

**switchboard**

CASE Currents: “Next-Generation Networking” .....4

Kenyon College: “Flipping the Switch” .....8

Customer Case Studies.....10

Student and Alumni Success Stories.....14

Frequently Asked Questions.....18



From the beginning, Switchboard has been our passion project. We started as a group of alumni and students with a simple purpose: to bring true engagement to student and alumni communities.

We're honored to share that project with you now. Thank you for taking the time to learn more about Switchboard.

Since its inception, Switchboard has spread to schools across the United States and Canada. The connections that Switchboard has forged have launched careers, changed lives, and strengthened the bonds between students, alumni, and their alma maters.

We would be proud to support you, your institution, and your community with the genuine, high-impact engagement that only Switchboard can provide.

Please take a moment to review what we've prepared in the following pages and share it with your colleagues.

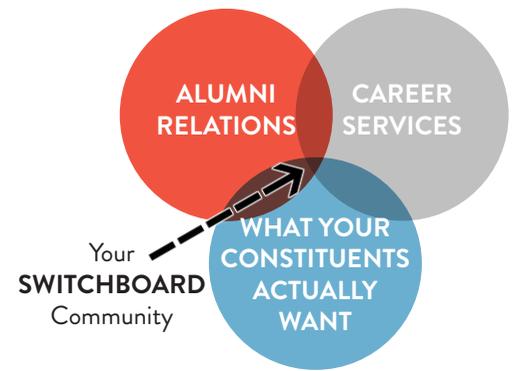
We look forward to connecting with you.



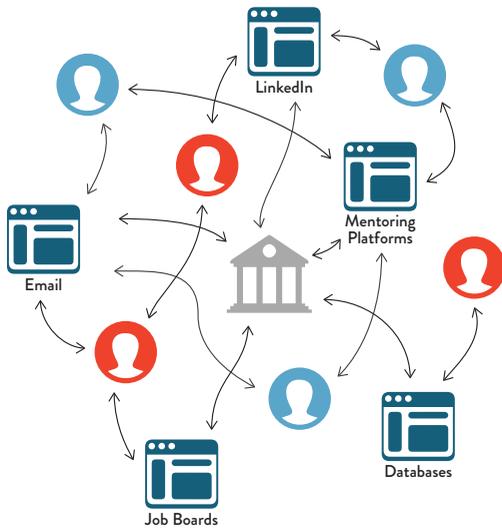
# switchboard

ALUMNI NETWORKS THAT DELIVER STUDENT ENGAGEMENT THAT WORKS

Switchboard is a community-driven online platform and app that connects students and alumni with each other to generate meaningful, recurring engagement.

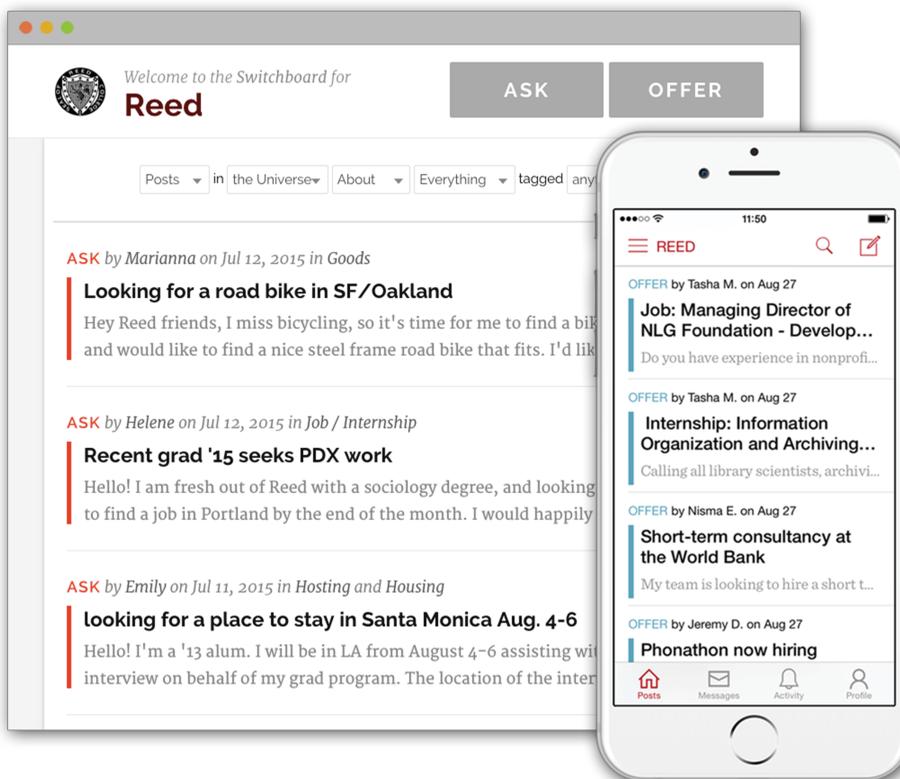
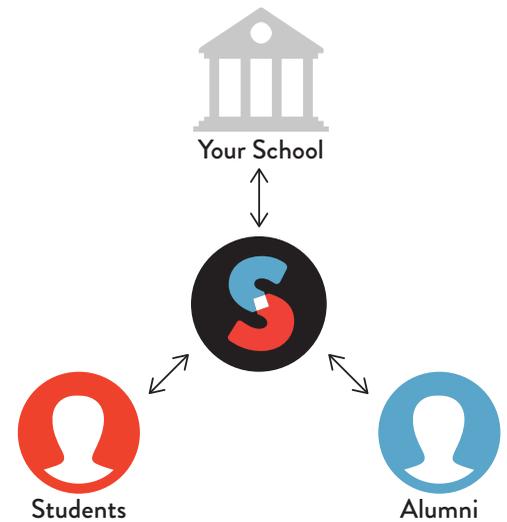


## BEFORE



Switchboard streamlines the process of networking to make your institution's network more valuable and accessible to students and alumni. By providing your constituents a valuable service, Switchboard doesn't just help them land jobs and exchange career advice—it extends the spirit of your community across the globe. In the words of one customer, "It's reunions all the time."

