain their programs and provide scholarships to students (Pettit & Litten, 1999). Therefore, universities often create comprehensive communication plans in an effort to advance relationships with graduates and to support financial goals. Effective alumni mass communication is thus a first step in securing organizational goals.

Mass communication can be described as communication from an organization to many people via a media channel with limited audience feedback (Bliwise & Hay, 2001). Organizations such as universities rely on mass communication channels to communicate with prospective and current students, faculty, alumni and donors.

Universities often use magazines to communicate with their audiences because they are relatively inexpensive and are able to reach a large audience (Rowland, 1977). However, the content of the publication must interest the audience, and the message must be clear, concise and able to retain the audience's attention for future communication.

Furthermore, the content must be understood to create the desired effect to achieve organizational goals, such as cultivating alumni or donor relationships and securing alumni financial support (Pearson, 2001). Therefore, effective organizational

communication requires pre-determined content knowledge regarding audience opinions and preferences. Otherwise, the organization's audience is not being adequately served, the desired effects are not being achieved and organizational goals are not being met.

Knowing what, when and how the external audience wants its organizational communication is an important determinant in communication content. Audience feedback, such as e-mail, letters or voice messages, is rarely used as a sole determinant of publication content because it does not accurately reflect the opinions and attitudes of all readers, nor does it contain in-depth explanations of the attitudes and opinions of the audience (Pettit & Litten, 1999). Therefore, some type of formal qualitative research regarding audience preferences and opinions must be established to create and produce effective external communication.

State higher education institutions rely on a variety of sources for financial support, including funds from the state, the university foundation, student tuition, state or national grants and alumni or donor support. Institutions that are not financially able to meet teaching, research and service goals are forced to seek additional funding resources to meet goals in an effective manner. Loessin, Duronio & Borton (1986) emphasized the increased importance of higher education's fund-raising efforts during a time when state and federal funding is declining. Alumni and donor support represent an important source of institutional funding that can become a regular part of the institution's revenue (Martin, 1993). Alumni and donors have different reasons for their financial support of

higher education institutions. Leslie & Ramey (1988) reported that alumni contributions are usually based on a desire to repay the institution for an education received or are based upon an increased recognition of the academic benefits provided by the institution.

Loessin, Duronio & Borton (1986) found alumni involvement in actual fund-raising projects and activities reflects a positive psychological commitment to the institution, generating enthusiasm and momentum for reaching those who are less committed.

Shadoian (1989) reported that “alumni giving is the single most important index of esteem in which the institution is held by a key group of individuals” (p. 1). Therefore, it is important not only to understand what alumni and donors want and need in designing a mass communication tool but also why and how alumni and donors base their decisions to give monetarily to an institution.

Qualitative research provides certain advantages in media-related research because it is flexible and increases the researcher’s depth of understanding (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Focus group research is qualitative in nature and provides in-depth information for researchers, especially in determining effective communication content in mass communication. When creating and producing new communication pieces, editors, writers and artists strive to meet deadlines and are often times unaware of how the content of their communication affects readers and their communication goals. Thus, focus groups take the guess-work out of how to effectively communicate with an audience.

This research explores readership preferences and opinions regarding the content of the Oklahoma State University College of Arts & Sciences Magazine and examines how the content of the magazine affects the reader's propensity to donate monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences. The information gained from this study should assist the editors of the magazine regarding magazine content while also assisting administrators in the College of Arts and Sciences to more effectively communicate and cultivate relationships with alumni, donors and prospective donors.

Background

Oklahoma State University's College of Arts and Sciences is the university's largest college, offering more than 80 degree options from 22 departments and two schools within the College (Keeley, 2002). Furthermore, there are 30, 098 Arts and Sciences alumni (Robinson, 2002). The College has traditionally acknowledged the importance of alumni communication and began communicating with its external audience via newsletters and magazines in 1995. Prior to this study, an annual newsletter titled A&S Insights and an annual magazine titled OSU Spectrum were used to communicate with alumni. Both publications had the same purpose: to foster communication and inform alumni and friends about issues, activities and news in the College. However, neither publication used qualitative research to better understand its audience.

The College of Arts and Sciences developed a new communication plan in June 2001 and combined A&S Insights and OSU Spectrum into one magazine titled OSU College of Arts and Sciences Magazine. This magazine is sent to approximately 7,000 Arts and Sciences donors and alumni members. The purpose of the College's new communication plan is to enhance its outreach efforts to alumni, to communicate more effectively with donors, and ultimately, to increase monetary contributions. This research will examine the value readers place on the content of the magazine, while also examining the content's effectiveness for persuading readers to donate monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences.

Problem Statement

The College of Arts and Sciences formerly produced two communication pieces: a newsletter (A&S Insights) and a magazine (OSU Spectrum). Neither publication attained the 2001 goals of the College's Communication Plan. The new goals of the plan included:

- Direct more resources to the college and increase unrestricted support;
- Keep alumni informed;
- Develop a career services network for students;
- Instill pride in a degree from the College of Arts and Sciences;
- Increase the value of an College of Arts and Sciences degree; and
- Inform people about the benefits of a liberal education and the importance of lifelong learning (June 2001 Arts & Sciences Communication Plan, p. 1)

To achieve these goals, the College combined A&S Insights and OSU Spectrum into one four-color magazine titled OSU College of Arts & Sciences. However, research regarding readership preferences for the content of the magazine was not conducted prior to the release of the first magazine. Furthermore, content or readership preference studies by the College have been nonexistent. Without proper information regarding readership content preferences, content is based on personal judgment by those responsible for the publication's production, and if goals are achieved, the reasons for success are unknown.

The new communication goals of the College require formal research to achieve success. Hence, focus groups will be conducted to determine readership preferences and opinions and the effectiveness of content on a donor's propensity to give based on reading the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine.

Purpose of the Research

This research focuses on readership preferences of alumni of the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU regarding the content of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine. Another portion of this research will focus on the magazine's content and its affect on a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College. Focus groups were conducted to interview a purposive sample of College alumni members and donors regarding their content preferences and opinions for the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, and how that content affects their propensity to donate back to the College.

Research Objectives

Based on the first two goals of the 2001 College of Arts and Sciences

communication plan, the research objectives for this study are:

1. to determine magazine usage;
2. to determine content preferences;
3. to determine content that may affect a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College;

From these research objectives, the questions guiding this study are as follows:

Research Question One:

What value do readers of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine place on the content found in the Fall 2001 issue, and what additions or changes do they suggest?

Research Question Two:

What is the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences based on the content of the magazine?

The information derived from this study provides in-depth details about readers' opinions and preferences of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, a necessary factor in creating a more comprehensive and effective communication tool for the College. Finally, the research will provide valuable information for fostering effective and financially beneficial communication between the College and its alumni and donors.

Methodology

A focus group is a qualitative method of research used to explore opinions, preferences and attitudes of a target audience (Morgan, 1993). In this research, three focus groups were conducted to determine alumni and donor preferences regarding magazine content and to determine attitudes and behavior of these participants regarding the content and its influence on their propensity to donate.

Focus group participants were purposively selected from a list of OSU College of Arts and Sciences alumni who contribute to either the University or specifically to the College of Arts and Sciences (or one of its 22 departments). Each group was comprised of no less than 11 participants and no more than 12. Each purposive sample focus group contained alumni and donors from the College, representing different graduation dates, different schools within the College, different genders and different patterns of alumni membership participation or monetary giving. Some participants were current OSU alumni members, paying a \$35 annual fee for membership, which entitles them to receive the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine. Some participants were graduates from the College but they had never joined the College's Alumni Association. Some participants were donors to the College but not alumni. Finally, some participants never received an alumni publication and never contributed to the university in any capacity.

Focus groups were conducted in three Oklahoma locations to gain a saturation of opinions regarding the content of the magazine. Thirty-five purposively selected Arts and

Sciences alumni or donors were recruited through an initial e-mail letter by the researcher, followed by a letter stating specifics about each focus group, such as time, date and place, and then by a reminder e-mail sent 3 days prior to each meeting. The focus groups were conducted in February 2002 on the OSU campuses in Tulsa, Stillwater and Oklahoma City.

Theoretical Framework

Media System Dependency Theory

The theory of media system dependency provides a model to illustrate the relationship between the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and its readers. University alumni and donors are dependent on the university to provide them with news about the university and often rely on university newsletters or publications to deliver the news that helps them stay connected to their alma mater

The media's power lies in its control of certain information resources that individuals require to satisfy personal goals or certain needs. Hence, people construct their own media system based on their goals and use patterns. The media, or in this study the College of Arts & Sciences Magazine, is seen as a linking force of communication between alumni and the College itself. Alumni often rely on the magazine to inform them about the news of the College, as well as news about the university. A media system dependency relationship is defined by Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur (1976) as:

The extent to which attainment of an individual's, group's, organization's, or system's goals is contingent upon access to the information resources of the media system, relative to the extent to which attainment of media system goals is contingent upon the resources controlled by individuals, groups, organizations, or systems, respectively (p. 250).

Ball-Rokeach (1985) proposed that a key variable in understanding how, when, and why media messages influence audience beliefs, feelings or behavior is the degree of audience dependence on mass media sources of information. Dependency within this framework has been defined as "a relationship in which the capacity of individuals to attain their goals is contingent upon the information resources of the media system – those resources being the capacities to (a) create and gather, (b) process, and (c) disseminate information" (Ball-Rokeach, 1985, p. 487). Furthermore, the absence of alternatives might also increase dependency on available university information sources.

The more an individual comes to rely on a single communication channel, the greater predictability of the outcome of communication, and the more alternative informational sources available to an individual, in terms of quality and quantity, the less likely the individual is to be dependent on a specific channel of information (Rubin & Rubin, 1985, p. 39).

Individuals are dependent on media information in many ways. How they use media is often based on their personal goals and personal objectives. According to the dependency

model, a need to understand the social and self-environment, orientation, and play are the three major dimensions of human motivation that guide media behavior (Ball-Rokeach, 1985). This dependent relationship is determined by the types of information intended to satisfy societal, organizational and personal goals (Ball-Rokeach, 1985; Ball-Rokeach & De Fleur, 1976; De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

Media system dependency is the extent to which the media system's information resources are perceived by an individual or group to be helpful in pursuit of their goals, and the media system must respond to the needs and wants of the audience and social systems while also depending upon the audience and social systems for content and revenue resources (Skumanich & Kintsfather, 1998). Furthermore, social networks (such as, in this case, the alumni of the College of Arts and Sciences) may hold important consequences for media dependency (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984) and media use (Sotirovic & McLeod, 1998).

Halpern (1994) states media dependency is not equally distributed among members of a given society, but rather the social-structural location of individuals is a key factor in understanding differences in media dependency patterns. Ball-Rokeach (1985) believes structural location is determined by variables such as class, status and power.

When considering the differences in personal interest of articles within a magazine (such as the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine), many different

opinions can result from the same article, which often makes it difficult to determine which articles have a desired effect. Different personal opinions often cause the media to produce different interpretations of content (Ball-Rokeach, Rokeach, & Grube, 1984). Therefore, in-depth research, in this case focus group research, is required to determine a full range of opinions and perceptions.

Individual Media Dependency

Individual media dependency is a microlevel of media system dependency and is worthy of mention in this research. Individual media dependency provides a concrete base for the empirical measurement of definitive causal dependency relationships of an individual with respect to a specific medium (Colman, 1990; Grant, Guthrie & Ball-Rokeach, 1991; Loges, 1994). The analysis of dependency relationships or the perceived importance of media by an individual in pursuing key motivational goals may allow for a more accurate prediction of effects than more commonly relied upon methods such as demographics or psychographics (Loges & Ball-Rokeach, 1993). Loges & Ball-Rokeach (1993) categorized the dependent relationship of individuals and their choices of media into three dimensions: understanding, orientation and play. Therefore, individual media dependency is a measure for assessing media impact, such as the effect of content on the alumni of the OSU College of Arts and Sciences, based on the intensity of the relationship between alumni and the College magazine.

Ball-Rokeach and De Fleur (1989) believe that an individual must have a pre-existing dependency with a medium for a genre dependency (a dependency on a specific medium, such as, in this case, a publication) to develop, stating that dependency may fail if the individual does not find the content relevant or interesting. Ball-Rokeach et al. (1984) and De Fleur & Ball-Rokeach (1989) theorize that the greater the genre dependency, the greater the degree of attention and affect during the exposure to the content. When personal goals are reached because of content exposure, content value intensifies for the individual, which in turn increases the individual's dependency, resulting in further individual involvement with the medium, in this case, the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine.

Therefore, media dependency theory (and individual media dependency) is a framework for understanding alumni readers' patterns and usage of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine.

Significance of the Study

An in-depth study into the communication preferences and opinions of an organization's audience is beneficial to the audience and the organization. Readership preferences and opinions change over time, thus making it necessary to be in touch with those opinions and preferences to produce effective and mutually beneficial communication. The lack of research aimed at readership and alumni preferences for the College of Arts and Sciences leaves editors and managers guessing about the

effectiveness of their magazine. This research aimed to provide the College with a readership evaluation of its new magazine's content, as well as to provide insight about a reader's propensity to give monetarily, based on the publication's content.

At the conclusion of this study, the College of Arts and Sciences should be able to use this research as an effective communication planning tool to determine the effectiveness of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, to help the publication staff decide the content of future issues and to gauge the propensity of readers to donate based on the magazine's content. Additionally, this research should prove useful to editors and managers of other alumni publications interested in improving readership communication while also increasing monetary support.

Limitations and Assumptions

Results from this study cannot be generalized to the general public or to other university publications because the sample size is small and may not be representative of the general population. Focus groups, while excellent at providing in-depth information, cannot be generalized to the population because the results stem from the attitudes and opinions of a small number of people, who may or may not reflect the opinions of the larger population. However, results can serve as a guide to editors and publications managers of other alumni magazines

Furthermore, it is assumed that participants in the focus groups of this research responded honestly.

Organization of the Research

To aid in the achievement of communication goals of the College of Arts and Sciences, this research was conducted to provide reliable and accurate information regarding the content of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and its effect on a reader's propensity to donate.

Chapter II provides a review of literature relevant to this study, including previous studies regarding alumni and university publications, as well as literature concerning focus group methodology, theories of mass communication applicable to this study, magazine content and university fund-raising methodology and effectiveness.

Chapter III defines the research methodology used to conduct this study and collect the data, and describes the sampling methods used to select focus group participants from a database of the College of Arts and Sciences. This chapter also includes methods used to administer and analyze the information gleaned from this study.

The findings of the three focus group studies are presented in Chapter IV.

Chapter V presents a summary of the findings and includes recommendations for the editor of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine regarding publication content. This chapter also includes suggestions for the College of Arts and Sciences Development Director, as well as suggestions for future research and comments by the research author.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Effective communication is essential for successfully cultivating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its external audience.

Having a media presence capable of reaching the masses guarantees that public institutions will be able to disseminate messages about accomplishments, needs and future plans, and raises an organization's public profile and association with those messages (Utter, Noble & Brady, 1999), therefore creating or maintaining a relationship with alumni. Alumni communication varies in form, but often appears as newsletters or magazines, which often serve as the alumni's main source of information about their alma mater (Creekmore, 1999; Kelly, 2001). Alumni publications are also used to foster fund-raising efforts of universities by stimulating the relationship between the graduate and the campus (Schoenfeld, 2001).

The purpose of an alumni publication is to maintain and enhance relationships to "produce favorable attitudes toward the institution and produce behaviors supportive of the university" (Bartolomero, 1986, p. 488). Magazine editors must thus understand something about their readers (Stephan and McCarthy, 1958). Editors must also understand the audience and its relationship between the medium and the people it reaches (Erds & Morgan, 1970). Writing and preparing magazine content would be

simple if all readers had the same interest and concerns; however, when the audience is comprised of a diverse group of people, such as an entire alumni population, magazines are great communication tools (Creekmore, 1999).

The ultimate worth of an alumni magazine goes beyond the tangible by affirming the sponsoring university's ideas, financial needs and future plans (Creekmore, 1999).

Communication is an important aspect in the giving process. University alumni publications not only inform and update alumni, but they can also foster emotional feelings of belonging, which may lead to financial support. In this research, the number one goal of OSU's College of Arts and Sciences is to enhance fund-raising efforts. Therefore, a review of literature on university fund-raising and alumni communication follows. While research regarding a publication's content and a reader's propensity to give is non-existent, and while research on alumni philanthropy is still in the early stages of developing a body of knowledge (Oglesby, 1991), there are several studies relating to the importance of effective alumni communication and higher education institutional fund-raising that are worthy of mention.

University alumni communication fosters relationships with alumni and is essential when trying to boost alumni donations. In the early 1900s, colleges began using public relations tools, or mass communication tools such as magazines and letters, to keep the public in touch with their purposes and activities in an effort to compete for

alumni financial support (Fine, 1972). Ray (1982) found alumni communication was the single most important factor in cultivating donors.

Andrews (1953) suggested that financial giving was related to the donor's familiarity with the cause for which one was giving. Likert & Hayes (1957) indicated that an individual or group decision to contribute financial support was influenced positively when effective communications were used to publicize the position of the reference group to which the individual or group is associated. Tyus (1958) found that a lack of communication between college personnel and alumni negatively affected financial contributions. Tarr (1965) identified financial necessity as the main reason for alumni communication following World War II.

