

you might think. This is not necessarily a bad thing—many colleges and universities depend on the generosity of alumni school spirit to survive—but it is something you should know.

Okay, so you're an alumnus. What are you going to do about it? Well, if you're like most graduating (or soon-to-be-graduating) students, you'll likely run and hide for the next five to ten years. "It usually takes about ten years," admits Terri O'Shea, associate director for classes at the Vassar College Alumni Association. "The young alums come back to campus to visit, but it's the ones in their thirties who really make an effort."

You can, of course, make an effort to get involved before then. Many of you are already active in campus organizations—student government, concert planning boards, campus newspapers—making vital contributions to your student community. Most universities rely on a continuation of that involvement from this same group long after graduation. And, for others less involved, many schools have initiated giving programs for undergraduates, while many others have called on students to solicit alumni contributions over the phone, in their spare time.

"I think you find we hear from people who were active as students, and people who were not so active as students," says Sue Burris, assistant editor of the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor) Alumni Magazine. "But it does take a while for anyone to get involved. I think students get kind of nostalgic, and the people who had a particularly good time in college, whether they were active or not, find they want to keep some kind of connection. People want to return what they got from college. They want to keep a connection to those days that were particularly carefree."

Carefree? You might want to quibble with Burris on that one, but you do get the point.

We talked earlier about how your college career probably began with a freshman orientation week, but there is no equivalent on the other side of the revolving door. As ever, *The American Express Real Life Planner* is out to provide useful information regarding your post-campus life; below you'll find almost everything you'll need to know to enter the ranks of alumni with your heads held high:



Make sure your school knows who you are, what you're doing and where to find you. Alumni associations can't keep you adequately informed of upcoming events of interest if they're still sending notices to "the parents of...." And, since many of you have or will take advantage of some type of alumni career counseling program, you might someday want to return the favor by offering advice and direction to a

graduating student looking to enter your field. But you can't help a graduating student looking for work in your area unless that student knows where to find you, and that student won't know where to find you unless you keep your alumni listing up-to-date.



Don't feel pressured to give money right away, even though you'll soon be on the receiving end of dozens of inopportune phone calls, imploring you to contribute to a capital campaign or fund drive. If you do feel like giving, try to do so on the university's schedule, and not on your own. Often a capital campaign will have a matching-gift program in place with a sponsoring company, or a particularly wealthy alumnus. Take the time to find out about current or future fund drives to make sure the school gets the most out of your money. If you don't feel like giving, save yourself and the imploring student a good deal of time and trouble by stating your intentions up front. A simple, "Thank you for calling, but I'm not in a position to donate money right now; I would like to give in the future, and I will call the school when I'm ready," is often enough to get you off the hook (and the phone back on the hook) with a clear conscience.



If you want to get involved in alumni activities on a limited basis, offer to interview prospective students from your hometown, or from the area of your current residence. Most of you probably sat on the other side of the table in an alumni interview as a high school senior, and now that the tables have turned you might want to help a prospective student gain some perspective from your experiences.



Try to attend at least one Homecoming weekend in the first few years following graduation. You never really know how you feel about your undergraduate days until you give yourself a chance to rekindle that old school spirit. If you're still living within a reasonable distance from your school, you'll likely find Homecoming a pleasant way to pass a fall weekend. Go. At least once. Even if your old crowd (which is now still your current crowd) doesn't go for that sort of thing.



Contribute to the alumni notes section of your school publications. If you're like most recent graduates, the first thing you'll turn to when you start receiving alumni magazines and newspapers will be the section highlighting the rites of passage of your former class-

mates—careers, advanced degrees, marriages, births, second mortgages. Let them hear from you every once in a while; after all, turnabout is fair play.

CASE IN POINT

When he was elected to the Board of Governors of the University of Michigan (Flint) Alumni Society, Walter Lucas III saw his new position as an opportunity to work on behalf of the school that had worked so hard for him. As a 1979 graduate of the school, and a 1984 graduate of the University of Michigan Dental School (Ann Arbor), Lucas's continued commitment to the University of Michigan state school system is deep, and while many of his college friends have all but severed their ties with the school, Lucas sees his appointment as a chance to foster his college ties.

"I do feel a responsibility to the school," says Lucas. "They gave me my degree, and my dental degree, which allows me to make a living, and I am grateful for that. I know I paid tuition for my education when I was here, but I still feel I owe something to the school. I feel a responsibility to give something back." What he gives back amounts to approximately one evening per month for meetings, and another five to 10 hours per month for related events. "The time



commitment is not as much as some people would think," he says, "and I think that's what scares people off from getting involved."

Lucas, who also serves on the board of directors of the Urban League of Flint, and on the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, is clearly not one who is afraid to get involved, or scared off by any time commitment. "I feel it's important to make changes from within," he claims, "and sometimes that kind of thing takes time. Working for alumni groups means that I can give my input to make recommendations or changes or improvements. It means I can still have a say in the way things are done."

Most of Lucas's college friends have avoided any such formal continued relationship with the school. "It depends what kind of college experience you've had," he says of the