

# Communications Best Practices for Recent Graduate Class Secretaries and Media Team

This document outlines communications best practices for recent graduate Class Committee Secretaries and Media Team members. While this might be most helpful for those in these roles, other Class Committee members should be aware of this information as well.

## Annual Communications Schedule

This is a suggested schedule for class emails and/or social media posts in recent graduate life (up to 10 years out) and beyond! There will be some additional messages during your 5th and 10th Reunion years. There are also unique communications in your first year out from graduation, and these can be found in the next section.

- Ongoing
  - Reminding classmates to update their email address, mailing address, and career information over time in their HAA Alumni Directory profile at [community.alumni.harvard.edu/person](http://community.alumni.harvard.edu/person) (and note how regional event invites are tied to preferred address).
  - Publicize class events and recent grad events like Real World for Recent Grads.
  - Share updates/news about your classmates.
  
- Summer (June-Aug)
  - Ensure activities chairs have signed up with HAA and help promote recruitment of them (repeat annually, generally in June and July). HAA staff will initiate this and ask you for your help with additional marketing and sharing relevant content.
  - Remind class about your social media accounts and regional Facebook groups so these are actively used as a source for updates and community (repeats annually, and August can be a good time before fall events start).
  
- Fall (Sept - Nov)
  - Secretary requests updated class email list from HAA staff liaison (repeats annually, generally in September).
  - Publicize Welcome to Your City programming (repeats annually, generally in October). HAA staff will initiate this and ask you for your help with additional marketing and share relevant content.
  - Publicize Harvard-Yale/Fall Fest programming (repeats annually, generally in November). When The Game is at Harvard, there will be a formal Recent Grad Tailgate. HAA staff will initiate the planning of this in partnership with volunteers, ask for your help with additional marketing, and share relevant content. When The Game is at Yale, tailgates will be organized by classes, and those class leaders should be in touch with their Secretary and Media Team regarding marketing needs.
  - Highlight Harvard Moves in media engagement (repeat annually, in November).
  
- Winter (Dec - Feb)
  - Holiday message to class (repeat annually).

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- Spring (Mar - May)
  - Highlight Global Networking Night in media engagement (repeat annually, in March).
  - Highlight Housing Day in media engagement (repeat annually, in March).
  - Remind class about Board of Overseers and Elected Directors voting. You can repurpose content that is emailed to alumni or on the HAA website, or you can ask your HAA staff liaison if they can share content with you to use.
  - Highlight Harvard Alumni Day in media engagement (repeat annually, in May/June). You can repurpose content that is emailed to alumni or on the HAA website, or you can ask your HAA staff liaison if they can share content with you to use.
  - Consider collaboration with gift committee on fundraising message at the end of the fiscal year in June. You can make “soft asks” or point to information about giving in engagement messages. Your Harvard College Fund Class Officer can be a resource here for strategy and language.

## **Tasks and Communications in the First Year Out**

Much like in a Reunion year, there will be some unique tasks and communications in the first year out from graduation. These include:

- Highlight Class Commencement in media engagement over the summer.
- Update website to archive senior year content over the summer.
- Secretary gets list of Class Committee post-grad email addresses from HAA and shares with Class Committee over summer.
- Mention @college email expiring one year after graduation in the spring and include answers to related FAQs.
- Consider 1 year “graduversary” messages or posts.

## **Best Practices for Email and Social**

Secretaries feel the need to walk the tight line of not oversaturating via email in order to ensure their updates are read when they are sent. As a result however, feedback from general members of Class Committees suggests that in more recent grad classes, members of the class at large don’t know how to take advantage of their Class Secretary’s and Media Team’s ability to publicize events, share each other’s projects, and celebrate each others’ successes.

A best practice to solve for this is for Secretaries and Media Team members to create a process that works best for them and their class for collecting information from their classmates to publicize. This might involve emailing updates/requests to the Class Secretary directly, emailing updates/requests to the class Gmail account, or creating a survey form to collect information, and include it at the bottom of every email you send, with a short reminder blurb about its purpose. This process or form could also allow for classmates to specify if they prefer publicity over email, social media, or both. Given the frequency of requests, there might be times when secretaries send special one-off emails for specific updates. To cut down on emails, you may also choose to wait to include these updates as another part of your regular email newsletters (holiday email, Housing Day email, Harvard Alumni Day email, etc.).