Parsons & Wethington (1996) reported that the "act of regular communication between an organization and its potential donors can have a far greater impact in securing funding from alumni than the fund-raising appeal conducted at regular intervals" (p. 47). Utter et. al (1999) found that perceptions of value can be greatly enhanced through campus communication with alumni, thus creating more alumni contributions on a regular basis. Hunter, Jones & Boger (1999) found that alumni were more favorable donors to institutions with effective information networks, and alumni responded more favorably to institutions with quality and frequent alumni correspondence. Similarly, Millett & Jorosz (2001) reported university fundraisers must make some kind of contact, either personal contact or written communication, to improve and foster alumni giving.

Relationships between the institution and its alumni are another important factor in alumni philanthropy. Universities must communicate effectively with alumni to create or enhance relationships and possible donations. In a philanthropic focus group study for Stanford University, Pearson (1999) concluded that philanthropic support for a higher education institution depends, to a large extent, on the relationships it has with its prospects, and giving is influenced by the quality of alumni relations and communication. Furthermore, fund-raising efforts can be more successful when alumni relations, university communications and university development departments work closely together (Pearson, 1999). Moreover, fund-raising messages sent through mass communications must specify goals, ask for support and be written from an alumni perspective (Pearson, 1999). Additionally, Pearson (1999) found that alumni were twice as likely to identify more closely with their department than the university as a whole and felt more comfortable donating to their own departments than to a general university fund.

When considering alumni decisions to read an alumni publication and the alumni's decision to donate, Bragg (1971) found no statistical significance in the relationship between giving and whether the alumni publication was read. Moreover, he found no significance in the amount of the gift and time spent reading the publication. In contrast, Miracle (1977) found that for donors, 87.7% stated that they received alumni literature regularly, as compared to 47.7% for non-donors, and that donors indicated that

the quantity of communication regarding the institution influenced their yearly giving decisions. Similarly, Aug (1987) reported a significant relationship was found between donor behavior and readership of an alumni magazine. McKinney (1978) concluded that receiving information about the institution through a variety of sources was a significant factor in determining donor status. Grill (1988) found a strong relationship between readership and donor behavior. Shadoian (1989) reported that reading alumni publications was the single strongest indicator of alumni giving. Martin (1993) found 96.7% of participants in a public university study spent some time reading their corresponding alumni publication. Furthermore, Martin (1993) found that donors responded positively to a publication's reporting of a perceived need for financial assistance.

In conclusion, effective alumni communication is essential to the successful fund-raising efforts of any institution, especially universities. Alumni communication tools are often the only source of information for the alumni, thus making the alumni dependent on news from their alma mater. Without communication, relationships cannot be built or maintained, and fund-raising efforts are hampered.

Few research studies have been conducted to determine audience preferences in publication content, but many studies have been completed regarding the attitudes and opinions of publication audiences at Oklahoma State University. However, none of these studies used qualitative research such as focus groups to gather data. Moreover, there

have been few studies conducted to measure a reader's propensity to give monetarily to an institution based on the content of a publication.

However, several quantitative studies regarding publication content conducted at OSU are relevant to this research effort. Sharpe (1962) studied the problems of nine Oklahoma Extension Circulars and found that content should be specific and carefully considered to fulfill the needs and wants of its readership. Cox (1969) conducted a study of Stillwater's community newspaper in conjunction with the OSU Public Information Office. The study surveyed city residents and their preferences for news about higher education in the city's newspaper; it also dealt with editorial content. The study found that readers expressed interest in news stories about students, but not about stories involving faculty, departmental or administrative news. Overall, there was low interest in higher education, even in a university community.

There have also been several major studies researching OSU magazine readership content preferences in the past 33 years. A readership survey was conducted by Dollar (1974) for the OSU alumni publication formerly known as Outreach. The study focused on the content and format of the magazine; a national advertising questionnaire was used and a 68% response rate was obtained. Dollar found that 12% of participants found the magazine's content exciting, while 81% described the content as acceptable. Forty-three percent of the readers read most issues, while 52% of the readers reported that they read every issue of the magazine. "Class Notes," a regular section in the magazine, was

considered by 54% of the respondents to be the most interesting feature of the magazine.

“Class Notes” featured human-interest stories about alumni.

Dollar conducted a more in-depth study of the content preferences of respondents for Outreach magazine in 1974 as part of his master’s thesis. Dollar (1974) found that “Class Notes” was still the most popular feature of the magazine. Respondents also liked a feature titled “Alumni Achievements.” The least-favorite features of the magazine were “Honors and Awards Banquets,” “Administrative Programs” and “Staff & Faculty Changes.”

Other research relevant to this project includes the work of Moore (1992), who conducted a study to survey the readership of the quarterly magazine regarding their preferences of the magazine's editorial content and format. Moore found that magazine features about successful alumni were popular among readers. Moore also found that respondents with doctoral degrees preferred reading about stories of controversy within the university. Moore reported graduates from the early 1990s expressed the need to see more stories addressing specific colleges within OSU. He also reported that most respondents read only “some” of the magazine, and 69% of the respondents were happy with a quarterly publication. Moore found respondents enjoyed “Class Notes” more than any other section of the magazine. “Class Notes” dealt with alumni stories. Finally, Moore reported respondents requested to see more stories dealing with controversial campus issues and interesting alumni.

Fleming (2000) conducted the most recent survey research of magazine content preferences for an OSU publication, where study participants evaluated the content and format/design of OSU Magazine. Fleming found that 43.5% of readers read most of the magazine, while 24.8% said they read half of it and 26.9% said they read all of it. The main feature story of each issue was read first by more than 48% of the readers. Additionally, "Class Notes" were read by 25.5% of readers, read nearly as often as the main feature story (17.8%). Respondents preferred more stories about successful alumni and campus events, and fewer stories about contributions and branch campuses.

Fleming also found that respondents gave positive ratings to the magazine's writing and characteristics (timeliness, credibility, accuracy, diverse coverage, length, depth, interesting, well written and informative). Regarding frequency of stories, more than 56% said they preferred more nostalgic stories, more than 48% preferred more campus event stories, more than 40% wanted more successful alumni stories, and more than 28% desired more athletics and sports stories.

Conclusion

In the field of journalism and mass communication, research on alumni magazine content and its effect on a reader's propensity to give financially to the sponsoring institution is mostly non-existent. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on general alumni philanthropy. Research that does exist is usually in the form of a dissertation or master's thesis, and more often than not is not published.

This chapter has examined the importance of alumni communication and communication in institutional fund-raising efforts and relevant collegiate magazine content studies. While few studies have been conducted regarding the importance of effective alumni communication and its connection to alumni donations, several studies have focused on magazine content.

Fleming's magazine readership survey regarding content is the most up-to-date study relating to this research and addressed alumni's content preferences and opinions. Fleming found that magazine readers read the main feature story first. Readers also enjoyed and read stories about alumni accomplishments as often as they read the main feature story. Stories about the college from which respondents graduated were read nearly as often as alumni features and main feature stories. Fleming also noted that stories regarding donor gifts and campaigns were the least read; stories about departments or colleges from which the respondent did not graduate also rated very low. Respondents also wanted more articles regarding OSU history and campus events, followed by successful alumni and information about branch campuses.

Finally, this research also examines the role of the alumnus as a reader and a prospective donor for the College of Arts and Sciences. There is no relevant literature addressing the parameters of this study and further examination and exploration of alumni magazine content and its effect upon a reader's propensity to give are needed. The findings of this study will begin the exploration of the relationship between a university's

communication with alumni and the communication's effect upon the alumni to contribute monetarily to the university.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter describes the research design and procedures used for this study. A summary of the problem statement and the two guiding research questions appear in the first section of this chapter. Next, an overview of the importance and significance of focus group methodology in researching magazine content is reviewed, and procedures and questions used to collect data for the study are discussed. The last section of this chapter summarizes the sampling techniques and data analysis method, and discusses the limitations and weaknesses of this study.

Statement of the Problem

The major purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, a new annual publication developed in 2001 in hopes of enhancing outreach efforts to College alumni. The College's communication goals are to direct more financial resources to the college, to increase unrestricted support and to keep alumni informed. The two research questions guiding this study were:

1. What value do readers place on the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine?

2. How does the content affect a reader's propensity to give financially to the College of Arts and Sciences?

Description of Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to find the range of perceptions and opinions regarding the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and a reader's propensity to give monetarily based on the magazine content. Therefore, the use of focus group methodology was selected by the researcher as the sole instrument used in collecting content perceptions data.

Focus groups can serve a number of purposes. Morgan (1997) states that focus groups are used in several ways: 1) as self-contained research, in which they serve as the principal source of data; 2) in supplementary research, where they rely on some other primary method of data collection, such as a survey; and 3) in multi-method research, where they are combined with two or more means of gathering data and no one primary method determines the use of the others (p. 2). Krueger & Casey (2000) state that focus groups are used to aid in decision making, product or program development, customer satisfaction, planning and goal setting, needs assessment, quality improvement or movement, understanding audience and employee concerns and attitudes, and policy making and testing. Greenbaum (2000) confers with other focus group experts, stating that the method is used to "delve into attitudes and feelings about a particular topic...and to understand the 'why' behind the consumer behavior" (p. 6). However, Morgan (1993)

believes focus groups should not be used for decision making because the results of a focus group cannot be generalized to the population.

Good planning is essential to the success of a study, especially when focus groups are the primary, or only source, of data. According to Krueger & Casey (2000), at least three or four focus groups must be conducted to ensure adequate coverage of desired information on a given topic. The number of participants required for a focus group, according to most experts, are between six and 12 people. Morgan (1998) believes focus groups should consist of six to eight people. Krueger and Casey (2000) state that successful focus groups consist of five to 10 people, but emphasize that “the size can range from as few as four to as many as twelve” (p. 10). Greenbaum (2000) believes seven to 10 people should comprise a focus group, with each participant having similar characteristics.

There are two schools of thought regarding the role of the moderator in a focus group. Krueger & Casey (2000) believe the moderator must have adequate background knowledge on the topic of discussion and must be skillful and experienced to conduct successful and informative focus groups. Morgan (1997) disputes the skill and experience of the moderator, explaining that “a less experienced moderator who has more contact with the issues will produce better data than a professional moderator who has never worked in the topical area” (p. 48). According to Greenbaum (2000), the best moderator

is the one who can learn the most from the participants and play the role of the authoritarian during the session.

The questions asked during the focus group are perhaps one of the most important aspects of the session. Krueger & Casey (2000) recommend keeping the questions open-ended, clear, short, one-dimensional, conversational, and free of acronyms, jargon and technical lingo. Similarly, Morgan (1997) recommends questions be open-ended, easy to understand, and be followed with questions such as "Why do you feel this way?" or "Tell me more" or "I don't understand what you're saying" (p. 41).

X Focus groups are typically recorded in one of two ways: by voice recorder or a two-way observation mirror with an assistant taking detailed notes (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Once the session is complete, transcription of the session takes place and the transcript is included in the research report (Morgan, 1997).

Focus group data cannot be generalized to the population (Wimmer et al, 2000). Instead, only inferences can be made, based on the internal consistency of the data. The analysis of the data derived from the focus group provides explanations regarding readership content preferences.

Research Design

Focus groups discussions were conducted in three different locations: Tulsa, Stillwater and Oklahoma City. Tulsa's focus groups included 11 participants; Oklahoma

City's focus group used 12 participants; and Stillwater's focus group consisted of 11 participants. Overall, a total of 34 alumni and donors participated in the study.

Participants were selected from a list of Arts and Sciences alumni; some were donors to the College, some were Alumni Association members and some were simply Arts and Sciences graduates. The list provided by the College of Arts and Sciences included alumni names, addresses, phone numbers, graduation date and degrees received. However, it should be noted that not all information categories were included for each person, and some of the information was incorrect.

E-mail correspondence was used to recruit participants. The researcher considered each e-mail address on the Arts and Sciences alumni list and then selected a purposive and segmented sample of potential participants, based upon degree and year of graduation. A copy of the initial letter is included in Appendix A.

On January 15, 2002, the researcher sent 50 e-mail letters to potential Tulsa focus group participants asking for their participation in a 90-minute focus group being conducted in their city to explore effective alumni communication for the College of Arts and Sciences, as part of a thesis project. Forty-five people responded via e-mail; 12 said they would participate while 33 said they would be unavailable to participate. On January 22, 2002, the researcher sent e-mail inquiries to 70 potential Oklahoma City focus group participants. Fourteen people agreed, while 36 respondents said they would be unavailable on that date. Others did not respond. On January 29, 2002, the researcher sent

50 e-mail inquiries to potential participants in Stillwater, where 12 of the 37 responding agreed to participate and 23 people declined. Two people did not respond.

After the initial responses were received by the researcher, a second e-mail was sent to each respondent. Respondents accepting the invitation to participate were sent a follow-up letter again advising them of the time, date and location of the group meeting. The letter also advised participants that a copy of the OSU Arts & Sciences Magazine would be mailed to them. This measure was used to save time and postage. A reminder e-mail was sent to confirmed participants three days prior to the focus group meeting. Copies of the second e-mail, reminder e-mail and confirmation letter can be found in Appendices B & C and D.

Focus Group Questions

The development of questions for the focus groups began with a review of Fleming's 2000 readership survey of the OSU Magazine and from previous studies regarding magazine content, alumni magazines and fund-raising magazines. Questions were refined during discussions with the development director from the College of Arts and Sciences and the researcher's thesis adviser. Questions were designed to be open-ended and every attempt was made to make each question short, concise and clear (Langer, 2001).

The following questions were used to explore the opinions of readers regarding the general mission and purpose of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine:

- In your opinion, what is the main message of this magazine?
- After reading the magazine, do you understand the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences?
- After reading the magazine, do you feel more connected to the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU Stillwater?
- After reading the magazine, do you feel like you know what is going on within the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU in Stillwater? How about the departments?

The following questions were used to explore the opinions of readers regarding the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine.

- Using an adjective or several adjectives, describe how you feel about the content of the magazine.
- What section of the magazine did you turn to first?
- What section, if any, did you not read? Why
- What section was most enjoyable?
- Do you find any news about your department in the magazine?
- Do you think it is important to see news about every College of Arts and Sciences department?
- Did you consider any articles too long or too short? If so, which ones?
- What kind of stories would you like to see more of?
- What kind of stories would you like to see less of?

- Do you have any suggestions for improving the content of the magazine?

The following questions dealt with a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences, based on the content of the magazine:

- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to donate to the College of Arts and Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to give to your department within the College?
- After reading this magazine, what articles, if any, inspired you to donate?
- After reading this magazine, would you make an unrestricted gift (not designated to a specific department or fund within the College) to the College of Arts and Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, would you make a restricted (designated gift) to a department within the College?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel like you were asked to donate to the College of Arts and Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel you understand the different financial needs of the College? Of different College departments?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel that the magazine sufficiently describes how contributions are being used by the College?

Research Schedule

Three focus groups were conducted in February 2002. The first focus group was conducted in Tulsa, Oklahoma on the OSU-Tulsa campus. The second focus group was conducted in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on the OSU-OKC campus. The final focus group was conducted on the OSU campus in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Each session lasted approximately 70 minutes.

Sampling Plan

Although random sampling techniques provide the best opportunity to obtain unbiased samples, it is not always possible for researchers to use random sampling, especially in qualitative research, where randomness is rarely a part of the process (Gay & Airasian, 2000). In this study, purposive sampling was selected instead of random sampling because the researcher was able to select alumni based on their date of graduation and degree, which gave the researcher a more homogenous group of Arts and Sciences alumni participants. Using a random sampling method could have included too many participants from one year of graduation or from one degree or department. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgment sampling, allows the researcher to select a sample based on his or her experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled (Morgan, 1993).

Research Instrumentation

The researcher conducted each focus group in a reasonably secure, private conference room. Data was collected using audiotape, which was later transcribed. Before each session began, participants were asked to read and sign a consent form explaining why the study was being conducted and how the information derived from the study would be used. The consent form also explained how the information would protect each participant's privacy and when the information would be destroyed. One-hundred percent of the participants read and signed the consent form. The consent form, moderator outline of questions and demographic questionnaire are provided in Appendices E, F & G, respectively. A transcript of each group discussion can be found in Appendix H.

The researcher served as the focus group moderator and followed a written outline of questions, prioritized in case of time constraints. Before the questioning began, the moderator informed participants that their answers were confidential and that their participation in the study was strictly voluntary. The moderator also explained that she was in no way affiliated with the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and that she was interested in all types of comments regarding the content, including negative and positive comments. Upon completion of each focus group, a two-page questionnaire was given to each participant to explore demographics of the group, how OSU alumni use the

publication, and how OSU alumni make their decisions to contribute monetarily to the College. The participants were told not to include their names on the questionnaire.

Analysis

Since the data obtained from focus groups cannot be generalized to the population, there was no need for statistically reliable data in this qualitative study. Data were categorized and collated by similar responses, then identified by common themes and differences. The findings of the magazine content portion of this research are expected to be similar to findings of other magazine research. It is anticipated that this research will conclude that readers prefer stories about alumni, students and campus events, while readers do not prefer stories about financial gifts, long stories in general, articles containing fund-raising appeals or articles regarding administrative matters.

Limitations and Weaknesses

The responses of the focus group participants may not be representative of the entire population of alumni of the College of Arts and Sciences. Henerson et al (1978) said that preferences can only be inferred from the responses that are given. Furthermore, sampling errors are present in focus groups because sample sizes are small (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 48). Moreover, the participants of the focus groups may have been more passionate about the subject matter than the larger population of alumni. Also, participants may have given answers they thought the moderator wanted to hear, even though the researcher explained that she was in no way affiliated with the OSU College

of Arts & Sciences magazine and did not make any decisions regarding its content. It is assumed that each participant answered the focus group questions honestly and objectively because each person understood the meaning of the questions. Finally, because a focus group's outcome is based heavily on the skills of the moderator, many experts agree that anyone conducting a focus group should be skilled in moderating. In this study, the researcher acted as the moderator of the focus groups, and could have unintentionally inflicted bias into the questions. However, it should be noted that the moderator did extensive research regarding moderator skills and conducting effective focus groups.