## WITH SWITCHBOARD



## HOW IT WORKS

On Switchboard, finding help and sharing opportunities are as easy as posting an "Ask" or an "Offer." Students and alumni get what they need. You earn their gratitude.

With a user-to-post ratio of less than 2-to-1, your Switchboard will be more engaging than your LinkedIn group ever was. Switchboard also includes a suite of analytics and moderation features that LinkedIn doesn't.

Other platforms achieve an average of 5% total community adoption. Switchboard sets a higher standard. Our customers see adoption upwards of 30%.

## OUR CUSTOMERS

REED COLLEGE

Kenyon College

 Portland State  
UNIVERSITY

 WILLAMETTE  
UNIVERSITY

Williams

OBERLIN  
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY

 ANTIOCH  
COLLEGE

DENISON  
UNIVERSITY

 CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY  
PORTLAND • OREGON

 University  
of Portland

 S|A|C  
EST. 1899  
St. Andrew's College

 CHEWONKI



“We surveyed alumni to see how often they were being contacted through the career adviser program and found that the majority had never been contacted at all. This was a huge missed opportunity. Switchboard casts the net much wider. It’s our network—on steroids.”

–Colleen Sump, Former Director of Parent & Alumni Engagement, Willamette University

## THE BENEFITS OF SWITCHBOARD

### ACTIVATE YOUR NETWORK

-  42% of all Switchboard posts are career-related.
-  56% of career-related posts are offers to help.
-  70% of career-related posts have positive outcomes.

### SERVE YOUR CONSTITUENTS

-  Provide students and alumni with a valuable tool.
-  Earn institutional loyalty in the long term.
-  Promote giving with a donation button.

### ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

-  Register ≥5% of your community in 12 months.
-  Reach alumni anywhere with our iOS app.
-  Track and communicate with specific user segments.



“All of the people I’ve connected with on Switchboard have been excited to help in whatever way they can. I show Switchboard off to friends from other schools and usually get a kind of jealous response like, ‘I wish my school had that.’”

–Caroline '14, Reed College alumna

# switchboard

If you want to strengthen your institution, engage your alumni, and give your students the network they deserve, get in touch!



Contact: Mara Zepeda, Co-Founder & CEO  
(617) 459-5617 [mara@switchboardhq.com](mailto:mara@switchboardhq.com)  
[@switchboardhq](https://www.switchboardhq.com) [switchboardhq.com](https://www.switchboardhq.com)



# **CASE CURRENTS: “NEXT-GENERATION NETWORKING”**

**“Switchboard is our network—on steroids.”**

**In this article, *CASE Currents* interviews  
Switchboard customers Reed College,  
Oberlin, and Willamette University about  
their success with the platform.**



COUNCIL FOR ADVANCEMENT  
AND SUPPORT OF EDUCATION®

[Home](#) > [Publications & Products](#) > [CURRENTS](#) > [CURRENTS Archive](#) > [2014](#) > [November/December 2014](#) > [Next-Generation Networking](#)



## Next-Generation Networking

*Alumni offices want a robust and engaged network. Alumni want connections, freebies, and a helping hand. Here's how one social tool—Switchboard—can build you a stronger and happier university community.*

By [Tara Laskowski](#)

[Sidebar](#)

©iStockphoto.com/Hulton  
Archive/Keystone View/FP

Griff Radulski had a problem: 11 chickens needed a temporary home while his landlord reseeded the backyard. A senior biology student at Oberlin College, Radulski kept the chickens as personal pets and also managed chickens from the Ohio institution. So he turned to Switchboard, an online bulletin board used by the Oberlin community. The site features two types of posts—offers and asks—and within days, Radulski was contacted by Kira McGirr, a 2006 Oberlin graduate, who offered her backyard as a kind of chicken hotel (in return, she received as many eggs as she wanted).



From Portland State University in Oregon to Williams College in Massachusetts, a growing number of institutions are adopting Switchboard as an alumni and student benefit. The site was created in 2012 by Reed College alumni Mara Zepeda (2002) and Sean Lerner (2010) as a volunteer project: a way to connect the Oregon institution's alumni, students, faculty, and parents. Now it's a business. The model is also expanding to communities beyond universities, from women bicyclists to meat sellers.

For alumni associations, Switchboard is a new way to serve and broaden their network and engage alumni. "Community is top of mind at Switchboard," Zepeda says. "We wanted to capitalize on the talents and generosity within higher ed."

No cat videos, political rants, filtered photos, or ads clutter Switchboard. It's just people helping people. Stephanie Bastek, a recent Reed graduate, snagged an internship at the Washington, D.C.-based *American Scholar* magazine from 11 time zones away in Southeast Asia, while Stephanie Chan, a current student at Willamette University in Oregon, found summer work creating media lists, writing pitches, and developing case studies at a San Francisco public relations consultancy.

"The success stories keep reinforcing that this works," says Mike Teskey, director of



alumni and parent relations at Reed. The numbers help, too. Since Switchboard launched at Reed, more than 3,400 users have posted more than 1,000 asks and more than 1,100 offers—requests and talents that might have gone unheard or untapped without a tool to communicate them. Oberlin's Switchboard adds an average of two dozen users each week, and half of those users immediately engage with the site.

When Zepeda served on Reed's alumni board, she saw an opportunity to directly connect with more people, beyond the campus borders. "Colleges do a great job," she says, "of hosting in-person events and connecting that way, but they don't always know how to serve their network—or have the time and resources to do so."

