



THE
DENISON CLUB
for Students

The Pride of CASE V Awards Program

Category number and title:

2. Best Student Alumni Programming – AR

Name of Entry:

The Denison Club for Students

Name of Institution:

Denison University

Title of entry: **The Denison Club for Students**
Category number of title: **2. Best Student Alumni Programming – AR**
Institution: **Denison University**
Name and contact: Steve Crawford • Director, Alumni Relations
Denison University • PO Box 1831 • Granville, OH 43023
740.587.5717 • crawfords@denison.edu

General description of the entry:

Working in tandem with the Office of Alumni Relations (formerly the Office of Alumni Affairs), **The Denison Club for Students** (DCS) educates the student population about life beyond the campus. The student-directed board facilitates a variety of class-specific events to reaffirm pride in Denison and to generate life-long commitment to Denison. The University has approximately 2150 undergraduate students and roughly 30,000 alumni.

DCS was founded in the fall of 2006. The first president was hand-selected by the Office of Alumni Relations and charged with recruiting additional members for the board. The year ended having completed four events with a group of approximately eight (8) active members. In the 2007-2008 academic year, the club hosted four similar events. A more formalized structure was established including the election of a president and three (3) vice presidents as well as the recruitment of nearly 20 active members to the board. The **DCS** president also initiated event partnerships for the 2008-2009 academic year with the Black Student Union (BSU) and OUTLOOK, the gay-lesbian student group.

Branding is of utmost importance for both **DCS** and the Office of Alumni Relations. The office uses a block “DU” graphic on all printed materials. **DCS** has its own logo that incorporates the same “DU” graphic, underscoring the shared goals of both the student group and Alumni Relations.

Goals and objectives of the project:

DCS is a bridge between the student body and the Office of Alumni Relations. The group’s leaders introduce their peers to the opportunities available after Denison and work to ensure healthy and long-term relationships with Denison’s students, alumni, parents and friends across all generations. The group has three primary functions:

- 1) Build class identity
- 2) Educate current students about the activities and services available through the Office of Alumni Relations
- 3) Offer leadership development opportunities

DCS achieves these goals by participating in or hosting a variety of student events:

Campus Involvement Fair At the start of each academic year, the Office of Student Activities presents the Campus Involvement Fair. This event provides registered student organizations a formalized opportunity to recruit additional members. More than 100 groups participate annually, and a large percentage of the student population attends. In fall 2007, **DCS** board members, easily identifiable in their DCS-branded t-shirts, took

this opportunity to recruit additional members as well as to promote the Office of Alumni Relations. The group encouraged interested students to attend the first meeting of the year, while distributing free ice cream sandwiches and fudge bars. (After all, nothing attracts students like free ice cream on a hot September afternoon!) Nearly 70 students signed-up to be part of the email distribution list for planning meetings, and nearly 30 students attended the first meeting of the year. A great start for a newly forming organization.

Sophomore Class Event The first of three class-specific events targeted the sophomore class. The **DCS** board – the creative force behind the entire event – decided that access to an otherwise restricted venue would be a great draw. The chosen venue was “Brews, Too!”, the “mysterious” 21-and-over entertainment room in a local pub. The staff was instructed not to serve alcohol, even if a sophomore student was age 21 or older. The program was simple: a hamburger buffet with vegetarian options, music and plenty of socializing. The first 100 students in attendance received a class-specific t-shirt with their year of graduation and the DU brand imprinted. Board members, again wearing their **DCS** t-shirts, worked registration and mingled with guests. Formal, yet brief, comments were made to the large group, which included information on the Office of Alumni Relations. Sophomores left the event happy, having connected with fellow classmates and also learning a little more about Denison.

Junior Class Event The second event, also designed by the **DCS** board, targeted the junior class and built on the excitement generated from last year’s sophomore class event. In April 2008, members of the junior class were invited to an intramural field on campus for food, games and prizes. The first 100 students in attendance received a leather key chain with the year of graduation and the DU brand imprinted. Games included a water balloon toss and hot dog eating contest. One of the larger attractions was a dunk tank. (And yes, the water was much too cold for a mid-April evening event!) Prizes awarded included Chipotle gift cards, Brews gift certificates and Whit’s Frozen Custard gift certificates, all of which are favorites of the student body. Again, **DCS** board members wore their t-shirts, worked registration and mingled with guests.

Senior Class Event The third class-specific event, *Countdown to Commencement*, was the most formal of all **DCS** events. Seniors were invited to an evening reception, which featured high-end hors d’oeuvres, a string quartet and a champagne toast. (A non-alcoholic option was available to all guests; those under age 21 were not permitted to drink alcohol.) The president of Denison offered remarks on the importance of remaining connected to the University, and the vice president of Institutional Advancement formally welcomed new graduates into the Society of the Alumni by offering a toast. For those in attendance, three (3) free 5th Reunion registrations, currently valued at \$175, were raffled off. All seniors were given luggage tags with the Denison Clubs brand imprinted as parting gifts.

