



# HANDBOOK FOR REGIONAL OFFICERS

*2008 Edition*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	Role and Mission of the Regional Association, the Alumni Council, and the Office of the Alumni Association .....	Page 1
II.	Successful Regional Associations: An Overview .....	Page 3
III.	Regional Association Leadership .....	Page 5
IV.	Regional Association Membership .....	Page 13
V.	Regional Communications .....	Page 17
VI.	Regional Event Programming.....	Page 25
VII.	Operational Notes, Finances and Legal Considerations .....	Page 35
VIII.	List of Appendices, Reports and Forms.....	Page 41
IX.	Index .....	Page 107



# **I – Role and Mission of the Regional Association, Alumni Council, and Office of the Alumni Association**

## ***A. What is a Regional Association?***

Regional associations are the formally-constituted, alumni-led organizations that connect all Princetonians within a certain geographic boundary to each other and the University. Regional associations are typically known as a “Princeton Club,” “Princeton Association,” or “Princeton Alumni Association” of a city, county, state or country.

The oldest Princeton regional associations were formed in the 1860s, just after the American Civil War. Using the newly-founded Princeton Club of New York City as a model, College President James McCosh encouraged the creation of regional clubs and associations across the country. By the end of his presidential term in 1888, there were seventeen regional clubs in places such as Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., Cincinnati, Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha, the Pacific Coast and the “New Northwest” (Minnesota).

As of this handbook’s printing one hundred forty years later, there are 163 Princeton regional associations around the world. These range in size and population from the five boroughs of New York City (with nearly 10,000 Princeton constituents) to Kathmandu (with its four local alumni). For a complete list of recognized regional alumni associations, see **Appendix B**.

## ***B. What is the Mission of a Regional Association?***

The mission of Princeton’s alumni organizations is to engage as many alumni as possible in the ongoing life of the University in mutually beneficial ways and to support alumni initiatives that promote the goals of the University. For the complete mission statement of the Alumni Council of Princeton University, please visit [http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/alumni\\_council\\_committees/](http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/alumni_council_committees/).

Regional associations are designed to allow Princetonians to pursue this mission locally—to create communities of Princeton around the world. The diversity in our local alumni communities allows each regional association to go about this process in unique ways, but commonalities emerge. Most associations seek to fulfill their purpose by holding activities that allow constituents to gather for educational, networking, service-oriented, and/or social purposes. In addition, they try to motivate and inspire the alumni community to serve the University. They also create positive awareness of the University among local non-alumni so as to enrich local knowledge about Princeton University, to attract applicants and promote higher education. For more specific ideas about how to accomplish this mission, see Section II – Successful Regional Associations: An Overview.

## ***C. How do Regional Associations Fit into the Network of Princeton Alumni Organizations?***

All Princeton alumni—numbering more than 80,000—are members of the Alumni Association of Princeton University. Regions, classes (year of graduation), and affiliated groups, including the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni (APGA), are the three typical ways in which Princetonians organize themselves into smaller associations.

Regional, class, and affiliated associations select officers to govern and represent their constituencies to the University. All regional, class and affiliated group presidents (along with certain other elected and

appointed alumni) serve on a central **Alumni Council**, which is the governing body of the Alumni Association of Princeton University. The 72-member Alumni Council Executive Committee functions as the working arm of this group. The Executive Committee meets on campus three times a year and conducts much of its business through standing committees dealing with the many significant aspects of alumni affairs.

One such group is the **Committee on Regional Associations (CORA)**, whose membership consists of a chair, vice-chair, and eight regional association officers elected to the Executive Committee. CORA works with staff members from the Office of the Alumni Association to provide support, guidance and information to regional officers around the globe. CORA also works in collaboration with the Regional Affairs staff in designating achievement awards for associations.

For an organizational chart of the Alumni Association and Alumni Council, see **Appendix R**.

#### ***D. What is the Office of the Alumni Association and How Can its Staff Help Regional Officers?***

The Office of the Alumni Association, consisting of twenty-three University staff members, serves the Alumni Association of Princeton University and the Alumni Council by assisting, informing and engaging alumni and providing opportunities for alumni to be of service to each other, to students and to Princeton. Located in historic John Maclean House next to Nassau Hall, the Office provides staff support to the volunteers and is responsible for strengthening the University's multiple relationships with its alumni through programs of communications, participation, and service. For a complete list of current Alumni Association office staff and organizational chart, please see Appendix S.

The staff members within the Regional Affairs team of the Office of the Alumni Association specifically support regional association volunteers and their activities. They can be an important source of assistance in managing your associations, programs and activities. For instance, they can:

- Arrange for University faculty members or administrators to visit your region
- Help advertise upcoming events in your region
- Supply a limited quantity of Princeton insignia materials (such as napkins, nametags, cups and paper tablecloths) for use at regional functions
- Enable specialized online services (including the ability to send mass e-mails) for regional officers, and explain how to maximize this resource
- Assist in running reports of alumni, parents, and students residing in your region
- Act as a sounding board for your ideas
- Strategize with you on new initiatives and programs
- Provide advice and guidance to help you through a difficult situation
- Suggest well-qualified alumni in other regions who also may be able to help you
- Answer questions about any element of this handbook or other matters related to the running of a regional association

Please feel free to contact the **Regional Affairs staff members** if you have any questions while serving as a regional officer.



