



partner / create / empower /

# The Bren School achieves 70% alumni engagement after launching “BrenConnect”

## partner /

- Join data stored in multiple disparate spreadsheets and systems
- Reduce time spent tracking down information and manually updating data
- Create a modern, online resource to serve as a one-stop solution
- Implement a robust social networking platform for career advancement and work-related needs

## create /

- Salesforce.org Higher Education Data Architecture (HEDA) provides a streamlined data model
- Community Cloud helps deliver a modern, CRM-centric career resources /networking portal built on top of student and alumni data

## empower /

- Associate all student and alumni data with one master contact record rather than in multiple systems
- Drastically reduce time spent on manual data entry so that staff can focus on higher value activities and provide an elevated level of advising
- Launch BrenConnect, a new online portal for career services to provide students and alumni with online knowledge resources, networking groups, and a searchable Alumni Finder
- Achieve 70% alumni engagement with BrenConnect within one year of launching, obtain 3,000+ views for informational articles, and accumulate 1,100+ job postings

“Salesforce lets us practice ‘elevated advising.’ Instead of spending our days on manual, data-related tasks, we can focus our time and energy on more value-added activities that allow us to provide students and alumni with the highly personalized advising and career services that have long been a hallmark of the BrenSchool.”

- Kristi Birney, Associate Director of Career Development & Alumni Relations, UCSB Bren School

## Extensive Data, But Too Many Systems

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For almost 20 years, the Bren School's students and alumni could email the Career Development & Alumni Relations office, and a member of the team could quickly provide advice ranging from career tips to customized, field-specific lists of Bren contacts. However, as the student body and the number of graduates grew, the team needed to rely less on memory and more on spreadsheets, databases, and old emails to maintain a highly customized level of advising. As the Bren School continued to expand, so did the number of systems and processes.

"We had an impressive amount of student and alumni data, but none of the systems we had in place to manage it talked to each other," explained Kristi Birney, Associate Director of Career Development & Alumni Relations at the Bren School. "We were storing data and content on webpages, in multiple email marketing platforms, in various systems – including an outdated customer relationship management (CRM) system – and in way too many spreadsheets. A change made in one place didn't translate to the other systems, so we were spending a lot of time updating everything manually. That was pretty labor intensive."

Additionally, fielding questions from students and alumni became a less scalable exercise as the size of the alumni population grew with each graduating class.

"Let's say one of our students reached out to us because they wanted to see if there were any alumni working in the sustainable apparel field," said Monica Illes, Career Development & Alumni Relations Program Manager at the Bren School. "We'd start by consulting whichever alumni spreadsheet had the most comprehensive information – but often, we'd have to cross-consult several other lists, emails, and/or files to track down the most complete answer we could."

"We felt there had to be a better way to do this," said Birney. "We wanted something that could provide a 360-degree view from prospective student, to student, to alumni – and we started searching for a CRM system that could help us do that."

**"Knowing that we were going to have a partner by our side who really understood Salesforce and how to use those tools to solve our problems made it a no-brainer to move forward,"** said Birney.

## Student and Alumni Information in One Place

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Salesforce Community Cloud and the Salesforce.org Higher Education Data Architecture (HEDA) offered the Bren School an ideal foundation for streamlining its processes and taking a new approach.

"As part of our due diligence, we looked at a variety of different CRM systems, and Salesforce really came out on top," said Birney. "Community Cloud was the perfect platform for creating an online website for our students and our alumni that could foster student and alumni growth and career development, and serve as a really powerful and engaging one-stop solution."

"The other big factor was that Salesforce could address some of those system and process challenges that our staff was running into," said Illes. **"We wanted one system – a single home for student and alumni information – where we could do a lot of our administrative tasks and duties and have it all tied back to one master contact record, and HEDA was perfect for that."**

Connecting with a nonprofit-focused consultancy with extensive Salesforce experience gave the Bren School confidence that they were ready to take the next step.

# A Modern Resource for Personalized Career Services

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Over a 3-month period, the Bren School worked with the consultancy to launch BrenConnect, a unique student-alumni portal powered by Salesforce Community Cloud. In addition to providing 24/7 access to career resources, BrenConnect offers a fully searchable, custom-built Alumni Finder, LinkedIn profile syncing, networking groups, and job and internship postings.

Since going live, BrenConnect has experienced a high level of community engagement. Over 70 percent of alumni have joined BrenConnect in the last year. The top career resource article has over 3,000 views, and more than 1,100 jobs have been posted.

Meanwhile, HEDA improves data tracking and workflow optimization on the staff end for everything from job and internship placement to alumni contact information, with extensive use of Salesforce features like Cases, Campaigns, custom forms, and Dashboards.

**“HEDA is integral to the services we provide on BrenConnect,” said Illes. “For example, tools like our Alumni Finder couldn’t exist without all the data tied to contact records on the back end. Everything is so simple and elegant when it’s handled and tracked in Salesforce, rather than in multiple spreadsheets – it’s really revolutionized our day-to-day work.”**

Most importantly, having Salesforce in place allows the Bren School to effectively continue its longstanding commitment to high-caliber career development for its growing student and alumni community.

“We call it ‘elevated advising,’” said Birney. “Instead of spending our days on manual, data-related tasks, we can focus our time and energy on more value-added activities that allow us to provide students and alumni with the highly personalized advising and career services that have long been a hallmark of the Bren School.”

Illes added, “Salesforce has provided this great tool that’s allowed us to innovate and modernize the experience for our students, alumni, and staff. As our alumni population grows each year, we have a sustainable way to keep providing the services that we’ve always provided, and to continue innovating and delivering value to students and alumni for the decades to come.”



## School

The Bren School of Environmental Science & Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara

## About the Bren School

Located at the University of California, Santa Barbara, the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management was established in 1991 to help tackle the world’s environmental problems. The school offers master’s and PhD programs in environmental science and management to approximately 200 students each year, helping to train the next generation of environmental leaders.