

Survey results offer insights from alumni

INFOGRAPHICS BY BILL SHANDER

Passionate & Proud *

The results of the college's recent alumni survey are in, and a few points are crystal clear: Trinity alumni are passionate about Trinity and proud of their alma mater; most have a mix of positive and negative feelings about the college; and the majority would like to be even more connected to Trinity, especially in ways that acknowledge who they are and what they want in an alumni experience.

Even before the data points were analyzed, those at Resonance Insights—the firm that conducted the survey—said that the unusually high response rate signaled a passionate group. Resonance received more than 2,500 responses out of the 18,300 surveys disseminated, the highest response rate Resonance has ever seen and much more than the expected 600 to 1,000 responses, which would have been enough to provide a valid sample. Moreover, those who completed Trinity's survey spent more time than expected on their responses, another sign that the audience is very engaged. Trinity alumni dedicated an average of 25 minutes to the task—with some taking as long as an hour—compared with the 15 to 20 minutes the survey

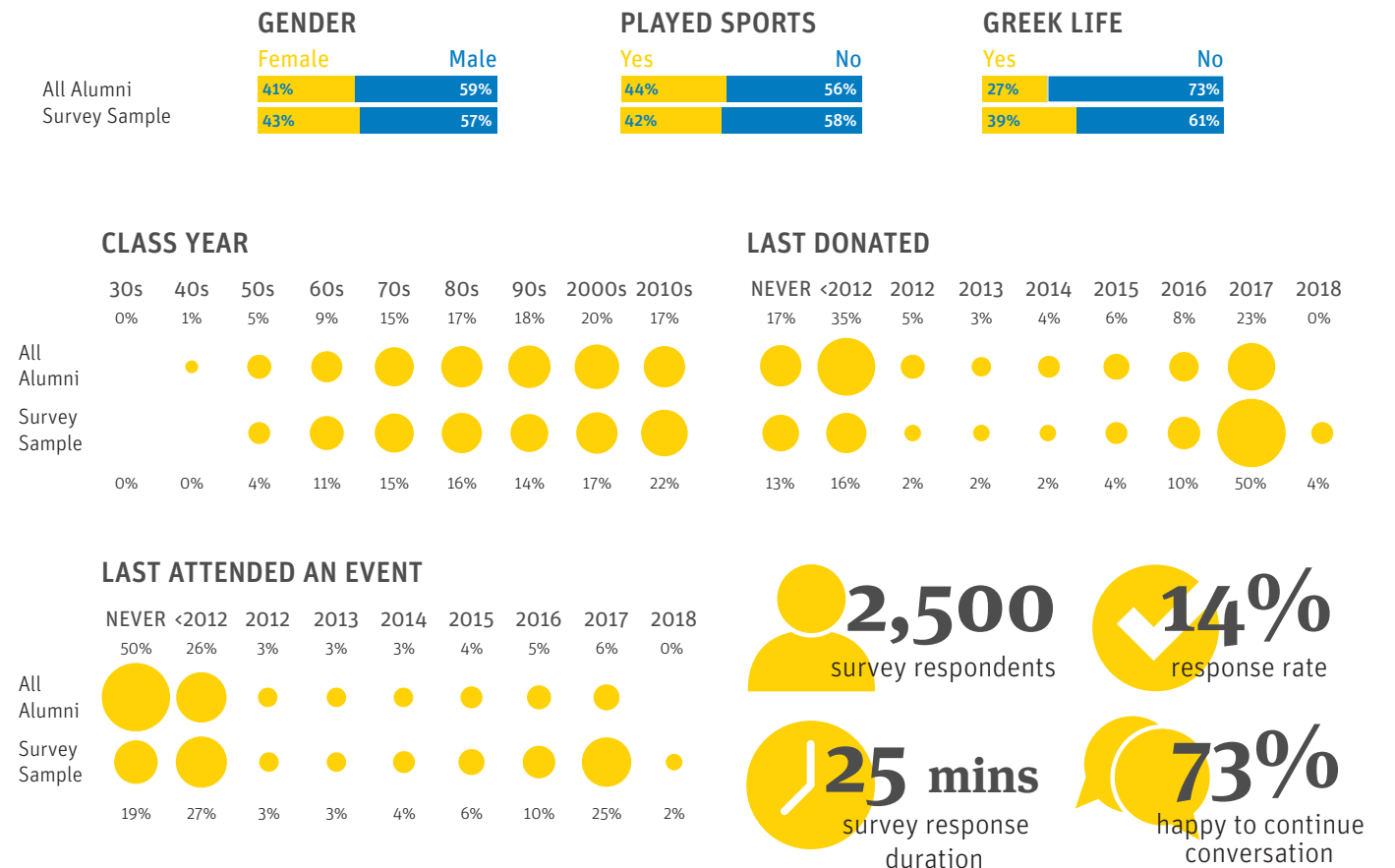
was designed to take. And three-fourths said they would be willing to do more in-depth survey work in the future, again showing their commitment.

