



## ALUMNI SURVEY 2014- 2015 • EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Highlights

An analysis of the 2015 Babson College Alumni Survey results shows that the Alumni and Friends Network has made strides since the previous survey administration (2011) to enhance alumni communications and networking opportunities, to identify ways to engage Babson’s increasingly more global alumni network, and to provide opportunities for alumni to serve as ambassadors for the College. Highlights include the following:

- Overall, results show an improvement in performance from 2011,
- 95% of respondents rated their decision to attend Babson as “excellent” or “good,”
- 95% of respondents reported that their overall opinion of Babson is “excellent” or “good,”
- Babson alumni respondents describe themselves as “loyal,”
- Alumni who graduated in 2009 and later are the most active promoters of Babson and are more likely than their peers to volunteer and participate in Network offerings,
- The activity that appealed the most to all classes, except the classes prior to 1973, was “professional development events,”
- In general, “current” and “lapsed” donors’ perceptions and attitudes about Babson, communication methods, and alumni activities are more favorable than those of “never” donors, and
- Babson alumni use of LinkedIn was significantly higher than use at national colleges/universities.

This executive summary provides an overview of the survey, key findings, and next steps.

### Overview

Babson College contracted with the Performance Enhancement Group Ltd. (PEG) to administer the Alumni Attitude Study<sup>®</sup>, a national, multi-college research study that measures alumni perceptions and attitudes about their alma mater as well as their student and alumni experiences. The survey instrument also included seven Babson-developed custom questions designed to provide additional feedback on engagement activities, communication methods, and giving attitudes.

The survey was conducted in February 2015 and distributed electronically to the 28,030 alumni for whom the College had active email addresses. The survey yielded a response rate of 7.9% (N = 2,073) compared to a 9.6% response rate in 2011; the first time Babson participated in the Study. (Nationally, the survey response rate has also decreased from an average of 10% in 2011 to 7 – 8% today.) Despite the lower response rate, there was a 23.2% increase in the number of responses (N in 2011 = 1,682), largely due to the fact that the 2015 survey was emailed to a larger pool of alumni; a difference of 10,517 active email addresses.

Babson College results are compared to an all school average of the 81 colleges/universities who participated in the Alumni Attitude Study<sup>®</sup> during the last four years as well as Babson College results from 2011. In addition, results are compared by era (see *Table 1*) and by donor status (“current,” “lapsed,” and “never”).

*Table 1: Definitions of Era*

<i>Class Years</i>	<i>Era</i>
Prior to 1973	Woodstock/Vietnam
1974 – 1980	Post-Watergate
1981 – 1993	Yuppie/End of Cold War
1994 – 2000	Electronic Revolution/Dot.com
2001 – 2008	Post 9/11
2009 or Later	Post Great Recession

## Demographics

Consistent with representation in the overall alumni population, the percent of undergraduate and graduate alumni respondents is comparable; 51% and 44%, respectively. Five percent (5%) of respondents earned two degrees from Babson. Nearly eighty percent (76%) of alumni respondents are Caucasian. By comparison, 49% of the 2011 respondents were undergraduate alumni, 46% graduate alumni, 6% double degree alumni, and 80% are Caucasian. (For additional demographic data, see *Addendum*).

## Key Findings & Comparisons

Overall, respondents rated their Babson experience as positive. More than ninety percent (95%) of respondents reported that their *overall opinion of Babson* is “excellent” or “good”; this is slightly higher than the national average (92%) and 2011 Babson results (93%). Of note is that Babson’s most recent alumni (classes 2009 and later) were more critical than their peers (see *Table 2*).

Table 2: % Rating Overall Opinion of Babson as “Excellent” or “Good”

