



Reunions: Planning a Successful Reunion – Part 2

So you've decided on your objectives, your audience, your venue, your dates, and who is doing logistics. Or those have been determined by university tradition. What are the next steps in planning a particular reunion or event?

Step 1: Build Your Volunteer Team

Building a strong leadership team for each reunion is extremely important. Not only will the leadership team help you to set your goals and plan your events, they will be in the forefront of your attendance efforts. You have heard it before: the more passionate leaders involved, the more alumni that are likely to get involved and attend! Although you'll utilize many communication vehicles including email, regular mail, web pages and social media tools such as the organization's Facebook page to get your message out, the most successful reunion outreach is always one-on-one. A robust and active reunion committee can make all the difference in getting others to attend.

Step 2: Add Customized Meaningful Content

Most robust reunion programs contain several social events such as cocktail parties or dinners, lectures by professors, panels by notable alumni and addresses by university administrators, often the President. What is often most meaningful to participants, however, are the unique aspects that the alumni leadership creates. Whether publishing a class book, including alumni panels focused on group specific issues (such as raising children or retiring from careers), including performances highlighting the group talent (whether in art, music, film or other areas) or even including a well-executed memorial service for deceased friends. The unique events or activities that the volunteer organizers put together often develop from ideas from the volunteer team and may at first seem odd, but should be nurtured and supported.

Step 3: Execute the Plan

Reunion should be fun! It should be enjoyable for both the alumni attending and the volunteer group (and staff) that organized the weekend. You as organizers should plan for the fun (whether by including certain surprises or celebratory events) and have an active role in leading the excitement especially if you sense that the group dynamic is not developing. While managing the last minute details can be a distraction, take some time to make sure that the feel of the event is what you intended. Attendees are going to want to speak with the organizers and the leadership team so it's important to circulate and make sure everyone is comfortable.

Step 4: Continuing the Momentum

People generally leave a reunion inspired about their organization and the university. To build on the interest, you should incorporate ideas for continued involvement with the university into your communications and programming. After the reunion, in the communications that thank the participants and especially the volunteer leadership, you have the opportunity to build on the momentum from the reunion and help to strengthen the alumni engagement with the university.

Additional Resources / Ideas / Examples:

<http://dartmouth.org/reunionplanning/>

http://www.military.com/Resources/ResourceSubmittedFileView?file=reunions_how_to_plan.htm

<http://www.iup.edu/upper.aspx?id=88431>

<http://alumni.dal.ca/get-connected/dal-homecoming/reunions/reunion-planning-guide/>

http://www.reunionsmag.com/resources/resources_FreeStuff.html

<http://excelsiorpilots.com/plan/timelin1.htm>

http://www.case.org/Browse_by_Professional_Interest/Special_Events/Homecoming_and_Reunions.html (public index of articles, access to an individual article requires password)