New alumni group hopes to improve ranking

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A new alumni group hopes to improve the Freeman School's national ranking by reaching out to recent graduates.

The Freeman 50 is the brainchild of Edward Crawford (MBA '08, MGM '09), who says he was inspired to start the group after seeing the success that other schools had had with initiatives such as class agent programs.

"We have alumni who love Freeman and want to come back to New Orleans all the time, but they're not connected to the school," says Crawford. "I started talking to some recent alumni and people at the school about how to fix that, and the idea just grew from there."

Crawford says the mission of the group, which held its first meeting in March, is to improve the quality of the Freeman MBA brand, and since rankings are the most visible way to value an MBA program, it made sense for the group to focus its initial effort on improving the Freeman School's ranking.

The Freeman 50's first initiative is to launch a class agent program to maintain connectivity with MBA alumni and improve the percentage of alumni giving, a significant factor in national rankings. The idea behind the program is to assign two alumni from each MBA class to help maintain contact information for the class and keep track of how many members of the class have made a donation. By leveraging the close relationships that exist within each class, Crawford says the Freeman 50 can help the school build closer ties with alumni and, ultimately, increase the percentage of alumni supporting the school.

"The way giving works is through classes and programs," Crawford says. "It's about relationships-‘I know these people and I want to donate to my class and have my class have some ownership.'"

At the class of 2009 graduation dinner at Muriel's in May, Freeman 50 members Porter Nolan (MBA '08) and Emily Mitchell (MBA '07) spoke to graduating students about the group and got the members of the class to sign pledge cards agreeing to give a fixed amount to Freeman for each of the first five years following their graduation, the first time Freeman graduates had ever made such a commitment.

Crawford says the Freeman 50 also hopes to work with the Career Management Center to bring more recruiters to campus and to create a scholarship fund to attract more top-quality candidates to the MBA program.

The Freeman 50 currently includes five alumni from the class of 2007 and five from 2008, with members representing organizations including UBS, TXU, Shell, the Idea Village, Ernst & Young, JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs. Crawford says the goal is to add five new members from each subsequent MBA class based on nominations from students and recommendations from the Career Management Center.

"I think we really hit the ground running with this effort," Crawford says. "We don't pretend we're going to do a lot of things or raise a ton of money. We're going to focus on a few small initiatives and try to maintain connectivity between the school and alumni because, ultimately, that connection is more important than any donation."