

# Reunion In-Person Events Overview and Best Practices

More information about reunions, including the dates for in-person programming in 2025 can be found on the Harvard Alumni Association website here: <https://alumni.harvard.edu/reunions/register>. More information for you and your classmates will be added here as it becomes available.

We invite you and your class to think of your reunion as a year-long celebration rather than an in-person celebration taking place over a few days. This new approach is an opportunity to strengthen the bonds of community by emphasizing inclusion and welcoming those who might otherwise not be able to engage in a typical reunion. This will also allow your class to feature more content-rich sessions throughout the year, ahead of your celebratory gathering on-campus in June.

There could be four different types of programming in your reunion year:

- Virtual class programming in the fall, winter, and spring, as desired, planned by your reunion committee in partnership with your HAA staff liaison.
- Regional in-person class programming in the fall, winter, and spring, as desired, planned by your reunion committee in partnership with your HAA staff liaison. These were previously referred to as “pre-reunion events” but should be thought of as your reunion programming.
- Virtual programming planned by the HAA for all reunion classes and the Crimson Society featuring Harvard faculty, administrators, and other special guests in the fall, winter, and spring. Your staff liaison will keep you informed as these programs are planned and will ensure that these broader programs are integrated into your reunion schedule.
- In-person reunion finale programming on-campus in Cambridge in June, now the week after Commencement, planned by your reunion committee in partnership with your HAA staff liaison.

The HAA will host Harvard Alumni Day (previously called the Annual Meeting of the Harvard Alumni Association) during the in-person reunions on Friday, June 6. This will feature the alumni parade and a featured speaker.

Your in-person programming on the Harvard campus will be a celebratory conclusion to your reunion year, building on the months of virtual/regional program your reunion committee will plan and taking advantage of the type of programming that can only be done in-person!

## **Planning the Schedule**

Your HAA staff liaison will share an initial schedule with you at the beginning of the year. This will include placeholders for larger events like your meals and dances, as well as when your memorial service and class photo will be. The schedule will also indicate where open time blocks for programming are available, so that the reunion committee can create custom programming during this time, if interested.

This phase of planning, which will ideally take place in the fall, is the time to determine the components of your reunion that will have an impact on the budget. Once you have a budget set, you will be on the path to opening registration in the spring.

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Committee members can consult Class Reports (Red Books) from previous reunions or work with the HAA to obtain a draft copy of the current Red Book, as they work to identify topic areas and recruit participants for programs. A class survey can also be used to help identify areas of focus and classmates to feature.

Please note that you do not need to create programming for every open hour on the schedule. Your classmates will appreciate the opportunity to have some unstructured downtime, whether that's on their own/with their family, meeting up with other classmates informally, taking a break (or nap!), or changing for the next event (and this is some of the most common feedback we've heard from alumni post-reunion).

### **Class Programming: Social, Intellectual, and Memorial Service**

Social programming can take many forms during the reunion and may include the lunches, evening events, networking sessions, affinity group mini-reunions, or other gatherings. You and your committee will decide what form you would like these events to take. We also recommend building in time on your schedule for informal socializing to allow classmates to do what they're most excited about: see each other!

Intellectual programming is an opportunity to balance the social activities with some thoughtful content. Your committee might decide to hold some sessions concurrently so classmates can pick a topic that is most interesting to them. Based on survey results from past reunions, we do not recommend more than two concurrent presentations at a time. Additionally, please plan to allow at least 15 minutes in between back-to-back sessions.

- **Alumni Panels/Guest Speakers:** Class panels and symposia provide classmates with an opportunity to reconnect through events of direct relevance and interest. Specific panel topics vary by reunion. A successful symposia event draws on the collective wisdom of the class and presents stories from a diverse group of classmates. Many classes invite speakers who have not presented at a previous reunion. The committee should strive to include panelists representing the various demographics of the class. A symposia/class panel should last no longer than 90 minutes, allowing 15–30 minutes for open questions. Panels should have no more than six people, including the moderator; panels with more than six people do not allow each panelist adequate time to speak and additional microphones lower the audio quality of the symposia. Class symposia are a unique opportunity to generate conversations among classmates, but it's important to avoid the trap of over-programming your reunion. When planning your days, make sure enough time remains for follow-up conversations between symposia!
- **Glimpses/Classmate TED-style Talks:** Glimpses is a unique reunion program during which a handful of classmates will give a glimpse into their life through a short presentation. These aren't lectures, but rather reflections on life and can be funny, poignant, difficult, and powerful. Many alumni consider this program to be a highlight of their reunion.

Please see the Memorial Services Best Practices document for information about how to plan for your memorial service and what to expect at the event.

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### Venues

For on-campus spaces: Harvard's campus offers reunion classes many options for a wide variety of different types of events. Using approved on-campus spaces allows alumni to have a more personal and immersive Harvard experience, whether it be listening to a panel discussion in a lecture hall, sitting down to a meal in one of the Houses, or dancing at a concert in Harvard Yard. Please note that while classes may express preferences on space, we can't make any guarantees and most spaces won't be confirmed until the spring.

