



# PRINCETON WOMEN'S NETWORK

## Best Practices

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### Structure

- Begin with local grassroots initiative and develop volunteers and leadership based on their interests and local demand. Look to the Princeton Women's Network for guidance and support for organization and structure.
- Coordinate with the regional alumni association.
  - Recognize areas it can support, such as: website, event planning and implementation, leadership development, trouble shooting tips, financial assistance and structural support such as tax-exempt bank account, legal advice, insurance coverage, etc.
  - Recognize mutual benefits for the PWN and regional association.
    - Coordination with regional association establishes Princeton affiliation that provides "legitimacy" to PWN.
    - Coordinated regional groups can integrate at many levels and avoid working at cross purposes (for example, scheduling conflicts).
- Consider partnering with other constituent groups such as ABPA, A4P, graduate alumnae.

### Leadership<sup>i</sup>

- Create a leadership structure that promotes longevity of the PWN and works best for the region (may vary depending on location, size, demographics, etc.).
- Seek out and develop volunteers who can provide insight into and provide leadership, such as graduate school alumnae, young alumnae, etc.
- Develop a culture of leadership development (grow volunteers into leaders).
- Consider recommended leadership positions:
  - Chair or Co-Chairs, Treasurer, Communications Coordinator and/or Secretary, special interest committee leaders (e.g., Women in Media, Women in Finance, Service Group, Book Group), Advisory Board.
- Hold two or three leadership meetings a year.
- Recognize importance of planned leadership transitions:
  - Establish how new leaders are developed and selected;
  - Consider "term limits" for leadership positions to provide leadership opportunities for others on a regular basis to encourage a flow of new ideas and prevent volunteer burnout.



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### Events<sup>ii</sup>

- Respond to the interests of volunteers and local alumnae.
- Include networking/socializing at all events to create personal connections.
- Manage expectations of leaders planning events and others participating in them (e.g., speakers).
- Focus on quality, not quantity; events don't need large turnouts to be successful.
- Learn from experience and other PWNs: some events will attract less interest than expected and others will be blockbusters.
- Ask outgoing or gregarious alumnae to engage quieter alumnae.
- Emphasize events that highlight local alumnae (e.g., focus a cultural outing on an alumna in the field).
- In [e-]newsletters, solicit event ideas, event spaces, event organizers, new volunteers and other assistance.
- Leverage existing alumni/alumnae events (including webcasts) to promote gatherings for your PWN (such as Reunions, Alumni Day, Volunteer Leadership Conference, She Roars and other group conferences — black alumni, LGBT, graduate alumni).

### Communications

- Participate in PWN network-wide leadership meetings/calls:
  - Learn about event ideas, activities, best practices, participation demographics, and relevant topics to enhance your own PWN.
- Connect to the PWN website:
  - Access a variety of engaged alumnae.
  - Integrate with existing alumni/ae resources such as TigerNet.
  - Learn about other PWNs in the regions that are linked to the website.
  - Tap resources for PWN leadership, including:
    - Guide for starting a PWN;
    - Best Practices for leading a PWN; and
    - Events and leadership by region.
- Communications and Social Media
  - Distribute e-newsletters using Alumni Association's alumni database to promote events and special interest groups and to solicit volunteers, ideas and space.
  - Use existing tools such as TigerNet, Facebook and LinkedIn.
  - Appoint a savvy volunteer to facilitate social media communications.
  - Promote use to alumnae through pertinent (need to know) and stimulating content and connections.



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- Leverage user-provided content to create opportunities for mentoring, event creation, volunteer development and more.
  - Encourage alumnae to connect directly with each other, arrange small events on short notice (e.g., going running or to movies or dinner), and share information of interest to individual alumnae such as job openings or events sponsored by their not-for-profits.

#### **Finances**

- Pay-as-you-go events.
- Possible support from local alumni organization.
- Consider dues to help subsidize service events and keep other events affordable.

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#### **<sup>i</sup> Suggested leadership responsibilities:**

- Chair or Co-Chairs: Lead event planning and oversee event implementation; edit e-newsletters publicizing events; evaluate and implement ideas suggested by membership for events and new groups; coordinate with regional alumni association; facilitate leadership succession; respond to general inquiries from members; trouble-shoot. Co-Chairs are often preferable to a Chair because they assist and inspire each other.
- Treasurer: Manage finances (e.g., checking account, PayPal account), coordinate with Treasurer of regional alumni association as needed; provide information needed for University's annual filing with IRS.
- Communications Coordinator: Format e-newsletters; distribute e-newsletters using Alumni Association's alumni database; maintain website; facilitate conversations in Facebook/LinkedIn/TigerNet groups.
- Special Interest Group Leaders: Plan and implement events; maintain email/electronic list of members and facilitate ways for them to communicate. Co-leaders are preferable to one leader because they assist and inspire each other.
  - Possible Special Interest Groups: Book Group, Service/Not-for-Profit, Media, Technology, Education, Mothers, Healthcare, Lawyers, Entrepreneurs, Finance, Architects and Real Estate
- Advisory Board: Comprised of the PWN Chair or Co-Chairs, Treasurer, Communications Coordinator, special interest group leaders, and two or three other alumnae who are committed to PWN and have good insights for sustaining it. Advisory Board meets a few times a year to discuss issues of importance to the effective functioning of the PWN.
- Secretary: Maintains minutes of Advisory Board meetings; assists Chair or Co-Chairs as requested.
- Leaders of career development activities, social events, cultural activities and mentoring events: Plan and implement events of interest.



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#### ii Ideas for initial and ongoing events requiring minimal management and expense:

- Annual social event (wine and cheese party or tea) in a home to establish and solidify connections.
- “Food for Thought” potluck for a small group in a home with guest speaker (preferably an alumna) to provide intellectually stimulating program in a community building environment.
- Annual service group event (e.g., evening at soup kitchen or shelter, afternoon at animal rescue facility).

Created by the

**Ad Hoc Committee on Alumnae Initiatives**