Vice President for College Advancement **Michael Casey** says he was quite pleased with the response rate and the information that's been made available. "The depth and volume of responses are remarkable," Casey says, adding that all involved were struck by the consistency of responses across generations and demographic groups, as well as constituencies defined by activities while a student. He also notes the importance of the findings moving forward. "The results of this survey will be integrated into everything we do, including how we engage our alumni with the life of the institution."

To help our readers better understand the survey results, *The Reporter* asked data visualization artist Bill Shander to interpret several key data points. We then asked National Alumni Association President **Justin S. Maccarone Jr. '81, P'19**, Vice President for Communications and Marketing **Angela Paik Schaeffer**, and Casey to offer their insights.

* For more on the alumni survey, including a video of the livestreamed alumni survey presentation from Reunion Weekend, please visit commons.trincoll.edu/Reporter.

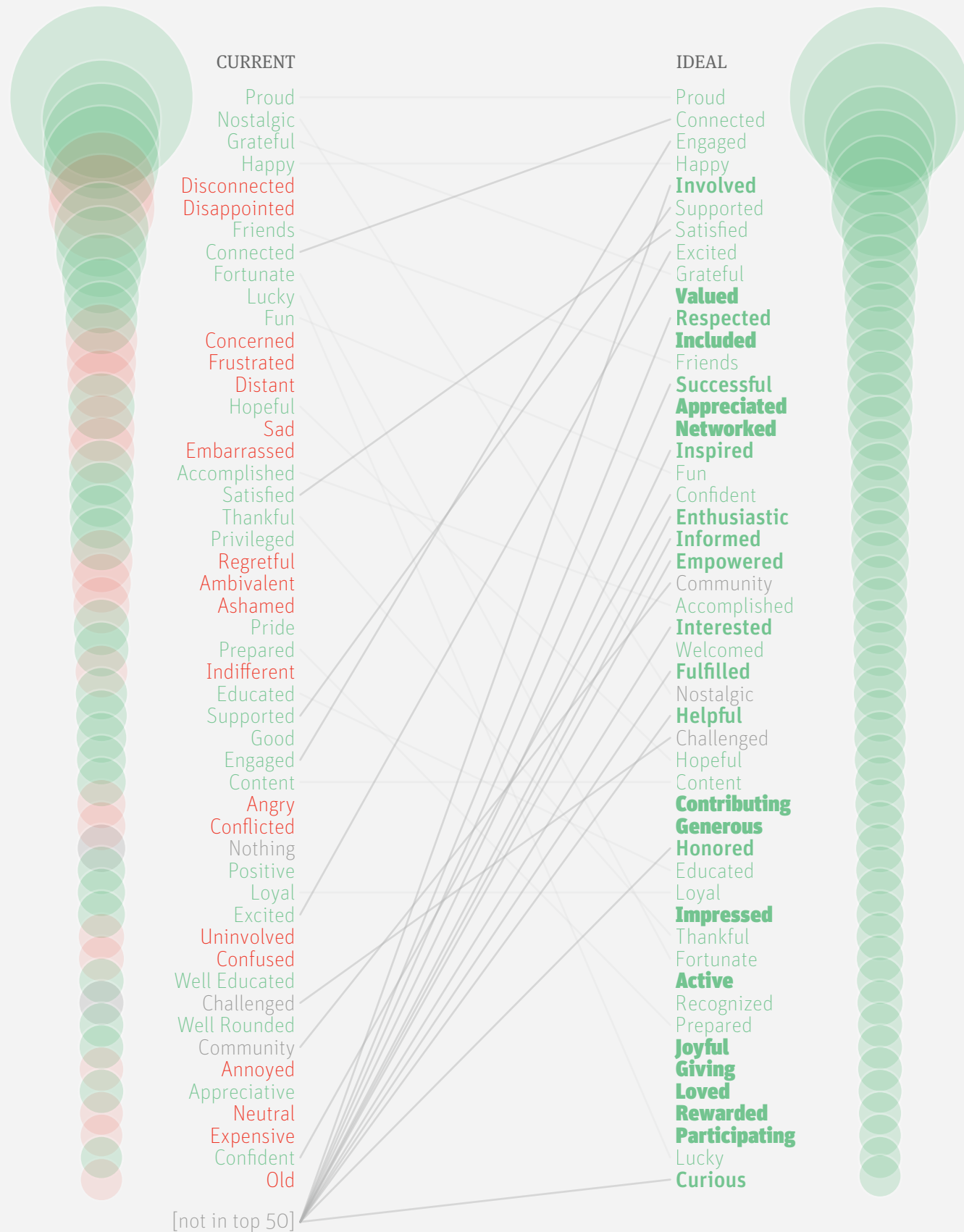
Who participated in the survey?



"We can see from the responses that folks wanted to be heard. One of the things that makes a small college special is that people *do* know who you are and they *do* care about you. That was, in fact, part of what prompted us to conduct the survey. We sensed that there was this pent-up desire to express thoughts, hopes, and concerns. I think we were right!"

—MC

(Thank you for participating!)