## II – Successful Regional Associations: An Overview

Regional associations vary widely in their size (both geographically and demographically) and activity level, and no two associations are run precisely the same way. However, the most active and successful groups tend to have the following qualities:

- **Strong, Enthusiastic Leadership**
- **Active and Engaged Membership**
- **Excellent Communication Practices**
- **Successful Programming and Events**

The next sections of this handbook will examine each of these elements in depth.

### *A. Scaling These Features to Different Sizes and Kinds of Regional Associations*

It is very possible for all associations—large, medium and small, as well as domestic and international—to achieve excellence in all of these areas. The important thing to remember is to set attainable goals that are appropriate for the unique cultural, demographic and geographic circumstances in your region. The following chart details a few of the annual goals regional officers may wish to set for their associations:

	<b>Large Association</b> (Local Population over 600)	<b>Medium Association</b> (Local Population between 200 and 600)	<b>Small Association</b> (Local Population less than 200)
<b>Leadership</b>	Stable leadership and board, active committees, regular leadership meetings	Stable leadership and board, regular leadership meetings	Stable leadership with multiple officers
<b>Communications</b>	10+	8+	5+
<b>Events</b>	6+	4+	3+

This chart merely provides benchmarks, but what is appropriate for any given association will vary widely based on local factors. Large associations tend to have an event at least every other month, though in many cases, they hold multiple events each month. In areas with smaller alumni populations, regional leaders may find it makes sense to hold three or four alumni events each year; however, some small associations also hold multiple events each month. Of course, turnout at events will likely be smaller in regions with fewer alumni spread out over large territory than in those located in metropolitan areas. Similarly, monthly newsletters may be a perfect communications tool for a large association, but impractical for small associations that sponsor a few events per year. Throughout this handbook, we will suggest ways to apply ideas to associations of all sizes.

The quality of the experience is as, if not more, important than the quantity of projects undertaken. When ingenuity and spirit are behind the projects, alumni react positively and feel engaged by the association and the University; this means they are successfully fulfilling the regional association’s mission.

## ***B. Recognition Awards for Regional Associations***

In 1978, the Alumni Council's Committee on Regional Clubs and Associations (now known as CORA) established several awards to recognize outstanding service to Princeton and Princetonians by successful regional clubs and associations. All of Princeton's regional clubs and associations are eligible for award consideration—nominations are solicited annually. The awards are presented at the annual meeting of the Alumni Council on the weekend of Reunions. For a complete list of Regional Association recognition awards, please see Appendix Q. For complete lists of past regional association award winners, please visit the Alumni Association Web site at [http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/awards/regional\\_association\\_awards/](http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/awards/regional_association_awards/).



### 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](mailto: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.





## IV – Regional Association Membership

Two groups of people make up all regional associations—a core of volunteer leaders and the larger membership body whom they represent and serve. This section of the handbook covers topics related to the latter group—how to define and manage membership, structure a successful dues campaign, create membership “value” and ultimately create an active, engaged community of local Princetonians.

### A. *Defining Membership – Who is Included*

The membership of a Princeton regional association is made up of multiple constituencies, including undergraduate alumni, graduate alumni, current students, parents of current and former students, and surviving spouses or partners of Princeton alumni (widows and widowers) who live within the geographic boundaries of the association.

Each of these affiliations is denoted in University records. To assist you in understanding the affiliations and maintaining consistency through the use of the same codes in your own records and communications, below is a chart of common affiliation codes:

'	Undergraduate Alumnus or Student	P	Parent
*	Graduate School Alumnus	g	Grandparent
gs	Graduate School Student	K	Kin
S	Spouse	h	Honorary Classmate
W	Widow/Widower	H	Honorary Degree Holder

### B. *Using Dues to Define Membership*

To fund operating expenses, many regional associations ask their alumni to pay dues. The Office of the Alumni Association encourages this practice, but also suggests caution in having the payment of dues signify membership in the regional group. The University considers all constituents in a given region to be members of the local association, so you may wish to instead employ the terms “dues-paying members” and “non-dues-paying members” when discussing those individuals who have or have not contributed financial resources to your group. Whenever possible, we encourage you to use the most inclusive language and practices possible.

### C. *Structuring Membership Dues*

Dues structures can vary widely between regional associations. Some groups have a flat rate, while others offer a tiered structure, setting different rates for alumni, parents of students and/or alumni, first-year-out alumni, other young alumni, current undergraduates, alumni couples or families, “Old Guard” alumni, constituents residing more than X miles from the association’s major city, and/or non-residents. Other groups will give a special rate to “first time” dues-payers or to those constituents willing to receive all notifications by e-mail (and thus cutting down on production expenses).

The cost of dues also varies widely. Some associations have a top rate of \$25 and for others it is \$50. Some associations only collect dues when the treasury runs low, while others just ask alumni to pay what they think is appropriate and/or whatever they can. There are pros and cons to every kind of structure, but there is no right or wrong. When setting dues rates, it is advisable to answer two

questions—1) what will the market support and the target audience be willing to pay? and 2) what cumulative total of funds is needed to support association business? Within those parameters, associations can set dues structures at a level whereby the club’s efforts are sustainable without the need for the treasury to accumulate a huge surplus over time.

