

Toledo Alumni Magazine

6c: Best Alumni/Institution Magazine (10,000 FTE and up)

The University of Toledo

**Submitted by Cynthia Nowak (executive editor) – University of
Toledo Office of Communications – MS 949, 2801 W. Bancroft St.,
Toledo OH 43606**

419.530.8956 cnowak@utnet.utoledo.edu

As the University of Toledo magazine with the widest distribution, Toledo Alumni Magazine continues to walk the line between alumni and institutional publication, its goals and objectives defined by this duality. A 2006 merger between the university and the Medical University of Ohio still plays a large part in determining content, with STEM-discipline research stories often front and center.

At the same time, we strive to maintain our alumni content, as reader surveys indicate a strong preference for stories of that type.

With a mission to “to improve the human condition; to advance knowledge through excellence in learning, discovery and engagement; and to serve as a diverse, student-centered public metropolitan research university,” UT seeks greater connectivity with alumni, state and regional legislators, businesspeople, donors and potential donors, and corporate partners. Some negative emotions that immediately followed the merger and threatened that connectivity were those of alumni who felt the merger was an affront to the UT or the Medical University they knew. Those sentiments seems to have calmed, although the three issues entered here were still taking a more aggressive approach to its strong UT/strong community pieces. Thus the two “testosterone covers” of these entries.

The Spring 2008 issue signals a return to a softer approach, though we continue our emphasis on strong UT/strong community stories.

Increasing enrollment is another UT goal — the magazine's stronger focus on its areas of academic strength is also intended to make the publication a recruitment tool. That was also the thinking behind the Fall 2007 issue with its cover series of successful young alumni profiles.

Thus, goals of the magazine support those of the university:

- showcasing the latest research projects and various institutes (especially those that directly engage the community or have international applications);
- showing the university as an excellent educational venue where students can obtain the knowledge they need to succeed anywhere they choose to pursue their careers;
- fostering pride in the accomplishments of alumni (and by extension the university);
- uniting its Main and Health Science Campus alumni by pointing up the positives of the merged institution.

Approximately 75 percent of the content of the enclosed issues of Toledo Alumni Magazine was produced by three professional staff: one editor, one designer and one photographer, none of whom work exclusively on the magazine. The editor decides on nearly all content, working from very general suggestions of higher administration. Our associate editor and contributing writers are able to devote only limited time to the magazine. Occasional freelance writers are used (perhaps 5 percent), and we've re-established our faculty essay. Freelance photographers for out-of-state stories are used about 10 percent of the time; more

often, budget considerations push us to asking long-distance alumni to provide photos.

One important note: the Winter 2008 issue includes the UT Foundation annual report, a practice established to reduce that institution's mailing costs. Because the staff of Toledo Alumni Magazine had no control over either the editorial content or the design of that report, I'm asking that you consider only the magazine portion of that issue in your evaluation.

Being that UT must by law choose the least expensive print house among those who submit bids, the budget (printing, photography, graphics) for the 2007-2008 print cycle (three issues) was \$148,000 (calculation takes into account only the magazine portion of the Winter 2008 issue), or approximately \$1.40 per copy.

As the feelings of goodwill generated by university magazines are notoriously difficult to quantify, a system of regular surveys has been in place for three years. Responses show features either read or skimmed by 90 percent (on average) of the respondents. University representatives continue to receive a good deal of positive reaction from alumni, especially those working with development officers. Many have said that the expanded (from 32 pages in 2005) and university-focused magazine reminds them of the publications of their other, Ivy alma maters. Cost considerations, however, have forced UT to reduce the size by eight pages, beginning this fall.