For off-campus spaces: Most classes hold all of their Reunion events on campus but some may elect to host at least one event off campus. The HAA has existing relationships with several venues in the area, including the Harvard Club of Boston, Museum of Science, and a number of local hotels. While we do enjoy working with these venues, we highly recommend that classes aim to be on campus as much as possible. If a class chooses to host off-campus events, the associated costs will be passed along to the class and classmates. The charges incurred when working with an off-campus venue (rental fees, transportation, etc.) can significantly increase the cost of the reunion.

Once your committee has determined its program needs, spaces will be assigned based on anticipated attendance and other events happening on campus. While committees can express preference for spaces, the HAA will make all final decisions on space assignments. Your HAA staff liaison will share your programming plans with colleagues on the Alumni Affairs & Development (AA&D) Events team, who will provide oversight of space allocation, logistical support, staffing models, vendor management, and caterer management related to all of the reunions. Event spaces will be assigned by the AA&D Events team, allowing reunion committees to focus their efforts on customizing program content to capture the spirit of your class and engaging your classmates and encouraging them to attend through strategic outreach.

### Catering

Catering outreach and planning is done in close partnership with HAA staff and reunion leaders. Committees will work with their HAA staff liaison to review menus based on provided templates and options. Please note that we will not be creating menus from scratch for any events. Catering costs will make up the majority of the expenses for your reunion, so it's best to determine the pricing for meals as early as possible so the rest of the budget can be built with that in mind.

Several spaces on campus require the use of Crimson Catering as the sole catering provider. These include Annenberg Dining Hall, the Residential Houses, Science Center Plaza Tent, Meyer Gate Tent, the Knafel Center, among others.

The Faculty Club's catering service provides catering services at the Faculty Club, Loeb House, and the Smith Campus Center. Events at the Harvard Art Museums are catered by A Catered Affair. For other venues, the HAA works with a number of other local caterers, including Cuisine Chez Vous, Whole Foods, Blue Ribbon Barbecue, Baker's Best, Ipswich Clambake, Flour, and others. External caterers must be approved by the HAA and all catering contracts must be signed by the AA&D finance team.

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Please see the Reunion Budgeting Process and Best Practices document for information expense types that are covered by Harvard and which are covered by the class, and how purchases will be made.

### Faculty Outreach

The HAA is organizing regular faculty and administrator virtual programming for reunion classes throughout the reunion year, so we encourage reunion committees to create classmate-focused content for the in-person events. However, if your class would like to invite Harvard faculty to be part of a speaking event or a panel, please be in touch with your HAA staff liaison to determine the best way to move forward.

Each class can decide if they want their panels or speaking events to only feature classmates, or if they would like to feature guests from other classes, Harvard faculty, or speakers without a Harvard affiliation. Your HAA staff liaison can help you think through the appropriate speaker(s) depending on your goals for the event, and availability of speakers. If you would like to feature a Harvard faculty member, please let your HAA staff liaison know as soon as possible. They will then connect with a team in the HAA that manages event invitations to faculty who can advise on the best way to make the ask or offer additional/alternative names depending on the event.

### Other Event Logistics

- **Accessibility:** Making reunions accessible for all attendees is a priority for the HAA. We make an effort to ensure all spaces where reunion events will be taking place are accessible, and for our senior reunions, we seek to choose spaces that are close to each other to reduce walking time and distance. All shuttle vans are also accessible.
- **Audio/Visual:** The HAA and AA&D Events work closely with our on-campus partner, Education Support Services, as well as third-party companies such as Bergsten Music and Bay State Sound to provide high-quality audio and visual support to reunion programs ranging from a panel discussion to an outdoor concert. Your HAA staff liaison will help your committee volunteers determine an event's AV needs and will make sure those needs are communicated with the vendor. Please note that once AV requests are finalized, we are not able to make changes.
- **Recording/Streaming:** The HAA will arrange and cover the costs for livestreaming and recording of the memorial service for all classes (to be posted on the HAA's YouTube channel). Any further video editing or hosting (or costs) for the memorial service will be the responsibility of the classes. If your class is looking to explore recording and/or streaming other events during your reunion, please connect with your staff liaison to discuss approach and logistics.
- **Bar Service:** The HAA works with professional bartending services to provide a high-quality experience. Classes may select a non-alcoholic bar, beer and wine, or full bar service for meals and events. Mimosa/Bloody Mary bars are also available for breakfasts. Reunion Committees will not need to play a role in choosing the specific alcohol brands offered beyond choosing the general bar package types noted above. Committees are encouraged to choose a bar package based on the experience they want for their classmates at the event, rather than based on the costs. Typically, there is minimal pricing difference between a beer and wine bar and a full bar.

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Additionally, all bar service at on-campus class events will be open bar for a smoother experience for attendees. Please note that per Massachusetts state law, some amount of food must be offered alongside an open bar.