Reading Day Event The final event of this year was on reading day, the day prior to the start of spring semester finals. *I’m At My Whit’s End!* was named after and held at a local frozen custard store. Recognizing that students may need a quick study break, free

custard was given to any Denison student who visited the store between Noon and 6 pm. **DCS** board members, once again in their **DCS** t-shirts, were onsite in one-hour shifts to thank each of the 750 students who attended and to offer support for upcoming finals.

Description of how the project fits into overall institutional and/or advancement goals:

DCS was designed intentionally to mirror regional programming sponsored by the Office of Alumni Relations. These regional groups, known as The Denison Clubs, provide opportunities for alumni, parents and friends to connect in cities throughout the United States and abroad, at nearly 80 club events each year. The work done by **DCS** with the student body provides an invaluable foundation for insuring healthy and long-term relationships that reaffirm pride in Denison and keep individuals connected to Denison.

The program's name, **The Denison Club for Students**, also was intentionally selected to provide a seamless transition from student to alumni. Regional clubs are called "The Denison Club of [insert city/region name]." Examples include the Denison Club of Chicago or the Denison Club of Central Ohio. The goal is to familiarize students with the Denison Clubs name and brand while still on campus, consequently making club activities less mysterious upon graduation. Using the theory that if alumni know what to expect at an event, they are more likely to attend, more likely to remain connected with Denison and more likely to provide institutional support through volunteering opportunities and regular financial giving.

Audience:

The target audience is future alumni. Current students are excellent at networking amongst their peers, and the program built on that expertise by educating current students about opportunities to stay connected with Denison and other Denisonians following graduation.

Total number of professional and support staff who worked on the program:

The club is run with the support of one full-time administrator and one full-time support staff member, each devoting far less than five (5) percent of their respective work week to **DCS** activities. The administrator is the primary liaison with the student leaders and states the charge to the group members. This person also confirms logistical arrangements for events, approves messaging (i.e. marketing, etc.) and staffs each event to insure quality and safety. The support staff member sends email invitations, manages the registration process and prepares necessary supplies (i.e. nametags, guest lists, etc.) for each event.

Program budget:

The Office of Alumni Relations earmarks approximately \$14,000 annually for **DCS** activities and gifts. **DCS** is an officially recognized student organization and has applied for funding from the Denison Campus Governance Association (DCGA) for the 2008-2009 academic year. The group received an initial award of approximately \$3000 for specific events, with the final confirmation of the amount expected at the start of the academic year.

Any special circumstances or challenges faced:

DCS gained recognition as an official student organization, having submitted an application with all appropriate signatures. This recognition allows the group to make reservations under its own name, rather than through Alumni Relations, as well as to participate in the annual Campus Involvement Fair.

The greater challenge came in applying for funding from the Denison Campus Governance Association (DCGA). DCGA required an official constitution for **DCS**, which at the start of the year, **DCS** did not have. Through meetings with Student Affairs professionals as well as student representatives of DCGA, the first **DCS** constitution was submitted ... and promptly rejected. Fortunately, only minor revisions were required, and the second submission was approved.

With an approved constitution, **DCS** applied for funding to cover three class-specific events, the reading day study break at Whit's and the proposed joint venture with BSU, for a total of five (5) events. Only two of the event proposals received financial support from DCGA for the 2008-2009 academic year. At the final DCGA meeting of the year, the president of DCGA vetoed all appropriations given to student organizations. Revised awards to all student organizations are pending, as of this printing.

Documented results, measurements of effectiveness:

Name-recognition is one of the greatest measures of success for **DCS**. Students not only identify the **DCS** logo but are starting to anticipate class-specific events. For example, at the 2007 Campus Involvement Fair, students remembered the "DU" graphic from the first "I'm at my Whit's End!" event, and eagerly exclaimed, "You are the Whit's people!" In addition, several members of the junior class asked **DCS** board members in advance about the date for their next class function. Although the numbers of inquiries is not statistically significant, it does show anecdotally that students are making small, albeit important, connections.

Attendance is the second measure of success. The sophomore event for fall 2007 had an anticipated attendance of 150. In reality, more than 180 students attended the function ... a good news/bad news scenario. It was good that many people attended, but not so good that not enough food was prepared. A similar situation occurred for the junior class event. Reservations put the event at 100 guests, but nearly 150 students attended. Fortunately, the food lasted a bit longer for this event. And for the reading day event, more than 750 students took advantage of the free frozen custard.

The final measure of success is the steady influx of new members for the **DCS** board. Each event generates heightened interest. The 2007 sophomore event alone generated at least 20 individuals who expressed interest in working with the club. While not all of them persisted throughout the year, it is clear that these events increased the awareness and reputation of **DCS**.