A few associations have a “patron” membership designation, offering special privileges for those alumni willing to pay a premium dues amount to support the association’s efforts. Other regional groups will ask local alumni to give donations to the club instead or in addition to membership dues. This frequently occurs when a club needs to fund a particular activity, such as a University scholarship for a local undergraduate, a community service project, a Princeton Prize in Race Relations Awards ceremony, etc. This model can be successful in drawing out alumni who are more likely to support specific initiatives than broadly defined club priorities.

#### ***D. Collecting Membership Dues***

After setting an appropriate structure, the association can create a sensible dues collection program that can be consistently applied over time. Decide upon the period for which the dues will apply—is it annual, biannual, or “when-the-treasury-runs-low,” and does it cover a calendar year (January to December) or fiscal year (July to June)? Most active associations adopt an annual dues program that applies to the fiscal year, but given unique local circumstances, other systems may work better for you.

Here are some tips for successful dues solicitations:

- Dues solicitation can come in many forms—letters, e-mails, phone calls, etc. Regardless of method, the most important messages to communicate are how dues money will be spent and the value of dues-paying membership to the individual dues-payer (“value” is discussed in greater length in the Section IV–E).
- Dues can be requested of all Princeton constituents in the region, especially for the first solicitation. Whenever possible, subsequent solicitations should not go to those who have already paid.
- For follow-up requests, it may be most effective (in terms of time and cost) to target those alumni who have paid dues in the past, as well as those who regularly attend events and/or are involved in association activities (including the local Alumni Schools Committee). Such individuals may have simply forgotten when they last paid dues, or there could be personal issues occupying most of their time and attention. Reaching out to individuals reinforces an association’s image as a concerned community that keeps track of and cares about its members.
- Make information about becoming a dues-paying member available at all association events, and allow people to pay dues on such occasions.
- State the dues request clearly and concisely, and provide an easy-to-use response form and/or a pre-printed return envelope.
- Thank all dues payers for their past and current support—a short personal note or e-mail can go a long way toward making individuals feel engaged and appreciated.
- Deposit checks promptly to avoid creating gaps in dues-payers’ financial records.
- Some large associations offer an opportunity to renew membership halfway through the current year for the following year at a discounted rate.
- Some associations mandate that all officers and board members pay at least the minimal dues level to set a good example, then mention this 100% participation rate in their dues appeals.
- Remember that Annual Giving requests are in high gear from March to June, so regional association dues appeals at this time may confuse alumni as to what precisely they are giving funds.

- If your association has filed for non-profit status (either independently or under the University’s group tax-exemption), dues payments and donations may be tax-deductible, and this can be mentioned in dues appeals. For more information about your association’s legal status and guidelines about tax-deductibility of dues and other contributions, see Section VII.

### ***E. Creating and Explaining Membership Value***

An effective regional association will always strive to demonstrate how active membership (payment of dues and engagement in activities) benefits individuals, as well as the association and larger Princeton University community. To this end, communications—especially dues solicitations—can describe both the tangible and intangible value of participation.

Tangible value can be found in money saved or products received by dues-payers. For instance, event fees can be structured so that dues-paying members receive reduced pricing (possibly free). Some associations also have events open first or only to dues-paying members. An association can directly highlight how dues-payers will receive top priority for special events (for event and programming ideas, see Section VI) when dues solicitation coincides with the announcement of upcoming activities. Other associations will provide benefits to dues-payers, ranging from a printed alumni directory to a member “spotlight” in an upcoming newsletter to a free “Princeton Club of XX” magnet or scarf. For more information about the tax implications of providing goods, services, benefits or privileges in return for financial contributions, see Section VII.

Aside from promoting discounts or “free stuff,” dues appeals can also highlight the intangible purpose and perks of membership, such as the opportunity to connect back to the University through networking and socializing with local Princetonians. The membership can also be informed how dues money supports otherwise unfunded priorities (such as a reception for admitted students or club community service activities). Dues payment allows alumni to not only be part of the association’s work, but also an integral part of the current and future University community.

### ***F. The Role of Membership Chair, Sub-Chairs and Committee***

In small associations, duties related to membership cultivation and dues collection are typically part of a larger set of responsibilities handled by an officer such as the president or secretary. But, as described in Section III of this handbook, many large (and even moderately-sized) associations appoint or elect a Membership Chair to organize these efforts.

Some regional associations have divided the work even further by creating a Membership Committee and/or sub-chairs (such as a Parents Chair, Young Alumni Chair, and/or Graduate Alumni Chair) to target Princetonian audiences who may not engage in association activities without additional prodding from “one of their own.” Similarly, some groups have worked with the University’s affiliated alumni associations (i.e., Association of Black Princeton Alumni, Association of Latino Princeton Alumni, and/or Asian American Alumni Association of Princeton) to identify regional liaisons who reach out to these alumni populations and encourage them to become involved. These sub-chairs and liaisons may also be responsible for creating programming that specifically interests their targeted group.

It is important for associations to be aware that Princetonians within the aforementioned groups may feel like they are not truly welcome at association activities—that they are too young and the events are for “older” people; that they didn’t have the full campus experience because they were at the graduate school and thus have little in common with undergraduate alumni; that parents should only come with

their undergraduates; or that they may be the only minority at the event. Having sub-membership chairs and liaisons who are sensitive to these feelings and try to assuage such fears through targeted appeals can make a huge impact in the effort to ensure the active and engaged membership in a regional association is truly representative of the local constituents' diversity.

