Notes from discussion are based on the two main questions posed to the alumni engagement working group. Those in attendance included, community members and alumni, staff, alumni association board members, and students.

1. As the oldest and largest university in San Diego, the university has over 240,000 alumni. Many of these alumni are prominent community leaders in the region and across the nation. Moreover, our alumni participate extensively in university events, especially athletics. At the same time, our alumni annual giving rates are relatively low. What initiatives can we pursue to strengthen our alumni network and increase alumni annual giving?

It is hard to get alumni to reconnect and give for the first time. Some ideas discussed to help re-engage alumni included:

- Hosting a lecture series on broad topics (marketing, engineering, etc.) to get alumni back to campus, involved and heard.
- Host watch parties for football games and other sporting events.
- Have mixers so that connections between Aztecs can be built. This is especially important for new grads. Providing them with this opportunity will lead to them to give back.
- Use social media, such as LinkedIn and Facebook to engage alumni. This can be a useful tool to reach alumni from afar.
- Personalize their stories when alumni give back. This will be beneficial to other alumni, giving them something to relate to and motivation to give.
- Target small groups of alumni based on their campus involvement as students and develop messages that will be potent for them.
- Create events that will bring alumni back to campus and expose them to campus traditions, thus giving them the nostalgic feeling that will re-energize them.

Possible reasons why alumni do not give:

- Lifetime members of the SDSU Alumni Association (those that paid $500 to become life members of the association) may feel that because they paid their membership dues, that they do not need to donate to the university.
- Alumni and students with conservative views feel isolated and want to have a stronger voice. They won’t feel inspired to give until they feel there is a bigger conservative push on campus.
- SDSU used to be a commuter school, which prevented students from getting involved in campus traditions. They do not hold a strong connection to the university and thus do not feel a need to give.
- Many alumni say they have never been asked to donate. SDSU should be more aggressive in asking alumni to donate.

Additional comments made:

Alumni need to reach out to their own networks to get their friends, family, coworkers, etc. back into the fold of the university. Alumni should encourage those in their networks to give.

It is important to build a culture of philanthropy among the students. The importance of giving should be communicated to students consistently so that they feel more compelled to give as alumni. Faculty should share the message of giving with students as well. Even giving a small amount will make a difference and will build loyalty.

2. Great universities create powerful networks in which university alumni support each other professionally. This approach helps students obtain employment and alumni prosper in their professional pursuits. What initiatives can we pursue to support the development of networks that will support the “Aztec Family”?

- Create an alumni directory to help students connect with alumni in their desired professional field. It can help them build relationships with alumni, which can lead to mentorship, informational interviews and possibly employment. SDSU currently has the Aztec Leadership Network, http://go.sdsu.edu/leadershipstartshere/businessmap.aspx
- Leadership certificate program at SDSU – new program developing at SDSU that will create an opportunity for students to be mentored by alumni as part of their certificate program.
- It is just as important to get students out into the community as it is to get alumni back to campus. Having students meet with working professional will help them build their networks.

Written feedback provided by attendees:

- Alumni activities could be planned with more intention of connecting alumni with current students (more interactive).
- Broaden the definition of “giving” to include ways other than by monetary means.
- To get alumni back to campus, have discount parking or special parking area for paid alumni members.
- Add young alumni to alumni association board.