

Pre-Reunion Events Overview and Best Practices

Pre-Reunion Events Roadmap

In addition to the reunion programming on the Harvard campus in the spring (as well as the virtual programs for all reunion classes planned by the Harvard Alumni Association), reunion committees may also choose to organize pre-reunion events that can either be held virtually or in-person regionally. The key to a successful pre-reunion event is someone (or a small group) willing to take the lead on planning the event. There are many great ideas for both virtual and in-person events, but both models require willing stewards.

Questions to Consider Before Planning

The biggest question is format: Will this be in-person or virtual?

In-person

- Who will host/plan the event?
- Where and when will it take place?
- What costs need to be taken into account? (*Please note, there is no budget for in-person pre-reunion events unless specifically discussed with the committee)
- What will the invite pool be? Is it just classmates or are partners/families invited?
- How will the event details be communicated to these classmates?

Virtual

- Who will host/plan the event?
- When will it take place?
- What kind of event is this? Will it be a panel/talk/social?
- What costs (if any) need to be taken into account? (*Please note, there is no budget for virtual pre-reunion events unless specifically discussed with the committee)
- What details need to be communicated to the class?

Things To Keep in Mind

Some classes choose to plan their entire schedule of pre-reunion events at the beginning of the year, while others plan as an idea arises. Either approach can work as long as there are volunteers within the class who will own the events.

Programming ideas for in-person events may include:

- Happy hours
- Harvard games or watch parties
- Community service projects
- Speaker events
- Book clubs
- Forming a team for a local sport league
- Community or professional theater performances or games
- Outdoor excursions such as hiking, picnicking, or visiting a nearby historic town

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Overview and Best Practices

Be mindful of financial inclusivity. In-person regional events should be no-cost/low-cost, although some events might require classmates to pay a small amount (i.e., buying their own food or drink at a restaurant or bar gathering or buying a ticket to an event). Be sure to market that an event requires such payment when sending class communications. It is not an expectation that the volunteer has to spend any money to hold an event; you are really just the organizer to convene everyone.

As noted above, neither the Harvard Alumni Association nor the Harvard College Fund provide a budget for virtual or in-person, class-specific pre-reunion events. If you anticipate needing to pay for a service as part of a pre-reunion event, this needs to be discussed with the Reunion Committee Chairs and your College Alumni Programs staff liaison as the budget is being built. Please note the College Alumni Programs team is not resourced to take payments for pre-reunion events.

How the CAP Team Can Help

The College Alumni Programs team – and your Reunions & Classes staff liaison specifically – can help with the following:

- Sharing lists of classmates in a particular region for in-person events. This can help inform where it might make sense to hold an in-person event, alongside the interest of the volunteer organizers.
- Sending monthly class-wide emails highlighting upcoming pre-reunion events.
- With the permission of the Reunion Program Chairs and the Class Secretary, can share email lists for regional classmates with event hosts so they can send out additional, targeted email invites to local classmates, in addition to the class-wide communications sharing all events regardless of location. Event hosts will first need to sign a volunteer confidentiality agreement form, if they have not already, before receiving a list of email addresses.
- Providing limited Zoom support if needed, but ideally planners will leverage the Zoom licenses the HAA has available for classes in a reunion year, or volunteers will use a personal Zoom account (or a platform of their choosing).

Please note that the College Alumni Programs team is not resourced to help with the following pieces:

- Coordinating logistics or content for any pre-reunion events (virtual or in-person).
- Managing event RSVPs and registration forms. Volunteers are encouraged to use a system that works best for them to quickly have access to the information they need. Past processes by volunteers have included using a Google Form or equivalent for sign-ups or asking registrants to email them.

For more information about virtual event best practices, see the Virtual Events Overview and Best Practices document.