### ***G. What is an “Active and Engaged” Membership?***

Throughout the process of dues solicitation and other attempts to engage association membership, it is important to stay positive, but also set realistic goals. No association gets everyone to participate; in fact, even the largest and most active regional groups tend to have a **dues-paying membership of only ten to fifteen percent**. If you have reached that level or above, you are doing very well!

Factors such as the local undergraduate/graduate alumni ratio, diversity levels and average age of the alumni population can significantly impact the types of events that are likely to be successful. If associations are cognizant of the alumni population demographics, they can make efforts to ensure club leadership is truly representative and programming appeals to a wide array of interests.

One way to measure whether a club is meeting this goal is to analyze the statistics of how many active and dues-paying members there are in different demographic categories compared to the total number of members within that category. For instance, if alumni who graduated between 1980 and 1990 constitute 20% of an association's total membership but only 5% of the association's dues-payers and/or event attendance, this imbalance indicates there is a significant group of alumni who do not feel engaged by and/or welcomed within the association. At this point, efforts can be undertaken to determine how to better serve that group (and thus, the overall association membership). Surveying your membership (or a smaller segment of it) to solicit ideas for programming, communication preferences, and price structures can be quite educational and help set an association's priorities for the future (see Section V-F and **Appendix K** for more information on best practices for surveys).

Today, the alumni body as a whole is much less likely to pay dues or come to events “because they should” than in the past. The most effective club leaders ensure (and are prepared to explain why) association activities are relevant to tigers of many different stripes.



## V – Regional Communications

What brings together enthusiastic leadership and engaged membership? Effective communication—the third hallmark of successful regional associations. This handbook section reviews the basics—from how to obtain, update and utilize alumni contact information (and what you can and cannot do with such data), to the typical methods of communicating with alumni, to the rules for what kind of content can and cannot be sent from a regional group—and also suggests ways to maximize the impact of your communications.

### A. *Obtaining Contact Information*

Regional officers have access to lists of all Princeton constituents living within their regional boundaries so their contact information can be used for official regional association business. The list may be obtained in one of two ways:

- Download the list from TigerNet Volunteer Services, part of the Office of the Alumni Association’s Web site (please see **Appendix D** for instructions on using this function)
- Request a copy of the list from the Regional Affairs staff at Office of the Alumni Association.

The same list is available from either source, as TigerNet and the University’s alumni database are synchronized on a daily basis. Regional officers are strongly encouraged to make use of the TigerNet download function whenever possible because it is instantly accessible to you, without any office processing delay, and it is always current, while a list received from the office two months ago may already be out of date.

### B. *Updating Contact Information*

The University’s Office of Alumni Records maintains the database of all alumni contact information. When Alumni Records is notified that an alumnus/na has moved to a new regional association, they will include this information in regular reports to the regional secretary so that s/he will be notified of this new local member and can get in touch with this person to welcome them to the community.

Regional officers will frequently receive requests from their local constituents to update their contact information. The association may also have mailings returned, indicating the University’s address on record for the person in question is inaccurate. It is possible to update alumni contact information in several ways:

- Alumni can update their own contact information online at the following Web site: <https://tigernet.princeton.edu/updates/updateinformation.asp> [Note: Alumni must register (or be registered already) for TigerNet in order to access this Web site.]. Regional officers can not make changes on behalf of others on this site.
- Alumni can directly contact Alumni Records by e-mail or telephone to provide updated information.
- A regional officer can pass along the requested changes to Alumni Records by e-mail or telephone (in this case, the officer should identify him/herself as such, so Alumni Records knows why s/he is speaking on behalf of a fellow alumnus/na).

Alumni Records can be reached by e-mail at [alumrecs@princeton.edu](mailto:alumrecs@princeton.edu) or by phone at (609) 258-3114.

### ***C. Removing People from Mailing Lists***

Occasionally, regional officers are asked to remove someone from their mailing list or e-mail listserv. If the association is maintaining a separate database, mailing or e-mailing list, you may do so at your discretion. But assuming the regional association is using lists generated through Alumni Records (including TigerNet), there are several steps that must be undertaken.

First, the association is asked to remind those with this request that currently, this is an “all-or-nothing” situation – if someone wishes to stop receiving e-mails from a regional association, the only way to do this is to remove this person from ALL University e-mail lists maintained through Alumni Records (including Tiger E-News, Annual Giving, and notices from classes, affiliated groups, individual departments, etc.). The same rule applies to mailings – if someone wishes to receive no mail or contact from the regional association, s/he will also be taken off the mailing list for the University (including the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*). However, a person can remain on the University’s hard-copy mailing list and be taken off the e-mail list.

If the requesting individual still wishes to proceed, there are different policies depending on the request and the type of constituent:

- If the requesting individual is anyone other than an alumnus/na (i.e., a parent, widow, kin, etc.) and wishes to be taken off either/both e-mail lists and/or mailing lists, Alumni Records can process this immediately, and no further steps are needed beyond notifying Alumni Records of the request.
- If the requesting individual is an alumnus/na and wishes to be taken off e-mail lists, Alumni Records can process this immediately, and no further steps are needed beyond notifying Alumni Records of the request.
- If the requesting individual is an alumnus/na and wishes to be taken off mailing and e-mailing lists (in other words, wishes to receive “No Contact” from the University or its supporting organizations), please bring the individual to the attention of the Office of the Alumni Association so they can be sent a letter confirming their intention and knowledge of the decision’s implications.