Summary

While results from this study may benefit editors of other OSU publications, the results should not be generalized to publications from other universities or to the same audience in the future. Audience preferences change with time. Therefore, this study is limited to the sample and events analyzed and should not be applied outside this framework.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

This chapter includes the information obtained from the three focus groups conducted with Oklahoma State University alumni regarding their attitudes, opinions and preferences of the content of the Fall 2001 issue of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine. The focus groups also explored a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences, based on the content of the magazine. Additionally, a questionnaire was given to focus group participants to learn more about the demographics and giving habits of the magazine's audience.

The findings of this study helped meet the research objectives as outlined in Chapter I. Discussion and recommendations for use of these findings and a summary of conclusions are presented in Chapter V. Examples of the focus group questions, materials and demographic questionnaire can be found in the appendices.

The questions guiding this study are as follows:

- What value do OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine readers place on the content found in the Fall 2001 issue, and what additions or changes do they suggest?
- What is the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of A&S based on the content of the magazine?

Focus Groups

Overview

Three focus groups were conducted in the month of February 2002 in three different cities in Oklahoma. The first focus group was conducted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on the OSU-Tulsa campus. There were 12 participants. The second focus group included 11 participants and was conducted in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, on the OSU-Oklahoma City campus. The final focus group was conducted in Stillwater, Oklahoma, on the OSU campus. Eleven subjects participated. Prior to the actual focus group interviews, questions were reviewed and refined based on the recommendations of this study's thesis adviser, several mass communication professors and the Development Department of the College of Arts and Sciences.

The focus groups were designed to answer the following questions about the OSU College of Arts & Science Magazine's content. The following questions were used to explore the opinions of readers regarding the general mission and purpose of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine:

- In your opinion, what is the main message of this magazine?
- After reading the magazine, do you understand the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences?

- After reading the magazine, do you feel like you know what is going on within the College of Arts and Sciences at OSU in Stillwater? How about the departments within the College?

The following questions were used to explore the opinions of readers regarding the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine:

- What was your overall opinion of the content of the magazine, using an adjective or adjectives to describe the content?
- What section of the magazine did you turn to first?
- What article was your favorite?
- What section, if any, was your least favorite and why?
- Do you find any news about your department in the magazine?
- Do you think it is important to see news about every College of Arts and Sciences department?
- What kind of stories would you like to see more of?
- What kind of stories would you like to see less of?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the content of the magazine?

The following questions dealt with a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences, based on the content of the magazine:

- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to donate to the College of Arts and Sciences?

- Have you ever donated to a cause based on the content of a publication?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to give to your department within the College?
- After reading this magazine, what articles, if any, inspired you to donate?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel like you were asked to donate to the College of Arts and Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel you understand the different financial needs of the College? Of different College departments?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel that the magazine sufficiently describes how contributions are being used by the College?

Focus Group Analysis and Summary

Participants' opinions regarding magazine's main message

Participants generally felt that the magazine's main message expressed the accomplishments of the College of Arts and Sciences, including research and fund-raising accomplishments, but ignored or downplayed the importance of arts and departmental news within the College.

The consensus of the Tulsa focus group was that the magazine's message was the College of Arts and Sciences was diverse and had high achievements in research. One participant said:

“I think the main message is the OSU Arts and Sciences grads are successful in what they do.”

Another participant commented:

I think...the point is promoting its accomplishments and that it's [the magazine] kind of making the point that these accomplishments are in every aspect of the world...we've got science...arts...all kinds of different research...we've got variety...it covers a lot of ground.

Another participant said the magazine's articles represented “diversity,” while several participants said they felt there was more of a focus on science rather than the arts.

The Oklahoma City focus group overwhelmingly said fund-raising was the main message of the magazine, while some participants also agreed that it was a recruiting tool for students interested in research. One participant said:

“I agree [that it's a fund-raising tool] because the Director of Development is listed on the inside front cover...and the content contains articles about raising money or donors that give money. It gives you a feel of fund-raising...”

Another participant thought the magazine was a “bragging tool,” while another person called the magazine propaganda:

“I saw it as...propaganda because its mission was to bring up issues both negative and positive, as I assume from the mission statement, but it's all...touchy, feely positive stuff. Fund-raising, I think, is a big deal of the magazine.”

The Stillwater focus group also agreed that fund-raising and research achievements were the main messages of the magazine, leaving little room for information regarding the arts of the College. One participant replied:

“Research. I think the message is that Arts and Sciences are into research.”

Another participant commented:

“I think it tells about what’s going on in certain aspects of Arts and Sciences, my guess is it only covers areas that receive money, but I’m not sure.”

Another participant echoed the same concerns:

“...I know Arts and Sciences is the largest college, but it seems only science or research gets the headlines.”

Several people thought fund-raising was a main theme.

“I thought it was a fund-raising tool because of the development message toward the first of the magazine. It also tells about people who gave money, so...fund-raising.”

“This is what we’re doing, please send your money. Even though I don’t see any article asking for money, that’s how it feels.”

“...it feels like a fund-raising magazine, it’s also a bragging rights magazine, like see what’s happening at OSU.”

“Things are going on here and we want you to give money.”

One person mentioned that only a select number of departments within the College of Arts and Sciences were mentioned in the magazine. Several people agreed with this comment.

Participants' opinion regarding magazine content's explanation of mission of College of Arts and Sciences

Participants overwhelmingly agreed that they did not know the mission of the College. Some of the Tulsa focus group's comments included:

"Specifically, no, it [the mission] didn't jump out at me that it's written in here."

"They never list it, do they?"

"Good question, I don't see it"

"That's a very good question. You would think since this is obviously a fund-raising publication, or close to it, that they would list the mission of why they want our money and how they will use it."

All Oklahoma City focus group participants had similar responses, such as:

"No, I don't think I saw a mission statement, but maybe I missed it."

"No, I didn't see one [mission statement] and since I believe that this is an extension of the fund-raising department, or the Development Department because the Development Director's name is mentioned and she has an article, I thought there should be a mission of what the College is trying to do...they should list one."

“The College is more than research and technology, so I would venture to guess the mission is something more than research. This question...illuminates the need for the statement to appear in anything having to do with fund-raising.”

“I don’t recall a mission, and...I agree, a mission should be listed.”

“If the mission was listed, I don’t remember it...”

“What is the mission?”

The Stillwater participants agreed with the other groups, commenting:

“No, I don’t think they listed a mission. However, I believe every non-profit organization has a mission...and I’m sure the College of Arts and Sciences has a mission.”

“...I do not. I’m looking [on the inside front cover], and if that’s a mission, I’m shocked and disappointed. It seems to be the magazine’s mission, which by the way, after reading this, they don’t accomplish that mission.”

“No, I didn’t read a mission and I don’t know the mission, but my guess is this is a fund-raising publication and their mission is to raise money and pat donors on the back.”

“No, without re-looking at the inside front cover, but after reading the entire magazine, I have no idea what the mission of the College is.”

“I agree...I have no idea, but from reading the articles I could guess that the mission is to increase funding for research and technology.”

Participants' opinion regarding magazine's information about what's going on in the College of Arts and Sciences

Participants generally felt they did know more about what is going on in the College of Arts and Sciences, especially in the field of research, after reading the magazine. However, most participants agreed that they did not know more information about other areas of the College. Their comments included:

“Definitely, I know a lot more about research.”

“Yes, I know more about some aspects of the College...I know more about research.”

“Yea, I know a little more about research, but I'd say overall, I don't know much about the College.”

“It's very interesting what's going on, but I know that the College is the largest on campus, so they've got a lot going on. Is this it? If so, I'm sad. If not, why don't they mention the other stuff?”

“...I was impressed by the things that are happening...I'm proud.”

“No, not necessarily more informed, maybe updated on research is a good way to put it.”

“I think you generally get to understand the sciences side, you don't know anything else besides that.”

“...I understand more about research but not about arts.”

“Yes, I know more about some things in Arts and Sciences, but certainly not everything...It seemed pretty one-sided as far as coverage of the entire College.

Did they drop the ‘arts’ in Arts and Sciences?”

“Sort of. I do feel more informed about some interesting scientific stuff, but I see gaps in the coverage...”

The Stillwater participants said they did not feel more connected to the College after reading the magazine, but did feel like they knew more about research within the College, stating:

“No, not necessarily more connected, maybe more informed about research.”

“Yes, I feel like I know what’s going on, but I wouldn’t say I’m connected...”

“No, I’m not more connected but I am a little bit more informed on research.”

“...maybe a little bit more informed...This College is huge and you’re telling me this is all that happened this past year?”

Some Stillwater participants also felt that the information in the magazine was a duplication of news, stating:

“Most of these articles that are in here I’ve seen on the news or in the papers.

Channel 5 ran a few of these stories. They seem like duplications, probably from the office that sends press releases to the press. So, no, I’m not more connected or more informed.”

“...it is a duplication of information, but it’s probably because we live in Stillwater.”

Participants’ opinions regarding magazine content

The majority of participants said they did not enjoy the content of the magazine, deeming the content boring and uninteresting. Their comments included:

“It was pretty dry.”

“Not interesting. Maybe boring is a good adjective.”

“I’ll agree with boring.”

“...I’d describe it as interest-free.”

“The articles are topical but hard to be interested in.

“...I thought it was boring.”

“Not real interesting. Not provocative.”

“I didn’t find the content very compelling at all...”

“...Some articles I find interesting. Some I don’t.”

“There were some of the articles that were written where I lost interest partway into the article. I had to force myself to read these because I had to for this group. I found very few interesting articles, but some of them were very interesting and I learned some good things.”

“...but I had to force myself to read some of it because it was kind of boring...”

“I thought it was very boring.”

“...there were some interesting things, but typically, if I got this [the magazine], I would not read this. The articles were too long.

“I thought it was very boring.”

“I wouldn’t read this, it looks boring because the articles are long...”

“Boring.”

“...a boring read.”

Articles Read First by Participants

The majority of the participants reported reading the alumni and student articles first, but responses were varied regarding which article was read first. Most participants said they read the entire magazine from front to back, beginning with the content page, because it was required for the focus group. Several people commented that they would not read the magazine at all (because they found nothing of interest) if it had not been an assignment of the focus group.

Participants’ favorite articles

A majority of the participants reported that the alumni and student articles were their favorite articles to read. The “Genome” article was also mentioned as a favorite of several participants. Comments included:

“I liked the alumni profiles because there’s a curiosity of do I know this person, or is that a connection that I want to maintain, or should I contact this person?”

“I...went straight to the center section and read about ‘Frosty Friend’ and ‘Fan Girl’ [student articles]...”

“Mine was alumni profiles also because you can relate to people that were also at OSU, but I wish they had more articles, especially about people in my era...”

“I liked the ‘Attracting Talent’ article because it was about a student...”

“Alumni articles are usually my favorites, but these need work.”

“The ‘Genome’ article was okay, and I also like alumni articles.”

“...the student articles.”

“I liked the alumni profiles.”

“I...liked the alumni profiles, and ‘Keepsakes of the Heart’.”

“I also liked the student stories, and the article about Mario White.”

Participants’ least-favorite articles

According to a majority of the participants, research articles ranked among the least favorite, as did the letter from the Dean and the article by the Development Director titled “Backward Glance.” Participants felt the research articles were too long and detailed, the letter from the Dean was only “obligatory,” and “Backward Glance” was not interesting. Respondents’ comments included:

“Frogs was really boring.”

“I wouldn’t say there’s one in particular, but when they put a bunch of names in paragraphs, it means nothing.”

“I think some of the longer ones. I just found myself wanting to get the idea more quickly so I could move on...and I lost interest.”

“They need sub-heads to give us an idea and get to the point...”

“Let them put the longer articles in a departmental newsletter or something...”

“Just give us a brief.”

“My least favorite was Dean John Dobson’s article, his obligatory letter that takes up the front cover. That’s so wasteful.”

“...Don’t give him [Dean Dobson] full color, no one is going to read that anyway.”

“...I wouldn’t have read it had it not been assigned.”

“I would...steer clear of any kind of science things because it bores me.”

“I read every word because I thought it was an assignment, but if I received it I wouldn’t...read it because nothing intrigued me.”

“I would never read the letters from the Dean or Development Director...”

“I steered clear of the science.”

“‘Backward Glance’ by the Development Director...it was boring.”

“I couldn’t finish that [‘Backward Glance’] or figure the point of that one.”

“That article by Deborah [‘Backward Glance’]...”

“...I didn’t like that one, either.”

Participants' opinions about departmental news within the content of the magazine

More than a majority of the participants did not see any news about their department within the content of the magazine, and an overwhelming majority felt each department should be mentioned in each issue of the magazine. Comments included:

“Yes, every department should have some recognition, good or bad...”

“...departments should be represented.”

“...if a department doesn't....make a newsletter, isn't the College of Arts and Sciences its [the department's] voice to alumni?”

“The College is supposed to represent its departments, even in a small blurb, something should be said about each department...”

“...Every department has something to say or report.”

“Every department has something good to say, and Arts and Sciences represents these departments, don't they, so they should have something in each issue.”

“Every department has accomplishments and disappointments. Let us know both”

“...Show us the changes going on in each department.”

“...Each department deserves some credit and praise.”

“...How else can the College be equal in its representation of its departments.”

“If it's just once a year [the magazine], I'd do more about what's going on in each department. To mention these stories that are in here right now, mostly science, and neglect all the other departments, is an injustice...”

“I’m not worried about my department having news each time, but with just once a year [publication of the magazine], I’m a little concerned about the true news of the Arts and Sciences.

“My tie to OSU is my department.”

Suggestions for improving magazine content

The majority of participants made the following suggestions regarding the content of the magazine:

- Include more departmental news;
- Make the articles shorter so more news can be included in the magazine;
- Make the headlines more descriptive;
- Give the readers a way to offer opinions and suggestions to the magazine and the College – allow for two-way communication between the readers and the College;
- Include information regarding the financial needs of the College and its departments and give alumni specific information regarding how they can help;
- Include an annual financial report regarding how monies raised were used by the College;
- Include more alumni stories by era;
- Include more interesting student stories, including the struggles and accomplishments of students.

Participants’ comments included:

“My suggestion would be to include a little information about each department and to shorten most of the articles. Also...give us a way to find out some of the needs of the school. Don't just brag about what's going on, brag on what needs to be done. Inspire us to give...”

“...Shorten the stories and make the headlines better so we don't have to read everything. Give us more interesting alumni and student stories...”

“...have more articles to interest a vast array of people...get suggestions from the audience. Incorporate some type of 'letters to the editor' encouraging suggestions from the readers. This would truly make this a two-way communication tool.”

“Well, if they want to raise funding, speak to us and tell us what is needed. Let the departments tell us what is needed...and I also like articles about students, struggling or otherwise, and alumni who have used their degrees to better themselves and the lives around them.”

“Shorten the stories...use more interesting alumni and students in the stories. Tell us what financial needs have arisen...”

“There should be some call to get the alumni involved, which is definitely missing...”

“...They need more departmental news, more alumni news...and more student news.”

“...profiling different time periods, different eras...and be candid, that’s how you’ll get the money.”

“Departmental news. Student news. Alumni news.”

“Tell us how the College is changing and what’s in its future.”

“Tell us the needs of the different departments and show us how our contributions have helped in the past...”

“...Shorten articles and more coverage of departments.”

Participants’ interest in an online version of the magazine

An overwhelming majority said they would not read the present magazine online because the articles were too long and they were not interested in the present articles. However, participants also commented that they preferred a hard copy to read at their leisure, if “it’s worth reading,” and to place in their offices or lobbies. Some participants said it would be beneficial to have an online version of the magazine, done in conjunction with the hard copy of the magazine, so readers could find out more details about articles that interest them in the online version. Participants agreed that this would save valuable printing space in the hard copy but still fulfill the reader’s curiosity.

Participants opinions regarding whether they would give monetarily to the College after reading the magazine

Thirty participants said they would not give a contribution to the College of Arts and Sciences after reading the magazine; four respondents said they would give a

contribution to the College, but would prefer to give to designate their gift to their department. Participants responding 'no' said they would consider giving to their departments if the magazine's content listed departmental needs. Comments from the participants included:

"Yes, but I'd need to know more information about the needs."

"I would donate but it would be earmarked to my department."

"...Show me a need in an article...and maybe give me a link to explore the matter further..."

"No, I wouldn't donate to the College...without good reason, and the only reason I can think would be a good reason would be because of my department or something like that."

"...There were no articles asking for specific funding, and there is no accounting for where the money they have raised is going, other than maybe research."

"Special or specific funding needs would have to be listed to get me to donate."

"No, they gave me no reason to donate."

"No, for several reasons. First, my department wasn't mentioned, so am I less important? Second, I don't know how they will use the money, and third, they didn't ask."

"...They don't seem to need anything. I'd rather give to my department."

"They didn't ask for anything, and they seem to be fine regarding money."

“No...they didn’t give me a reason...there are real needs out there, but who knows what they are.”

“No, but I would consider giving for a specific reason.”

Participants’ opinions regarding giving monetarily to their department after reading the magazine

An overwhelming majority of participants said they would not give to their departments based on the content of the magazine because their respective departments were not mentioned and/or the magazine did not indicate a need or ask for their financial help. Comments included:

“No, because I did not see my department. But, if there was an article stating a need or something, I might be more likely to send a few dollars.”

“No, I wouldn’t give to my department unless they asked. They can ask by letter, on the phone, or maybe in an article, especially if the next issue of the magazine followed up with how the money helped someone or funded new equipment or something.”