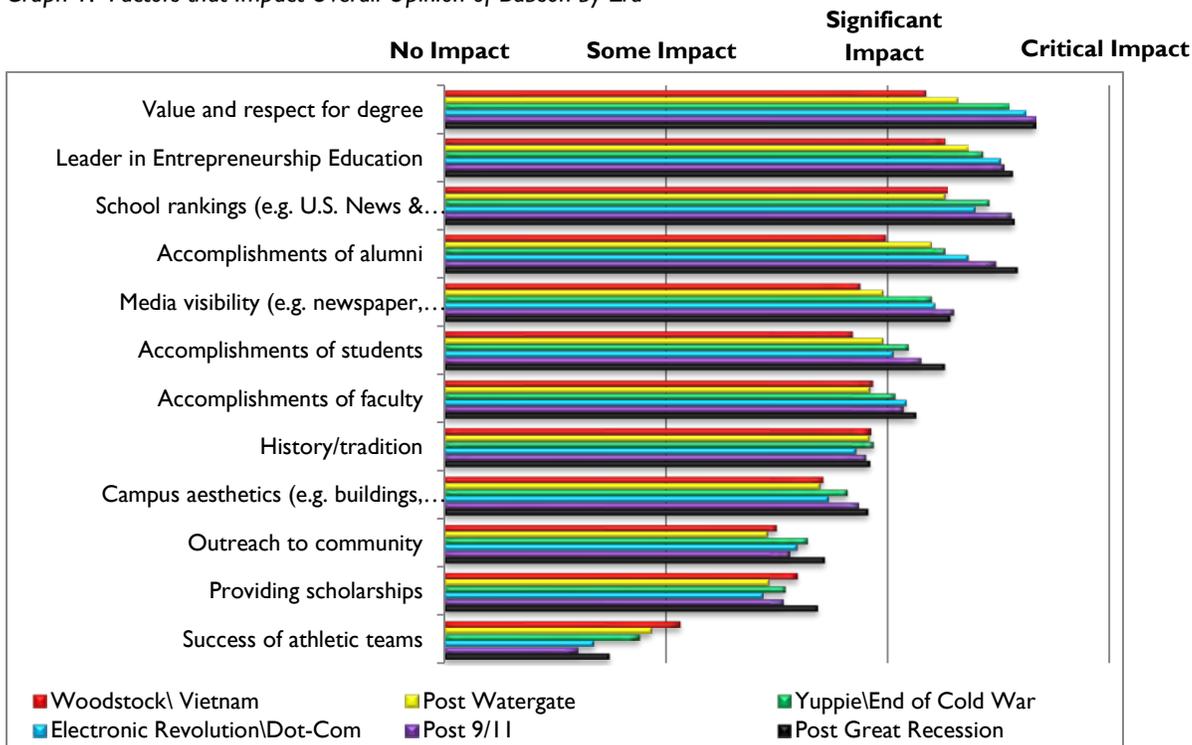
Class Years	%
Prior to 1973	97%
1974 – 1980	94%
1981 – 1993	97%
1994 – 2000	96%
2001 – 2008	96%
2009 or Later	90%

Primary factors that impact overall opinion of Babson include the following:

- “value and respect for degree” (93%),
- “leader in entrepreneurship education” (86%),
- “school rankings” (89%), and
- “accomplishments of alumni” (85%).

These percentages are comparable with 2011 Babson results and higher than the national college/university results. Worth mentioning is that these factors are paramount for more recent graduates –those alumni who graduated in 2009 or later (see *Graph 1*). The factor that had the least impact on overall opinion of Babson across all class years is “success of athletic teams.” Of note is that regardless of era, feedback regarding the impact of these factors is relatively consistent.

Graph 1: Factors that Impact Overall Opinion of Babson by Era



Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

Babson alumni respondents describe themselves as “loyal.” *Loyalty* to “Babson in general” is comparable between the two survey results. The 2015 Babson results show a slightly greater loyalty to “my academic program (e.g. Two Year MBA, One Year MBA, etc.)” among graduate alumni than the 2011 Babson results and a small decrease [overall] in aggregate loyalty to “a student organization or activity I was associated with” and to “Babson athletics.” Babson’s most seasoned alumni (those in classes prior to 1973) expressed the highest level of loyalty for “Babson athletics.” Alumni who graduated in 2000 or later expressed the highest level of loyalty for “a faculty member or instructor” and “staff member, advisor, or coach”; this is consistent with 2011 results.

Twenty-five percent of respondents reported they *promote Babson to others* “all the time.” Nearly forty percent (37%) reported that they promote Babson “regularly” and 35% stated “occasionally.” These percentages are comparable to both the national college/university and the 2011 Babson results. The frequency of promotion varied by era with the most recent alumni –those who graduated in 2009 and later, being the most active promoters of Babson.