One final note on this topic: If you are receiving many requests from people wishing to be taken off your mailing or e-mailing lists, you could be sending too much mail or e-mail! See below (Section V-F) to review the best practices for effective communications.

### ***D. With Whom Should a Regional Association be Communicating?***

Associations are encouraged to send all communications to the broadest relevant constituent base. In most cases, this includes all alumni, parents, widows, etc. living within a regional association’s boundaries. Occasionally, the officers may wish to communicate with a more limited segment of their population (for instance, in recruiting interviewers for local applicants, only alumni should be contacted since only they may serve in this capacity), but in general, the Office of the Alumni Association encourages erring on the side of inclusiveness.

## *E. Types of Communications*

There are many different ways regional officers can communicate with their constituency. The most common are mailings, broadcast e-mail, Web sites, online/e-mail discussion groups, and the telephone, each of which will now be discussed in further length:

**MAILINGS** – Traditionally, mailings such as letters, newsletters, invitations (and reply cards), flyers, and postcards have been the cornerstone of regional association communications. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider when sending out a mailing:

- The University offers Printing and Mailing Services to its alumni groups, including regional associations. For full details on this program, please see **Appendix F**. To view sample layouts for mailings produced for regional groups by Printing and Mailing, please see **Appendix G**.
- The U.S. Postal Service and many other internet companies offer opportunities to design, print and mail a variety of formats through easy-to-use online services. Traditional mail-houses also may exist in your local community. Regional associations are welcome to use these services, so long as they follow standard procedure in ensuring the companies will not use alumni contact information for any purpose beyond the immediate job. To view a sample Confidentiality of Data Agreement for outside printers and mail-houses, please see **Form F**.
- Regional associations can request a set of printed mailing labels for their local alumni from the Office of the Alumni Association. This can be sorted either by name or zip code.
- Hard copy mailings do involve the expense of postage, though it is possible to qualify for a reduced postage rate by using bulk mail and pre-sorting all pieces by zip code (for more information on these and other tips, visit the United States Postal Service Business Mail Web site at <http://www.usps.com/businessmail101>).
- Given the costs of producing and sending mailings, regional associations may want to promote a full schedule of events through a regular mailing (such as an annual, quarterly, or monthly newsletter), and then use postcards, e-mails and other cheaper communication methods on a more frequent basis.
- Extra copies of mailings—especially those mentioning upcoming events—can be made available as flyers at association gatherings as an additional way of promoting participation.
- It is important for one copy of every mailing to be sent to the Office of the Alumni Association for inclusion in the association’s permanent file.
- To view a sample regional association newsletter, please see **Appendix H**.

**E-MAIL** – In today’s online world, e-mail broadcasts and distribution lists have become the preferred method for communications for many regional associations, due to ease of production and low costs. However, there are many alumni who have not provided e-mail addresses to the University, so e-mail is not recommended as the sole method of communication. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider when sending out an e-mail broadcast:

- Through TigerNet Volunteer Services, regional officers can instantly send a simple broadcast e-mail to all their constituents (please see **Appendix C** for instructions on using this function). The Office of the Alumni Association automatically receives a copy of every broadcast e-mail sent through this system.
- If regional associations wish to send attachments or rich-text e-mails, an officer can download a list of e-mail addresses within a region from TigerNet Volunteer Services (or request this from the Office of the Alumni Association) and send it through a separate system. In this situation:
  - Please be sure to include one or more members of the Regional Affairs staff on the distribution list, so the message can be included in the association’s permanent file.
  - Please list all recipients in the blind-carbon-copy (BCC) field; this helps to ensure the security of the list and the privacy of all recipients.

- To view a sample regional association e-mail newsletter, please see [Appendix J](#).
- Some associations maintain a separate database of regional constituents who have opted in to receive broadcast e-mail messages from a special listserv. The Office of the Alumni Association can assist you in creating a listserv that ends in @princeton.edu; please contact the Regional Affairs staff for additional information.
- Only regional officers should be able to send an e-mail to all alumni, parents, etc. in a region. If a forum is desired where any Princetonian can reach out broadly to other Princetonians interested in a similar subject, the association can create a TigerNet Discussion Group (see below for more details).

**WEB SITE** – Many regional associations create and maintain a Web site to create a virtual presence for the local alumni group. Web sites can help to promote upcoming events, chronicle past gatherings in descriptions and pictures, post newsletters and links to other relevant Web sites, provide contact info for local leaders, and even collect dues and event registrations through an online payment system. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider when building or updating a regional association Web site:

- Regional associations can create and store their web pages on the Office of the Alumni Association’s server for free, however, certain technical limitations may apply. Please contact the office’s Technical Services staff at [tigernet@princeton.edu](mailto:tigernet@princeton.edu) for more details.
- To gather ideas on what kind of design and information a regional association might wish to include on its Web site, we encourage review of existing Web sites to identify best practices. All known regional association Web sites are linked to the main listing of regional associations at [alumni.princeton.edu/main/alumni\\_communities/regional\\_associations/regional\\_association\\_list/](http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/alumni_communities/regional_associations/regional_association_list/).
- A regional Web site is visible not only to local Princetonians, but anyone surfing the web. Effective regional Web sites maintain a balance between being informative about local officers and activities while safeguarding the privacy of its individual members.
- The Regional Affairs and Technical Services staff members of the Office of the Alumni Association are happy to provide advice and suggestions for alumni organization Web sites; however it is ultimately the responsibility of the local officers to keep the Web site content updated and relevant.

