

# Outreach and Engagement

## Best Practices for Reunions

### **Communications Overview**

Classes can develop exceptional and exciting reunion programming, but to be most successful you will also need a communications and outreach plan to drive participation. Consider starting a word of mouth or class-wide networking campaign to reconnect. The HAA Alumni Directory makes it possible for everyone to update their contact information quickly and easily. Please check and update your profile at [community.alumni.harvard.edu/person](https://community.alumni.harvard.edu/person) and share with your classmates that this is how they can update their own information too. It's especially important for reunion committee members to keep their information updated so classmates can easily reach them. In addition to reaching out to classmates broadly, please prioritize contacting classmates who have not attended previous reunions or stayed in touch with the class.

### **Class-Wide Emails: Overview**

Many of the class emails sent in your reunion year, whether they be about the reunion committee, class events, or the Class Report, will (or can) be sent through Harvard's broadcast email system. Your HAA staff liaison will work with you as volunteers on this process. If your class had been using a third-party broadcast email client in non-reunion years, or sending email through a [classes.harvard.edu](https://classes.harvard.edu) website, you can continue to use these platforms for emails in lieu of Harvard's email system for some messages, and you can work with your staff liaison to determine an approach that will work best.

Your HAA staff liaison will help you send emails to your class through our email marketing system. We suggest communicating with your classmates monthly, though the frequency of your class-wide communication will naturally increase as important events and deadlines approach. Even in an age when there are seemingly infinite platforms through which to communicate with Harvard alumni, we continue to find that email is an effective outreach strategy. We also recognize, however, that most of our alumni are inundated with email, both from Harvard and elsewhere. Knowing that, we aim to be strategic in the use of email throughout the year.

### **Class-Wide Emails: Guidelines**

The separate HAA Broadcast Email Service document (which can be found here: <https://officerslounge.classes.harvard.edu/article.html?aid=210>) has more information about what the email template looks like, as well as the information that will be needed in order to send the email. If you would like to send emails to your class, we ask that you provide us with the final text 4 business days before you would like the email to be sent at the latest (more advance notice is fine too!). The process of creating and sending a broadcast email includes more steps than sending an email through a personal email client like Gmail, so we appreciate your partnership in this process to ensure content is finalized and signed off by the relevant committee members before sharing with us.

After you share your final approved text with your HAA staff liaison at least 4 business days prior to your preferred send date, they will then share this with colleagues who will build, test, and proofread the email, ensure the text and format are accessible, and check the broader Harvard email calendar to confirm the best send time to avoid conflicting with other emails that your classmates might receive

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around the same time. Given the steps involved, the HAA is unfortunately not able to send emails with fewer than four days' notice. If more time is needed to finalize the text, the send date can be adjusted.

### **Class-Wide Emails: Other Communications**

In addition to the emails about your class programming sent out in collaboration with your HAA staff liaison, as well as the Class Report emails sent out by the Class Report Office and your Class Report Chair, the HAA's Engagement Marketing Team (in partnership with the College Alumni Programs office) will draft and send out the emails about the virtual events taking place throughout the year for all reunion classes featuring Harvard administrators and faculty.

Additionally, these teams will collaborate on drafting and sending marketing emails for your on-campus programming, including registration launch, targeted reminders, reminders ahead of deadlines (pricing changes from early bird to standard to on-site, housing, childcare, refunds) and other key messages. These messages will generally look the same across all reunion classes, with the exception of the specific year, dates, and links for your class. Once a classmate has registered, they will no longer receive registration reminder emails, but will still receive general update emails, including a series of emails with important information in the days before the reunion.

Prior to the Class Report submission window and the reunion programming registration launch, the HAA will also send out reminders to classmates about needing their HarvardKey (their username and password) to login to these applications. Harvard staff are available to support with HarvardKey assistance by phone or email. Please note that following a password reset, it may take up to 24 hours until one is able to log back in with their new password.

Additional communications that the HAA will manage for all reunion classes include invites to all widows and widowers of classmates to attend the reunion, a call for authors from the reunion classes to share their books to be featured at the Harvard COOP, information about Harvard Alumni Day, information about off-campus hotels, and information about accessibility accommodations and resources.

Class volunteers will not be part of the drafting and review process for these emails, but your staff liaison will ensure class leaders have the needed information and that class-specific emails are scheduled with these other emails in mind.

### **Peer-to-Peer Outreach and Lost Classmates**

Class-wide emails are a supplement to the peer-to-peer outreach that remains the most effective way to engage with your classmates. Classes who have implemented successful outreach programs quite often see a direct correlation in reunion participation. This personal touch is often the reason classmates decide to participate.

In the five years since your last reunion, many of your classmates may have changed their contact information or address, but didn't update this in their HAA Alumni Directory profile at [community.alumni.harvard.edu/person](https://community.alumni.harvard.edu/person). It's important for your classmates to have both an active email and mailing address on file so they receive emails about their reunion events and the Class Report, and can also receive a copy of the Class Report.

There are some classmates for whom the HAA will have an email but not a physical mailing address. Even though HAA communications will primarily be sent by email, it is important that the HAA also has a

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physical mailing address to ensure they are able to invite alumni to regional programming and send them a Class Report. Similarly, there might also be classmate for whom the HAA has no active email address. A list of these “Lost” classmates will be shared with the reunion committee in hopes that members can reach out to their classmates and ask them to update their information in the HAA Alumni Directory.