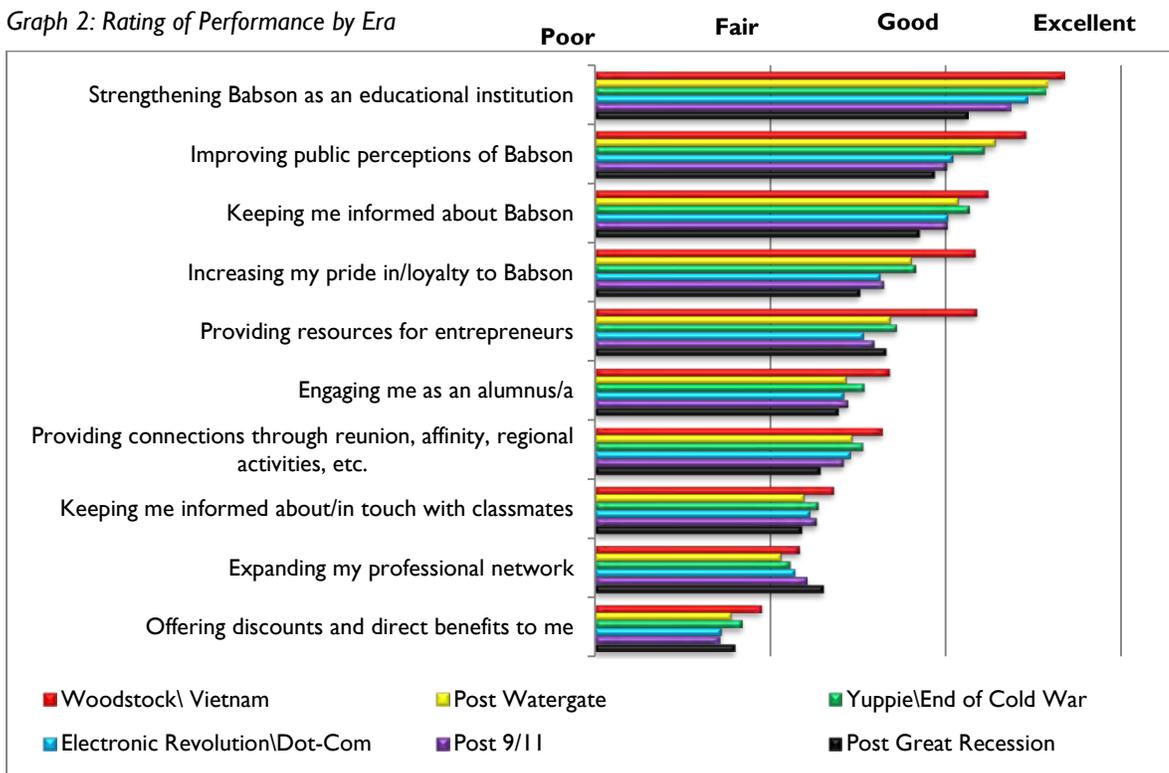
*Perceptions of the alumni experience* are more favorable than in 2011; 63% of 2015 Babson respondents rated their alumni experience as “excellent” or “good” compared to 60% in 2011. This rating is lower than the national average of 68%. Satisfaction with alumni experience varied by era. Alumni who graduated prior to 1973 were most satisfied with their alumni experience, while alumni who graduated between 1974 and 1980 and alumni who graduated in 2009 or later were the least satisfied (see *Table 3*).

Table 3: % Rating Alumni Experience as “Excellent” or “Good”

Class Years	%
Prior to 1973	67%
1974 – 1980	53%
1981 – 1993	66%
1994 – 2000	60%
2001 – 2008	66%
2009 or Later	59%

Contributing to this [alumni experience] rating is that Babson alumni respondents reported that the College’s performance in “engaging me as an alumnus/a” and “providing connections through reunion, affinity, and regional activities, etc.” are between “good” and “fair” (see *Graph 2*). In general, alumni who graduated prior to 1973 had the most favorable ratings on performance across all dimensions, while alumni who graduated in 2009 or later had the least favorable performance ratings, with the exception of satisfaction with “expanding my professional network.”

