

III –Regional Association Leadership

At the core of a successful regional association is a group of dynamic officers who represent the diversity of the local Princeton community, relish assuming the responsibilities of leadership and can be relied upon to provide consistent levels of service to the association. Experience has shown that enthusiastic leadership is the most important ingredient in a regional association's success.

A. *Officer Titles and Areas of Responsibility*

Many of the largest and most active alumni associations have a dozen or more officers and board members, each having responsibility for a single aspect of running the organization. In smaller associations, a handful of alumni may share multiple roles and responsibilities between them.

Below is a list of the most common officer positions and their standard duties. Any and all positions can be elected or appointed, as best fits the association's needs in accordance with its by-laws.

The **President** manages all association activities, delegating specific duties as broadly as possible. The President may also:

- preside at meetings involving the executive committee and/or general membership
- maintain contact with the Alumni Association staff and the Alumni Council Committee on Regional Associations
- serve as a member of the Alumni Council and represent the association at the annual meeting, which takes place at a luncheon on the Friday of Reunions
- publicize Alumni Council and University information to the association
- provide the Alumni Council and University with annual reports when requested
- appoint new non-elected officers, in conjunction with other officers
- ensure continuity between administrations by orienting new officers and transferring records

The **Vice President** is usually the second-in-command of the association and, in many cases, is preparing to take on the presidency. The Vice President may also:

- preside at meetings in the president's absence
- head an important association function, such as event planning, schools committee, etc.
- learn the president's duties in anticipation of filling that position

The **Secretary** oversees issues related to communicating with the membership of the association. The Secretary may also:

- keep information flowing from the officers to the general membership
- maintain records of Princeton constituents in the region, in cooperation with the Office of Alumni Records at the University
- produce mailings (including newsletters) to association members
- take minutes of all officers' meetings and circulate them to the membership
- contact new arrivals in the area and encourage their involvement in the association

NOTE – In larger associations, the secretary's duties are frequently divided among several officers, such as a Membership Chair, Communications Chair, Technology Chair, and/or chairs of targeted populations like young alumni, parents or graduate alumni (descriptions of these positions provided below).

The ***Treasurer*** manages the association treasury and handles the day-to-day financial needs of the organization. The Treasurer may also:

- solicit dues and other contributions
- collect dues and event fees from the membership
- pay invoices
- track and project the budget
- report on the state of the treasury to the president and other officers
- prepare an annual association financial statement and any reports required by the University and/or Alumni Council
- participate in discussions about regional association business with fiscal implications

NOTE – Additional information about operational elements related to finances are outlined in Section VII of this handbook.

The ***Alumni Schools Committee Chair*** manages interviewing assignments in their designated area in consultation and cooperation with University Admission Office staff. The Princeton Schools Committee's stated goal is to interview 100% of area applicants whenever possible. To this end, the ASC Chair may also:

- conduct applicant interviews
- recruit and/or appoint committee members to assist in interviewing
- assign committee members to applicants, then motivate these volunteers and monitor performance
- ensure interview reports are filed with the Admission office on a timely basis
- appoint vice or co-chairs to manage smaller areas within a large region
- encourage matriculation of all accepted students
- initiate committee-wide activities such as attendance at college fairs
- maintain contact and liaison with the Admission Office and the Princeton Schools Committee of the Alumni Council

NOTE – For a full job description, all ASC Chairs should read thoroughly the ASC Chairs Handbook, distributed by the Admission Office.

The ***Activities or Programs Chair*** implements specific activities of the alumni association. The Activities Chair may also:

- develop ideas for programs and events
- research and pursue speakers and venues
- organize publicity for events (in conjunction with other officers)
- coordinate logistics for events in advance and ensure the event runs well

The ***Membership Chair*** manages duties related to gaining and maintaining an active membership (as outlined in Section IV of this handbook). The Membership Chair may also:

- maintain the roster of members (current and past)
- establish membership goals and initiatives, in collaboration with other officers
- develop membership solicitations
- reach out to alumni who may not be active participants

The ***Communications Chair*** manages duties related to preparing and sending messages to association members (as outlined in Section V of this handbook). The Communications Chair may also:

- draft, lay out and send letters, newsletters and electronic correspondence
- develop communication strategies to ensure all members and potential members are being contacted by the association in some way
- coordinate with other officers to ensure the above goal is achieved

The ***Webmaster or Technology Chair*** finds ways to use technology to maintain and improve association operations, communications and outreach. The Technology Chair may also:

- develop and maintain the association Web site
- inform other officers about technological resources available through the Alumni Association Office, including TigerNet Volunteer Services
- liaise with the Alumni Council Technology Advisory Committee

The ***Career Networking Chair*** manages career-related programming and activities. The Career Chair may also:

- conduct periodic career networking events such as “NetNights” for area alumni
- encourage alumni who want to provide job assistance and advice to fellow alumni and undergraduates to register for the Alumni Careers Network online database
- liaise with the Alumni Council Committee on Careers
- maintain contact with the University Career Services Office