Alumni associations might struggle with how to advertise an alumnus's art gallery opening or assist students who are seeking a friendly face in a foreign city. In addition, universities may decide they cannot promote the numerous crowdfunding campaigns or benefit fundraisers that come their way—even though they generally wish to support them. "We had requests like this," Teskey says, "but we didn't always know how to fulfill them. Switchboard fills this need to serve our alumni faster by letting them help each other."

It also strips down barriers to communication. "Students are often intimidated by alumni and have a hard time taking that first step to contact them," says Colleen Sump, director for alumni and parent engagement at Willamette. "But there's something about this tool that makes it easier for that initial contact. Students are more willing to put [their requests] out there and see what they get back."



### Do We Need Another Social Tool?

Yes, Zepeda says. The biggest platforms are more concerned with mining users' data and selling advertising than connecting people. Professional networking tools like LinkedIn can help someone find an internship or job connection, but they're less helpful for finding a place to stay the night before a big out-of-town interview or crowdsourcing contacts with connections to a

certain industry or skill.

While alumni relations' databases can connect alumni to each other, those databases generally aren't user-friendly or intuitive. "Directories are problematic for many reasons," Zepeda says. "They are often out of date. They unnaturally silo the network. Generally, people don't find one another through a directory."

This was certainly true at Willamette, where many eager alumni were interested in talking with students but not easily able to make those connections. Alumni could sign up for a career adviser program, but it wasn't effective. Technology was partly to blame—with a clunky search system on the website, the process and the lack of results discouraged students and alumni. Students were also hesitant to contact alumni, whom they thought might reject them.



"We surveyed alumni to see how often they were being contacted through the career adviser program and found that the majority of people had never been contacted at all. This was a huge missed opportunity," Sump says.

With Switchboard, engagement levels have increased in just six months. "It casts the net much wider," Sump says. "It's really like that old switchboard model—if one person cannot connect you, chances are they'll know a friend or a family member who can. It's our network—on steroids."

### A Community for Young Alumni

For alumni professionals, engaging recent graduates is often the hardest task. New grads are not just starting out in their careers; they're also struggling with student loan

payments, relocating, and figuring out their lives. Giving back to their alma mater is often a low priority. But the demographics for Switchboard show that recent grads want to be engaged. At Reed, 34 percent of alumni using Switchboard are graduates from the past three years, and 60 percent of the current student body is registered for the site. Nearly 40 percent of Oberlin's users graduated in the past five years. These young graduates are sharing their expertise and generosity by giving advice on what courses to take, speaking frankly about a previous internship, or offering a student a free ride to the airport.

"Those on the younger end of the spectrum need a lot of help at this point—they're building their network, and they're in major discovery mode, but these individuals also have a lot to give," says Ma'ayan Plaut, manager of social strategy and projects at Oberlin.

## Engage First, Ask Later

Alumni helping alumni is great, but will Switchboard generate more interest in the institution? Will Switchboard users volunteer at university events or contribute to their alma mater because of their connection online?

Switchboard's founders are thinking seriously about these questions. Too many institutions ask for gifts without showcasing their value in facilitating alumni networks—that's one of the reasons Zepeda came up with Switchboard. "You have to lay a foundation first, invoke that generosity of spirit," she says. Basically, you have to step out of the way and let your network help itself.

Switchboard's setup works like this: The first year an institution implements the platform, it focuses on community engagement. After the second year, if the client wishes, the platform incorporates giving prompts in strategic places, such as when someone posts a success story. The idea is that if an institution can give more value through a well-connected network, it will garner more gifts in the long term.

"Switchboard is a give-back, get-back situation that we hope will indirectly lead to more engagement with our school," Sump says.

"It's a feel-good place," Teskey says. "I've heard people on campus saying, 'You should Switchboard it!' about all sorts of things. It's becoming a thing." But the true test of success for the Reed advancement team may come this academic year when it implements a "Give to Reed" button on the site: Then Switchboard's impact on financial gifts to the institution can be measured.

## Keeping the Community Coming Back for More



The biggest challenge for university Switchboards is keeping their network engaged. Even if users get results, they must keep returning to the platform for the community to thrive. Better email notification systems about asks and offers in key interest areas or locations might help users remember to check in to see how they can help, rather than just visiting the site when they need to make an ask.

Yet for those who find success—from professional development to help with yardwork—a connection has been made, a relationship has been started, and a link to the institution has been strengthened. "One of the greatest benefits of any college experience is the network you become a part of," Plaut says.

As for that temporary chicken coop setup at Oberlin? Not only did it give Griff Radulski's chickens a safe place to stay but it also turned into a learning experience for McGirr's son. "My toddler loves the chickens, holding the eggs, Griff, helping Griff, and the fact that the chickens poop," McGirr wrote on the Switchboard success board. "He talks about the chickens all day long and helping Griff, and again, that the chickens poop."

# KENYON COLLEGE: “FLIPPING THE SWITCH”

“Kenyon Nation has a new neighborhood, and  
it’s called Switchboard.”

In this news post, Kenyon introduces  
Switchboard to their community.

# Flipping the Switch

**From Kenyon News - July 9, 2015**

Kenyon Nation has a new neighborhood, and it's called [Switchboard](#).

Switchboard is an online communication platform with the potential to become a vibrant, virtual village square — a marketplace for goods and services, a nexus for jobs and internships, and a transportation hub. Alumni, faculty, parents, staff and students are urged to participate in the digital community crossroads that turns on an axis of “asks” and “offers.”

Students can *ask* for and alumni can *offer* an internship in New York City, a place to live in Brooklyn, a car to get there and advice on what to wear on the first day in the office. Alumni can *ask* for and a Kenyon professor can *offer* a rental home for Reunion Weekend. The organizers of the annual Earth Day Festival can pitch the healthy-living extravaganza on Switchboard.