“I might if an article inspired me to do so, especially if there was a follow-up article telling me how my money helped or something.”

“No, my department was not mentioned.”

“...Without seeing my department or knowing what’s going on, how can I want to give. If a story told me about an overwhelming need or something, I might feel differently.”

“I wouldn’t give unless I saw a need...”

“...If more articles told how individual alumni were pooling their money to help, I might feel left-out if I didn’t give.”

“No, I wouldn’t give without a reason...”

“...There was no call to give.”

Participants’ opinions regarding whether articles inspired them or asked them to give to the College and how articles explained College’s financial needs

All participants agreed that none of the articles in the magazine inspired them to donate to the College, nor did the magazine specifically ask readers for monetary contribution. Furthermore, participants agreed that the magazine did not adequately, if at all, explain the financial needs of the College.

Participants’ opinions regarding how the magazine explained the College’s use of contributions

An overwhelming majority of the respondents did not feel that the magazine had adequately explained how current donations were being used by the College. Comments included:

“No, I don’ know how much they raised, and I sure don’t know where it went.”

“I think it [the magazine] reinforces our view that science and technology get the bulk of the money, and some departments suffer because they don’t get equal money from Arts and Sciences.”

“I would be disappointed if this was all because I didn’t see my department mentioned. Does that mean they didn’t receive any money?”

“No, but that would be very helpful if I were considering donating. I think that’s why a lot of people only give to their department because they know the money will be used in the department.”

“No, they don’t explain where the donations go, other than endowments.”

“I think it shows where the money is spent in research, but no place else.”

“No, they could do a better job of showing us how much money was raised last year and where it went.”

“...If they are serious about fund-raising and keeping us a reader and as donors, they need to show us how serious they are. Give us a run-down of what was used for departments, faculty, students, scholarships and staff positions. Show us how much the Development Director makes, how much the Dean makes, etc. If they have nothing to hide, show us the money, baby” (laughter).

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The primary goals of this research were to determine the reader's value of the content of the first edition of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and to determine a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College of Arts and Sciences based on the content of the magazine. In June 2001, the College developed a new communication plan, which called for the creation of a new communication tool for its alumni. The communication tool was a publication and was named OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine. There were no publication content studies conducted prior to the release of the new magazine, and therefore, there was no information regarding readership preferences or opinions for the editors of the magazine to consider when creating the new publication. Readers of the magazine are alumni and donors from the College of Arts and Sciences. Their opinions, perceptions and attitudes regarding the content of the first-edition magazine were recorded during three separate focus groups.

The two guiding questions for this study were:

- What value do readers place on the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine?
- How does the content affect a reader's propensity to give financially to the College of Arts and Sciences?

To determine a reader's value of the content of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, focus group participants were asked questions regarding the content of the magazine, such as: what articles were your most favorite and least favorite and why; what kind of articles would you like to see in the magazine; what articles would you cut from the magazine; what preferences do you have regarding article length; and what suggestions do you have regarding how to make the magazine content more attractive to readers.

To determine a reader's propensity to give to the College based on the content of the magazine, readers were asked if they felt compelled or inspired to give monetarily to the College after reading the magazine. They were also asked if the magazine gave them information regarding the monetary needs of the College and its departments. Finally, participants were asked their preferences regarding making financial contributions to the College or their departments within the college and how the magazine could deal with asking for financial contributions.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

There are recognized strengths and weaknesses of this study. The original purpose of the study was to explore the attitudes and preferences of Arts and Sciences alumni regarding the content of the OSU Arts & Sciences Magazine and a reader's propensity to give monetarily to the College based on the content of the publication. Focus groups, a form of qualitative research, were used to explore alumni attitudes

and preferences, and the use of qualitative research is considered to be a strength of this study. “Qualitative research involves several different methods of data collection, such as focus groups, field observation, in-depth interviews and case studies” (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 48), and each technique allows the researcher to better understand the data collected. Qualitative research offers certain advantages in media-related research because qualitative techniques “can increase a researcher’s depth of understanding of the phenomenon under investigation” and allow the researcher the flexibility to delve into new areas of interest while conducting the research, unlike survey [quantitative] methodology (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000, p. 48). Furthermore, Krueger & Casey (2000) state that focus groups are a good qualitative methodology for aid in decision making, product or program development, quality improvement, and understanding audience attitudes and customer satisfaction. Hence, this study’s use of focus groups helped the researcher explore the depth and breadth of participant attitudes and opinions regarding the content of the magazine and their propensity to give monetarily to the College based on the content.

The major weakness of this study is that the data collected from three focus groups cannot be extrapolated to the general public or to other university publications because the sample size was small compared to the size of the overall Arts and Sciences alumni population of 30,098. Wimmer and Dominick (2000) reinforce this weakness, stating one disadvantage of qualitative research is that “sample sizes are

usually too small to allow the researcher to generalize the data beyond the sample selected for the particular study” (p. 48). However, measures were taken in this study, through purposive sampling, to balance the representation of participants in the focus groups by selecting participants from different years of graduation, different degrees within the College, and different locations.

Another weakness of this study is the over-recruitment of participants in each of the three focus groups. One group consisted of 12 participants; two groups consisted of 11 participants. This is an acceptable number of participants, according to focus group experts Krueger & Casey (2000), Morgan (1998) and Greenbaum (2000), who believe focus groups should consist of no less than five people and no more than 12 people. However, the sheer number of participants may have contributed to participants’ incomplete or short answers on some of the questions.

Conclusions

The focus group data can be summarized as follows:

- After reading the magazine, the majority of participants did not know or understand the mission of the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Magazine content was generally described as uninteresting, and participants felt it contained too many articles regarding research and too few articles regarding departmental news and the arts.
- Participants requested more in-depth articles focusing on students and alumni.

- Participants suggested making the annual publication a semi-annual publication to include more current College news, stating that the “Fall 2001” dateline on the front cover of the magazine was misleading and conveyed images of a semi-annual or quarterly magazine. Therefore, participants suggested more than one publication per calendar year.
- Participants suggested adding a yearly calendar of events for the College of Arts and Sciences.
- Participants recommended adding a “suggestions and comments” section to allow alumni two-way communication with the College.
- Participants expressed their willingness to give monetary contributions to their departments but felt specific departmental needs must be reported in the magazine.
- Participants expressed concerns regarding giving monetary contributions to the College on an unrestricted basis and felt the College and its publication should include an annual report regarding how the College distributed funds to each department.

Recommendations

This research was conducted to help editors of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine understand their audience and its preferences regarding the content of the publication, as well as how the content of the magazine could inspire

readers to contribute monetarily to the College. The magazine's purpose, according to the Arts and Sciences June 2001 communication plan, is to act as a communication tool between the College of Arts and Sciences and its alumni. One of the main goals of the communication plan is to increase monetary contributions to the College. Hence, it is important that the readers understand the content of the publication and come to rely on the publication for Arts and Sciences information, especially information regarding the financial needs of the College and its departments. Bartolomero (1986) stated that the purpose of an alumni publication is to maintain and enhance relationships to create favorable readership attitudes toward the institution. Therefore, the College must understand what kind of information readers want in the magazine.

The following recommendations are based on data gleaned from the three focus groups.

Change the June 2001 Communication Plan goals

The current goals of the College's Communication Plan are unrealistic. The number one goal is to secure unrestricted funding for the College. The number two goal is to communicate effectively with alumni. Unfortunately, focus group participants reported they would not give unrestricted funding to the College and they would not read the current content of the magazine. However, participants said they would give to their respective departments if there was a financial need listed in the

magazine. Therefore, the College should change the magazine content to include more departmental and fund-raising news and information. The College should also consider developing a communication plan involving departmental fund-raising. Shadoian (1989) found that alumni giving was the single best indicator of how alumni feel about their institution. Martin (1993) found that alumni and donor support represent an important source of institutional funding that can become a regular part of the institution's revenue.

State the mission of the College

State the mission of the College in each issue of the magazine to enhance the readership's understanding of the goals and plans of the College. The ultimate worth of an alumni magazine goes beyond the tangible by affirming the sponsoring university's ideas, financial needs and future plans (Lott, 2001). Include articles regarding how the College has worked to accomplish its mission in each issue of the magazine. The Dean's letter and the Development Director's comments should also include information regarding how the College is moving toward its mission, which goals it has accomplished and which goals have yet to be achieved. The articles should address how the College plans to achieve future goals. Finally, the Dean or the Development Director should include an article regarding the amount of funding raised by the College each fiscal year and how that money was used to further the goals of the College and the departments within the College.

Balance the news

Balance the articles in the magazine between research and arts, maybe by dividing the magazine into two sections: science and art. This would allow for more departmental news from each area of discipline within the College. If there is at least one article that spurs the interest of each reader, readers are more apt to become dependent on the magazine as a source of news and information for the College, and a media dependency begins to develop, which furthers the College's communication goals. In this study, the College of Arts & Sciences Magazine is the linking force of communication between alumni and the College. Hopefully, repeated exposure to the publication will result in a media dependency. Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur (1976) described a media system dependency as:

The extent to which attainment of an individual's, group's, organization's, or system's goals is contingent upon access to the information resources of the media system, relative to the extent to which attainment of media system goals is contingent upon the resources controlled by individuals, groups, organizations or systems, respectively. (p. 250).

The OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine is the primary vehicle of information for Arts and Sciences alumni. The absence of alternative forms of information might also increase alumni media dependency. Rubin and Rubin (1985) stated:

The more an individual comes to rely on a single communication channel, the greater the predictability of the outcome of communication, and the more alternative informational sources available...the less likely the individual is to be dependent on a specific channel of information (p. 39).

Skumanich & Kintsfather (1998) stated the media system dependency is the extent to which the resources are perceived by an individual as helpful in attaining certain informational goals and in responding to the needs and the wants of the audience. Therefore, if the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine meets the needs, wants and informational goals of its readers, it can be presumed that a media dependency will develop between the readers and the publication.

Include more interesting student articles

Write more articles about students at OSU, including articles about student accomplishments and student struggles. Fleming (2000) and Moore (1992) had similar findings. Spend more time on the creativity of the articles to enhance the readership opinions regarding the quality of the stories. Many alumni feel that current student stories are nothing more than a press release from the Office of Public Information at OSU, rather than informative articles capturing the true essence of the student's life. Include more personal information about the student's life by listing personal facts, such as hometown, extra-curricular college activities and future aspirations.

Include more interesting alumni articles

Include more articles about alumni, including articles regarding how alumni have used their education to further their careers and contribute to their jobs, communities and OSU. Fleming (2000) also recommended adding more alumni stories in his study. Articles should be written from an alumni perspective and include alumni from several different eras at OSU. This will enhance the reader's interest and will allow more readers to feel connected to the magazine because they will relate to alumni stories within their own era.

Make communication two-way

Include a section in the magazine for alumni comments and suggestions to make communication between the College and its alumni more effective and two-way instead of just messenger and receiver. Parsons & Wethington (1996) found that regular communication between an institution and its donors is ultimately the single most important factor in securing a media dependency with readers and donors. Editors should use the suggestions to improve the quality of the magazine. A section containing "letters to the editor" could be included. The magazine also needs to create a way for alumni to update their personal information, including career, home and e-mail information. The alumni lists used in this research did not have accurate or up-to-date e-mail addresses. With updated information, the College may be able to expand its use of online communication.

State financial needs of departments within the College

Write about the financial needs of each department to give donors an opportunity to contribute as they see fit. Pearson (1999) found that universities must specify financial goals to be successful in their fund-raising endeavors. Securing donations, whether departmental or unrestricted, is a major goal of the College of Arts and Sciences, according to their new June 2001 Communication Plan. Currently, articles about gifts to the College are often regarded by readers as uninteresting and as a “payment” to the donor in return for a monetary gift. Fleming’s (2000) study found OSU Magazine readership preferred less contribution stories.

Perhaps the College could give each department the opportunity to write an article about its most pressing needs, such as equipment, scholarships or the need for more faculty positions. Participants commented that they feel they cannot make a difference as an individual, but when participating in a campaign where their money is added to other donor’s money, they feel their contribution makes more of an impact.

Include more departmental news

Results presented here indicate that the College should increase the size of the magazine to include more departmental news from each of the 22 Arts and Sciences departments. Moore (1992) had similar findings. His study found that readers of the OSU Magazine preferred an increased number of diverse stories. Adding more stories

about departmental news will increase the production cost of the magazine.

Therefore, to make this change financially feasible, the College should consider changing the stock of the publication's paper to a less expensive grade. This will allow for more pages to be added and to allow for the increase in postage.

State how funds secured by College have been used

It is recommended that the Dean or Development Director write an article stating how the funds raised by the College have been distributed during the year. Many focus group participants said they would consider giving monetarily to the College if the magazine listed how funds were used, along with the specific needs of the College. Andrews (1953) found that financial giving was related to a donor's knowledge of financial needs. Pearson (1999) stated fund-raising messages should specify goals and ask for support.

Also, perhaps the magazine could include a list of names of donors to the College in the Dean and Development Director's section of the magazine, regardless of whether the donations stemmed from departmental gifts or unrestricted Arts and Sciences gifts. A list of names would satisfy the donor's need for recognition and the College's need to recognize its contributors.

Make headlines more descriptive

Regarding layout, article titles and headlines should be more descriptive to give the reader a sense of the story. Not all readers will read every article, but a good

headline can improve the reader's ability to understand what is going on within the College of Arts and Sciences.

Further Research

Alumni magazine readership is diverse and changes each year because of the addition of new alumni from each graduating class. Stratton and Angerosa (1995) suggest that readership surveys should be conducted every two years to keep up with changes in readership demographics and preferences regarding informational needs. Moore (1992) suggested the need for regular readership surveys, such as every five years, to keep pace with changes in readership. Fleming (2000) concurred that readership surveys should be conducted periodically and suggested conducting readership demographic and preference surveys every five to eight years.

Based on the information gleaned from this research and the fact that the College of Arts & Sciences Magazine is a new communication publication, readership surveys for this publication are needed on a regular basis, such as every two years, to access the readership's opinions and preferences regarding magazine content. This will help the magazine's editor provide useful content to alumni and to increase the readership's media dependence on the publication because individuals will selectively expose themselves to this medium to find information about the College of Arts and Sciences. Individuals who become dependent upon a certain medium, such as the College of Arts & Sciences Magazine, will selectively expose themselves to the

magazine, which will increase the chance for messages from the College to have more effects on the audience (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976). This may also help the College reach its goal of securing more funding from its alumni base.

Periodic research should also be conducted regarding audience preferences of an online version of the magazine. At this time, participants suggest the magazine would not be a useful online communication tool. Fleming (2000) found similar results in his study.

However, once the content of the magazine matches its audience's preferences and captivates readers to look and read upcoming issues, readers may be willing to access the publication online, which will save printing and postage costs, as well as satisfy the interests and information needs of Arts and Sciences alumni.

Conclusion

Magazines should strive to provide some type of original information to make readers reliant on the magazine for certain types of information, in this case news about the College of Arts and Sciences. The only way for a magazine to create a niche and a loyal following is to understand its readers and deliver news and information that cannot be found in any other area of the media. Creating a media dependency between the readers of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine and the publication will help the College achieve its new communication goals and will contribute to the future success of the College's fund-raising goals.

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55. Utter, D., Noble, C. & Brady, M. (1999). Investing in the future: Transforming current students into generous alumni. A study by Boston College. Fund Raising Management, 30(9), 31-36.
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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FIRST E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE TO POTENTIAL FOCUS GROUP
PARTICIPANTS

Dear OSU alumni:

I am writing to OSU College of Arts and Sciences graduates to ask for your help. I am a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Broadcasting at OSU-Stillwater, and I'm currently working on my thesis. My thesis focus is effective alumni communication.

I am writing to ask for your participation in a focus group I am conducting in Oklahoma City on Saturday, February 9, 2002 from 9:00 - 10:30 a.m. at the OSU-OKC campus. This study will examine your opinions and attitudes regarding the new College of Arts & Sciences alumni magazine.

Would you consider participating in this study? Your participation in this research will benefit all alumni in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Whatever you decide, please contact me by e-mail (ginaj noble@aol.com) or by phone at (405) 624-3980.

I sincerely appreciate your consideration! Go Pokes!

Gina J. Noble

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT E-MAIL CONFIRMATION
2ND E-MAIL CORRESPONDENCE

[date]

Name of participant

Address

City, State and zip

Dear [name of participant]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the OSU Alumni Communication Focus Group on Saturday, (date), 2002 at the (location) campus in Room (?) of the (building location).

The focus group will begin promptly at 9 a.m. and will end no later than 10:30 a.m. Refreshments will be provided.

Enclosed you will find a copy of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences Magazine. Please review the content prior to the meeting.

Your participation is sincerely appreciated and very valuable to my thesis research, as well as to the College of Arts and Sciences. If you have any questions, please contact me at (405) 624-3980.

See you on (date) at 9 a.m.

Sincerely,

Gina J. Noble

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT CONFIRMATION LETTER

[DATE]

PARTICIPANT NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

Dear [NAME]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my OSU Arts & Sciences Alumni Communication focus group this Saturday, [DATE], at 9 a.m. Enclosed please find a copy of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences Magazine. Please review the content of the magazine prior to our meeting. I will be asking your opinions and preferences regarding the content of the magazine.

The focus group will be held on the OSU campus in the [Building], Room []. Dress is casual. Please arrive 10 minutes early to register and get comfortable. We will begin promptly at 9 a.m. and should be finished no later than 10:30 a.m. Refreshments will be served.

