

Outreach and Engagement

Best Practices for Reunions

Communications Overview

Consider starting a word of mouth or class-wide networking campaign to reconnect!

- Encourage classmates to check and update their alumni profile and contact information at community.alumni.harvard.edu/person
 - It's especially important for reunion committee members to keep their information updated so classmates can easily reach them
 - Please prioritize contacting classmates who have not attended previous reunions or stayed in touch with the class.

Class-Wide Emails: Overview

- Many emails sent in your reunion yearwill (or can) be sent through Harvard's broadcast email system. Your HAA staff liaison will work with you 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 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.
- We suggest communicating with your classmates monthly, though the frequency of your class-wide communication will naturally increase as important events and deadlines approach.
- We have found that email is an effective outreach strategy, however we recognize that alumni are inundated with email, so we aim to be strategic in the use of email throughout the year.

Class-Wide Emails: Guidelines

- The [Broadcast Email Service document](#) has information about what is needed to send the email.
- Please provide us with the final text at least **4 business days** before you would like the email to be sent, as the process of creating and sending a broadcast email includes more steps than sending an email through a personal email client like Gmail.
- After you share your final approved text with your HAA staff liaison, they will 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 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 class emails you send in collaboration with your HAA staff liaison, as well as emails about the Class Report, the HAA will send out multiple communications including:

- Marketing emails, including registration launch, reminders ahead of deadlines (e.g. pricing changes, housing, childcare, refunds), and other key messages. 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.

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- Virtual events taking place throughout the year for all reunion classes featuring Harvard administrators and faculty.
- Reminders to classmates about needing their HarvardKey (their username and password). 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.
- 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.
- 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

Peer-to-peer outreach 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.

Update your Alumni Profile:

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

"Lost" Alumni:

For some classmates, the HAA has an email but not a physical mailing address on file. Even though HAA communications will primarily be sent by email, it is important that the HAA also has a 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 a 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.

Opting Out of Harvard Communications:

Some classmates might not want to receive all types of communications from Harvard, but if they want to participate in reunion events and receive the Class Report, they should ensure that they are subscribed to receive emails. If classmates would like to opt-out of other types of communications, they can do that through the Email Preferences menu in the Directory. There are many 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 emails or need assistance updating their email preferences.

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Classmate Outreach Efforts from the HAA

The Reunions and Classes team will begin outreach across all reunion classes during the summer to ensure that we have email and mailing addresses on file, as well as confirm 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 process will ensure that the class list is as updated as possible. Of course, there might still be gaps, and we look to partner with members of the committee to help with that additional outreach.

Websites

HAA-Managed Reunions Website:

The HAA maintains a [Reunions website](#) that includes updates about your in-person events as well as information relevant to all classes (e.g. housing, parking, headquarters, etc.).

Class-Managed Websites:

For those classes who use a [classes.harvard.edu](#) website, you can view the [training resources](#) if the assigned volunteer needs a refresher on how to update content. These websites are intended to provide simplistic management functions. Some classes may wish to use a different 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](#) includes a set of [social media best practices](#) and guidance such as how to recruit administrators, how to develop an engagement strategy, how to establish group guidelines, how to build a system to approve/decline posts, how to manage inappropriate comments, how to promote your accounts, and how to keep your audience engaged.

Text Messaging Program

Registrants who opt into the HAA’s text message program will receive alerts with event timing and locations. Text messages will also provide real-time updates in case of inclement weather or other unexpected program changes. Volunteers will not play a role in the creation or deployment of texts. Some classes might also receive texts about registration and deadlines.

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Postcards and Mailings

- In order to share information with classmates unreachable by email, a paper mailing is a good option. Your HAA liaison can price this out to help you decide if you should send a mailing to the full class, or to just those without email addresses.
- The HAA will send a save-the-date postcard to all reunion-year alumni in the fall.
- For the 55th Reunion and above, a paper mailing will be sent from the reunion committee 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 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. Once your staff liaison confirms it is all set, you will be able to use it on your digital accounts and other locations.