**DISCUSSION GROUP** – Since regional officers are only permitted to send official association messages through TigerNet Volunteer Services and other formal communication methods, many regional associations will set up an opt-in online discussion group where any Princetonian can post information s/he thinks will be interesting to other people in the area. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider with regard to a regional discussion group:

- The Office of the Alumni Association offers regional associations the opportunity to easily create a free discussion group through TigerNet. This system offers discussion group members the option to receive e-mails from the list in real-time or in a daily digest (new and archived postings can also be placed and read on the discussion group’s TigerNet portal).
- Please note that TigerNet discussion groups are public within the Princeton alumni community and can not be restricted; for instance, someone who lives in New Jersey can still join the New York discussion group. However, this can work to the advantage of a region that utilizes such a group to promote an upcoming event—perhaps someone who lives outside the boundaries of a region will be in town when an event is taking place!
- Topics on existing regional discussion groups typically range from local job opportunities and available sporting event tickets, to references for neighborhood doctors and suggestions for great restaurants. Regional officers can promote their club’s upcoming events as well as other activities not sponsored by the association, but still potentially of interest to area alumni.

**TELEPHONE** – It may be old-fashioned, but the telephone is still an important tool for communicating within a regional association. Here are a few tips and ideas to consider when deciding in what circumstances the use of a telephone may be the best method of regional communication:

- In any circumstance where individual attention would be warranted or appreciated, consider calling alumni instead of sending e-mails or a mailing (even if it is personalized). For instance, if an alumnus is new to the area, receiving a call from a regional association officer may encourage that alumnus to get involved in the group and consider fellow alumni to be a resource in settling into the community. If an alumna who usually has a good record of paying dues suddenly stops doing so, a concerned phone call could reinforce that the regional association has valued her past contributions and hopes she'll stay involved. Likewise, thanking dues-paying members with a personal phone call demonstrates that the regional association recognizes their assistance.
- If a regional association receives returned mailings or bounce-back e-mail addresses, quick phone calls can individually remind alumni to keep their contact information up-to-date, as well as notify them of the content of the missed message.
- A telephone chain may also be an effective way to quickly spread the word about events or other critical information among a regional association population.

This is not a comprehensive list of types of communication suitable for regional associations. Innovation is highly encouraged and even rewarded. To learn more about the Committee on Regional Associations Award for Innovation and the Alumni Council “Award for Communications Excellence,” please see [Appendix Q](#).

#### ***F. Best Practices in Effective Communications***

Beyond the mechanics of how to communicate with a regional constituency, regional officers are encouraged to maximize the impact of their communications through a few basic principles and practices:

- **REGULAR COMMUNICATION** – Ensure that communications with constituents occur; whether that means biweekly or quarterly depends on the activity level of the association. However, be aware that sending too much mail or e-mail will have diminishing returns. It is important to strike the right balance between communicating frequently and TOO frequently.
- **MULTI-PRONGED APPROACH** – Utilize multiple methods of communication to ensure that all local alumni have been reached. In this electronic age, it is tempting to rely solely on e-mail broadcasts to notify regional constituencies of news and upcoming events; but though e-mail messages are easy and low-cost, more than one-third of Princeton’s alumni do not have an e-mail address on file with the University. Even among those alumni who do have e-mail addresses on file, some messages will bounce, some will be diverted to spam filters, and some will just be ignored. Different people will be reached through different approaches, and only with a multi-pronged communications strategy can a regional association ensure that its message reaches as many people as possible.
- **CAPTURING AND HOLDING INTEREST WITH CONTENT** – Share interesting and relevant information with your regional constituents. Aside from announcing upcoming events, regional association communications may include news about local admitted students and Alumni Schools Committee efforts, campus updates from local Princeton undergraduate and graduate students, excerpts of thank-you letters from regional scholarship recipients, a short feature story about recent achievements of local alumni, and/or other topics that serve to link alumni with Princeton and each other (see [Appendix H](#) and [Appendix J](#) for sample newsletters in print and e-mail format).

- **CAPTURING AND HOLDING INTEREST WITH LANGUAGE** – The way in which content is communicated is just as important as the content itself:
  - Have a positive and enthusiastic tone. Regularly express gratitude for people’s contributions of time and resources.
  - Remember the acronym KISS, meaning “Keep It Short and Simple.” Messages (in e-mail and print) should be no longer than they have to be while still conveying basic details. However, providing a Web site link where more information on certain topics can be found is a good way to ensure people who want to know more can easily find additional info.
  - If multiple topics are contained within a single message, help alumni navigate to the sections most interesting to them by including a table of contents or topic list at the top of the communication piece.
  - Place the name of the regional association—or at least the word “Princeton”—prominently in the letterhead, header or e-mail subject line of all communications. This can help prevent messages from ending up in spam filters or garbage cans.
  - In addition to running spell-check, have more than one person proofread all messages—this will help catch mistakes that a computer won’t find and possibly flag issues about content that other readers and recipients would also have.
  
- **STARTING UP: OPENING COMMUNICATIONS** – If a regional association is newly-created or coming out of dormancy, the officers’ initial communication (letter and/or e-mail) to the group will serve as a formal introduction to the local alumni. Such a message may introduce the new officers and provide their contact information, clarify the association’s purpose, request payment of dues to create a treasury, solicit additional ideas and volunteers (informally or through a survey—see below), and promote one or more upcoming events (sharing news of several events will inspire confidence that the association intends to be active beyond one initial gathering).
  
