



## Planning Multiple-Location Events using Social Media

**One way to involve many alumni in a “single” event and leverage volunteer efforts is to have it distributed over a number of sites.** The events have to be fun or tap into an emotion. An existing student tradition can go “global” – or with annual repetition, a new alumni tradition can be created. Multi-location events are a way to “cross-pollinate” among existing organizations such as regional chapters and they can be a way to build a new organization based on alumni interests. **The “single” event can even be distributed over time using a number of different dates.**

**Participants feel like they are part of a larger effort or happening closely connected to the university.** Even a small group of five to ten people will feel the connection if they know that their event is part of a much larger event or effort. A multi-location event can significantly help small regional associations (or local chapters of shared interest groups) with programming by providing an additional event that is closely associated with the university – with little cost to the university or the local groups. **Social media can also be used during and after the event(s) to “tie” them together.**

### Examples of global distributed activities and international multi-location events.

**Traditional sports rivalries.** Attending television broadcasts of athletic contests between traditional university rivals has often been the impetus for local gatherings. Planning a local event is eased because the date of the contest is set well in advance and publicized widely by the broadcaster as well as by the university. In many cases, the contest can be viewed at a local sports bar – lowering venue overhead. Publicizing time and location of local events (often by a local alumni association) is still necessary. Ideally, a central web presence publicizes local venues to increase turnout. Examples include “The Game” between Yale and Harvard in late November or The Boat Race between Oxford and Cambridge in March.

**Feb Club Emeritus.** Feb Club was originally a series of Yale undergraduate student social events to enliven the coldest, dampest month of the year – February – by holding a party at Yale every night of the month. However, since 2008, it has become an annual social event for alumni around the world ([febclub.webs.com](http://febclub.webs.com)). As an alumni tradition the proclaimed intent is to hold an alumni get-together (no matter how small) somewhere in the world every night of February. To have an “official” event, all you need is a volunteer “host” at a local pub, where alumni can meet with little or no preparation. Alums can pay for their own drinks, so there is no cost to the host or regional association. More elaborate events are also held by those with time or money to do it. There are currently over 100 Feb Club events around the globe attended by over 5000 alumni.

**Yale Day of Service:** The Yale Day of Service (DoS) ([yaledayofservice.org](http://yaledayofservice.org)), was begun in 2008 to tap into Yale’s student traditions of community service and social justice. Every year, the second Saturday of May is designated as the Yale DoS. On that day (or as close to that day as possible), alumni and their families and friends volunteer their time to a local community organization for a service program such as park clean-up, tutoring or mentoring. The effort involves over 4000 Yale alumni, family and friends at over 250 sites around the world. Many DoS projects are part of ongoing efforts by local Yale Clubs or other Yale alumni organizations.

**Centralized planning with local execution** ensures a well-organized event that reflects the interests of a wide array of alumni. However, success often requires some of the characteristics of a successful flash mob or message that has gone viral. For each event, there need to be clear instructions defining participation that allows significant local flexibility; the structure should allow volunteers to self-organize each event without central control; the university must provide centralized online sign ups and automatic email reminders, and built in social media sharing.

**Building and maintaining distributed events usually requires an online framework for local implementation:** It can be useful for both organizers and participants to be able to sign up through the system. Both Feb Club and DoS encourage individual site organizers to sign up – not just regional associations – in addition to the individual participants. This allows Shared Interest Groups and even a group of friends to participate with their own event.

Feb Club Emeritus was organized from the bottom up by a few alumni volunteers. It spread virally as a fun and unique Yale tradition. However, the simple centralized online framework has allowed it to continue and grow. In contrast, Yale DoS was a concerted effort organized by AYA from the top down including the creation of a volunteer leadership structure. But the flexibility for participation has allowed a simple centralized online framework with regional coordinators to support continued growth from the bottom up.