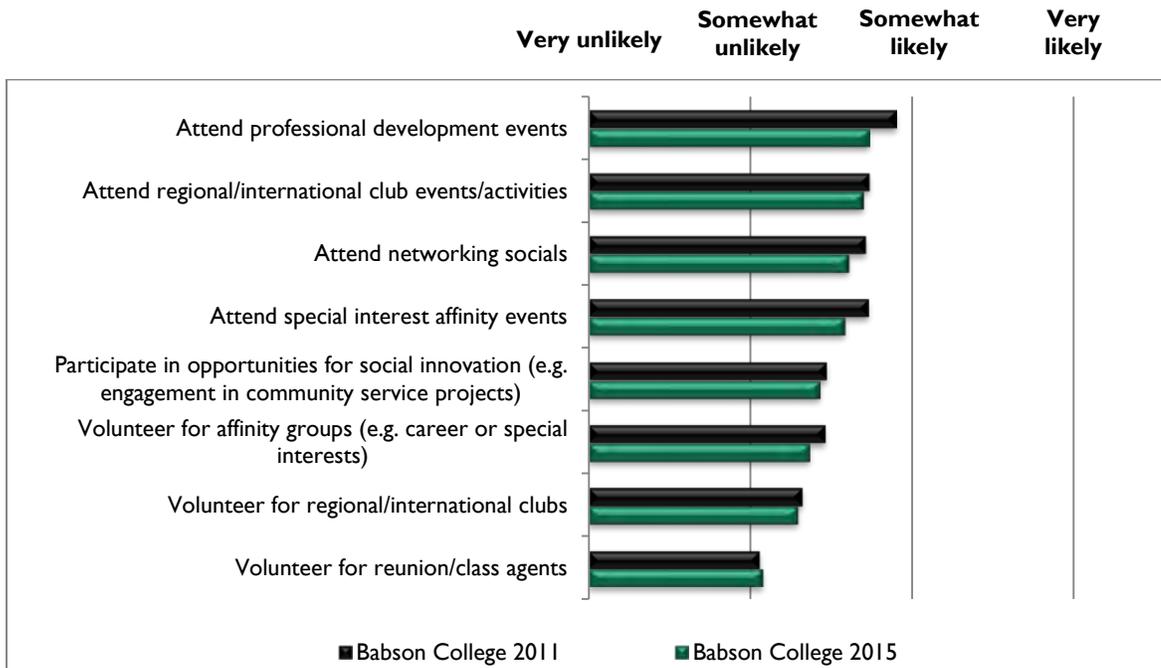
Graph 2: Rating of Performance by Era



Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

Overall, *likelihood to participate in the specific activities that align with the Alumni & Friends Network strategy* –namely professional development events, regional/international club events/activities, special interest affinity events, networking socials, and social innovation (e.g. engagement in community service projects) decreased slightly from prior survey results (see *Graph 3*).

Graph 3: Likelihood to Participate in Alumni and Friends Network Offerings



Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

In general, the activity that appealed the most to all classes except the classes prior to 1973 was “professional development events.” For respondents that graduated prior to 1973, “regional/international club events/activities” appealed most. Of significance is that “very likely” to participate was not denoted for any type of activity. In general, Babson alumni respondents reported that they are more likely to attend events than to volunteer.

