



## *Regional Associations: Programs to Sustain Alumni Engagement*

**Programming for your audience** – Know your audience. Learn what they like. The geographic region and the urban, suburban or rural nature of the locale affect what works. The age of the intended audience does too. So does the cost.

The best way to know what events are of interest is to solicit programming suggestions from alumni and members by simple pen-and-pencil, email, web-based survey methods ([http://aya.yale.edu/content/membership-surveys\\_1570](http://aya.yale.edu/content/membership-surveys_1570); [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)) or social media. Segment your audience so each person can respond with the most comfortable tool.

**Programming for your resources** – Know your group limitations and resources. Planning an event requires volunteer time, talent, and, sometimes, treasure or financial capacity. The essential resource is the leadership of volunteers who are committed, willing and able to plan, organize, and produce an event. Financial resources in an association's accounts or funds generated by an event are secondarily important.

- Work with volunteers to choose events that the planners are enthusiastic about producing and have the capabilities to produce and execute with excellence.
- Look for reproducible events. The necessary effort for the subsequent event will be reduced, even if the event grows in size. Some can be made reproducible by altering them slightly to fit the resources available. For example, an association can hold a reception every year for local students who have graduated from high school, been accepted by the University and will be attending the University the next year.
- Small or large events are only successful, if within the budget for time, talent and treasure.
- The size of the event or the amount of financial investment is not determinative of the interest or fun generated. Small groups, even one or two people, can produce fun and interesting events.

**Creating program-ready traditions** – Build events around institutional traditions and annual events to strengthen alumni participation. Coordinating around an existing university event can be an opportunity for a relatively easy and inexpensive get-together with continuing appeal to successive generations of alumni.

- Shape and promote a few select student traditions, if you have them, so that they will have continuing appeal as students become alumni. Otherwise create those traditions.
- Have an annual party at a time during the year that is usually vacant on the social calendar, like [Feb Club](#).
- Organize a community service tradition that can get people outside, like [Day of Service](#).
- Take advantage of a spectator sports event or inter-university rivalry: [The Harvard-Yale Football Game](#).
- Build on a seasonal University event or need (college fairs in the U.S. or interviewing high school students applying to university for admission: [Yale Alumni Schools Committee](#)).

### **Creating low-cost, easy-to-organize university-branded programming**

- Identify professors who give accessible lectures of their current research then take the show on the road by paying their travel expenses (within limits): [AYA-Redpath Speakers Program](#).
- The University or alumni associations can work together with publicists to monitor the travels of University connected people. Many authors, playwrights, musicians, artists, and professors tour to promote their work, or give promotional talks. Local associations can plan an event to coordinate with a regional visit, such as a presentation and luncheon.

### **Resources for ideas on a wide variety of events:**

- A sample list of events categorized by audience: see next document in handout.
- Suggested themes, venues, and talent sources: <http://aya.yale.edu/content/advice-examples>.
- Events sponsored by the Yale Club of Washington, DC, a large association not located near Yale: <http://www.yaleclubdc.org/event-calendar>.
- Events organized by a smaller club with a scattered alumni based, the Yale Club of Central Pennsylvania, that might have only a handful of events every year: [PaYale.com](http://PaYale.com).
- A shorter list of events with more detail about each event including the resources needed to hold it and instructions for making it happen: [yalegale.org/casestudies](http://yalegale.org/casestudies).