Your participation is very much appreciated. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at ginaj noble@aol.com or call me at (405) 624-3980.

I look forward to meeting you on February [DATE]! Thanks again!

Sincerely,

Gina J. Noble,
School of Journalism & Broadcasting graduate student

APPENDIX D

FINAL E-MAIL REMINDER TO PARTICIPANTS

Dear (participant name):

Just a reminder that the OSU-(City) focus group regarding effective alumni communication begins at 9 a.m. this Saturday! We will meet in Room (?) in the (building) on the OSU-(City) campus. Refreshments will be served and dress in casual. You should have received a copy of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences Magazine. Please remember to review its content prior to our meeting.

I look forward to meeting you this Saturday, and I sincerely appreciate your consideration!

See you on Saturday! Go Pokes!

Gina J. Noble

APPENDIX E

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

FOCUS GROUP CONSENT FORM

I, (_____), hereby authorize or direct Gina J. Noble to conduct a focus group to investigate publication content considerations of the OSU College of Arts & Sciences Magazine. This is done as part of an investigation titled: *A Focus Group Study Regarding effective alumni communication of the College of Arts & Sciences: Opinions and perceptions of A&S alumni*.

This study is being conducted by a graduate student in mass communications as a thesis requirement for a master's degree, which will be formally published and available in the OSU Edmon Low Library. This research will observe and collect opinions concerning publication content of the Fall 2001 issue of the magazine. For those who produce this publication, this research will provide a more accurate and objective look at content issues of the magazine. Research data for this focus group will be collected by audiotaping participants in a closed, reasonably secure environment. The focus group will be conducted by Gina J. Noble. Gina will follow a written outline of questions. Audio and transcription notes will be kept under lock. Your name will never be mentioned on the tape and no person other than the moderator will hear or review the tape. The tape will be destroyed after the session has been transcribed to paper.

The only discomfort you might incur during this focus group is the time you volunteer to participate, which is anticipated to last about an hour. This signed consent form will be the only record of your attendance at this focus group. There will be no attempt to connect opinions or responses with any individual. At the end of the focus group, you will be asked to complete a short, anonymous, demographic questionnaire. I understand that participation is strictly voluntary, that there is no penalty for refusal to participate, and that I am free to withdraw my consent and participation in this project at any time without penalty after notifying the project director.

I may contact Gina J. Noble at (405) 624-3980 or at the School of Journalism & Broadcasting, Oklahoma State University, Paul Miller Building, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078-8031; (405) 744-6354; ginajnoble@aol.com. I may also contact Sharon Bacher, Institutional Review Board Executive Secretary at 203 Whitehurst, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK 74078-1020; (405) 744-5700.

I have read and fully understand this form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Signature of Subject

Date and Time

Person authorized to sign for subject, if required

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Project Director or authorized representative

APPENDIX F
MODERATOR QUESTION OUTLINE

MODERATOR OUTLINE FOR QUESTIONS

- In your opinion, what is the main message of this magazine?
- After reading the magazine, do you understand the mission of the College of Arts & Sciences?
- After reading the magazine, do you feel more connected to the College of Arts & Sciences at OSU Stillwater?
- After reading the magazine, do you feel like you know what is going on within the College of Arts & Sciences at OSU in Stillwater? How about the departments?
- Using an adjective or several adjectives, describe how you feel about the content of the magazine.
- What section of the magazine did you turn to first?
- What section, if any, did you not read? Why
- What section was most enjoyable?
- Do you find any news about your department in the magazine?
- Do you think it is important to see news about every College of Arts & Sciences department?
- Did you consider any articles too long or too short? If so, which ones?
- What kind of stories would you like to see more of?
- What kind of stories would you like to see less of?
- Do you have any suggestions for improving the content of the magazine?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to donate to the College of Arts & Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel more inclined to give to your department within the College?
- After reading this magazine, what articles, if any, inspired you to donate?
- After reading this magazine, would you make an unrestricted gift (not designated to a specific department of fund within the College) to the College of Arts & Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, would you make a restricted (designated gift) to a department within the College?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel like you were asked to donate to the College of Arts & Sciences?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel you understand the different financial needs of the College? Of different College departments?
- After reading this magazine, do you feel that the magazine sufficiently describes how contributions are being used by the College?

APPENDIX G

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

12. If "Yes", how much would you be willing to pay?
- | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Less than \$1 | \$1.00 | \$2.00 | \$3.00 | More than \$3.00 |
|---------------|--------|--------|--------|------------------|
13. Do you use or have access to a personal computer? Yes No
14. Do you have access to the World Wide Web? Yes No
15. Have you ever contributed monetarily to a department within OSU? (i.e. journalism, psych, etc.) Yes No
- If so, which department? _____
16. Have you ever contributed monetarily to the OSU Foundation? Yes No
17. Have you ever contributed to the College of Arts & Sciences? Yes No
18. After reading your copy of OSU College of Arts & Sciences magazine, are you more likely to contribute monetarily to the College of Arts & Sciences? Yes No
19. Tell me why you donate to OSU?
- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| Because I receive a magazine from OSU..... | Yes | No |
| Because I receive an appeal letter asking for an unrestricted donation | Yes | No |
| Because I feel a sense of loyalty to OSU..... | Yes | No |
| Because I need a tax break..... | Yes | No |
| Because someone asks me personally..... | Yes | No |
| Because I receive an appeal stating a specific need..... | Yes | No |

*You are finished. Thanks for your time and effort.
Please return this form to Gina Noble.*

APPENDIX H

FOCUS GROUP TRANSCRIPTION

Tulsa Focus Group

MODERATOR – IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THIS MAGAZINE IS?

I think the main message is that OSU Arts & Science grads are successful in what they do.

I think that its, the point is promoting its accomplishments and that its kind of making the point that these accomplishments are in every aspect of the world, I mean, We've got science, we've got arts, we've got, you know, all kinds of different research, we've got variety. It covers a lot of ground.

Diversity.

Yes, that sums it up. Diversity.

I'd like to see an article about anyone of the schools that appear in Arts and Sciences. I'd like to see an article about them.

I felt like one of the main focuses was research. A lot of research.

Very detailed research. I mean I thought the articles were very thorough about exactly what they're doing and exactly how its going to influence you and impact this and the studies were very specific, I thought.

It seems to me there's more emphasis on science rather than the other, arts, by just a little bit.

I would agree with that.

Yes, I would, too.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU KNOW THE MISSION OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES?

Specifically, no, it [the mission] didn't jump out at me that it's written in here.

I think the way it's done it appears there are missions.

And I think that in lieu of your earlier statement, too, because its mostly focused on sciences, it would tend to lead the fact that that's where their aim is, as opposed to arts.

And I think that is a perception that a lot of people have of OSU, in that it's more technology oriented rather than, say, liberal arts oriented.

More technology oriented.

They never list the mission, do they?

Good question, I don't see it.

What is the mission? (laughter)

That's a very good question. You would think since this is obviously a fundraising publication, or close to it, that they would list the mission of why they want our money and how they will use it.

The mission seems to be research, but I don't recall them saying that.

I never thought about it, but I think, now that you mention it, a mission is important to let the alumni know where the College is headed, you know?

Perhaps its technology and research because there's more money to be gotten from grants, etc. There's more money in the sciences up for grabs.

I agree.

I haven't heard of many grants for English composition.

Well, maybe that's why, I mean kind of generally I would think, the feeling I get from their mission is, this is where your money's going, see what we're doing here, and it's really legit.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THE MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT’S GOING ON AT OSU TODAY?

Definitely, I know a lot more about research.

Yes, I know more about some aspects of the College, but not many. I know more about research, but I know there are more departments than just research. So in a way, I guess I’ll change my answer to no, I don’t know much more, just some. (laughter)

Yea, I know a little more about research, but I’d say overall, I don’t know much about the College.

No, other than research.

Not unless it’s scientific. Boring.

It’s very interesting what’s going on, but I know that the College is the largest on campus, so they’ve got a lot going on. Is this it? If so, I’m sad. If not, why didn’t they mention the other stuff?

Well, I was impressed by the things that are happening are going to affect the nation. I mean, these just aren’t some Stillwater or Oklahoma things, it’s huge and I was like, oh, this is our school. You know, the Genome article, I was like, wow, I’m proud.

Yea, Yea, I felt the same, and again, I felt like there are undoubtedly accomplishments on the arts side as well, I’m wondering what those were.

I agree. While I feel more informed about research, there’s a lot of other areas to be mentioned. They probably feel cheated. I know I would. I didn’t see my department and I’m wondering why.

No, not necessarily more informed, maybe updated on research is a good way to put it.

I’ll agree. I’m impressed with the research but I swear I’ve read this stuff, or some of these articles, before now.

MODERATOR –AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO OSU?

Hum, no. I didn’t see anything that reminded me of my years at OSU. I didn’t see any friends and I didn’t see my department.

No, my department and my fellow classmates make me feel connected. I saw nothing on them or my department.

Yes and no. I read about people that I don’t even know, so I’m fascinated by what’s going on.

But again, this is more, I mean I’m coming from the arts side, I’m not, I don’t know too much of what’s going on really too much with what I was experiencing when I was at OSU.

As I mentioned before, I don’t use my arts degree and this doesn’t hit home for me and for my career choices.

Me either. If you don’t recognize something when you’re reading the magazine, like a familiar face, a familiar class or at least your department, how can you feel connected. But I do feel informed, if that counts.

Me, too. I’m informed about some of the things going on, but I didn’t feel connected.

My experience is only in the graduate college, so, though I was in Arts and Sciences in graduate school, and I don’t know anything about any of these programs, and though I know previous magazines have focused on where I did my graduate work, but I think its good to know all these things, it’s just things I’ve never had any experience with, and little interest in.

It’s sort of like, I guess we kind of look for things we identify with.

Yea, Yea. I feel connected because I know someone in the magazine, but that doesn't happen very often, so if that's what it takes to make me feel connected, than I'll probably never feel connected again.

Whether it's our particular degree or whatever, seeing something you're familiar with makes you feel nostalgic and more connected. I didn't see anything about anyone I knew or anything about my degree or my department.

I think it might be important over the course of the year to make sure every department generally gets mentioned, or people are going to go, they don't care about my degree.

Well, I feel like this is just a semester by semester publication, I mean. Is this?

I think it should come out three or four times a year. (laughter)

Well, I thought it had a lot of really concentrated comments and I thought, this might be really hard to maintain and then I saw the word "fall" and thought it was quarterly, which I thought was pretty good. On the connected questions, I've always wondered about the demographics of the alumni, like where we're spread out in the nation, where we might be in the world, I don't know if you have way to display that, you know, U.S., here's people in Canada, and where the concentration is in Oklahoma.

Well, that would interest all of us, not just Arts and Sciences because you would see the whole national perspective.

Yea, I don't think "connected" is a word I would use. I feel more informed about Arts and Sciences now at Oklahoma State, and I have more a sense of pride that we are evolved nationally, not just regionally, but as far as "connected", I don't feel I've re-bonded with Oklahoma State through this magazine, but I do have a sense of pride now for my alma mater that we are doing so many good things.

I agree with that. I don't know how you could make me feel connected.

They could give us information to brag about at work, but not necessarily make me feel touched.

That's what I thought, I'm going to take this to work and put it on my desk.

Well, I think, I mean, I was a Arts and Sciences student for four years and I graduate student for two years and when I think of OSU, I don't necessarily think, oh, I'm an Arts and Sciences grad.

Does anyone ever feel bonded to a given college? They feel bonded to their departments.

Yes.

I definitely agree.

No doubt that's true. We think of our departments, not our colleges, don't we?

MODERATOR - WHAT WAS YOUR OVERALL OPINION OF THE CONTENT OF THE MAGAZINE, USING ADJECTIVES TO DESCRIBE YOUR OPINION:

I thought it was very interesting, although I thought some articles were more interesting than others, which is probably true of everybody.

It was pretty dry.

I'll agree with dry.

Me, too. Not interesting. Maybe boring is a good adjective.

Yes, I'll agree with boring.

Dry.

A lot of these articles are of a scientific nature kind of difficult to make them interesting.

Frosty the Friend article was OK, but in general, I'd describe it as interest-free (laughter).

The first person stories are very nice because they are a lot easier to draw people in. Scientific articles are harder to draw people in.

The articles are topical, but hard to be interested in. Although you probably wouldn't have trouble finding readers for the bio-terrorism article, the Frosty the Friend and Fan Girl, you know, kind of lightens

things up a little bit. But you can't do that all the time and tell people what's going on in Arts and Sciences. I mean, a lot of the stuff they do is kind of boring. But it needs to be told. Maybe with better writing.

I'll agree. I thought it was boring.

I think it makes it more interesting if you can relate to the stories. Someone I know is working on Indian culture, so that was more interesting.

Do we have 5 or 6 specific schools?

No, there's a bunch of schools. Probably more than 20.

The reason I asked is because there are only 5 articles here. Why wouldn't they represent all schools if it's only an annual publication?

I think its interesting that we have so many s for you (talking to the MODERATOR). In other words, Arts and Sciences has not explained itself very well because we don't know much about them, like how many schools they have, how many times the magazine comes out.

As a publication, it doesn't seem to answer much about the Arts and Sciences College.

This goes back to the whole problem of once a year publication, they need to make it bigger or make it more often to cover the scope.

MODERATOR - WHAT ARTICLE DID YOU TURN TO FIRST?

I started with keepsakes of the heart because it was the first article. No other reason.

I started at the first because I knew I had to read the whole thing.

I read the titles first, then came back and read the Genome article.

I read the Genome article first, then keepsakes. I read Genome because I have interest in that area.

I read the alumni profiles and "Preparations for life" because they seemed like they would be the most interesting.

I went through it first and looked for alumni, then I read about the alumni, but the articles were kind of boring.

The picture of the family caught my eye. I read about alumni, first, too.

I think in terms of interest, I spent more time in the alumni section. I would agree.

I always look at the content page first and try to notice if there's any article to which I am related in terms of careers.

I read the "Making history" article on Raymond Estep, and I look for articles with white space, I know that's kind of silly, but if they're really busy, I'll think to myself, I'll read it later because I don't have time, or that's going to take me more time to read. Personally, I like the alumni features. Visually, I like pictures.

MODERATOR – WHAT ARTICLE DID YOU MOST ENJOY?

I liked page 25 [Wentz funding] because I'm theater. Therefore, it was my favorite.

I liked the alumni profiles because there's always a curiosity of do I know this person, or is that a connection that I want to maintain, should I contact this person?

I kind of turned my brain off and went straight to the center section and read about Frosty Friend and Fan Girl, those were my two favorites.

Mine was the alumni profiles also because you can relate to people that were also at OSU, but I wish they had more articles, especially about people in my era. It would be cool to see someone I know.

I liked the Center section, Frosty Friend and Fan Girl, best, because they were about students.

I liked the alumni profiles and page 9 because I saw one of my old professors, so it made me read it.

I liked the attracting talent article because it was about a student. I like student articles.

I liked the Genome article, only because it sort of relates to my interests and I think it's the one that's most important internationally.

I went to the "Genome" article first because it's a hot topic, but I most enjoyed the "Frosty" article and "Fangirl" article.

I enjoyed the alumni profiles and Fan Girl, because they were about students, former or current, but the articles could be more impressive and there should be more student articles.

Just to stir up a little controversy, I didn't particularly care for the "Frosty" article or "Fangirl," and I didn't like his drawings. I enjoyed the endowment article and the "attracting talent" piano performance piece because that's in my field and it's about students.

MODERATOR – DID YOU FIND ANY NEWS ABOUT YOUR DEPARTMENT IN THE MAGAZINE?

Yes, I was thrilled. I'm a music major. But I didn't think the story was that interesting, but at least they mentioned it.

No, my department wasn't in there.

No.

No.

No, I didn't see one mention of my department.

My department was eliminated. It was humanities.

No.

I don't recall seeing my department, but I was pretty bored by the end.

My department was not mentioned.

Yes, I'm aerospace studies.

No, my department is Journalism and it wasn't mentioned.

Same with me, Journalism, and I didn't see anything.

No.

MODERATOR – DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO SEE NEWS ABOUT EVERY DEPARTMENT IN AN ANNUAL MAGAZINE?

Yes, especially in an annual magazine. How else do you spread the word?

Yes, every department should have some recognition, good or bad. Tell us something.

Yes, I agree departments should be represented.

Also, if a department doesn't have enough money or whatever to make a newsletter, isn't the College of A&S its voice to alumni?

I agree. The College is supposed to represent its departments, even in a small blurb, something should be said about each department, especially when this magazine lists all the departments it represents on the back inside cover.

I agree. Say something about each department, no matter how small.

Departments should be represented.

I agree. Without seeing something familiar, it's hard to get in to the magazine.

I agree. We need some familiarity, especially because I never related myself as an “arts and sciences” person, you know.

Yes, I agree. Mention something worth mentioning. Every department has something to say or report.

I agree. Report something on each department to at least involve everyone in some way. Arts and Sciences is broad and the differences between the majors are great. Bring us together by telling a little about each department.

MODERATOR – WHAT KIND OF STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

I don't have an opinion, they've got a variety, and I would say if some department is omitted, I would have to conclude that those departments are not excelling as much as those departments mentioned in the magazine. Is this true?

Well, it seems like there's a concentration of, you know, scholarships and award articles, which is always interesting, although it would be nice to know about the other departments, like I said, it would be nice to have a short article about every department in the college.

I agree. Every department should be represented. An update of some kind, or briefs, or who's who, or awards.

I agree, or if they could do two issues, mention each department at least once per year, per school year.

I think it would be better served having a couple of large articles about big deals, like Rhodes scholars, but the shorter articles could cover the gamete of Arts and Sciences, so that everybody can find something to read, but they also get the highlights of the top stuff.