The ***Book Awards Chair*** manages the association Book Award program to recognize outstanding high school students. The Book Awards Chair may also:

- decide upon an award nomination or selection process in conjunction with other regional officers, especially the Alumni Schools Committee Chair
- identify high schools where students will be eligible to receive the award
- inform the school administration of the award selection process
- plan a recognition event for book award winners
- coordinate with the Alumni Association Office to order book plates, books and/or certificates, as well as to request book signings by University faculty or a speaker visit

The ***Community Service Chair*** coordinates the association’s efforts to engage its membership in community service projects. The Community Service Chair may also:

- identify opportunities for association members to participate as a group in a community service activity
- seek occasions for the regional association to partner with a service or educational organization to provide in-kind support
- maintain contact and liaise with the Alumni Council Committee on Community Service

The ***Princeton Prize in Race Relations Regional Chair*** manages duties related to regional operations of the Princeton Prize in Race Relations. A longer description of this national program can be found in Section VI – D. The Princeton Prize Chair may also:

- recruit and/or appoint committee members to assist in running the Prize
- build and maintain relationships with local schools, religious organizations and community groups so as to make the Prize known to a wide pool of possible applicants
- evaluate local applicants and pick winners
- organize an event for acknowledging winners, in conjunction with other regional officers
- maintain contact and liaise with the National Princeton Prize in Race Relations Committee

The ***Graduate Alumni Chair*** encourages participation of graduate alumni in association activities. The Graduate Alumni Chair may also:

- develop relationships with graduate alumni in the region to learn of their interests and needs
- maintain contact with the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni (APGA) and staff liaisons at the Graduate Alumni Relations office
- collaborate with the above entities to increase graduate alumni engagement in the region

The ***Young Alumni Chair*** encourages participation of young alumni in association activities. The Young Alumni Chair may also:

- welcome new graduates to the region
- initiate activities aimed at a young alumni audience
- develop strategies for getting young alumni to join in all alumni events

The ***Princeton Women's Network Chair*** encourages participation of alumnae in association activities, including events designated specifically for women. The PWN Chair may also:

- plan local activities for Princeton alumnae (ranging from formal panels, lectures or book groups to informal gatherings and discussions)
- encourage Princeton alumnae living in the region to become active in the PWN
- coordinate logistics in conjunction with other regional officers

The ***Parents Chair*** encourages participation of local parents of undergraduates and alumni in association activities. The Parents Chair may also:

- initiate activities to welcome parents of new Princeton undergraduates into the Princeton family
- coordinate efforts for parents of current undergraduates to speak with and counsel parents of admitted students, as necessary and in coordination with the Alumni Schools Committee Chair

The ***Annual Giving Chair*** encourages local participation in the Annual Giving campaigns coordinated by the Development Office. In conjunction with staff liaisons from that office, the Annual Giving Chair may also:

- recruit and appoint committee members
- initiate University fundraising activities such as telethons or mailings.

NOTE – For more information on regional AG efforts, please contact Bruce Freeman in the Office of Annual Giving at bfreeman@princeton.edu or (609) 258-2713.

It is also possible for an alumnus/na to be a ***Regional Officer*** or a ***Board Member*** without being designated specific responsibilities. The ***Regional Officer*** title is also used by the Alumni Association Office to code volunteer leaders whose areas of responsibility are programs unique to one regional association for which a specific code does not exist. A ***Board Member*** designation is used for those who serve on the group's advisory board or council, but may not have specific tasks delegated to them. For more on the role of board members, please see Section III-H. NOTE – The Regional Officer designation carries privileges such as access to TigerNet Volunteer Services that a Board Member designation does not. If you have questions about the difference between the two roles, please contact the Alumni Association Office staff.

Some large associations will also designate a ***Regional Administrator*** to handle many logistical operations. This position could be voluntary or paid, with all funds for stipends or salaries coming from the association treasury, reported on annual financial reports and subject to standard rules of income taxation. This is the only position where it is possible and appropriate to pay an individual for services rendered to the regional association; all other positions should be held as non-compensated volunteer roles. In some cases, an association may hire a non alumnus/na to be the regional administrator. If you think your association may want to bring on a regional administrator, please contact the Alumni Association Office staff to learn more about the fiscal implications of this role.

B. Responsibilities of Service

Although the job descriptions of various officers may vary depending on the size, activity level and tradition of each association, the following advice is broadly applicable—it works to the advantage of all officers and the entire association if each officers' duties are clearly defined, leaving no doubt about responsibility or accountability. Preferably, each position in the organization will have a written role description—either as part of the association by-laws (see Section VII and Appendix M) or as a stand-alone document written by current and/or past officers in consultation with the Alumni Association Office—that is made available to new officers as they assume their respective offices.