Lost dog? Ask for help on Switchboard. Need a handyman? Get recommendations on Switchboard. Heading to San Francisco and looking for a great Italian restaurant? A Marina District foodie may respond on Switchboard. Need help pitching your science fiction manuscript to a publisher? You know what to do. In the hunt for a time machine? You're out of luck unless you're looking for a 1967 Ford Mustang and, if so, visit Switchboard.

This platform is a Kenyon-friendly cousin to familiar digital classified advertising sites and is intended to open new channels of communication, linking all corners of the Kenyon community. Everyone on the Kenyon email system can sign up at [switchboard.kenyon.edu](http://switchboard.kenyon.edu) to become a part of Switchboard. Your Kenyon password gets you in the game. Sign up with Google to link your accounts.

The Kenyon Switchboard has nine categories to help organize asks and offers: advice, events, goods, hosting and housing, internships, jobs, lost and found, rides and, if those don't meet your needs, “other.”

Switchboard is a clean, simple and searchable tool to reduce the torrent of email traffic that bedevils some in the Kenyon community. Along with the online calendar, Switchboard, in full flower, will supersede what the all-employee email stream has been doing since the early 1990s. The all-employee email is an endangered species at Kenyon, approaching obsolescence as a way to share information about campus-related activities, commerce and events.

To learn more about Switchboard, join President Sean Decatur and Scott Baker '94, associate vice president for [alumni](#) and [parent](#) engagement, for a Common Hour presentation Thursday, August 20, at 11:10 a.m. in the Olin Auditorium. Read more about Switchboard, including [answers to some frequently asked questions](#).

# CUSTOMER CASE STUDIES

“What’s not to like about Switchboard?”

We asked Reed College, Oberlin, and Willamette University why they love to use Switchboard to engage their communities.

# CASE STUDY: REED COLLEGE

## THE ALUMNI AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

Mike Teskey is the Director of Alumni and Parent Relations at Reed College, a liberal arts school in Portland, Oregon with 1,400 students and 18,000 alumni.



Mike and his team are integral parts of the Reed community and make countless connections between students and alumni.

His office needed a way to save time making these connections and cut down on repeat requests in their email inboxes.

Mike also wanted to increase young alumni engagement and connections across generations, and to offer parents a way to stay involved.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Since launching in October 2012, the Reed Switchboard has seen astounding engagement:

**97%** of the classes of 2013 and 2014 have signed up.

**62%** of users had never before been engaged by Reed.

## WHY SWITCHBOARD?

“I love the fact that Switchboard was borne out of a belief that Reed represents an ecosystem and that if someone has a need, there is likely someone out there in the Reed community who can successfully meet that need,” Mike says.

“I have long felt this was a missing element in how we communicate with one another.

“One aspect of our mission is to connect alumni to the college and with each other. If Switchboard can facilitate these interactions and be the forum in which Reedies experience positive and fruitful interactions, then that is not only mission related, but Reed’s role as the facilitator will hopefully redound to the college as well.

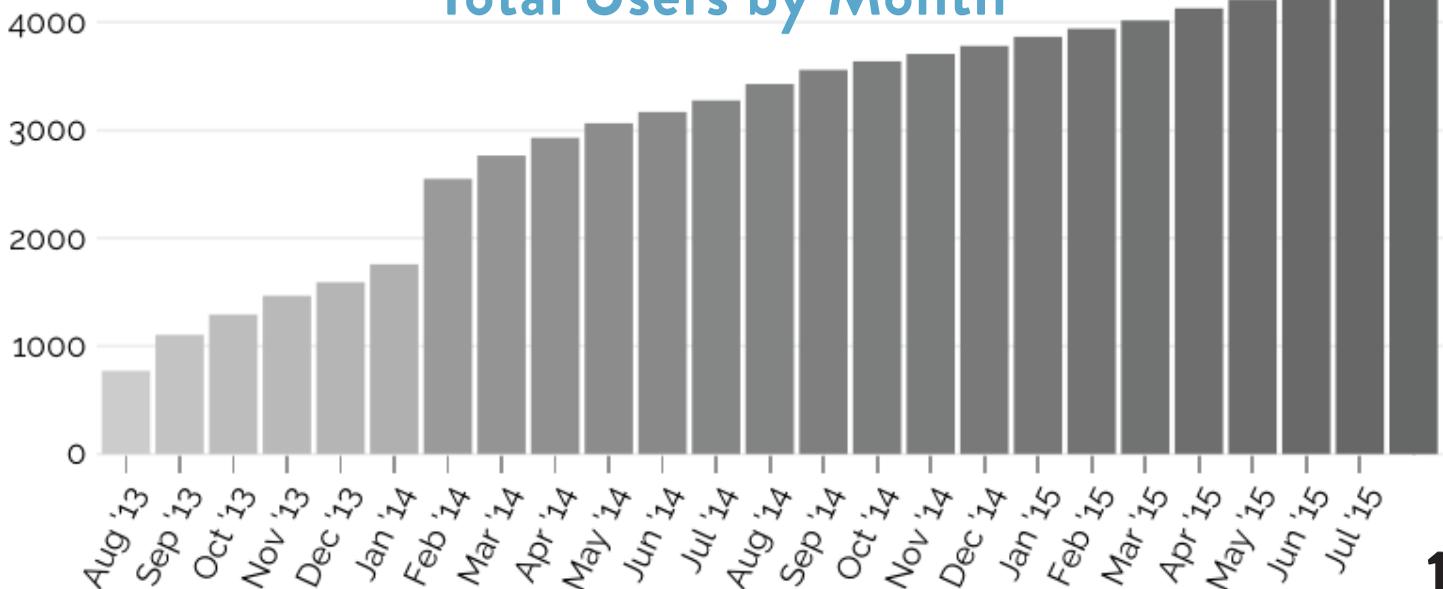
“Switchboard represents an interchange of needs and offers coupled with a way to celebrate successes that is quite compelling.”