A calendar of events so we'll know what's happening.

I agree. Also, each department.

I agree with a calendar of events and alumni stuff.

I agree with a couple of pages for each department.

What I would like to see is a different layout. All the science articles end up in the front and the arts articles seem to be pushed to the back, as if they're not as important. It needs to be a mix or the front half needs to be one and the other half needs to be the other.

I like the idea of seeing something about everything in the school, within reason, but I understand budget and space. I also want to know more about current students.

I would like more current student information, also.

Current student's stories would be interesting.

I think they should have an article asking others to submit ideas and articles.

Yes, I agree.

Right now, there is nothing for suggestions. Also, if you look in the front, you can see the College of A&S publishes the magazine, but the first name in a development person, which tells you right away they want money and they're not as interested in each department. If they want money, they should also want suggestions.

They should always have somewhere that asks for suggestions, or where we are now, or submitted articles.

Maybe they don't want to know.

It seems like they don't, doesn't it.

They know what they want to put in this publication already.

Yea, but if they're targeting alumni, alumni should have a right to correspond and update the College, right?

If they have a section on alumni, why don't they ask for other alumni to respond? Where do they get their ideas?

From the development director or from the money! (laughter)

From the dean (laughter)

There should be a questions and comments contact information box, at least.

For any publication to be successful, they must know their audience, and in this publication, it doesn't seem that they care to know their audience.

I saw the Sr. Director of Development of the first page and it turned me off. I thought, this is for fundraising, it's a way to get my money.

Well, let's just be candid about this, that's the purpose of this magazine, is to raise money.

It is, but I don't feel connected when they don't ask for my opinions.

They need to reach out more to alumni.

I didn't even see a "send donations" article or blurb or box.

Neither did I.

MODERATOR — WHAT WAS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE ARTICLE? WHAT STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LEAST OF?

Well, I didn't like the math article because I don't like math.

I didn't like the story about the chemist – too boring. That first word in the headline "chemist" makes me not want to read it.

Boone Pickens. Haven't we seen enough on him, or is it that he contributes a bunch of money and they have to mention him.

From "Frogs to coral reefs" was really boring.

I agree – "Frogs" was boring.

I wouldn't say there's one in particular, but when they put a bunch of names in paragraphs, then it means nothing.

I think some of the longer ones. I just found myself wanting to get the idea more quickly so I could move on. Some of the longer articles, like frogs and "OSU-Arkansas" just seemed to get longer and I lost interest.

They need sub-heads to give us an idea and get to the point. I can briefly read and still get the concept. In other words, let us skim.

Let them put the longer articles in a departmental newsletter or something, then the people who are reading it are more interested.

I agree.

I disagree. If one of the goals of the publication is to encourage support from the alumni, so if you only get a certain college information, you're not really getting the full picture of the university.

I think they should do a summary in this type of magazine, and more in-depth articles in departmental newsletters.

I agree.

I go through and look for my departmental news, or something about my department. When I don't see it, I lose interest.

Maybe they should have a short article from each school.

I definitely agree.

I second that.

I agree, also.

Just give us a brief.

My least favorite was Dean John Dobson's article, his obligatory letter that takes up the front cover. That's so wasteful.

They put him on the inside cover where there is color, don't give him full color, no one is going to read that anyway.

Yea.

I agree.

Why would they give their table of content color, and then include a bunch of pictures in black and white. Where's the priority? Better way to save money.

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I definitely agree.

I second that.

I agree, also.

Just give us a brief.

My least favorite was Dean John Dobson's article, his obligatory letter that takes up the front cover. That's so wasteful.

They put him on the inside cover where there is color, don't give him full color, no one is going to read that anyway.

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They know what they want to put in this publication already.

Yea, but if they're targeting alumni, alumni should have a right to correspond and update the College, right?

If they have a section on alumni, why don't they ask for other alumni to respond? Where do they get their ideas?

From the development director or from the money! (laughter)

From the dean (laughter)

There should be a questions and comments contact information box, at least.

For any publication to be successful, they must know their audience, and in this publication, it doesn't seem that they care to know their audience.

I saw the Sr. Director of Development of the first page and it turned me off. I thought, this is for fundraising, it's a way to get my money.

Well, let's just be candid about this, that's the purpose of this magazine, is to raise money.

It is, but I don't feel connected when they don't ask for my opinions.

They need to reach out more to alumni.

I didn't even see a "send donations" article or blurb or box.

Neither did I.

MODERATOR — WHAT WAS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE ARTICLE? WHAT STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LEAST OF?

Well, I didn't like the math article because I don't like math.

I didn't like the story about the chemist – too boring. That first word in the headline "chemist" makes me not want to read it.

Boone Pickens. Haven't we seen enough on him, or is it that he contributes a bunch of money and they have to mention him.

From "Frogs to coral reefs" was really boring.

I agree – "Frogs" was boring.

I wouldn't say there's one in particular, but when they put a bunch of names in paragraphs, then it means nothing.

I think some of the longer ones. I just found myself wanting to get the idea more quickly so I could move on. Some of the longer articles, like frogs and "OSU-Arkansas" just seemed to get longer and I lost interest.

They need sub-heads to give us an idea and get to the point. I can briefly read and still get the concept. In other words, let us skim.

Let them put the longer articles in a departmental newsletter or something, then the people who are reading it are more interested.

I agree.

I disagree. If one of the goals of the publication is to encourage support from the alumni, so if you only get a certain college information, you're not really getting the full picture of the university.

I think they should do a summary in this type of magazine, and more in-depth articles in departmental newsletters.

I agree.

I go through and look for my departmental news, or something about my department. When I don't see it, I lose interest.

Maybe they should have a short article from each school.

I definitely agree.

I second that.

I agree, also.

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Maybe I'm stepping out of line here, but they need to improve the photography. Use more pictures and less words. Pictures tell as story. Also, I agree about more student and alumni stories. And each department should at least be mentioned.

I would have to agree with almost every comment made. Shorten the stories. Use more interesting alumni and students in the stories. Tell us what financial needs have arisen over the year, then maybe follow up with a phone call to ask us to help. Or, have an insert in the magazine that we can send in with our contribution. But they must remember to inspire us, not just give us a bunch of mediocre articles, we'll never be inspired.

MODERATOR – IF THIS MAGAZINE WERE AVAILABLE ONLINE, WOULD YOU PREFER TO READ IT ONLINE OR IN HARD COPY FORM?

I would never read it online.

The articles are too long; it would take too long to print.

Hard copy.

Hard copy.

I agree with hard copy.

This is something I may want to keep, or may have to read it in increments.

I would never read it online.

Hard copy.

I would put it on my desk or in my office and read it at my leisure.

Hard copy.

It's not to say they shouldn't have a link, but hard copy.

They need to integrate their Web site and this magazine.

They could cut the length of the articles in the hard copy and say "see more" on our Web site, so if you wanted to find out more about an article, like more depth, you could access the Web site.

That way they could put more in the magazine for each department, and expand more on their Web site.

That's a good point.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE INCLINED TO DONATE MONETARILY TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, BASED ON WHAT YOU READ, OR THE CONTENT?

Having read this, yes, I would be more inclined to donate if I had the money to give away.

Yes, probably, but I would need to know more information on the needs.

No, I can't say I would. No reason.

No, and I donate and have for years, but there is nothing in here to persuade me to donate. It wouldn't make a difference.

I would donate but it would be earmarked to my department, not the College of Arts and Sciences.

I agree. If my department were mentioned in an article or something, stating why they needed extra funding, I might be inclined to donate.

Yes, I agree. Show me a need in an article or just a few lines, and maybe give me a link to explore the matter further, and I might donate.

It would have to go to my department to donate because from what I can tell, there's no accounting shown as to how the donations are given to each school within the College, and that's important.

It wouldn't change my mind to donate either way, but I'd be more inclined to donate to my department if I saw it in here. But I would also like to see where the money they have raised is going.

No, I wouldn't donate to the College of A&S without good reason, and the only reason I can think would be a good reason would be because of my department or something like that.

I would be more inclined to think about donating, but this would not make me donate.

I agree with the last comment. There were no articles asking for specific funding, and there is no accounting for where the money they have raised is going, other than maybe research.

If and when I donate, which is not too often, may I specify that my money would only go to something or someone in need, not the College, but a campaign or something, or to my department.

Special or specific funding needs would have to be listed to get me to donate.

You see, if they want to get people to donate who are not already donating, this wouldn't work. I donate to two departments, Sociology and Athletics.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE INCLINED TO DONATE TO YOUR DEPARTMENT?

No, because I did not see my department. But, if there was an article stating a need or something, I might be more likely to send a few dollars.

No, I wouldn't give to my department unless they asked. They can ask by letter, on the phone, or maybe in an article, especially if the next issue of the magazine followed up with how the money helped someone or funded new equipment or something.

This particular magazine wouldn't inspire me to give to my department because it wasn't mentioned. For all I know it's not even there anymore.

There's a list of departments on the back inside cover.

I would feel more pride if my department were covered, but I don't know if I would give. I guess it would depend on the article and the need. I'm not saying it wouldn't be worth a try. If they could use this to raise funding for departments, I think that's great.

Yes, only because I'm a scientist and they talked about science in this issue. But, they never asked for anything. Maybe this is a precursor for a phone call or letter or something.

I would have to see a departmental article and the need to decide if I would give. Doesn't the University Foundation fund each department. Didn't the "Bringing dreams to life" campaign help the departments. I would like to see information on how much money the College of Arts and Sciences raised through that campaign.

I might, I don't know. I didn't see my department. But, I might give to other departments if I felt moved by a need or something.

I don't think magazines are good fundraising tools, really. But they can inform the audience and inspire the audience. So no, I probably wouldn't give to my department unless I was really inspired.

I don't know. Sorry.

I might if an article inspired me to do so, especially if there was a follow-up article telling me how my money helped or something.

I might donate just to get my name in the magazine (laughter).

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DID ANY ARTICLE INSPIRE YOU TO THINK ABOUT GIVING MONETARILY?

No articles inspired me.

I agree.

No.

No.

I was not inspired because I didn't see anything of interest that I hadn't already seen.

No.

No articles inspired me.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL LIKE THIS MAGAZINE, IN ANY WAY, ASKS YOU TO GIVE MONEY TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES?

No.

No.

No.

No.

Yes because of who is listed first, the development director. When I saw that, this is a publication for development.

No.

I agree with the development comment. That makes me understand that this is for fundraising, not necessarily for information.

If I were loaded, maybe I would want to get my name in the book and be a part of this. (Laughter).

No.

No.

No, other than seeing the development director's name and face. Do you think she wrote her own article because there is someone else's name here, so is this just a PR piece.

Do you know if the development director is a graduate of OSU?

She needs to be if she is not. I haven't heard of her.

Are there any students listed as writers?

It would make a big difference to me if these people working for the College of Arts and Sciences are not graduates of OSU.

I honestly think students, maybe even graduate students, should be paid to write the articles instead of having someone outside the department.

Maybe we should check into who is on the staff and how many graduated from OSU (laughter)

That's a relevant point.

I would certainly feel better about the magazine if it were written by students or at least graduates.

They probably can't pay enough (laughter).

They should be using the Journalism school.

I agree.

They should pull someone from each department to write a blurb about the department.

I understand that students are important, but if they're trying to raise money, it needs to be very professional, and maybe students couldn't do that.

Why not. Don't pull freshman; pull seniors and advisers and editors and graduate students.

It should be university controlled, not development controlled.

Who are the writers? Natalie Watkins is reputable, but who is working for her?

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL YOU UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENT FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE COLLEGE?

No. There was nothing that even touched on how money raised is spent.

No.

No, how could we. Maybe they send something else to donors to explain where the money goes.

Maybe they don't have to explain anything.

They're a non-profit – they have to explain. It would be nice to see it here, but no, I didn't see anything.

No.

No.

No.

I agree, no.

I don't understand the financial needs.

No.

No.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL LIKE THIS MAGAZINE EXPLAINS HOW THE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE BEING USED BY THE COLLEGE?

Yes.

Yes, I feel like I know more about science and that's where the money is going.

Yes, somewhat.

Maybe.

No.

No, it explains a few departments, but not enough.

There needs to be a list of each expenditure so we can analyze their spending and giving to each department.

I would be disappointed if this was all – because I didn't see my department mentioned. Does that mean they didn't receive any money?

Maybe it's space limitations.

Well, to that end, then no, I'm don't think they have explained where all of their money raised goes.

No.

Yes, I do feel comfortable with their spending.

No, I don't know how much they raised, and I sure don't know where it went.

I agree.

The magazine could go more in-depth about the spending.

No.

I think it reinforces most of our view that science and technology get the bulk of the money, and some departments suffer because they don't get equal money from A&S.

Yea, I agree.

Yes, I'm also in agreement.

- END OF QUESTIONS -

Oklahoma City Focus Group

MODERATOR – IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THIS MAGAZINE IS?

Arts and Sciences rock.

I think it's a fundraising tool.

I agree because the Director of Development is listed on the inside front cover as managing editor or something, and the content contains articles about raising money or donors that give money. It gives you a feel of fundraising at least.

Yea, I agree. Fundraising.

It seems if you give money you get a feature about yourself.

It also seems to be a recruiting tool for highly motivated students to excel, especially in technology.

I agree, I thought it was a recruiting tool.

I agree, too.

I guess I'm weird because I thought it was just kind of, oh, that's nice. Kind of a bragging tool.

That's how I viewed it.

I saw it as submission of propaganda, because its mission was to bring up issues both negative and positive as I assume from the mission statement, but its all sort of touchy feely positive stuff – fundraising I think is a big deal of the magazine.

I agree.

Fundraising tool.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THE MAGAZINE, DO YOU KNOW THE MISSION OF THE MAGAZINE?

No, I don't think I saw a mission statement, but maybe I missed it.

I agree. I didn't see a mission statement and I'm looking right now and I still don't see one. I read it pretty thoroughly.

No, I didn't see one and since I believe that this is an extension of the fundraising department, or the development department because the Development Director's name is mentioned and she has an article, I thought there should be a mission of what the College is trying to do. It's very important when you're speaking to donors, or I guess alumni whom you want to be donors, to let us know what your plans are. All big businesses have a mission. I know the College has one. They should list it here.

No, I don't know the mission.

I don't know the mission but I think it's pretty clear, it's research and technology, right?

The College is more than research and technology, so I would venture to guess the mission is something more than research. This question is good because it illuminates the need for the statement to appear in anything having to do with fundraising.

I don't recall seeing the mission, and after hearing these comments, I agree, a mission should be listed.

No, I don't recall the mission, but I could have missed it, but I've been glancing through while my fellow mates answered, and I can't find one.

If the mission was listed, I don't remember it. But I agree with someone who said it's probably technology, since most of the articles talk about science and technology.

No, I can't recall the mission either.

No mission comes to mind.

What is the mission? (laughter)

Here it is on the front inside cover, but it's the magazine's mission, I think. It says this magazine is a publication of the Oklahoma State University College of Arts and Sciences designed to provide information on college issues and concerns while fostering communication among OSU alumni and friends.

Oh, I didn't see that.

If that's the mission, it's like they want to hide it. It should be bold and in plain sight.

I agree. Who would ever read that?

I agree that it should be more noticeable and should be in the article by the Dean or maybe the Development person.

MODERATOR –AFTER READING THE MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITHIN THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES TODAY?

Yes.

Obviously yes because you get more educated on who and what's going on.

Yes, I agree.

I think you generally get to understand the Sciences side, you don't know anything else besides that.

I would agree with that. I understand more about research but not about arts.

Me too. I agree that they mostly explain about sciences.

I'll second that. I know about some of Sciences, but I didn't see my department. And I know the school deals with more than sciences.

I don't know about Arts and Sciences anyway. I don't keep in touch with the school, for me it was some stuff I didn't know.

I found it interesting especially about the research. I always assume good students and scholarships, but the research struck a chord with me because I did not know that was going on up there.

Yes. I know more about some things in Arts and Sciences, but certainly not everything. My wife works within a department of arts and sciences, and I didn't see her area mentioned. Or my kids areas. It seemed pretty one-sided as far as coverage of the entire College. Did they drop the Arts in Arts and Sciences (laughter).

Sort of. I do feel more informed about some interesting scientific stuff, but I see gaps in the coverage. My department is Journalism, maybe they wrote it but they weren't mentioned.

MODERATOR – IN GENERAL, WHAT WAS YOUR OVERALL OPINION OF THE CONTENT OF THE MAGAZINE?

Not real interesting. Not provocative.

Acting to fulfill their mission.

I thought it was interesting but that it wasn't very in-depth and that it just kind of skimmed the top and gave me a real quick snapshot. Actually, it created a desire for me to want to know more information.

I would agree with that. It was interesting but a brief overview.

I didn't find the content very compelling at all, but I'm pretty critical because I'm a magazine editor.

I think there's obviously a lot of time and effort that goes into it – to short articles. Some articles I find interesting, some I don't.

I thought it was very informative yet I had trouble understanding the audience. I wasn't sure if it were made to inspire, if it's for future students or it's for development, I just couldn't get a clear-cut vision of who they were writing too, they're audience.

There were some of the articles that were written where I lost interest partway into the article. I had to force myself to read these because I had to for this group (laughter). I found very few interesting articles, but some of them were very interesting and I learned some good things.

When I looked at the table of contents I thought, wow, this is neat, sounds pretty compelling, but I had to force myself to read some of it because it was kind of boring, and some of it you just say to yourself, "who cares." But, I mean, I enjoy some of it, but there were some pages that just didn't do it for me.

