

Reunion In-Person Events

Overview and Best Practices

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 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 throughout your reunion year:

- Virtual class programming
- Regional in-person class programming
- Reunions-wide virtual programming, featuring Harvard faculty, administrators, and other special guests (centrally planned by the HAA)
- In-person reunion programming on campus in Cambridge in June

Your in-person programming on the Harvard campus will be a celebratory conclusion to your reunion year, building on the months of virtual/regional events 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 shell 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 committee can create custom programming if interested.

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.

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 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, such as lunches, evening events, networking sessions, affinity group mini-reunions, and more. We recommend building in time for informal socializing to allow classmates to do what they're most excited about: see each other!

Intellectual programming balances social activities with thoughtful content. Based on survey results from past reunions, we do not recommend more than two concurrent presentations at a time. Please plan to allow at least 15 minutes in between back-to-back sessions.

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- **Alumni Panels/Speakers:** These provide classmates with an opportunity to reconnect through events of direct interest. 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 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 session. 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 sessions!
- **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.

Venues

Harvard's campus offers reunion classes many options for a 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.

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. 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 provide oversight of space allocation, logistical support, staffing, and vendor and caterer management related to all of the reunions. Venues 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.

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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.

Several spaces on campus require the use of Crimson Catering as the catering provider. These include Annenberg Hall, Residential Houses, Science Center Plaza Tent, and 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.

Faculty Outreach

The HAA organizes 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. 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 that manages event invitations to faculty who can advise on the best way to make the ask or offer alternative names.

Other Event Logistics

- **Accessibility:** Making reunions accessible for all attendees is a priority for the HAA. We 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.
- **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 AV support. Your HAA staff liaison will help your committee volunteers determine an event's AV needs and communicate those needs to the vendor.
- **Recording/Streaming:** The HAA will arrange and cover the costs for recording of the memorial service for all classes. Any further video editing or website hosting for the memorial service will be the responsibility of the class. If your class is looking to explore recording and/or streaming other events during your reunion, please contact your staff liaison.
- **Bar Service:** The HAA works with professional bartending services to provide a high-quality experience. Classes may select a beer and wine bar or full bar service for meals. Committees will not need to play a role in choosing the specific alcohol brands offered beyond choosing the bar package types noted above. All bar service at on-campus events will be open bar for a smooth attendee experience. Per Massachusetts state law, food must be offered alongside an open bar.

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- **Decorations:** Most classes prefer not to budget for decorations, and we do not recommend it. Should your class be interested in having a decorations budget, the HAA asks that all orders be streamlined through Peak, one lighting vendor, and one balloon vendor in order to minimize risks. Floral arrangements can be ordered through Crimson Catering.
- **Entertainment:** Options depend entirely on your class's preferences. Many 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 the DJ.
- **Security:** The HAA takes security 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 large-scale events taking place during the week and where alcohol is being served.
- **Transportation:** Harvard provides a free reunion shuttle service throughout campus. This shuttle makes several stops, 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 block and event locations.

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

Housing

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 on the Reunions website.

On-Campus Housing: Alumni celebrating their 5th-50th Reunions have the option to reserve dorm housing on-campus on a first-come first-served basis. While staying on campus offers the opportunity to relive your college days and 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. Those who request campus housing will learn their dorm/House and room assignment when they arrive at Reunion Headquarters; they will not be notified of their room assignment ahead of time. Alumni will not be able to make requests for adjacent/shared reunion housing with classmates or other reunion attendees (except those on the same registration form).

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We have the wonderful challenge of growing attendance 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. Information about on-campus housing will be available on 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. Please note that the reunion budget and pricing must be finalized before we can begin building the online form, and it typically takes about four weeks to build and test the form.

- **Online Registration:** All reunion registrations can be completed online via a form created by the HAA. For 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.
- **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.

Reunion Headquarters

Reunion Headquarters, located at the Cabot Science Library, will be the check-in site for most reunions. The 70th Reunion may have an alternate headquarters location which will be listed on their schedule.

Those who register in advance should go to headquarters before attending any events to receive a nametag (which will serve as their entry ticket), favor (if the committee chose to have one), and other information. Alumni may also return to headquarters during operating hours if they have any questions.

If alumni elect to stay in on-campus housing, they will receive their room assignment and key/swipe card to check into their room at the housing desk location in headquarters.