

Alumni Research Project
Annual Report
2013-14

This is a summary of our accomplishments and findings from the 2013-14 school-year in meeting with alumni throughout the US to discuss their ongoing life purpose journey and the extent to which their Pepperdine University education has helped them with their personal faith and life-purpose journey. This represents the work of Drs. Cindy Miller-Perrin and Don Thompson and their undergraduate research assistants Lexi Howerton and Danielle Shilling.

We wish to express our gratitude to President Benton for supporting our work over this year and the four years to come. We maintain a research email address for any and all queries: alumni.research@pepperdine.edu.

2013-14 Highlights

We held two focus group dinners: May 4, 2014 in Malibu in the Weisman Museum and June 21 at the Paramount hotel in Seattle.

Our May event brought a group of 14 Alumni and spouses to campus. We enjoyed dinner together followed by a taped 90 minute focus group session. Two weeks after our event, we sent the attendees a follow-up spiritual autobiographical survey invitation.

Our June event brought a group of 10 Alumni and spouses to the Paramount Hotel in downtown Seattle. We enjoyed dinner together followed by a taped 90 minute focus group session. Two weeks after our event, we sent the attendees a follow-up spiritual autobiographical survey invitation.

These are highlights from our data gathering at both events:

Focus Group Discussion

How are you going about finding your life purpose?

One major theme emerged - life purpose shows up in unexpected and unplanned ways and represents an ongoing journey. Life purpose discernment and achievement are not destinations, but represent processes. Life purpose continually transforms as life unfolds. Significant life changing events that our alumni experienced tended to lead them toward a sense of life purpose they embraced but had not planned in advance. These events include: career changes, moving into a field they did not pursue at Pepperdine, medical emergencies, and interaction with a mentor who led them in a direction they had not originally chosen - most alumni reported that their present life purpose was not what they had expected when they completed their education at

Pepperdine. Yet, because of their broad educational experience at Pepperdine, they were able to embrace the changes they experienced.

How has your time at Pepperdine helped you in your time after college?

Pepperdine helped alumni during their postgraduate years in a variety of ways. Alumni experiences during their time at Seaver College equipped them with the ability to deal with conflict, gave them a sense of peace in life, and challenged them to think critically and apply this analysis to their evaluations of life purpose. Though each alumnus has a different story to tell, their common response was: I desire to actively pursue and engage with my life purpose.

Are there things you would change about your time at Pepperdine?

Alumni would have changed their experiences at Pepperdine in several ways. A few of these changes included taking advantage of the study abroad program, getting more involved in the local Malibu, L.A. County community, and exploring more opportunities inside and outside the classroom.

What We Have Learned about Alumni

Alumni like to get the chance to spend time together discussing life after college, comparing notes on life experiences and life changing events.

They appreciate the university reaching out to them for feedback. It is gratifying for them to have the chance to give back to their alma mater.

Each one has a unique story that they want to share with us and university.

Pepperdine makes a significant impact on them - through their faculty mentors and their international programs experiences.

The question of life purpose never disappears. We deal with it throughout our entire lifespan

2014-15 Plans

We are now working closely with Matt Ebeling in the Seaver Alumni office in planning to conduct three focus groups for the coming year: Ventura County Alumni - November 15, Dallas Alumni - in late spring 2015, and San Francisco Bay Area Alumni - in summer 2015.