In their own words

“These words reveal that our alumni want to feel connected and to be involved. In its role as an intermediary between the alumni body and the college, the National Alumni Association needs to find ways to enhance the opportunity for alums to connect with Trinity and with one another and to promote opportunities for engagement.”

—JSM



When we asked respondents to describe in their own words their experiences as alumni, we got back a total of 200 words. By far, the most frequently used word—said by 837 people—was “proud.” Then we asked respondents to imagine—and describe in their own words—an ideal Trinity alumni experience. The two lists at left show the top 50 reported words, with each bubble representing the relative number of times a word was given. Green words are positive expressions, gray are neutral, and red are negative (hence the disappearance of red among the top 50 in the “ideal” scenario). Lines connect the words in each column so you can see how the feelings change from “current” to “ideal.” We’ve drawn attention to these changes in a variety of ways: The darker lines indicate words that have risen in rank order. The slightly bold text indicates words that have jumped from outside of the top 50 list, and the darkest bold words in the “ideal” didn’t appear in the “current” list at all.

A mix of emotions

Our alumni expressed more positive than negative feelings about Trinity overall, with nearly four times as many expressing all positive feelings (993 respondents/43 percent) than all negative (265 respondents/12 percent). A healthy contingent—fully 45 percent of respondents—expressed some mix of positive and negative emotions. In the visualization below, each dot is one respondent and is aligned across a horizontal axis according to the percentage of positivity the respondents displayed in their answers.

“The mixed feelings we discovered with this question show me that we have a real opportunity here to work with our alumni to make their experiences with Trinity as positive as possible.”

—JSM



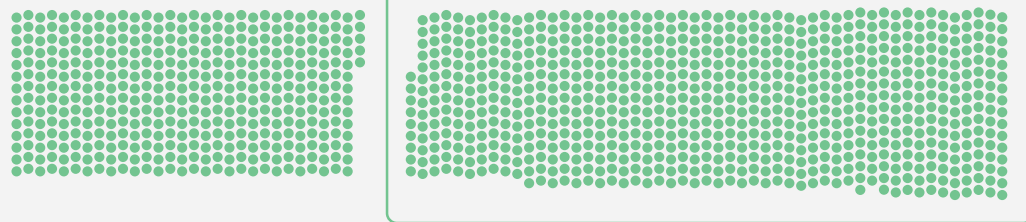
Passion and giving

Looking at alumni feelings and how those connect to whether people donated to the college recently, we see exceptionally passionate alumni, most of them positive, and giving rates that tell an interesting story. That is, only 65 percent of those whom we'd consider "enthusiasts" said they gave to Trinity last year, while 32 percent of those who expressed strong negative feelings said they gave.

"When you look at the giving rates, the opportunities are striking, both to increase support among our greatest champions and to engage those who, despite their unhappiness, continue to support the institution."

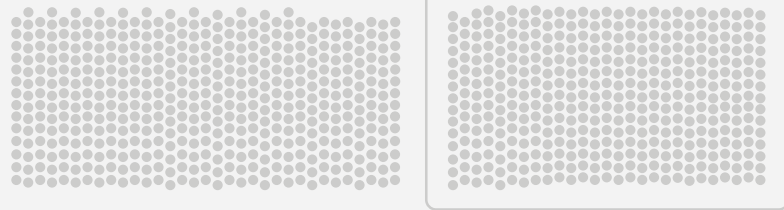
—APS

PASSIONATELY POSITIVE



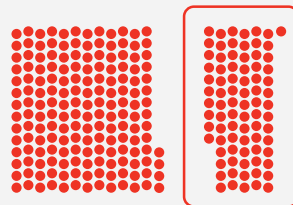
51% of survey respondents (1,173) can be considered "passionately positive."
65% of them (762) gave in 2017.

NEUTRAL/DISENGAGED



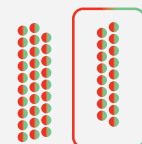
36% of survey respondents (878) can be considered "neutral."
48% of them (404) gave in 2017.

PASSIONATELY NEGATIVE



11% of survey respondents (253) can be considered "passionately negative."
32% of them (81) gave in 2017.

PASSIONATE BUT CONFLICTED



2% of survey respondents (46) can be considered "passionate but conflicted."
36% of them (17) gave in 2017.

Motivations

In analyzing what's behind alumni's expressed feelings about Trinity, Resonance Insights categorized their motivations into four categories (green=positive motivations; red=negative): Education/Friends (how they feel about the education they received, the relationships they developed); Self-Esteem/Career (whether they feel valued by Trinity, whether career connections and opportunities are realized); Connect/Participate (their feelings about the amount and quality of participation opportunities); and Reputation/Direction (how they feel about the general direction of the college or higher education generally, Trinity's national reputation, and more). The circles on the right are smaller than those on the left because fewer respondents answered those questions relating to their "ideal" feelings.

"These results show us that, in their ideal world, our alumni want us to engage them in ways that feel relevant and meaningful to their lives *today*."

—MC