- **SURVEYS** – Conducting periodic surveys of local Princetonians helps ensure that the regional association is being responsive to the interests of its constituents. Through well-phrased questions, surveys can also be wonderful mechanisms for recruiting new leadership, encouraging participation in existing and new club activities, and learning about resources available through the local alumni community. Equally useful to new or reorganizing associations and to established groups, surveys can be conducted through either a paper mailing or one of innumerable online service providers. To view a sample regional association survey, please see [Appendix K](#).
  
- **INVITATIONS** – When promoting an event, include the following kinds of information in the promotional communication/invitation:
  - The event’s name and purpose (a lecture? museum tour? casual social gathering?), as well as a short description (i.e., short speaker bio, a few-sentence long teaser about lecture content, etc.)
  - Who is invited (i.e., just alumni or also spouses, parents, children, friends, admitted or prospective students, etc.?)
  - The date and time frame of the event (providing both start AND end times)
  - The event location and directions on how to get there
  - Inclement weather date and/or location, if necessary
  - Cost of attendance, as well as any available discounts (i.e., for members, children, etc.)
  - Registration mechanisms, deadlines and rules (i.e., how to register—online or with a specific person? are walk-ins permitted? if tickets/spots are limited, who receives registration priority?)

- **BE THOUGHTFUL** – Overall, the best communications-related practice for regional officers is to be thoughtful about the overall message of the regional association and how individual messages contribute to alumni’s impression of the organization. Consider how the content, language, design, and format will be interpreted by the audience. Ensure that news is shared in a timely way. Make decisions about which messages warrant formal and more expensive methods of communication, and when cost-cutting measures are justified.

### ***G. Restrictions on Use and Distribution of Contact Information and Communications Content***

Princeton University considers the contact information of its alumni (and students, parents, widows, etc.) to be confidential. Regional officers who obtain alumni contact information—whether it be for one person or of their entire regional membership—are responsible for protecting the data against unauthorized use. There shall be no transfer of the data to any third party without express permission of the Office of the Alumni Association.

The full list of Princeton constituents in a region may not even be shared with Princetonian non-officers. Any Princeton alumnus/na can look up other individual alumni on the online alumni directory at <http://alumni.princeton.edu> (or in the printed version), but only officers have accepted the legal responsibility for maintaining the information’s security. In some cases, regional associations have printed directories of local Princetonians; those wishing to do so should be in contact with the Regional Affairs staff to review security concerns and evolving procedures.

A list of Princeton alumni in any given area would be highly coveted by any company or individual, be they telemarketers, spammers, or businesses building a distribution list. Please help protect the privacy of your fellow alumni and the confidentiality of the Princeton network by respecting this rule.

In addition to restrictions on use of alumni contact information by non-alumni and non-officers, regional officers should also be vigilant about the types of messages they send themselves. To remain true to the non-profit status of your regional association and Princeton policy, regional officers may never use official mechanisms to promote personal or political agendas, send commercial or sales-oriented solicitations, or encourage recipients to donate money to any organization other than the regional association—not even fundraising on behalf of Princeton University (all plans for fundraising should be coordinated with the Development Office). Though it is incredibly tempting to help promote benefit dances for other worthy non-profit organizations or help spread the word that an alumna is running for state legislature, such messages are expressly prohibited.

### ***H. Communication within the Officer Corps and Board***

To be truly effective, the regional association’s officer corps and board members will communicate frequently amongst themselves, which helps to ensure that all alumni leaders know what their fellow officers are doing and intend to do across areas of responsibility. For more specific ideas about strong intra-board communication, please see Section III–H.

## *I. Communication with Other Regional Association Leaders*

Interregional communications can help strengthen even the most successful regional groups through the sharing of new ideas and best practices from around the world. To assist in this effort, the Committee on Regional Associations (CORA) organizes teleconferences for regional officers to regularly engage with each other on a variety of topics. Association representatives will be contacted by e-mail in advance of each teleconference with instructions for participation; for further information about upcoming sessions, please contact CORA members or the Office of the Alumni Association.

Regional Affairs staff members can also assist regional officers by recommending contact with other individual regions and/or leaders who may have faced comparable issues or recently tried implanting similar ideas. In particular, members of CORA stand ready to assist regional officers with questions and issues.



## VI – Regional Event Programming

Regional associations primarily exist to bring Princetonians together away from campus, so holding successful events, activities and other programming constitutes the third key feature of thriving regional associations. This handbook section provides strategies for effective programming, including basic planning principles, a sampler of regional event ideas, and a review of frequently undertaken special projects.

