

Chapter + Affinity Group Leader Guide

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Overview

[Volunteer Opportunities](#)

[Why Alumni Chapters and Affinity Groups?](#)

[Expectations](#)

[Alumni chapters and affinity group leaders will:](#)

[The Alumni Association will:](#)

[Suggested Leadership Roles](#)

[Leadership Tips for Chapters + Affinity Groups](#)

Event Planning

[Goals of Events](#)

[Organizing an event schedule](#)

[Before an event](#)

[Contact with Vendors and Venues](#)

[Event Communications](#)

[The Role of The Alumni Association Staff:](#)

[During an event](#)

[After the Event](#)

The Alumni Association Volunteer Resources

[Personal Contact Information Request Policy](#)

[Mailing Requests](#)

[Logos](#)

[Chapter + Affinity Group Social Media Pages](#)

[Connecting With Other Volunteers and Staff](#)

[Growing affinity groups and chapters](#)

[Affinity Groups](#)

[Regional Chapters](#)

Overview

The Alumni Association of Case Western Reserve University connects more than 110,000 alumni from all of the university's schools, providing opportunities to develop and maintain a lifelong relationship with the university and with each other.

The Alumni Association, in its current form, was founded in 2006 and is advised by an [18-member board of directors](#).

Our mission:

The Alumni Association of Case Western Reserve University advocates for the CWRU community and engages current and future alumni in support of a lifelong connection. This is achieved by providing enriching resources and building a sense of pride, while reflecting our values of integrity, diversity and equity.

Volunteer Opportunities

Alumni volunteers play an invaluable role in promoting Case Western Reserve University to their community. Whether your interests lean toward mentoring students, admissions and recruitment, planning regional programming or helping the community, there are many opportunities for you to get involved.

[Learn More >](#)

Why Alumni Chapters and Affinity Groups?

Alumni chapters and affinity groups are imperative to engaging alumni around the world, serving as resources to keep them involved after graduation. Alumni chapters and affinity groups provide a means to connect alumni and future alumni to the university and to each other based on geographic location, shared interests, and identities.

Expectations

Alumni chapters and affinity group leaders will:

- Organize events and programs striving for at least one annual event, growing to four per year.

- Chapter and affinity group leaders encourage fellow alumni to attend events. This can be done through personal contact, via [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#) and sharing social media posts.
- Cultivate alumni volunteers interested in becoming future leaders to assure longevity and continuity of the chapter or group.
- Communicate with staff and fellow leaders via conference calls and meetings
- Submit nominations for the annual [Alumni Awards](#).
- Provide feedback and recommendations to the university when solicited.

The Alumni Association will:

- Provide marketing and communications support.
- Provide some financial support.
- Assist with hosting and staffing events from the university and The Alumni Association staff members.
- Offer support and guidance for growing chapters and affinity groups.
- Coordinate event support:
 - Registration platform
 - Procurement, vendor management and contract negotiation
 - Giveaways
 - Post-event survey and follow-up with the chapter and affinity group.

Suggested Leadership Roles

- Each alumni affinity group maintains its own board and committee structure.
- Each regional chapter has its own leadership structure. Chapter Leaders may assume roles to help distribute responsibilities or may choose to divide responsibilities by event timing and needs. Those responsibilities include:
 - Liaison with The Alumni Association staff and regional alumni. Presides over and calls chapter meetings.
 - Help with the planning and execution of events including promotion of the event. Also serves as an on-site event host.
 - Spearhead promotion efforts in conjunction with The Alumni Association.

- Use and promote [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#).
- Assist in maintaining social media that adheres to [university guidelines and promote current/upcoming events](#).
- Work with The Alumni Association staff to approve communications.

Leadership Tips for Chapters + Affinity Groups

Strong leadership is the key to a successful chapter and affinity group. To ensure your leadership team is the best it can be, here are a few tools and tips:

- **Balance your communications between in-person and electronic.** Email is an effective communication tool, but in-person meetings and/or conference calls help volunteers reaffirm their commitment to the group.
- **Encourage open dialogue about how involved each leader wants to be.** Make sure to have open conversations about who has the time and interest to do what.
- **Recruit new volunteers and leaders!** Every event you host is an opportunity to talk about being a leader and to offer new alumni a chance to get involved.
 - **Start by asking alumni to volunteer for a single project or event.** Define a manageable commitment. Once a new volunteer's project is complete, ask them to help with another. Be sure to thank them along the way!
- **Talk with other leaders.** Make the most of networking opportunities, participate in regular conference calls and reach out to leaders directly through the CWRU Alumni Chapter & Affinity Groups community in the [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#).
- **Utilize resources at The Alumni Association.** The staff is always available to discuss ways to increase engagement and participation.

Event Planning

Goals of Events

- Engage alumni by providing networking opportunities, meaningful experiences and maintaining a connection to CWRU.

- Provide alumni with an update about recent news and achievements of the university community.
- Provide a diverse array of programs to encourage alumni with different interests and identities to participate.
 - Attract first-time attendees to events.
 - Increase the retention of engaged attendees at events.
 - Engage parents and students that attend events.
- Support the long-term success and vision of your chapter or affinity group by recruiting future leaders.

Organizing an event schedule

- We encourage hosting an annual meeting to organize a calendar of events 6–12 months in advance.
- Event categories include: enrichment, professional or social and can be family-friendly, affinity/diversity focused, student-centric, stewardship focused and/or devoted to community service.
- Plan event specifics 8-10 weeks out from the potential event date; The Alumni Association will begin email promotions 4-6 weeks out from the event date.