We understand that classmates might not want to receive all types of communications from Harvard, but if they want to participate in class events like reunions and receive the Class Report, it’s important that they ensure their HAA Alumni Directory profile has their accurate email and mailing address, and that they are subscribed to emails. If classmates would like to opt-out of any other types of communications, they can do that through the Email Preferences menu in the Directory. There are now many options for different types of emails, allowing alumni to specify as desired. There may be cases where classmates have unsubscribed from HAA messages in the past, not knowing that this would prevent them from receiving emails about reunion and the Class Report. Your staff liaison will be able to assist any classmates who think they are missing out on communications or who need assistance with updating their email preferences.

### **Classmate Outreach Efforts from the HAA**

As a change since your last reunion, the College Alumni Programs team will work with the HAA Engagement Marketing team over the summer to strategically begin outreach across all reunion classes to ensure that we have email addresses and mailing addresses on file, as well as ensuring that classmates are subscribed to email. Through a “resubscribe campaign,” we will reach out to unsubscribed classmates through an email account separate from our broadcast email platform, to let them know how they can resubscribe for reunion and Class Report communications, if they want to. This overall process will ensure that the class list is as updated as possible before the work of the reunion committee kicks off. Of course, there might still be gaps, and we look to partner with members of the committee to help with that additional outreach.

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### Websites

The HAA will build and update a reunion-specific website at <https://alumni.harvard.edu/reunions/register> that will include general updates and information about your reunion as well as a registration form for the June in-person events once launched. This website will also include information about the virtual events taking place throughout the year for all reunion classes featuring Harvard administrators and faculty, as well as information relevant to all classes for the June in-person events (housing, parking, headquarters, etc.).

This website should supplement rather than replace your own class website. For classes with a distinct class website, we recommend including a link to the HAA Reunions website somewhere that is easy to find on your own website. For classes without a separate website (and/or volunteer to manage the separate website) the HAA website provides a central place to find reunion information.

For those classes who use a [classes.harvard.edu](https://classes.harvard.edu) website instead of a third-party website, the training resources can be found on the College Alumni Programs Officers Lounge volunteer resources website (which can be found here: <https://officerslounge.classes.harvard.edu/article.html?aid=206>), if the assigned volunteers need a refresher on how to update the content of pages. These class websites are intended to provide simplistic management functions for volunteers like webmasters and secretaries. Some classes may wish to use a different website platform that offers additional functionality, and we encourage classes to use whatever platform best works for them!

Please note that if you add any photos of the Harvard campus (or any photos in general) to your class website (or other digital platforms) they should be photos taken by you or fellow classmates/volunteers, or provided by HAA staff, and not images you find on the internet. Copyright-related companies now use software to scan the internet to find any of their photos. You could risk being found liable for copyright infringement if any image you use is copyright-protected and could be subject to significant fines that the class treasury would be responsible for covering.

### Social Media

The HAA encourages classes to use whatever social media platforms volunteers and classmates are comfortable using. Social media can be an effective tool to allow classmates to connect and converse but note that the HAA does not require classes to create or maintain social media accounts. Any social media accounts will need to be managed by volunteers from the class; your HAA staff liaison will not be able to post on your behalf, join your groups, or serve as a mediator.

The HAA's virtual engagement toolkit for volunteers (which can be found here: <https://alumni.harvard.edu/virtual-engagement-toolkit>) has information on class social media accounts, as well as social media best practices and guidance like how to recruit volunteer administrators, how to develop a social media engagement strategy, how to establish group guidelines, how to build a system to approve or decline posts, how to manage inappropriate comments and other feedback, how to promote your accounts, and how to keep your audience engaged (which can be found here: <https://alumni.harvard.edu/virtual-engagement-toolkit/social-media-for-volunteers/best-practices>).

Your staff liaison won't manage your accounts but will be happy to discuss your engagement strategy.

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### Postcards and Mailings

In order to share information with classmates unreachable by email, a postcard or paper mailing is a good option. Your HAA liaison can price out options to help you decide if you should send a mailing to the full class, or to just those without email addresses. The HAA will also produce and send save-the-date postcards to all alumni in a reunion at the beginning of the fall. For the 55<sup>th</sup> Reunion and above, a paper mailing will be sent from the HAA to all classmates with a mailing address on file to accompany your registration launch, directing them to call our office or register online. This will allow classmates who might not use their email, or who prefer to register for events via the phone the opportunity to register in advance. Physical mailing costs are built into your reunion budget as part of the flat registration fee.

### Custom Class Logos

If you do not already have one and wish to create a class logo, or a reunion year-specific class logo (this is entirely optional!) to use on your class website, social media accounts, or other locations, please discuss with your HAA staff liaison before you begin designing. If your logo has certain Harvard-related elements, it will need to be approved by the Harvard Trademark office before being used, so your staff liaison can help talk through what design might be best before you begin working on it. Once your logo is finalized, please share it with your staff liaison who will share it with Harvard Trademark for review. This process takes roughly four weeks on average. Once your staff liaison confirms it is all set, you will be able to use it on your digital accounts and other locations.

### Text Messaging Program

One of our most popular services during Reunions is our text messaging program. Your HAA liaison will work with HAA Engagement Marketing colleagues to turn your final in-person schedule of events into short texts. Registrants who opt-in will receive text alerts and reminders with timing and locations before events. Text messages will also provide real-time updates in case of inclement weather or other unexpected program changes. Volunteers will not have to play a role in the creation or deployment of the texts. Some reunion classes might also have the opportunity to receive text reminders about registration and key deadlines.