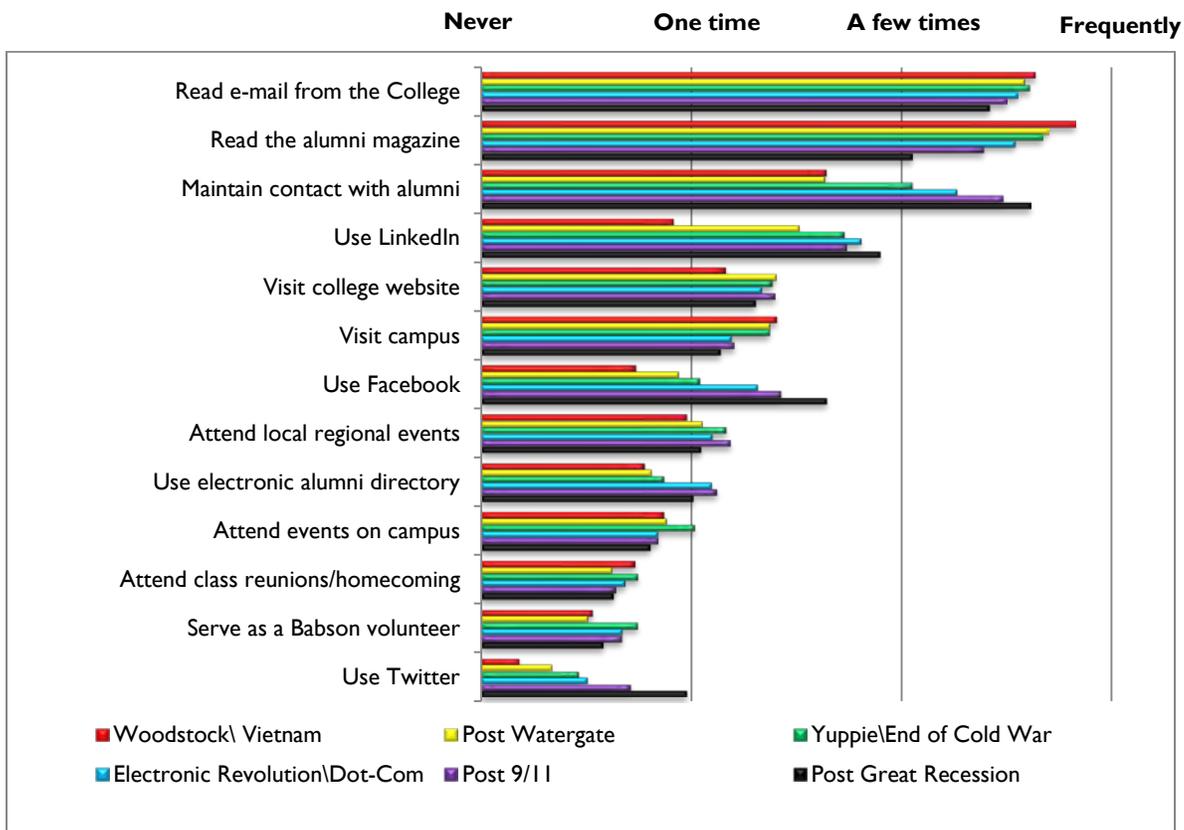
Primary barriers to participation in alumni activities include the following:

- “time/other commitments” (60%),
- “geographic distance” (48%), and
- “family or job commitment” (34%).

Among alumni who responded “geographic distance,” the majority (71%) resided over 250 miles from campus (either in the U.S. or outside the U.S.). Among alumni who reside within 50 miles of campus, “family or job commitment,” “type or subject matter of event,” and “value (cost compared to benefit)” were the primary barriers –54%, 53%, and 50%, respectively. In general, barriers were comparable across era; however “time/other commitments” and “family or job commitment” were particularly significant barriers for alumni who graduated between 1994 and 2000.

Consistent with the national college/university and 2011 Babson results, the three activities Babson alumni respondents reported most frequently participating are “read email from the College,” “read the alumni magazine,” and “maintain contact with alumni.” Alumni who graduated in 2009 or later use social media (e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter) more frequently than their Babson peers while alumni who graduated between 1994 and 2008 most frequently “use[d] electronic alumni directory” (see *Graph 4*). Alumni who graduated between 1981 and 1993 more frequently “attend events on campus” and “serve as a Babson volunteer” than their fellow alumni.