**24%** of Reed’s total student and alumni population use Switchboard.

**79%** of Reed’s student body have Switchboard accounts.

**1.4k** Reedies log on to the Reed Switchboard every month.

## Total Users by Month



# CASE STUDY: OBERLIN

## THE SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGIST

Ma'ayan Plaut is the Manager of Social Strategy and Projects at Oberlin College, a competitive liberal arts school in Ohio with 2,900 students and 40,000 alumni. She's also a recognized leader in higher education social media strategy.



The Oberlin community is creative, playful, warm, and forges bonds that last long after Obies graduate.

Ma'ayan makes Oberlin look great every day on Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. But she needed a way to activate and engage her community, to make them *feel* great by helping them succeed.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Since launching in July 2014, the Oberlin Switchboard has seen exceptional engagement:

**48%** posts on Oberlin Switchboard about jobs and internships are offers to help.

**43%** of Oberlin Switchboard users graduated within the past 10 years.

**1.6k** Obies have signed up for Oberlin Switchboard in the past year.

## WHY SWITCHBOARD?

“Like most social media managers out there, I get a lot of pitches for so many different flavors of social products. So few of the products I look into have a very immediate use for the Oberlin community. When I saw Switchboard, I knew the platform would fit our Oberlin audience well.

“Empty engagement isn't something our audiences do. Talking about engagement for the Oberlin community means that we have to provide something of value before it would even be considered by our audience. It's rare to find a grounded tech tool that can aid in solving the problems we deal with as people.

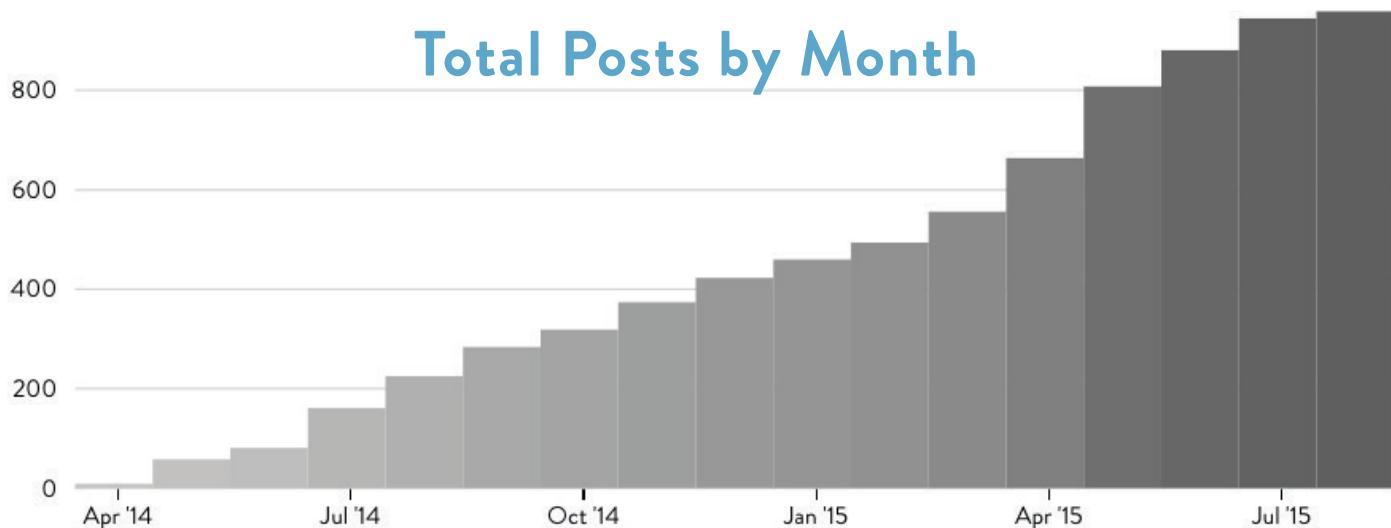
“Oberlin people will help Oberlin people because there's a connection already there. All we have to do is provide a space where the connections can begin finding each other.

“I've been asked a lot of questions about time spent on the platform and if it's worth it, and the answer is a whole-hearted YES!”

**6** There are Oberlin Switchboard users on six continents—all but Antarctica.

**100** Oberlin alumni in over 100 cities worldwide have signed up for Switchboard.

## Total Posts by Month



# CASE STUDY:



**WILLAMETTE  
UNIVERSITY**

## THE TEAM OF DIRECTORS

Jerry Houser has worked in career services for over 25 years and directs Willamette University's Career Services office.



Colleen Sump is Director of Alumni and Parent Engagement and has decades of experience working in higher education.

At the suggestion of trustees and alumni, Willamette partnered with Switchboard to amplify their efforts to connect students with alumni.

## BY THE NUMBERS

Since launching in March 2014, the Willamette Switchboard has become an indispensable tool for the Willamette community:

