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Student Alumni Association revamped to become more effective



Photo by: Elizabeth Banfield

By: Chelsea Sydnor

In the fall of 2015, the Student Alumni Association (SAA) decided to remove their organization from the registry of student clubs. This decision was made after noticing a decline in engagement from alumni and current students. The SAA came to the conclusion that they needed to work to renew both its presence on campus and its effectiveness for both current students and alumni.

"It seemed like we weren't having the interaction that we wanted," said Megan Pope, assistant director of Alumni Relations. "We decided to go ahead and revamp the entire organization."

The SAA has changed a great amount since Clevenger was a student in the early 2000's. "It used to be a huge deal for students to be a part of the group," said Leah Clevenger, director of alumni relations. "You had to be invited to apply, and [the students selected] would go to conferences and help out with events on campus."

She believes the Student Alumni Association may have had trouble representing itself to students, and interest declined.

"We needed to think about what the organization could offer to students," said Clevenger. "We didn't want it to just be something to list on a resume."

Clevenger hopes that the organization will be able to help current students connect with alumni, and help "tell current stories about Gardner-Webb."

"People often hear the word 'alumni' and think that we are just the fundraising organization," said Clevenger. "But most of what we do is about philanthropy, and building relationships through connections at the university."

According to Pope, Alumni Relations wants the opportunity to give back to alumni as much as they give back to the university.

"We're working with organizations, such as Career Services, to make sure alumni know about the resources for resume building and networking that are still available to them after their graduation," said Pope.

The SAA is working to introduce current students to alumni as well, through events such as an upcoming Charlotte Hornets game, in which the two groups will have the opportunity to interact and build relationships.

"Career Services and I will also be working to create videos to help students with things such as resumes, job applications and even cooking classes," said Pope. "Things that we think will benefit them."

Alumni Relations hopes to receive input from both alumni and current students to help improve the services they provide.