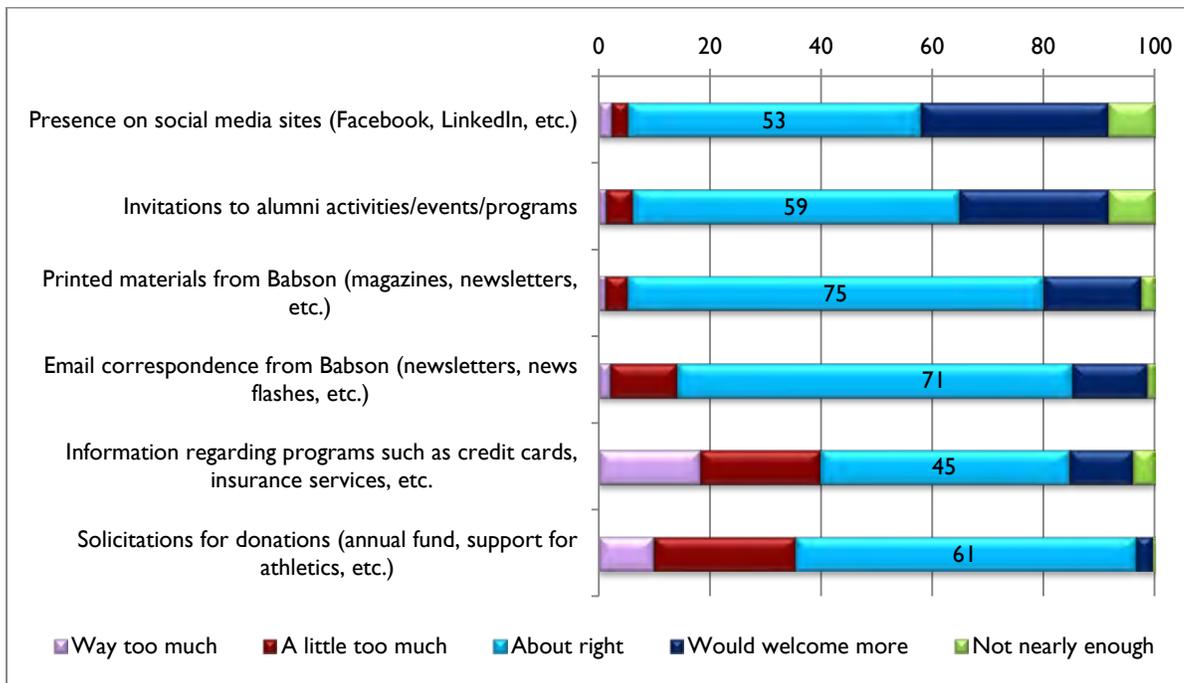
Graph 4: Frequency of Participation in Select Activities



Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

To foster engagement in the various alumni activities, Babson utilizes a variety of communication methods. Regardless of the communication channel (e.g. social media, printed materials, email correspondence, etc.), alumni respondents reported that the frequency [of communications] was “about right” (see Graph 5).

Graph 5: Feedback regarding Frequency of Communications



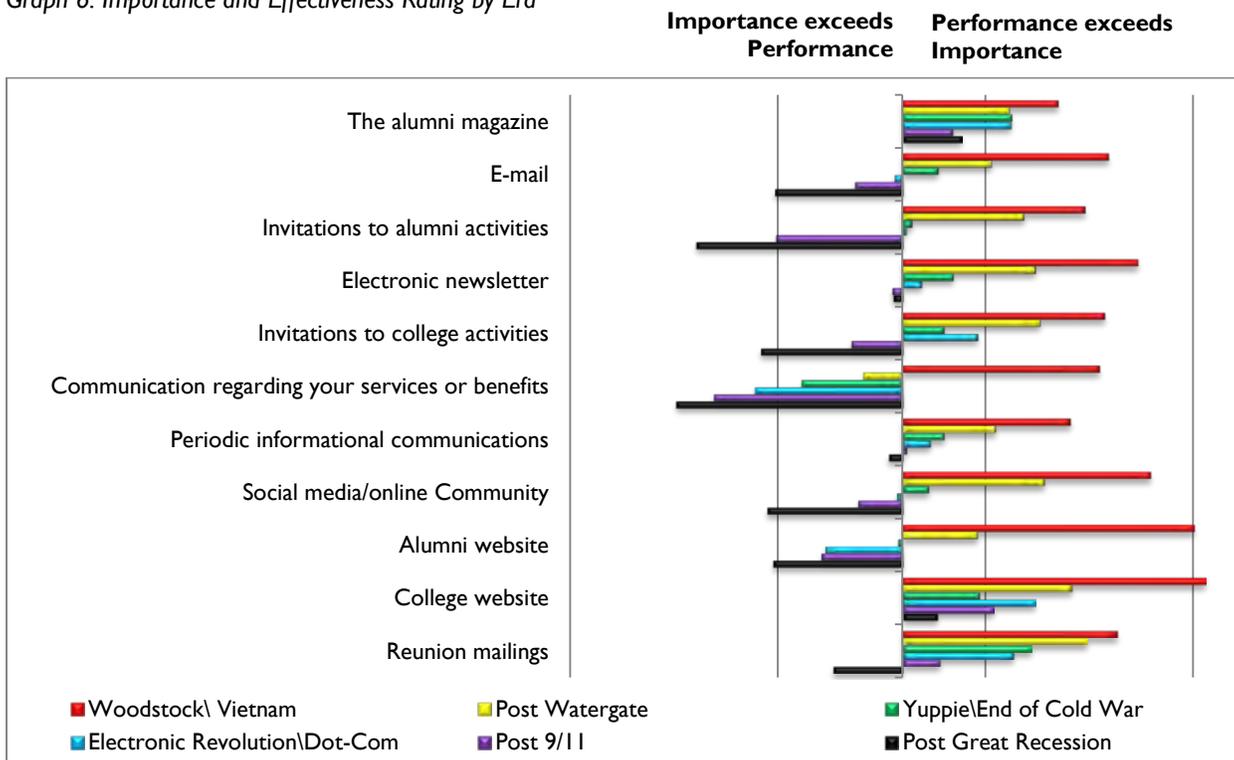
Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