**60%** of posts on Willamette Switchboard are offers to help.

**54%** of alumni on Willamette Switchboard graduated within the past 10 years.

**44%** of posts on Willamette Switchboard are about jobs and internships.

**1.2k** Willamette students and alumni have signed up in the past year.

## WHY SWITCHBOARD?

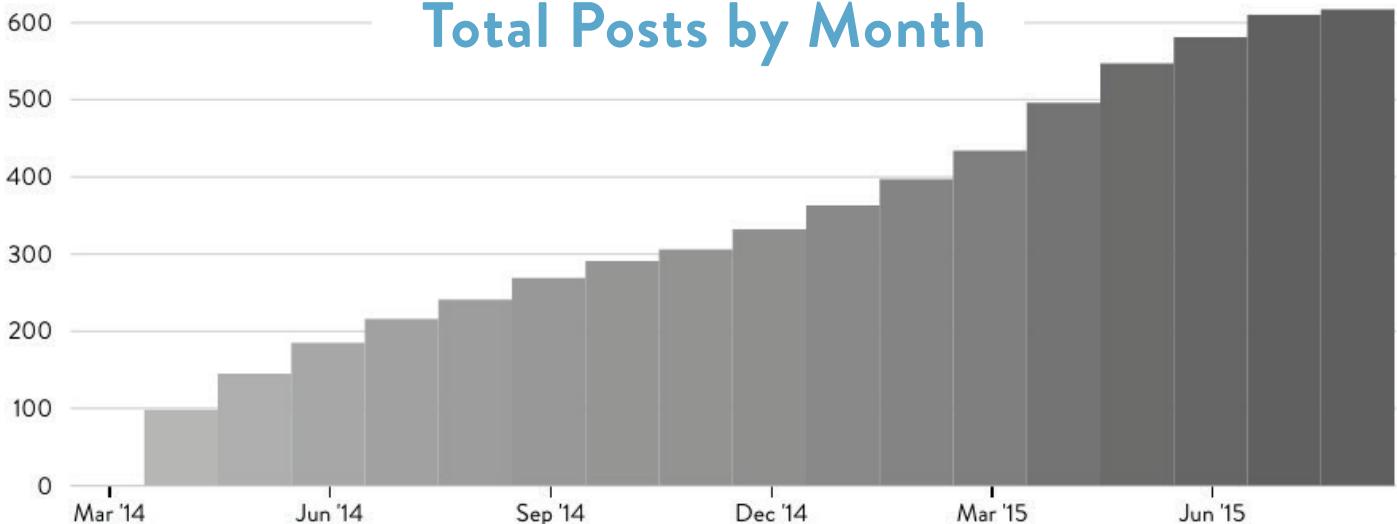
“Sometimes we get opportunities that are time sensitive and we wonder how to connect with students and alumni about it. So we post on Switchboard,” Jerry says. “I love the immediate response time. There have been good career connections made.”

“Students are reluctant to call on individual alumni because they don't want to bug people who are busy. But Switchboard lets students put an idea or ask out there and get a quick response. It removes the 'reluctance barrier' for students.”

Colleen adds, “Career Services quickly realized that Switchboard could be a great tool in connecting students with alumni who had career advice, tips and leads.”

“Initially they were concerned that Switchboard would take the place of the established Willamette job board, but once they saw Switchboard in action, they discovered that using both tools increases the quality and quantity of opportunities available to students. That's an outcome we all want!”

## Total Posts by Month



# STUDENT & ALUMNI SUCCESS STORIES

“Networking through Switchboard has helped me learn how to reach out to a community when I need help or guidance. I’ve turned to Switchboard for everything from job leads to advice to hosts.”

We interviewed Switchboard users about the success they’ve had using the platform.

# Success Story: First Generation Students Find Their Network on Switchboard

Graduating from college into the unknown is daunting, especially if you're a first-generation graduate without a network or safety net.

Switchboard makes it easier to find your way. Alumni use Switchboard to connect and find jobs, career advice, and places to stay.

Eric '14, the first of his family to graduate college, felt overwhelmed after graduation. He turned to Switchboard for help.

## Q: WHY DID YOU START USING SWITCHBOARD?

I'm a first-generation college graduate from a low-income family. I grew up in an area in economic decline, and I had no network to speak of.

That's how it seemed for a long time, at least. Networking through Switchboard has helped me learn how to reach out to a community when I need help or guidance. I've turned to Switchboard for everything from jobs to advice to hosts.

I've greatly appreciated the informality of Switchboard, as well as the fact that it operates as an online community forum allowing alumni like me to efficiently see who's out there offering help and who out there needs it.

I have been touched by the kindness, generosity, and hospitality of other alumni. Those values have been integral to my success finding and pursuing professional and personal opportunities.

## Q: YOU POSTED AN ASK FOR CAREER ADVICE. COULD YOU TELL YOUR STORY?

I went to Switchboard seeking advice from alumni who had gone on to become therapists in order to get as realistic a picture as possible of the "helping" professions.

I exchanged emails and Skyped with two alumnae and will be able to make wiser, more informed decisions about my career because of the insights they shared.

Taking the initiative to talk to them left me feeling empowered in my decision to slow down and take as much time as I want to understand the



*Eric '14 didn't have a professional network—until he used Switchboard to connect with other alumni.*

different paths I can follow towards professional security and fulfillment.

## Q: WOULD YOU RECOMMEND SWITCHBOARD TO YOUR FRIENDS?

I would recommend Switchboard to anyone who hasn't tried it.

It was tough when I started feeling structural pressures to prepare for graduate school or the labor market, since I felt compelled to plan, plan, plan before I really understood what I needed and wanted from my work.

And as someone who knew I wouldn't be able to turn to family for my economic security, there were moments when I felt overwhelmed, disempowered, and shut out of whatever channels people followed to find fulfillment in their careers.

A lot of that fell away as I grew and learned more about my needs and priorities.

Along the way, Switchboard gave me the chance to step into a network of big-hearted, community-minded alumni that was there all along.

# Success Story: Young Alumni Start Their Careers on Switchboard

Some Switchboard users make the most of their community's connections.

These serial succeeders use Switchboard to do everything. They land jobs half way across the world and find places to stay on cross-country road trips, all with the help of their community. Whenever they need help, they turn to Switchboard.

Stephanie '12 is one of those super users.

In the two years Stephanie has used Switchboard, she's logged three successes—all about internships and jobs she's found through her alumni community.

## Q: WHY DID YOU START USING SWITCHBOARD?

I must have started using Switchboard sometime before June 16, 2013, because that was my first post. I think I was checking it more often before then, but that's the first time I interacted with anyone.

I started using Switchboard, and still use it, to see what kinds of cool things alumni and students are up to, and to see if there are any part-time freelance gigs I can scoop up.