- **Decorations:** We typically include limited flower arrangements in requests with Crimson Catering, as well as for the Memorial Service, but do not provide any additional decorations unless the class has specifically budgeted for them. Most classes prefer not to budget for decorations, and we do not recommend it.
- **Entertainment:** Reunion entertainment options depend entirely on your class's preferences. Many of the reunion classes choose to have a DJ and dancing for at least one of their evening events. Other classes elect to have a class band perform or to host a class cabaret/talent show. For Yardfest, the combined program for the 5th and 10th opening party, the HAA team will work with reunion committees to identify the optimal performer. AA&D Events will book a DJ we regularly work with unless a class has a specific preference. They can also book photo booths for any events you want them at.
- **Security:** The HAA takes security at reunions very seriously and seeks to ensure the welfare of all reunion guests, staff, and other workers at all times. We share all reunion schedules with the Harvard University Police Department prior to the reunion. You can expect to see HUPD officers at any of the large-scale events taking place during the week and at any event where alcohol is being served.
- **Transportation:** Harvard provides a free reunion shuttle service throughout campus. This shuttle makes several stops on campus, including Reunion Headquarters, several of the Houses, and any Harvard parking garages where attendees have been instructed to park. Chartered buses will be provided for the 55th-70th Reunions between the hotel and event locations.

Please see the Reunion Budgeting Process and Best Practices document for information on what expense types are covered by Harvard and which are covered by the class, and how purchases will be made.

### **Housing**

There are many options for housing across the reunions. Options might include staying at local hotels or in on-campus housing in the dorms and Houses. While the HAA will offer you options depending on your reunion year, you may also choose to stay at a different hotel or at another location off-campus (an Airbnb, at a classmate's house, etc.).

**Hotels:** Hotel reservations should be made by classmates directly with the hotel, and this will be separate from the process for registering for the in-person programming. The HAA will not be able to assist with hotel booking. Information about hotel blocks will be available by visiting the Reunions website.

**On-Campus Housing:** Alumni celebrating their 5<sup>th</sup>-50<sup>th</sup> Reunions have the option to reserve dorm housing on-campus. While staying on campus offers the opportunity to relive your College days and

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enjoy a convenient location, the dorms are simple and will not come with the same amenities as a hotel room would, so please plan accordingly. You can register your guests for housing as well.

On-campus housing requests and payment (housing costs are per each person, not per room) will be part of the registration and payment process for the in-person programming. There will be a deadline to register for housing, and walk-in housing registration is not available. Due to the limited availability of dorm beds, housing requests will be filled on a first-come, first served basis.

Those who request campus housing will learn their dorm/House and room assignment when they arrive at Reunion Headquarters (see below). They will not be notified of their room assignment ahead of time. Note that alumni will not be able to make requests for adjacent/shared reunion housing with classmates or other reunion attendees (besides immediate family members). We have the wonderful challenge of growing numbers of reunion attendees each year, and with the growth in numbers also comes the growth in housing demand. In determining housing assignments, our priority is making sure our assignments match the accessibility, health (refrigeration for breast milk, insulin, etc.), and religious (non-electronic access on the sabbath, etc.) needs of reunion attendees. However, we will be housing reunion classes in clusters/Houses with one another. For reasons of safety, comfort, and convenience, we also try to assign housing near where a given class may be hosting an evening event. Information about on-campus housing will be available by visiting the Reunions website.

### **Registration for In-Person Programming**

The HAA will manage the creation and launch of the registration form for the in-person programming on-campus. There are different ways to register, depending on your reunion, and these are outlined below.

Please note that the reunion budget and pricing must be finalized before we can begin building the online form, and it typically takes about three weeks to build and test the form. Please see the Reunion Budgeting Process and Best Practices document for information on how the budget will be determined after programming plans are finalized and before the registration form is created.

You can register and pay for any guests as part of your own registration. Pricing for each adult guest will be the same as the pricing for classmates.

- **Online Registration:** All reunion registrations can be completed online. The HAA works with an internal AA&D team to create a registration form for your reunion. For data security purposes and to ensure that only your classmates are registering for your reunion, online registration requires a HarvardKey login. Classmates will be reminded to sign up for their HarvardKey in the early fall, at the beginning of the Class Report submission process.
- **Paper Mailings:** Mailings will be sent out to alumni for the 55th Reunion and above concurrent with the launch of online registration. This will include the schedule, detailed information, and the URL to register online or the phone number to call the College Alumni Programs Office for assistance registering. Alumni will not need to fill out a paper form to register.

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- **Phone Registration:** If your classmates require assistance registering, they may register over the phone by calling 617-496-7001 once registration is live.

Please see the Reunion Budgeting Process and Best Practices document for information about the pricing tiers and pricing options offered for in-person programming, as well as information about financial assistance and the reunion subsidy program.

## Checking in at Reunion Headquarters

Reunion Headquarters, located at the Cabot Science Library, will be the check-in site for most reunions. Those who registered in advance (either online or over the phone) should go here before attending any events to receive a nametag, which will be their ticket to many events, any other important information. Alumni may also return to headquarters during the operating hours if they have any questions for staff.

The 55th-70th reunions may have an alternate headquarter location which will be designated in their schedule.

For reunions where committees decided to have a merchandise favor for registrants, these will be available for pickup when checking in at headquarters. If alumni elected to stay in on-campus housing, they will be able to get what they need to check into their room at headquarters as well (their room assignment, key, swipe card, etc.).