In rating the importance of various communication methods and the College's effectiveness in utilizing these techniques, similar to the 2011 Babson results, alumni respondents reported that the largest gaps between importance and effectiveness are in the following communications:

- “invitations to alumni activities,”
- “communication regarding services or benefits,” and
- “alumni web site,”

Worth noting is that the results do show an improvement in performance from 2011. Notable too is that alumni respondents who graduated prior to 1980 reported higher levels of effectiveness across all types of communication methods especially the “college web site,” the “alumni web site,” and “reunion mailings,” while alumni who graduated in 2001 or later are most critical of the College’s effectiveness in employing multiple communication methods, including “email”, “invitations to alumni activities,” and “invitations to college activities,” “social media/online community,” and “alumni web site” (see *Graph 6*).

Graph 6: Importance and Effectiveness Rating by Era



Source: © PEG, Ltd. 2015

Alumni were also asked to rate the importance of specific content and Babson's performance in providing the content in its various communication methods. The largest gaps between importance and effectiveness are in “alumni stories, news, and achievements,” “research stories, news and achievements,” and “class notes.” This is comparable across era, with the most recent classes being the most critical of the College communicating this particular content. Respondents also noted that Babson’s performance on sharing “message from the president on college mission and priorities” and “student stories, news, and achievements” exceeded importance. In general, this is true across era as well.

The survey also solicited feedback about the Babson person (faculty, staff, student, or alumnus/a) and the Babson program or activity that “had a special impact on your student experience.” Nearly seventeen hundred (N = 1,691) alumni respondents commented on a Babson person and how this individual(s) shaped their student experience; these comments will be shared individually with faculty/staff in summer 2015. Additionally, 1,635 of the alumni respondents shared comments about a program or activity that impacted their experience. The top 10 programs/activities that had the most impact on student experience are noted in *Table 4*.

Table 4: Top 10 Programs/Activities that had the Most Impact on Student Experience

Program/Activity	#
Class	201
Athletics	184
Student Organization	127
Entrepreneurship	107
Greek Life	100
FME	71
MCFE	70
Study Abroad	61
CLTP	40
Babson MBA	35
BCAP	35

### Donor Perceptions and Attitudes

In general, “current” and “lapsed” donors’ perceptions and attitudes about Babson, communication methods, and alumni activities are more favorable than those of “never” donors.

The most important considerations alumni include in their decision to give are “to attract and retain better faculty,” “[to obtain] higher school rankings,” and “to improve the effectiveness of employment services for new graduates.” Of note is that for alumni who graduated in 2001 or later, employment services, rankings, and knowledge of how gifts are used are the primary considerations for making a gift, while for alumni who graduated prior to 1973, the primary considerations for making a gift focus on the faculty and “quality of academics.”

The primary reasons “current,” “lapsed,” and “never” donors do not give or do not give more to Babson is that they believe “my money will make more of a difference to other organizations,” “other alumni are in a much better position to give to Babson,” and “currently, I can’t afford to make a gift to any charity.” These results are comparable with the 2011 Babson results.