Before an event

Contact with Vendors and Venues

What questions should I ask when speaking with event coordinators from various venues? Please note, The Alumni Association will determine the level of support the university can provide, and complete all procurement and contract negotiation.

- Available Dates/Times
- Cost
- Venue Contact Information
- Venue Capacity
- Are there unique experiences that could be provided (ex: behind the scenes tours)?
- Contract Requirements
- Catering or meal and drink options
- Availability/Charge for Parking
- Tickets, if needed
- Location Maps & Directions

Event Communications

- Work on all parts of communication, as The Alumni Association staff begin marketing 4-6 weeks prior to an event. Marketing efforts can include emails and posts on case.edu/alumni and social media. **Leadership should, if attending, be the first to sign up for the event, to encourage others to attend.**
- The Alumni Association will create confirmation emails, reminder emails and post-event emails/surveys and provide talking points to be presented at the event, if applicable

To assist with communications, Alumni Chapter and Affinity Group Leadership should:

- Share email invitations and/or other event communications with your personal networks.
- Create and share social media posts about the event.
- Promote events by sending chapter or affinity group-wide messages through [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#).
 - Contact The Alumni Association staff liaison to gain administrative access for sending chapter-wide communications through [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#).
 - Make sure all informal events are discussed with your staff liaison prior to posting.

The Role of The Alumni Association Staff:

- Determine the level of support the university can provide, and complete all procurement and contract negotiation.
- Call vendors for a final check of all details to ensure a successful event.
- Confirmation emails, reminder emails and post-event emails/surveys
- Provide talking points to be presented at the event, if applicable

During an event

Most often, The Alumni Association staff attends events to be an on-site resource for volunteer leaders and alumni attendees. Staff will bring materials, including registration lists, name tags and giveaways.

- In the event that there will be no staff in attendance, alumni volunteers are expected to host the event. Materials will be delivered ahead of time.

- When staff is in attendance, volunteer leaders are expected to share an active role in hosting the event, including:
 - Arrive early to set up and prepare for early arrivals.
 - Serve as a CWRU ambassador. Welcome everyone. Check in alumni and guests, including walk-in registrants. Keep an attendance list, to be returned to The Alumni Association.
 - Talk about volunteer opportunities, upcoming events and applicable university updates .
 - Take candid and posed pictures with fellow alumni.

After the Event

- Send photos to your Alumni Association liaison or share as a post to social media channels.
- If no staff was in attendance, send an attendance list back to The Alumni Association.
 - In the event that registration money or gifts were collected, please send directly to The Alumni Association for processing.
- Leadership may keep additional giveaways and blank name tags for the next event.
- The Alumni Association will send a feedback survey shortly after the event. Once The Alumni Association receives the attendee list and any other post-event documents, survey results can be sent to chapter and affinity leaders for review.

The Alumni Association Volunteer Resources

Personal Contact Information Request Policy

The Alumni Association protects alumni contact information and cannot legally share private information. The Alumni Association ensures that outgoing messages representing the university are brand-compliant and appropriately planned with respect to other campus email communications. Alumni should use [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#) to send personal messages and group discussion topics.

Mailing Requests

Physical mailers are reserved for special occasions. Exceptions should be discussed with The Alumni Association staff.

Logos

The university logo is the strongest link to our brand. It is important to use only approved logos in all communications. Please refer to the [University Marketing & Communications branding policies](#).

Chapters and groups may request permission to use university logos from The Alumni Association staff as long as the staff member can ensure university brand-compliant use of the logo.

Chapter + Affinity Group Social Media Pages

The Alumni Association advocates each chapter and affinity group maintaining a Facebook page and CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network chapter community in partnership with their Alumni Association staff liaison. We will start these for you and grant administrative access to leadership managing communications. [Please refer to CWRU's social media guidelines](#).

Connecting With Other Volunteers and Staff

Looking for a fellow chapter or affinity group leader? Need help from an alumni association team member? Follow the links below for more information:

- [CWRU Connect: Alumni Career Network](#)
- [Alumni Chapters by Region](#)
- [Alumni Affinity Groups](#)
- [The Alumni Association Facebook](#)
- [The Alumni Association Instagram](#)
- [The Alumni Association Twitter](#)
- [The Alumni Association Staff Directory](#)
- [Case Western Reserve University LinkedIn](#)

Growing affinity groups and chapters

Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups provide a unique opportunity to engage alumni around a shared interest and identities. The Alumni Association staff should meet with prospective group members to explore what the group would look like and what it could achieve. Prospective affinity groups will first enter an “in development” phase for up to 12 months after their initial statement of interest. Groups in development should have the following operational criteria:

- A minimum of ten (10) steering committee members pledged to lead the group.
 - A minimum of 30 alumni, including the ten (10) person steering committee, recognized as members of the group.
 - Host a minimum of two events/programs to engage current members and to recruit new members within the development period
- *A minimum of 150 reachable alumni members have been identified among the developing group.

Regional Chapters

The Alumni Association will work to expand engagement efforts for alumni who do not have an established regional near them. Typically, this process follows the same event planning process for established chapters and will begin with one event that could be sustained annually. Potential chapter areas typically have:

- More than 400 alumni within 50 miles of a central city location or internationally, a history of a large alumni population (greater than 150), or the potential for growth (large number of current students and parents).
- Two alumni who are committed to assist The Alumni Association with recruitment efforts.