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Whatever the process is, Class Secretaries and Media Team members should ensure their whole Class Committee knows so they can effectively communicate this to their classmates.

You can also explore what should be added to your class website to keep it updated and active.

## **Email Tools and Resources**

In your senior year, you might have sent your classmates regular emails via a broadcast email service like Mailchimp or SendGrid, and certain emails about major news were sent in collaboration with your HAA staff liaison through Harvard's broadcast email tool (Salesforce).

In alumni life, you may continue to send emails through your third-party email client of choice. If you would like to request that the HAA send an email through Salesforce, that can be done too, and you should be in touch with your HAA staff liaison as soon as you're thinking of sending a message. Regardless of which approach you take, there are documents that cover the best practices for both. See the Officers Lounge for the documents for the HAA Email Service and External Email Client Best Practices. The HAA Email Service document shares information about what the templates look like, the timeline, and what information the HAA will need from you.

A note about Mailchimp specifically (since many classes have used it): You can only upgrade to a paid plan and then downgrade to a free plan one time. The next time that you upgrade to a paid plan, it will not let you downgrade to the free plan again.

## **Notification of Deceased Classmates**

Notification process that some Secretaries have followed (and suggest) for deceased classmates:

- Hear about a death in your class OR read about it in monthly necrology report (sent by HAA staff monthly by email to the Secretary).
- If you do not hear about this from the HAA, share the news with your HAA staff liaison. Wait to share any communications with your class until the HAA has updated the records for your classmate.
- Determine the House the person was in and reach out to the appropriate Class Committee House Representative to see if they know who the person's close friends or blockmates were.
- Start with close friends/blockmates and see if anyone can provide any information or a tribute.
- Share the news of the person's passing with your class and include a tribute from the friends/blockmates (or any additional information they have) - including whatever information the person's family/friends want to include (link to obituary, info about services, etc).

## **Partnership with the Harvard College Fund**

The Harvard College Fund will manage any communications as part of the annual giving campaign, so the Class Committee, including the Secretary and Media Team, do not need to plan to send these.

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However, there might be opportunities to take advantage of this partnership by bumping or forwarding particular messages if requested. Feel free to check in with your HAA and HCF staff liaisons if you are unsure of the best way forward for a particular situation.

Striking the right balance of communications about events/community-building and fundraising is important. Note that if you choose to have any emails sent by the HAA's email system (rather than using a third-party email client), you will not be able to include a direct fundraising ask, due to classmates' contact preferences. However, you could include a "soft ask" which could come in the form of a high-level reminder about the campaign. A likely time for this might come in May or June, as the annual campaign ends on June 30.

## Social Class Updates

Some of those who start with your class at Harvard might take time off and graduate with a later class. Those who participate in a Commencement with a later class (rather than participating with your class and "walking" before they actually graduate) will also participate in Senior Week and term-time senior year events with that later class, effectively changing their preferred class year to that different class for the remainder of their time as a student. Some may choose to keep that affiliation after they graduate, but some will prefer to change back to their original class. The HAA will work with these students to make sure their records are updated.

Because of this, it is likely that when you request a new class list from the HAA in the fall after your first full year out, you may find that there are new members of the class list, likely those who started with your class and graduated later. If you want to, you may decide to message those who are new to the list (by comparing the two lists) and welcoming them back to your class, as a nice way to ensure all your classmates feel welcome as they officially start their alumni life.

## Staying Updated

In addition to finding out news about your classmates from your classmates directly, you might also learn from these sources:

- *Harvard Magazine*, including the Class Notes section at the back of the printed magazine
- HAA (or other Harvard) social media accounts
- *Harvard Gazette* and *Harvard Crimson* stories or profiles
- Information shared by your HAA staff liaison, HCF staff liaison, or other staff
- As mentioned above, Class Secretaries receive a monthly email from HAA staff with a list of all College alumni who have passed away that month (whether or not someone from your class has passed away) sorted by class year.