I thought it was a little too glossy, too nice, um, not compelling really, and I expect from a college to be more aggressive, especially if they're students, I expect to hear both sides. It was a little lightweight.

I thought it was very boring.

I thought it was a little heavy on the science side, which is fine, but there are a lot of places I had to work to get through it.

I like to read about some of the things that happened when I was a student, and about change, and about what's happening today, and where we are now, why changes took place within the structure of the school, to find out how the College of Arts and Sciences is growing and where its going, what programs its added and deleted. Where are some of the old professors and where are the new ones coming from, things like that. I didn't see that in this magazine.

I like that too.

MODERATOR – WHAT SECTION DID YOU TURN TO FIRST?

Front page to get a feel for the magazine, texture, I guess I went front to back.

I went to the alumni section first.

I started with the content page then read it from front to back.

I went to the alumni profiles because I'm nosy and I want to know what's going on, but I was disappointed because these are people I have no idea about. I was wanted to see someone my age, from my era. I think they could do a better job with alumni.

Me, too, alumni section.

Of course, I've never seen it before and then I did an overview to see if anything jumped out at me, nothing did, and so then I started from the front.

I started from the back and did very much the same thing. I went through all of it and went through the table of contents.

I went to the table of contents and saw something right off the bat about someone in my hometown, so I turned to that page and then tried to read the rest of it from the front. It was difficult.

Well, I'm a backward reader, and on this one I started at the back, and I didn't find much compelling.

I always start on the arts stuff and then if I feel like it I'll read the science.

I started at the content page, then moved to the alumni section profiles, then I went to the scholarship only because I knew someone in the pictures.

Not being used to this publication, I don't know what to look for, it's too close to the OSU Magazine, and so, it doesn't have a life of its own. Like "Classnotes," which is in the OSU Magazine, is distinctive. This magazine doesn't have much of a personality, it's another fundraising magazine. Everybody's fundraising, so if you're a member of the alumni association, the university sends it to members, but everything looks the same. We're Arts and Sciences, let's push the envelope and do a little bit more. We're able to communicate, let's do it.

I read it from front to back because it was an assignment. I probably wouldn't have otherwise.

MODERATOR: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVORITE ARTICLE?

Alumni articles are usually my favorites, but these need work.

The Genome article was OK, and I also like alumni articles.

Alumni.

Alumni.

Alumni.

Alumni and Fan Girl

Alumni probably, but the Genome and Frosty articles were good, too.

Alumni, and then the Smithsonian article.

Smithsonian was interested, but not an article, really. Alumni, also.

No favorites.

Alumni and Genome.

MODERATOR: WHAT WAS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE ARTICLE?

I can't answer that. I didn't get all the way through.

Well, I read a little bit of everything, as I said, some of it I didn't read much, so I would have to say I read everything. I wouldn't read it all if it weren't an assignment (laughter).

I would tend to steer clear of any kind of science things because it bores me. I could care less about the national award, and all of these, you know, researcher articles don't thrill me.

I read every word of it because I thought it was the assignment, but if I received it I wouldn't have read any of it because nothing intrigued me.

I couldn't finish the research articles.

I tried to be diligent and tried to read everything, but I skipped the lists of heads for the departments.

I would never read the letters from the Dean or Development Director. I also wouldn't read keepsakes because these people just gave a lot of money.

I only read headlines then if something catches my attention I'll continue. The headlines didn't do anything for me, so I didn't go further.

I steered clear of the science.

I start every article and continue until they make a grammatical error, then I stop because it annoys me. So I stopped a lot (laughter).

I waded through all of it. I got through the "Mighty Pen" and then I had to quit. It wasn't good.

I'm like everybody else. I kind of look at the main headlines and see what's there and if they interest me, like Boone Pickens, or alumni, but the science articles should be shorter so we can read the headline and know what's going on.

MODERATOR – DID YOU SEE YOUR DEPARTMENT IN THIS MAGAZINE?

No.

No.

No.

Unfortunately, no

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Yes.

MODERATOR: DO YOU THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO SEE NEWS ABOUT EVERY DEPARTMENT IN AN ANNUAL MAGAZINE?

Yes, especially if this magazine is the department's only avenue for communicating with its alumni.

Not necessarily every time the magazine is published, unless it's an annual publication. Is this bi-annual?

Then yes, every department should be represented, even if they have a newsletter.

I agree. Without mentioning each department in some small way, the College isn't representing those under its wing.

Every department has something good to say, and Arts and Sciences represents these departments, don't they, so they should have something in each issue.

I definitely agree. Every department has accomplishments and disappointments. Let us know both.

I agree. Don't be afraid to go against the grain. College is about ideas and opinions. Show us the good and the bad and let us make up our own minds. Especially if you want our money (laughter).

I think some departments can have more press at different times, but overall, yes, each department should have something.

Yes, departments should be represented, either in a few lines or in an article. Switch between departments just mentioned and departments with an article to make it fair. But for heaven's sake, don't just cover research.

I'm in agreement. Departments should have at least a blurb about what they're doing. They each have something good to report.

I agree. Show us the changes going on in each department. Some of us are trying to get our kids to go here, and we need stuff to show them.

If they want my money than my department should be in there.

Definitely. Each department deserves some credit and press.

Something unique about the department or a personality within the department should be represented.

You have to make people read this. If they don't see something about their department, they might just trash it or at least not read it.

Double the size and cut the paper quality down.

There are 6 articles in here for science and two in here for arts, and I happen to know that the Journalism school is the largest school in Arts and Sciences, but have no mention.

If this is once per year, why does it have fall 2001? That indicates quarterly.

I agree. That's confusing.

I agree. Every department needs to be represented in some fashion.

MODERATOR – WHAT KIND OF STORIES DO YOU WANT TO SEE MORE OF?

People and programs and uniqueness of an individual or a department. I hate redundancy, and a lot of this same type of information comes out of the alumni association magazine, and like I said, I hate redundancy, but alumni stuff is important, so maybe the two editors (OSU Alumni Magazine & OSU College of Arts and Sciences Magazine) should sit down and hammer out who's doing what, something like that, let each of them do something unique.

More personality profiles. I didn't really come away from this publication feeling like I knew anybody in the magazine or I had a better insight.

I would like more articles about current students.

I would have to agree with current students.

Interesting people and interesting students, not whether or not they've given to the endowment fund, which seems to be the criteria for this publication, and as far as students, student profiles. Very few students don't struggle. Let's hear about them.

I'd like to see more profiles.

I'd like to see more alumni profiles of more recent graduates, and by era.

I'm not for sure I'd like to see more of what's in here right now, I'd like to see maybe some type of yearly events calendar to get people out, there must be things going on. I'd also like to see some input from the public, maybe a letter section from readers. It's supposed to be a communication tool between graduates and the school, but we're not communicating back because we're not given the opportunity.

I agree.

I think they could do a lot better job of seeking out better stories to put in here. A lot of it seems to be filler, to fill the space, and to have a decent size publication for everyone to read, I think they should work a lot harder at finding interesting stories. It's not that hard. The average Joe can have a great story. All they talk about is people with money.

I want to see my department in here.

I agree with the departments in here and personality profiles.

I want to add my department.

I want to second that.

I already spoke, but I also want to add that department news should be in here.

What the significance of the programs that students are allowed to participate in.

If anything, we should be able to feel good about our degree, so we need bragging rights, so stories about factual based snippets that give us a warm feeling.

Profiles of kids that are making it, but struggling. I'd give money to that.

Articles about parents who are struggling to put their kids through college.

If this is only a once a year publication, they can find more interesting stories.

It's like the editor or development director mandates who will be in the magazine, to scratch the back of donors or something.

Who's in charge of this magazine? Is this a paid staff?

This magazine is too one-sided and too fundraising oriented. If it's too obvious, people get turned off.

Does the development director have a communications background?

That would be important.

MODERATOR –WHAT STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LEAST OF? WHAT STORIES DID YOU NOT READ, OR NOT ENJOY?

I'm not interested in select donors with big bucks.

I don't care to read the fundraising department's comments.

I don't like the Dean's comments. They're obligatory and typical and the picture was terrible. It was staged and we can tell.

I agree.

I don't like the fundraising stories about donors.

They could calm down on science.

I agree. Be equal on the coverage.

I have to agree with the earlier comment about donors with money. They always get the press.

I agree.

Dean's letter is just obligatory. Don't waste my time unless you're really telling me something. Tell me how you plan to help each department, or where the money raised is going.

Fundraising stuff, articles, especially from the development department.

This magazine is all good news, and the reader is intelligent and can see through that. There is always concerns in any business. Let us know those and maybe we can help. Let us know the needs.

MODERATOR – ARE THERE ANY SUGGESTIONS YOU WOULD MAKE REGARDING THE CONTENT OF THE MAGAZINE?

I think it's been touched upon already, but about the people who spend a lot of money on the campus. I don't care about those people.

I think you lose credibility if you do articles about those who support you. It's scratching someone's back in return for a favor, and it's blatant. You lose your credibility. There should be a wall here about not doing a major story just to stoke a donor. Stroke them in other ways. You want little donors, too, and we're the little donors.

There should also be some kind of call to get alumni involved, which is definitely missing. There is no frequency notice to say how often this comes out. There needs to be a frequency notice.

That's why I think they have tackled too much for too broad of an audience. Perhaps there should be two publications or a newsletter that informs the alums of Arts and Sciences and a fundraising document that goes to maybe foundations or other places that give money, or to all the alums stating where the money is going, has gone, like an annual report. This kind of combines those things, which makes for a boring read.

They need to understand their audience better.

If it was up to me, I'd stroke the donors because you have to, but in a more business profile way, you know, to satisfy that donor's need to be recognized, which is a reality of the world. But they shouldn't stroke on this level, just recognize them.

I'd like to see a better quality of writing. Pull the audience in. I recognize a lot of the names of the writers of these articles and they work in OSU's Public Information department. I felt like I was reading a lot of press releases, which is probably how they fill the magazine. But unfortunately, that's how they fill other campus magazines and newsletters, so it is redundant, and boring.

It's too much propaganda. They need to write well. I think they need to find someone who has a clue to publish this, first of all, I mean, if they need help from alumni, because I understand the concept of trying to save money, but come on, this one avenue of getting information out is not cutting it. I'd rather see my department, like journalism, sending me this type of information via this magazine, I'd be happy as a clam.

I didn't like sifting through all of the crap. They need more departmental news, more alumni news from the departments, more student news.

This thing has a target audience from graduates from 2001 to all the way back to when OSU began. How do you meet all of those needs? Probably by profiling different time periods, different eras, at least in one section of this magazine. Bring us up to date where a program was in the 50s or 60s and where it is today. Is it better off? Worse off? Be candid, that's how you'll get the money. Basically, it needs to be more interesting.

Better headlines so we can skim through the stories. Then we can read what we want and skip what we're not interested in.

Departmental news. Student News. Alumni News.

I agree.

They need to get to the point right off the bat.

Better pictures.

MODERATOR - IF THIS MAGAZINE WERE AVAILABLE ONLINE, WOULD YOU PREFER TO READ IT ONLINE OR IN HARD COPY FORM?

I would rather read this one online because I would toss this issue in the trash, if it were online, I could click on it and get out quickly, with nothing being wasted.

Yes, I agree online.

I prefer getting it in hard copy because all my work is online and I'm tired off being online, I like to read it at my leisure.

I agree. I don't have high speed Internet and it would take forever to download it.

I agree. In hard copy.

Not necessarily receiving this publication as it stands now, but I prefer publications in hard copy that I can hold.

I agree. Hard copy.

I would like it online because it would save money and if I found an article online, I could print it off. A few articles were well written and I would read them, and they could be more in depth and read it at my leisure.

I need to clarify. I'm actually a person who prefers to have things in my hands, just not this thing. If they improve it based on our suggestions, I would try to read it.

If it was a really nice, and readable, I prefer hard copy, but not this thing.

I agree.

Hard copy, but improved.

MODERATOR - AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE INCLINED TO DONATE MONETARILY TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, BASED ON WHAT YOU READ, OR THE CONTENT?

No. They gave me no reason to donate.

No, for several reasons. First, my department wasn't mentioned, so am I less important. Second, I don't know how they will use the money, and third, they didn't ask (laughter).

No, I wouldn't because I didn't see any needs. They act like they've got plenty of money.

I agree. They don't seem to need anything. I'd rather give to my department.

No, I wouldn't give just for the sake of giving. They would need to be specific on need, then I might consider.

No.

No, I wouldn't, regardless of need, unless it was within my own interests, like my department.

No, I don't feel inclined to give based on what I read.

They didn't ask for anything, and they seem to be fine regarding money. The donor stories seem like they have the money they need.

No, I wouldn't give based on this crap (laughter).

I agree, not necessary with the "crap" (laughter) comment, but that they didn't show a need.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE INCLINED TO GIVE TO YOUR DEPARTMENT ?

No. My department wasn't mentioned.

I agree.

I agree. Without seeing my department or knowing what's going on, how can I want to give. If a story told me about an overwhelming need or something, I might feel differently.

I agree.

I did see my department but there was no mention of need, so no, without knowing what is needed, I don't think anyone would want to send their hard-earned money.

I'm proud of what I read about some of the departments, but mine was not mentioned and my loyalty is with my department. They are the people that helped me make it, maybe not the same people, but hopefully people with the same mission as those who helped me graduate.

No, I wouldn't give unless my department asked, and then it would have to be a need, not just "please give us money."

I don't think any article told us about financial needs, so why would I even think to give. There must be a reason for me to give.

No, I wouldn't give unless I saw a need. If an article told me why, and then the next issue told me how my money helped, I might want to join the club and give.

That's true. If more articles told how individual alumni were pooling their money to help, I might feel left-out if I didn't give.

My department wasn't mentioned.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, WHAT ARTICLES, IF ANY, INSPIRED YOU TO GIVE?

No articles inspired me to give. It was hard enough to get inspired to read it (laughter).

No.

No.

None.

I have to agree. I wasn't inspired.

No articles were really financially inspiring.

I agree.

None inspired me.

No.

No articles caught my attention.

I didn't read anything worthy of sending my money.

I agree.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL LIKE THIS MAGAZINE, IN ANY WAY, ASKS YOU TO GIVE MONEY TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES?

No.

No.

No.

Doesn't even tell you where you could give it if you wanted to.

No, but its obvious it's a fundraising magazine because of the development director's involvement.

No, it doesn't ask and doesn't say how to give.

No.

No.

No.

I agree that it doesn't ask us for money and it doesn't give us any information on any needs within the College of Arts and Sciences or the departments. That's what they need, a "need" article giving us ideas, like a wish list.

I agree with that comment, and no, they don't ask.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW THE SPECIFIC FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE COLLEGE?

Absolutely not. There was no mention of how the money raised is being used, not even in the donor articles.

No.

No. But if they want my money, and I probably speak for a lot of people, they could get it if they would tell me a need or needs and let me decide how to designate the money.

No, I don't feel informed.

No.

No. Maybe there's an annual report somewhere that tells how they spend it.

No, I'm not more informed, but maybe the Dean's letter could tell us the needs and how the money they raise each year is allocated.

That's a good idea.

I agree, and no, I'm not more informed on the financial issues, but that would probably be too boring to read, too.

No, I don't recall any article stating a need of the College or department.

I agree.

I'm in agreement with everybody. There is no justification in the magazine for how money is spent, but maybe that's not what this magazine is about, I don't know.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE ARTICLES IN THIS MAGAZINE SUFFICIENTLY DESCRIBES HOW CONTRIBUTIONS ARE BEING USED BY THE COLLEGE?

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

- END OF QUESTIONS -

Stillwater Focus Group

MODERATOR – IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT DO YOU THINK THE MAIN MESSAGE OF THIS MAGAZINE IS?

Things that are going on in the College of Arts and Sciences. It's a tool for telling people what's happening in Arts and Sciences.

Research, I think the message is that Arts and Sciences are into research.

Heavily into research, since most of the articles were research oriented.

Things are going on, we want you to give money (laughter).

Puff pieces saying here's what's good about Arts and Sciences I might add it does look like a fundraising magazine.

It reveals the advantages of an Arts and Sciences background.

It think it's a tool for alumni, to inform us what the College is focusing on and so forth.

I thought it was a fundraising tool because of the development message toward the first of the magazine. It also tells about people who gave money, so mainly fundraising.

I agree, it feels like a fundraising magazine, it's also a bragging rights magazine, like see what's happening at OSU.

I think it tells about what's going on in certain aspects of Arts and Sciences, my guess is it only covers areas that receive money, but I'm not sure.

I'll agree with that. I know Arts and Sciences is the largest college, but it seems only science or research gets the headlines.

This is what we're doing, please send your money. Even though I don't see any article asking for money, that's how it feels.

I agree somewhat. It does brag about A&S, like it should, but it doesn't tell us an overview of A&S because not very many departments are mentioned.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE MISSION OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES IS?

No, I don't think they listed a mission. However, I believe every non-profit organization has a mission, as well as all businesses, it just makes sense, and I'm sure the College of Arts and Sciences has a mission.

Yes, the mission as I understand it is to provide us with information about the College and to increase communication efforts. See, I think it says somewhere in the front of the magazine. Turn to page 1.

Where did you read that? Which article. I don't recall that.

It's on the second page, this one, and it's listed under the Arts and Sciences magazine blurb. I guess it might be the magazine's mission now that I think about it.

I'm looking at that comment on the inside front cover, and that's the magazine's mission, which is probably part of the College's mission. But, they should put more emphasis on their mission, after all, the mission is the guiding plan, right?

You asked if we know the mission, and I do not. I'm looking where they said, and if that's a mission, I'm shocked and disappointed. It seems to be the magazine's mission, which by the way, after reading this, they don't accomplish that mission.