Nearly fifty percent (48%) of contributors “currently [give] and plan to continue or increase” compared to 54% in 2011. Although 34% of non-contributors “never/do not plan to [contribute] in future” and 44% “have/do not plan to continue” compared to 38% and 37%, respectively in 2011, non-contributors do promote Babson to others at least “occasionally.” Forty percent (40%) of young alumni (classes 2009 and later) “have never [given] but plan to in future”.

### Next Steps

To accomplish its goals of continuing to strengthen alumni loyalty to and engagement with the institution, efforts on the following will likely yield positive results:

- Focusing alumni communications,
- Engaging younger alumni, and
- Tailoring engagement opportunities for various life stages.

More specifically:

- Customize alumni communications. The type of content alumni are interested in varies across era. As a result, creating the opportunity for alumni to customize content they receive from the College based on interests/preferences and/or former co-curricular activities (e.g. athlete, Babson Players, etc.) is paramount. To accomplish this goal, collaboration and coordination among several campus departments, including Advancement Services, the Alumni and Friends Network, Marketing, and ITSD, is necessary. Work is already underway on this initiative through the Alumni Portal.
- Enhance young alumni initiatives. Alumni who graduated within the last decade are more likely to promote Babson. Therefore, creating initiatives to engage them with their alma mater and re-connecting with the “people” that shaped their Babson experience is essential. As one example, extending personal invitations to faculty “favorites” to participate in Reunion and Homecoming may be a way to engage/re-engage young alumni with Babson. Also, making it a practice to share successful outcomes from events will help to further mobilize this population in support of Babson on multiple levels.
- Identify innovative ways to engage alumni “where they are at.” There is great diversity in the interests and availability of alumni to serve as participants and volunteers in the various Network offerings and furthermore, these interests and availability seem to vary at various life stages. Geographic location also plays a factor in level of involvement.

Considering all of these factors, it is important for the Alumni and Friends Network to leverage ETA® to both modify existing opportunities and to identify new ways to engage alumni. As one example, this year, Babson hosted the inaugural Babson Connect: Worldwide, an unprecedented opportunity for the global Babson community to gather and celebrate Entrepreneurship of All Kinds®. The Summit/Global Reunion, held in Cartagena, Columbia, featured several distinguished faculty speakers and prominent Latin American business leaders and engaged alumni from 13 different countries and 7 states. Building on the success and momentum of this year's Summit, plans are already under for Babson Connect: Worldwide 2016. As a second example, modifying the Undergraduate Alumni Admissions Interview Program to not only include Interview Days in select cities, but also feature a new process for interviews –the 'Starbucks' model, will enable alumni to meet Babson applicants at a time and place that is convenient for both parties in a public location; thus provide the opportunity to engage more alumni in support of Undergraduate Admission's recruiting efforts.

Implementation of these initiatives will yield a significant return on investment –alumni engagement as ambassadors, participants, leaders, and donors as well as support of the Alumni and Friends Network mission to “strengthen the global network and community of informed and engaged alumni and key stakeholders in support of Babson's global strategy.”

#### **Addendum: Demographics**

Alumni who graduated between 2001 and 2008 had the highest percentage of survey respondents (26%) (N = 525) and the second highest response rate [by era] (8%). Alumni who graduated prior to 1973 had the highest response rate (9%), however, they represented the second smallest number of respondents (N = 226). The Post-Watergate era (classes 1974 – 1980) had both the lowest response rate [by era] (6%) and the fewest number of respondents (N = 163).

Consistent with overall Babson alumni demographics, the majority of survey respondents are male (71%) and reside within 250 miles of campus (55%). Forty percent of respondents reside within Massachusetts, 45% reside out of state, and 15% reside in another country. Seventeen percent (N = 344) of respondents enrolled at Babson as an international student.

Consistent with overall donor status, “lapsed” donors represent the largest group of survey respondents; 58% (N = 1150). “Current” and “never” donors represented 17% (N = 335) and 26% (N = 514) of respondents, respectively. Worth noting is that there was a 51% decrease in the number of “current” donor respondents in 2015 and a 208% increase in the number of “never” donor respondents. However, the rate of return for “current,” “lapsed,” and “never” donors was comparable across the two survey administrations; 15%, 8%, and 5%, respectively.

We invite you to send us your comments and suggestions or to let us know if you are interested in serving as a volunteer. Please submit comments to [alumrel@babson.edu](mailto:alumrel@babson.edu).