

Growing and Engaging Leaders: Creating the AUCD Trainee Alumni Network

Shannon M. Haworth, MA and Benjamin R. Kaufman, MSW
Association of University Centers on Disabilities

Goal:
The AUCD Trainee Alumni Network will build a strong national alumni community by the continuing engagement of former and graduating trainees with the AUCD network.

Vision:
This community will be an organic connection with the national AUCD network and the wider disability community. This will be accomplished by creating opportunities for mentorship (mentor and mentee), information sharing, and networking.

Background

AUCD's 2015-2016 Strategic Map outlines five key priorities to strengthen the organization and network, engage the public, and expand our collective impact.

One of the five priorities is to *Expand and Strengthen Network Engagement and Collaboration*. An active alumni network can help achieve a number of goals related to this priority area. It will serve as a "professional home" for people trained in the AUCD network, be a constant source of information and support, and help centers and programs better leverage expertise in their states.

In 2015, AUCD conducted two assessments of graduating trainees to determine their interest in an alumni network and what their vision for it would look like. They were asked about platforms, potential benefits (e.g. directory, job board, continuing education), and dues.



Results

The most important function of this group (as reported by 93% of participants) would be to facilitate opportunities for mentors and mentees to connect around professional interests and expertise. And according to a second 2015 poll of trainees nearing program completion, 89% would like this group to help them gain additional access to leaders in their fields.

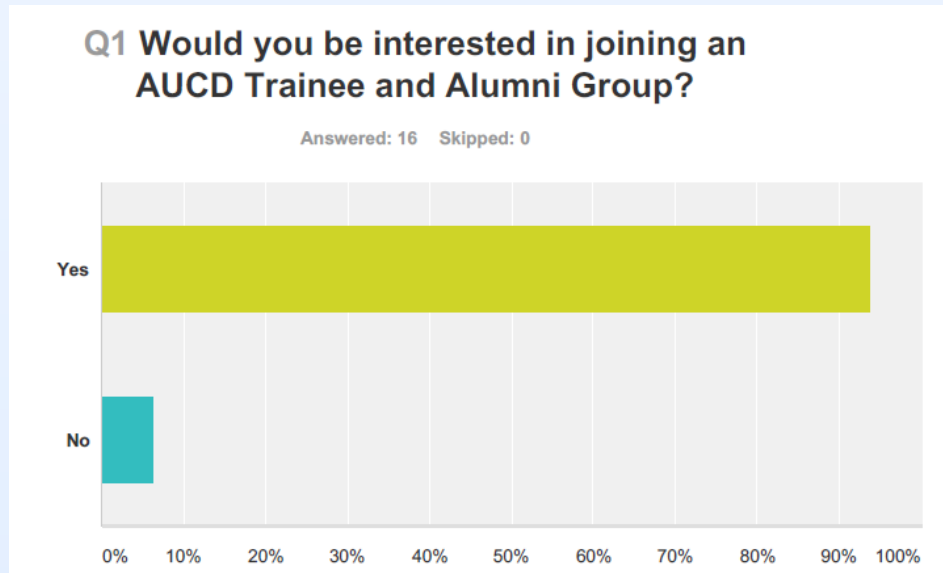


Figure 1.
Online Survey Results

Next Steps

AUCD has established an advisory committee that is now planning for the creation, implementation, and sustainability of an alumni group. This committee consists of central office staff, the current Virtual Trainee, and a variety of other network stakeholders.

During the AUCD conference, staff will meet with the National Training Directors Council and have an open call for former trainees (and faculty) who would like to be involved in a mentorship pilot. Staff and advisory committee members are also in the process of selecting a web-based platform where alumni will be able to connect with each other.