There have been a surprising number of posts with which I can offer up my own experience (like traveling in Southeast Asia and Berlin, living in D.C., working in graphic design, butchering animals).

## Q: YOU'VE POSTED SEVERAL ASKS ON SWITCHBOARD. COULD YOU SHARE YOUR STORIES?

First: An employee at a scientific publishing company posted about freelance proofreader positions, so I applied.

It's well-paying work, and sometimes the medical products being written about are just hilarious.

Second: Andrew '94 wrote for some Prezi/Wordpress help, and what originally started as a re-design of the interior of their site turned into a

continuing gig with a really awesome company doing great work.

I'm now on their staff page as the visual communicator, and there are some really exciting things going on.

Third: It was the last month of my half year farming in Thailand. I arbitrarily decided to check Switchboard after a few weeks' absence, and I saw this post about a paid magazine internship.

I thought: 1) This is the dream! What a unicorn of an opportunity! and 2) Living thirty minutes away from my parents is not as unappealing as I thought. I called Steve up from eleven time zones away, sent in my cover letter and resume, and it just so happened that I was flying from Phnom Penh to Washington, D.C. around the time they were interviewing candidates in person.

I bit my nails all weekend and then wonder of wonders, I got it. I dropped everything and drove back to Portland to collect my things, said goodbye to my old home, and drove right back to the East Coast.

Six thousand miles in three weeks. It was totally worth it, and I can say that after only two weeks on the job. Thanks, Steve.

## Q: WOULD YOU RECOMMEND SWITCHBOARD TO YOUR FRIENDS?

Totally. It's a really great way to put the things you've learned at school and out of it to use in the community.

It's such an easy way to give back—all it takes is ten minutes to send along an email connection, or write some advice that you personally have. There's no reason not to join Switchboard.

Also, not insignificantly, 50 percent of the money I make now is directly correlated to my successes on Switchboard. It works.

# Success Story: Switchboard is a Supportive Space for Students to Network

Students and new graduates don't always feel confident reaching out to established alumni for help—even when those alumni are eager to help.

Switchboard provides students and alumni with a friendly space to connect.

When Caroline '14 started using Switchboard as a sophomore, she got nothing but support. Thanks to the help of her community, Caroline was able to turn around and offer the same to students and alumni in return.

## **Q: WHY DID YOU START USING SWITCHBOARD?**

I started using Switchboard the summer after my sophomore year.

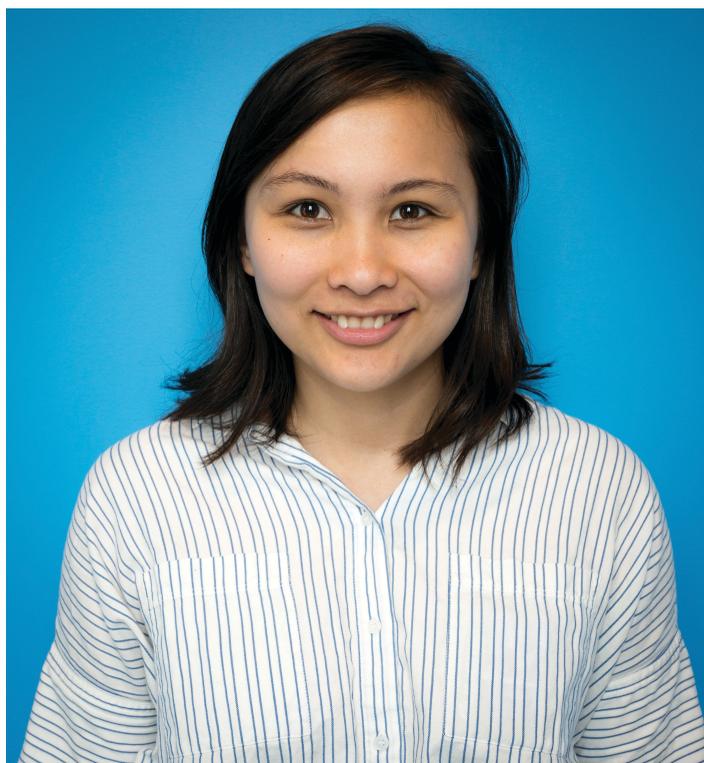
Initially I reached out an alumna to talk about film, which was really interesting and motivated me to pursue internships in production. It started off as an informal conversation about internships I might consider and her experience as a freelance producer in LA.

When I actually started looking for summer internships, she put me in touch with several alumni in film and was super supportive and willing to listen to me and offer advice. That experience really sold me on Switchboard.

## **Q: YOU POSTED YOUR FIRST OFFER AFTER CONTACTING ANOTHER ALUMNA. HOW DID THAT GO?**

I actually contacted her because I realized that she had produced one of my favorite episodes of Planet Money, and I just wanted to say hello and that I loved her piece. She suggested that I offer some advice since both I and another alum were interns at NPR headquarters.

I was really pleased with the response. Unsurprisingly, our alumni love public radio and a number of current students reached out and told us about their plans to get into news and radio.



*Caroline '14 got help on Switchboard as a student and paid the favor forward after she graduated.*

## **Q: WOULD YOU RECOMMEND SWITCHBOARD TO YOUR FRIENDS?**

I absolutely recommend Switchboard, especially for current students.

Networking after college is both awkward and important, at least in my experience, and I like that with Switchboard you can practice and hone some of those skills in a safer and more forgiving space.

All of the people I've connected with on Switchboard have been excited to help in whatever way they can. It has made me so much more comfortable reaching out to people I admire and want to learn from.

I show Switchboard off to friends from other schools and usually get a kind of jealous response like, "I wish my school had that."

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

# switchboard

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### HOW IS SWITCHBOARD DIFFERENT FROM FACEBOOK AND LINKEDIN?

What percentage of your student body is active on your Facebook and LinkedIn groups? On Facebook and LinkedIn, your community is splintered, and content that users post is often purely informational.