No, I didn't read a mission and I don't know the mission, but my guess is this is a fundraising publication and their mission is to raise money and pat donors on the back. (laughter)

No, without re-looking at the inside front cover, but after reading the entire magazine, I have no idea what the mission of the College is.

I agree with that statement. I have no idea, but from reading the articles I could guess that the mission is to increase funding for research and technology.

I agree. I don't know the mission.

I think their mission should be to teach, but this doesn't say so. I have no idea other than their mission is to raise money because I also thought this was a fundraising tool.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE CONNECTED TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU KNOW MORE ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON?

No, because my only connection is my department, and I didn't see it in here.

No, not necessarily more connected, maybe more informed about research, but that doesn't mean I'm connected.

Yes, I feel like I know what's going on, but I wouldn't say I'm connected. That means I have an emotional bond to the College. I never did, it was to my department – Math.

No, but it depends on if you know someone who's in here, and if you find someone you know, you might feel more connected.

Most of these stories that are in here I've seen on the news or in the papers. Channel 5 ran a few of these stories. They seem like duplications, probably from the office that sends press releases to the press. So, no, I'm not more connected or more informed. I can listen to the evening news with a lot more ease than reading this and get the same information. Sorry, but that's how I feel.

No, I'm not more connected but I am a little bit more informed on research.

No, I don't feel connected because my connection is to my department and Journalism isn't in here.

No, it took me a long time to read this magazine, I was not entertained, maybe a little bit more informed, but probably not. This College is huge and you're telling me this is all that happened this past year?

No, but I've never felt connected to the College. I'm like everyone else, my department is where my loyalty, so to speak, is.

Yes, but I'd agree its not a personal connection. You need to see someone you know or see an article you're familiar with, or something like that.

You need to remember, most Arts and Sciences alumni don't hear the news we hear if we live in Oklahoma because of TV, radio and public service radio. Most alumni don't live in Oklahoma. How are they going to feel connected?

I agree, it is a duplication of information, but it's probably because we live in Stillwater. And yes, I feel somewhat connected, but I already did or I wouldn't be here.

I've seen several of these articles one place or another, they didn't connect me before because they are too boring to read.

I think it's hard for Arts and Sciences to establish an identity because it's such a broad spectrum. Likewise, it's probably hard to get people to feel connected.

Most of us already feel connected or we wouldn't be here. But I suspect our connection is to our department. Mine was Journalism.

MODERATOR – IN GENERAL, WHAT WAS YOUR OVERALL OPINION OF THE CONTENT OF THIS MAGAZINE?

It was pretty complete except for one thing, where are these people from. Are these people from out-of-state? I have no idea where the Fan Girl is from. They need to include this information in their stories, all stories.

If you'll look at the credit lines, these are all people that work at the public information office. Carolyn Gonzalas, Adam Puffer, they send out stories to the media everyday, that's their job, to grind them out, and they don't put the student's hometowns in these stories. I get these all the time. The editors don't know when they get the information either, so they don't use them.

When I got to reading it, there were some interesting things, but typically, if I got this, I would not read this. The articles are too long. Most people are extremely busy. They could accomplish it with shorter stories and better photographs.

I thought it was boring.

I found it very interesting but without your (moderator's) involvement in getting me to read it, but honestly, I would never have read it. It doesn't look interesting, and the headlines aren't interesting.

I wouldn't read this, it looks boring because the articles are long and the pictures are little and the pictures aren't labeled. I like more white space and little articles.

Boring.

Frustrating because it was long, and a boring read.

The headlines were awful. The text was boring. Look at this article, "Only at OSU." Who would care about that? They need to put more time into interesting stories, not public information stories.

I agree. I skim the headlines and if it weren't for you (moderator) giving us this homework (laughter), I wouldn't have read it.

I agree.

I agree.

MODERATOR – WHICH WAS YOUR FAVORITE ARTICLE? WHICH ARTICLE DID YOU READ FIRST?

The two artist stories were my favorite because my daughter's an artist. That was it, for that selfish reason.

The first thing that came into my mind was the students. The student articles.

I read the Evan Tonsing article titled "Repatriating Voices From the Past," just because I like that kind of stuff, and then the business about funding new endowments, and the rest of them I had already seen. T. Boone Pickens was also kind of interesting.

That's big news. (laughter)

I read the "White receives Goldwater award" article, this is the kind of stuff I like because when I go to Texas, I want bragging rights on issues at OSU, not sports stuff.

I read the student articles, "Fan Girl."

I don't know if I had a favorite one, but the one that struck me the most and it was kind of a negative way that it struck me was "attracting talent." They are already talking about this girl that has basically been on campus for three weeks when the article was published and its already talking about her working on her master's degree. Come on, there is something better than that to talk about.

That one did seem weird, like they were stretching to find stories.

I agree.

From the interest standpoint, the pianist and music therapy, because those are my field.

Speaking of fields, I would have enjoyed reading something about my department, but I couldn't find anything.

I second that. That's the first thing I look for.

I agree.

Yes, I also agree with that statement.

When are we getting to what we want to see?

I liked the alumni profiles.

Oh, I agree. I forgot about those. Yes, I agree.

I also liked the student stories, and the article about Mario White.

I liked the faculty research project articles. Also, "A degree of High Demand" was interesting.

I agree with that also. I also liked the alumni profiles. And "Keepsakes of the Heart."

I enjoyed the research articles, especially page 5.

I wish they would tie into sports by telling us what Arts and Sciences players are on what team.

MODERATOR – WHAT WAS YOUR LEAST FAVORITE ARTICLE?

"Backward Glance" by the development director. Well, it doesn't look like she wrote it, but still, it was boring.

I couldn't finish that one or figure the point of that one.

I agree with that one, too. That was just really out of place. The other one I didn't like was "The Mighty Pen."

That article by Deborah, see, she's a big name related to this magazine, but you see here, she's senior director of development.

Well, she didn't write it. And yes, I didn't like that one, either.

I agree. I couldn't even finish "Backward Glance." I just kind of went through it, but it didn't interest me because it didn't say anything.

I agree.

Yes.

The "Keepsake" article was also a fundraising article, so it didn't come across as too much of a fundraising article. They need to be careful about that.

MODERATOR – DID YOU SEE YOUR DEPARTMENT IN THIS MAGAZINE?

No.

No.

Yes.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Yes.

No.

Yes.

I don't think so.

How many departments are there?

I think they're listed on the back of this magazine. I counted 22.

If they would shorten their stories they could put more into the magazine, to include each department, just a little blurb, maybe.

MODERATOR – DO YOU THINK ITS IMPORTANT THAT AN ANNUAL MAGAZINE MENTION EACH DEPARTMENT?

At least a little news about each.

Yes. How else can the College be equal in its representation of its departments.

Yes. There should at least be a few lines about what each department is doing. Perhaps written by the department head, or better yet, an outstanding student or something.

Yes, but why don't they do it more than once a year?

I agree. I know mailing costs and everything, but if they would cut down the stories, they could mention more about every department, even if it won't be interesting to everyone.

If it's just once a year, I'd do more about what's going on in each department. To mention these stories that are in here right now, mostly science, and neglect all the other departments, is an injustice. Because I know that the College, don't ask me how I know, has told the schools in it, all 22, that it will no longer fund newsletters or things like that, so many of these departments must rely on this communication to get the word out.

I'd do it quarterly, less expensive paper, more departmental news, but I know this is a fundraising magazine primarily, and they want it to be classy.

I'm not worried about my department having news each time, but with just once a year, I'm a little concerned about the true news of the A&S.

My tie to OSU is my department.

I agree. I am loyal to my department. I don't really want to read about every other department, but if you're trying to reach your alumni, should you be mentioning the broad scope of departments to entice something in everyone.

I agree. Mention all departments with a few lines, or boxes, or something.

Yes, I agree.

MODERATOR – WHAT KIND OF STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF?

Alumni and students. Maybe a story about my department.

Students and departmental news.

I agree. Students and alumni and I would love to catch up on my department.

Students make up this university. I would like to read stories about students who are accomplishing something and students who are finding it difficult to hang in there.

If you're going to do the stories on research, students help with the research. They need a different angle, focusing more on students.

Alumni and definitely students.

Alumni by era.

A&S alumni and students who struggle and students who excel, especially in sports.

Alumni and era stories. That's a good idea.

Students and alumni. Especially students from different departments and how they have helped the university in research or a project or something. Knowing more about each area of Arts and Sciences is important, especially when they say that an Arts and Sciences background makes a well-rounded student. Show us how.

Students and alumni stories, maybe alumni from the 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s, you know, like by decades or something.

I agree. More decade stories to include everybody in the audience.

I would like to see more student articles to show my daughter. I want her to go to college and these articles would not interest her. I want to show her some different stories about students to inspire her. This could be like a recruiting tool.

I think that's an excellent point. Make this a recruiting tool for parents and students.

Were there any students involved in any of these projects? Did Meinke do it by himself? Did McKeever? If students were involved, they should have been included. Any research with student help should be covered, to show the role of the researcher and the student. That's more impressive.

Exactly.

I agree.

I think it's important to hear. I have a student here now, and she is constantly telling me that she has teachers that don't speak English, she's had several classes, several labs, with these professors. It's nice to see what these professors are doing, besides teaching because they bring in the research money, it needs to be tracked.

MODERATOR – WHAT KIND OF STORIES WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LESS OF?

I would like to see less research articles, or maybe just shorter articles.

I just want to see a diversity of articles. This magazine seems too concentrated in one field – research.

Donor articles, as they are written, are boring.

Fundraising articles, or donor articles, at least make them shorter so there's room for other stuff.

Research articles. Balance the coverage.

I agree.

Research.

Research, just because this magazine was too one-sided. Give us the scope of Arts and Sciences.

I agree.

Boring stories of any kind (laughter).

I agree. Make them more interesting.

I'd also like to see more white space and better pictures.

I have no opinion, just make it more interesting.

MODERATOR – DO YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS REGARDING HOW TO IMPROVE THE CONTENT OF THE MAGAZINE?

Yes, give us more articles on alumni from eras and student stories.

Tell us how the College is changing and what's in its future.

I agree. Change is good.

Balance the content and focus on the student and graduate population.

Give us more interesting stories on students, faculty and how they work together.

Tell us the needs of the different departments and show us how our contributions have helped in the past. Also, balance the coverage of the magazine and make the articles shorter.

I agree. Shorter articles and more coverage of departments.

Yes, I'll second that. Even if I'm not interesting in every department, there should still be more news about current events in each school.

I'm going back to the mission thing. Tell us the mission, tell us the future plans, tell us what's happening and what plans are working and what plans are scrapped because they didn't work.

I agree with that. Plus, give us more alumni and student stories with some meat to them. Not length, meat.

Tell us the good and the bad. Don't make it so one-sided, like everything is rosy.

Give the readers a way to respond with comments, like a suggestions to the editor page or something.

Yes, and also let us make suggestions on stories. Maybe that would help the content to be more interesting. Maybe they could even run stories written by alumni.

I like that idea. This magazine is supposed to be a communication tool, according to its mission, so give the alumni a way to help make it a better publication. Let us offer suggestions. Let us help.

I think the coverage or focus should be on students and what's happening in each department. Don't assume we want to know what you tell us, give us a variety so we do feel more connected.

I think more alumni articles and articles focusing on the needs and changes of the school. Alumni are here to help, just like we helped you with this group today.

MODERATOR –AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL MORE INCLINED TO GIVE A GIFT TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES?

No.

No, not because I'm not loyal to my school, but because they didn't give me a reason. I sure wouldn't want my money to go to publish something like this magazine (laughter). No offense to anyone, but there are real needs out there, but who knows what they are.

No, for the same reasons as he said.

I agree. No.

No, but I would consider giving for a specific need.

No.

No.

No, I wasn't impressed with what I read. Interest me and challenge me to help.

No, simply because I didn't see anything of interest. My department wasn't in there and that's what I support.

No.

No, I don't give based on a warm, fuzzy feeling. Show me the need and why I should feel obligated, and then I'll think about it.

MODERATOR – HAVE YOU EVER DONATED TO THE COLLEGE BASED ON THE CONTENT OF A MAGAZINE?

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Never.

No, but my decision might stem from looking at a magazine.

I agree.

I agree.

Not yet, but I'm always open. They need to be creative.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, ARE YOU INSPIRED TO GIVE A GIFT TO YOUR DEPARTMENT?

No, but I didn't see my department. How can I donate when I don't know anything that's going on.

I agree. I'm not inspired yet.

Nope.

I would give to my department if there were a need and if it were mentioned in the magazine. I think its cool to participate in a campaign where one person cannot make a difference, unless they have huge amounts of money, but many people with small donations can really change the outcome.

I agree with that comment, but after reading this, I'm not inspired.

They never asked.

I'll agree with that. I give when I'm asked. This magazine just tells us the good stuff that the Development department wants us to hear about.

No, I wouldn't give without a reason, and then I could only give a small gift, which doesn't seem to interest them I guess.

I didn't feel inspired.

I second that. There was no call to give.

No, but I'd probably give to a phone call or letter.

I'd give if the need were great enough and my department was mentioned.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DID ANY ARTICLES INSPIRE YOU TO GIVE?

No.

No.

No.

No.

No.

Maybe. I liked the fact that we're really focused on research, but there wasn't any specific needs listed.

I think that's what the Dean of the College should focus on. He should inspire us to give. The donor articles don't inspire anyone.

I agree with that comment.

No, nothing inspired me.

No articles were inspiring in my opinion.

The articles must be shorter and say something right of the bat. What's the reason for the article. Put that in the headline or the first graph.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL LIKE THE MAGAZINE ASKED YOU TO GIVE MONEY TO THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES?

Yes.

Yes.

Yea.

Yea, behind the scenes and indirectly.

Absolutely.

Yes.

Yes.

Yea, we weren't born yesterday.

I agree, yes.

Not really, maybe indirectly.

They never tell you where a need is.

I agree with that. They just tell you the good things that they are doing, but never tell you where there is a need. That would help.

I agree.

I also agree with that.

It's like they want you to give an unrestricted donation because they don't tell you where the needs are so you can pick where you want to give.

MODERATOR – AFTER READING THIS MAGAZINE, DO YOU FEEL YOU KNOW THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF THE COLLEGE OR OF ITS DEPARTMENTS?

I feel like I've said this before, but no, nothing in the magazine showed us what the need were.

I agree.

I second.

I agree.

No, I don't know because they didn't tell.

No, the magazine just told us some trivial news. No financial needs.

I agree.

I agree with everyone.

No.

No, I don't recall any article mentioning financial needs.

I agree.

I also agree.

MODERATOR – DO YOU FEEL LIKE THIS MAGAZINE EXPLAINS WHERE DONOR'S MONEY WOULD BE GOING, OR HOW DONOR MONEY IS USED?

No, but that would be very helpful if I were considering donating. I think that's why a lot of people only give to their department because they know the money will be used in the department.

No, there needs to be an annual report, even if it's really concise.

No.

No.

No, it's not like an annual report, but I never see an annual report from the College, so maybe we should. It might help.

No, they don't explain where donations go, other than endowments.

I hope there is more need than just endowments.

I think it shows where the money is spent in research, but no place else.

I agree.

No, they could do a better job of showing us how much was raised last year and where it went.

I agree.

I agree. If they are serious about fundraising and keeping us a readers and as donors, they need to show us how serious they are. Give us a run-down of what was used for departments, faculty, student scholarships, and staff positions. Show us how much the Development Director makes, how much the Dean makes, etc. If they have nothing to hide, show us the money, baby (laughter).

I completely agree. Too many times we as donors are skeptical to give our money because of big salaries made by the staff. We know faculty members don't get paid much, but does the Development Director get a cut of whatever she raises? I hope not.

END OF QUESTIONS

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 2/12/03

Date: Wednesday, February 13, 2002

IRB Application No AS0238

Proposal Title: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY REGARDING EFFECTIVE ALUMNI COMMUNICATION OF
THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES: OPINIONS AND PERCEPTIONS
REGARDING CONTENT OF OSU COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES MAGAZINE

Principal
Investigator(s):

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Dr. Steven Smethers
313 Paul Miller
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

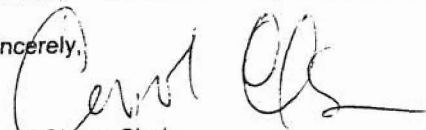
Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive Secretary to the IRB, in 203 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA ²

Gina J. Noble

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: ALUMNI PERCEPTIONS AND OPINIONS OF OSU COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES MAGAZINE: A FOCUS GROUP STUDY

Major Field: Mass Communication

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Joplin, Missouri, on June 21, 1963, the daughter of Robert K. Walker and Pamela K. Evans

Education: Graduated from Parkwood High School, Joplin, Missouri, in May 1981; received Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism (Radio, TV & Film) from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May 1985. Completed the requirements for the Master of Science degree with a major in Mass Communication at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2002.

Experience: Raised in Joplin, Missouri; employed as an aerobics and cheerleading instructor during summers; employed by Oklahoma State University Colvin Center as an undergraduate student; employed as a Distribution Director for In...Joplin! Metropolitan Magazine in Joplin, Missouri; employed as Foundation Coordinator for Freeman Healthcare Foundation in Joplin, Missouri; employed as Director and then Vice President of Children's Medical Center Foundation in Tulsa, Oklahoma;

employed as a graduate teaching assistant at Oklahoma State University,
Department of Journalism and Broadcasting, 2001 to present.

Professional Memberships: National Association of Hospital Development, 1990-
1996; Kappa Tau Alpha National Honor Society in Journalism and Mass
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