C. Term Length, Limits and Leadership Succession

Ultimately, each association should determine term lengths that work best in light of its own leadership and membership strengths. Most associations with formal procedures specify their terms of office to be two or three years. This term length allows adequate time to establish effective leadership even as it allows for the continuous cultivation of successors and a broad base of leadership over time. Maintaining steady flow through a leadership pipeline also guarantees the infusion of new ideas into the organization, rewards and trains upcoming alumni leaders, and helps safeguard against officer burnout.

The length of officer terms can be specified in the association by-laws or officer role descriptions so that officers know the expected duration of their service when they get elected or appointed. Of course, officers may be eligible to serve more than one term, if this provision is included in the by-laws.

Term length and leadership succession planning are often concerns for smaller regional associations, where necessity can dictate that officers serve for longer periods of time. The temptation to have fewer officers in a small region compounds this difficulty, as it results in having fewer people invested in the organization's success. Regardless of association size, one of the best ways to develop new leaders is to continuously build a group of alumni who are 1) willing to take responsibility for increasingly large tasks over time and 2) involved in the decision making process of the organization.

When leadership roles change hands, it is important to notify the Office of the Alumni Association so central records are updated and communications are directed to the correct volunteers. Both old and new regional leaders are responsible for ensuring a systematic and timely transfer of records on the local level.

D. Leadership Recruitment

The best source for new alumni leadership is the active membership. Alumni who frequently participate in the regional group's structured events and are willing to help with assorted tasks (with or without being asked) are usually the most willing to assume a role that formalizes and gives recognition to their involvement. Alumni engaged in other kinds of Princeton volunteerism (for instance, class or affiliated group leadership activities) may also be willing to take on a new task that benefits the University and Princetonians in general.

Current officers can always be on the lookout for potential new officers, as leadership recruitment and mentorship is not a task that should be taken up only when it is time to elect new officers. It is helpful to constantly promote open leadership positions (in both communications and at events) to a wide group of constituents and try to engage newly-involved alumni as much as possible. Personal contacts and networking is often important, but lists of alumni who have held previous leadership roles can sometimes be helpful and may be obtained from the Alumni Association Office.

If a situation arises where a current officer needs to step down without an heir apparent, it is also possible to communicate to all members that a leadership role has become available and those who are interested in becoming more involved can contact the remaining leadership. In such a case, remember the importance of emphasizing the rewards of leadership and engagement with Princeton, not just the work that needs to be done.

E. Leadership Continuity

Even as we emphasize the importance of bringing new people into leadership roles, it is also important to provide continuity between regional association administrations. Many groups devise a rotation system that brings promising new leaders through the ranks toward eventual presidency. It may be a relatively short progression from secretary/treasurer to vice president to president in a small association. In a larger association, there may be a number of chairmanships in which a volunteer might gain vital experience before assuming overarching responsibilities.

Past officers are also valuable sources of continuity. One proven method of utilizing their wisdom and experiences is to formalize their continued involvement through either an advisory board (see Section III-H below) or specified service on specific committees.

F. Diversity in Leadership

In an effective regional association, the diversity of the larger Princeton alumni body is reflected in its membership and leadership ranks. Active recruitment efforts are encouraged to ensure that all of your regional constituencies are fairly represented in the leadership group. Diversity in leadership promotes and facilitates diversity in membership and activities.

G. The Role of Committees

A highly effective way to share the workload of regional officers—especially related to schools, membership, communications, book awards, careers, and targeted populations—is to establish alumni committees for these areas. This also involves a larger number of alumni in association management, which can ultimately help to ensure effective leadership succession.

H. The Role of the Advisory Board or Council

Another way to involve more alumni in association management is to have an advisory board or council. Generally, a regional association board is composed of all current officers, select past officers who wish to maintain an advisory role, and other alumni who are interested in becoming involved but haven't selected a particular area in which to focus their energies. A board can be small or large—though not so large as to constitute the majority (or entirety) of the active membership.

Regular board meetings can be held (at a frequency appropriate to the association's activities) so that board members can be effective and useful to the running of the organization. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider with regard to board meetings:

- Establish standard board procedures through association by-laws (for more on by-laws, please see Section VII and Appendix M).
- Conduct board meetings with most members gathered in one location. Conference phone call-ins can be employed successfully though, whenever possible, sparingly.
- Create an agenda in advance of the meeting, and circulate this to all board members and officers.
- Encourage every officer, committee chair and board member to report in on their activities and areas of responsibility.
- Have one board member (such as the association’s secretary, or another appointee) take meeting minutes, then circulate these to all other officers and/or members within a reasonable time period.
- In regional associations with smaller alumni populations, while there may not be enough people to constitute a full “board,” the creation of an advisory council can be an effective way to engage non-officer volunteers in the association leadership.

Communication, cooperation and collaboration among all officers and board members are crucial to the success of a regional association.