Switchboard, in contrast, is wholly dedicated to connecting your community and meeting its needs. That's why Switchboard works when nothing else does: students are there for opportunities and advice, and alumni are there to feel connected and to lend a hand. Switchboard is a growing ecosystem that constantly engages your community. When's the last time you could say that about Facebook or LinkedIn groups?

### HOW IS SWITCHBOARD DIFFERENT FROM IMODULES, EVERTRUE, ETC.?

Platforms like iModules and Evertrue are back-end tools for you and your team. Switchboard goes further: it also makes *your community* happy. Switchboard is the gift to your community that gives them a reason to connect and give back. It gives you actual value: value that everyone in your community can see and feel.

### DOES SWITCHBOARD REPLACE EXISTING SERVICES?

Not at all. You can continue using your existing platforms and services. One of our customers describes Switchboard as "water" that fills the cracks that other services miss. Switchboard's community-created content plugs the gaps left by the varied solutions of disparate departments.

### WHICH OFFICES DO YOU WORK WITH?

Switchboard is a natural fit for alumni and parent affairs, career services, communications, student affairs, and development. Schools we partner with build coalitions across these offices to use Switchboard to its full potential.

### HOW DO YOU HELP ADVANCEMENT?

Switchboard is an opportunity to delight your key donors and show them the true power of your network. Combined with donation functionality on each and every landing page, Switchboard helps pay for itself while delivering value to your entire alumni community.

### DOES SWITCHBOARD FACILITATE ALUMNI MENTORING?

Without question, Switchboard is a place for mentoring. Unhindered by complex sign-ups or onboarding, alumni love to use Switchboard to mentor and advise students. At the same time, students log on to Switchboard to make use of their network every day. To quote a current customer: "Switchboard is our network—on steroids."

### CAN WE MODERATE USERS?

Yes. You can require that users be approved by a moderator before using your Switchboard and restrict a user's access should the need arise.

### CAN WE MODERATE CONTENT?

Easily. All posts are community-monitored. Once a user has flagged a post, it's pulled from the feed for administrators to review. As an added layer of security, Switchboard HQ also monitors a real-time feed of all new posts.

## **CAN WE CUSTOMIZE SWITCHBOARD?**

Yes. You can change your Switchboard's logo, colors, post categories, and welcome message.

## **HOW DO PEOPLE REGISTER?**

Users register by creating a unique account or by logging in with their Facebook, Twitter, or Google accounts. The majority of users choose to register with one of these existing accounts. You can require that users enter a community password when they sign up, and hold newly registered users for verification before allowing them to access.

## **HOW DO WE LAUNCH SWITCHBOARD?**

A subscription to Switchboard includes your own dedicated community manager. We will help you create your customized roll-out plan, seed the platform with high-quality posts, and enlist students and alumni. We then walk you through using your existing social media efforts, email database, and other channels to make your Switchboard an explosive, self-sustaining community.

## **HOW DO WE TRACK AND MEASURE ENGAGEMENT ON SWITCHBOARD?**

Switchboard features powerful data analytics and reports that you can share with your team. You can track new users, users by class year, engaged users, success stories, popular tags and locations, and many other insights. Your dedicated community manager will check in with you regularly to help you meet your goals. Month over month, you'll see your Switchboard grow and thrive.

## **HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO RUN OUR SWITCHBOARD?**

It only takes 15 to 20 hours of total university time to seed content launch your Switchboard in its first month, and your dedicated community manager will walk you through all of it. From then on, we suggest taking five to ten minutes a day to comment on posts and cultivate community. (It's wonderfully rewarding and fun—and a great way to connect with alumni.) Our community manager can even help you plan promotions for events like commencement and reunions and make sure that everyone is on board.

## **DOES SWITCHBOARD INTEGRATE WITH \_\_?**

You can easily export the new alumni email addresses you've gleaned from Switchboard to .csv for database integration. Switchboard makes a point of being a standalone solution that doesn't need to interface or interfere with other tools to operate fruitfully.

## **CAN WE EXPORT USER EMAILS?**

Yes. We ask users to update their email address when they sign up. You can export users' contact information as a .csv file.

## **HOW MUCH DOES SUPPORT COST?**

Technical and community support is included in the cost of your subscription. You don't have to pay extra.

## **HOW DO WE KNOW OUR SWITCHBOARD IS WORKING?**

Your community will use Switchboard every day, and your its front page will feature dozens of new posts each week. You'll see a variety of asks, offers, and comments, and the success stories will come rolling in.

## **I REMAIN UNCONVINCED. WHY SHOULD I CHOOSE SWITCHBOARD OVER \_\_?**

Concisely put: Because Switchboard works.

We built Switchboard for our alma mater because we were unsatisfied with other offerings. We, like you, have seen all the other alumni platforms out there. We've heard "engagement" so many times that the word rings hollow. But we haven't seen a platform that alumni actually use—and enjoy using. Except Switchboard.

## **DO YOU ADHERE TO CASE'S GUIDELINES FOR ALUMNI RELATIONS PROFESSIONALS ON ESTABLISHING VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS AND CASE'S STATEMENT OF ETHICS?**

What a thoughtful question! We do. We guarantee that your community will thrive on Switchboard, and we are committed to making that a reality.



ANTIOCH  
COLLEGE



CONCORDIA  
UNIVERSITY  
PORTLAND • OREGON

Kenyon College

OBERLIN  
COLLEGE & CONSERVATORY



Portland State  
UNIVERSITY

REED COLLEGE



S|A|C  
St. Andrew's College



University  
of Portland



WILLAMETTE  
UNIVERSITY

Williams

# Only one platform

engages over 90% of your  
graduating class every year,

builds institutional loyalty while  
helping students and alumni succeed,

and has the highest adoption rate of  
any engagement tool on the market.

# switchboard