### A. *Important Event Planning Principles and Practices*

A little bit of advance thought will go a long way toward ensuring events are successful. The following questions and answers reveal practices and principles to consider when planning regional association activities:

- **WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?** – Is an event aimed for just alumni, or also for spouses, widows/widowers, children, parents, current students, admitted or prospective students and/or non-alumni friends? Within any of these categories, there are also a variety of interests to be served. Since regional associations typically aim to engage as many people as possible, regional events usually try to be as inclusive as possible. It’s ok to plan activities that may have more appeal to a certain demographic, so long as other events have been or will be planned that would be interesting and open to a different demographic subsection and/or a wider array of people. Over time, regional associations can offer programming designed to engage a broad spectrum of their constituencies.
- **WHEN SHOULD EVENTS BE HELD?** – Think about what seasons, days, and times will provide the greatest opportunity for association events, recognizing that different constituencies will be more or less likely to attend functions at certain times (for instance, a weekday luncheon could draw well from a largely retired crowd, but many alumni employed full-time will not be able to attend unless they work close by). Varying the time slots for events over time can ensure that many types of schedules are accommodated. Awareness of religious holidays, school break schedules, and popular local events will help officers to avoid scheduling functions when many Princetonians may not be able to attend; checking Princeton’s academic calendar will inform when to schedule events to which current students will be invited. When several upcoming events are being planned, officers can spread them out over time as much as possible to ensure activities feel regularly-spaced and not bunched together.
- **WHERE SHOULD EVENTS BE HELD?** – Whenever possible, hold events in appealing locations. This means taking into consideration the demographic distribution of the local alumni population (i.e., if most people work downtown and live in the suburbs, then events on the weekend might be best located in the suburbs), as well as the particular draw a certain venue may have (i.e., holding an event in a trendy new location or historic site may draw more people than a hotel meeting room). Varying venues both prevents alumni from becoming tired of one location and encourages people from different parts of the region to participate. If controlling costs is often an important consideration, look to free or low-cost locations whenever possible, such as alumni homes, public parks, civic facilities (libraries and community centers), schools and universities, and spaces that Princetonians can make available through their own connections (i.e., corporate conference rooms).

Finally, regional officers must always abide by the “Policy Regarding Use of Non-Discriminatory Facilities at Alumni Events” (see [Appendix A](#)) and never hold events in facilities that are at all discriminatory on the basis of race, sex, religion, or national origin. Given the diversity of the Princeton community, it is important that all Princetonians be made to feel welcome

and comfortable at all Princeton-related functions. For similar reasons, regional officers are encouraged to hold events in locations that are accessible to those in wheelchairs and/or with limited mobility.

- **HOW MUCH SHOULD EVENTS COST TO ATTEND?** – Some factors that go into setting attendance fees include how much the event costs to run (see below), whether there will be discounts (and how much) for dues-paying members, what the refund policy will be (if any), and perhaps most importantly, what alumni will be willing to pay. People are more likely to attend if they feel the price reflects the opportunity provided and constitutes a good deal—not as though they are being gouged. Officers are also encouraged to have various events set at multiple price points through the year, so that people who are on a tighter budget would still feel they have an opportunity to attend at least an occasional regional function without creating financial hardship.
- **HOW MUCH SHOULD EVENTS COST TO RUN?** – The answer to this question will of course vary widely depending on the nature of a given event. However, a good rule of thumb to follow is that individual events should generally break even or achieve a small surplus between the cost of running the function and the income gathered from attendance fees. Some associations adopt and apply this principle over time, trying to break even or achieve a small surplus over the course of a year's events instead of on an event-by-event basis. A few other notes related to event costs:
  - **Non-Paying Guests** – Include the expenses of non-paying guests—such as featured speakers—in the event budget.
  - **Audio-Visual** – AV equipment may be needed for certain presentations, especially those given by University faculty. Many venues will charge exorbitant fees to set up and utilize this equipment, but sometimes these can be negotiated. Also, some associations get around renting this equipment by asking an officer or member to borrow available equipment from their company.
  - **Incidentals** – The cost of flowers, decorations, fancy nametags and other incidentals can quickly add up. If any/all of these are determined to be truly necessary for the event, make sure these items are included in the event budget. Please note that the Alumni Association Office can provide limited numbers of logo nametags and napkins to regional associations on request.
  - **Cash Bar** – Many associations do not host cocktails for their events, only providing non-alcoholic beverages as part of the attendance fee. If so, the association should not receive a commission on the sale of alcohol, as this would be subject to income taxation.
  - **No Honoraria** – It is the policy of the Alumni Association Office to pay only the travel expenses, but no honoraria, for Speakers Bureau visits to regional associations. Regional associations are encouraged to abide by this policy of not paying honoraria or speaker expenses.
  - **Require RSVPs** – Asking alumni to pay in advance (and specifying there will be no refunds after a certain date) will make certain the association can provide an accurate count to venues and caterers, as well as ensure all expenses are covered, even if someone cannot attend at the last minute. Charging attendees a higher rate to pay at the door helps encourage people to register ahead of time.
  - **Protecting Against Losses** – For very expensive events, some associations will ask a few loyal, generous alumni to guarantee a contribution, up to a specified amount, that would cover any losses if the event does not break even. These individuals can then be thanked for their “sponsorship” of the event.
- **HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD ATTEND?** – The previous two questions will also be impacted by this third consideration of projected and actual attendance. The goal is usually to have as large an attendance as possible and as is fitting at events; but be realistic in setting attendance goals that take into account past trends and the unique circumstances surrounding each function.

- **HOW SHOULD EVENTS BE PROMOTED?** – Make every effort to advertise all events as much as possible through a variety of communication mediums (including a mailed invitation/flyer/etc., initial and follow-up e-mail announcements, etc.–see Section V-E for additional methods). Other mechanisms to promote activities include:
  - Mention upcoming gatherings at each event and, if possible, have flyers or copies of the announcement/newsletter/invitation to distribute.
  - If a featured speaker is a Princetonian, send a copy of the invitation to the speaker’s class president and ask him/her to notify other classmates in the area. This concept can also be applied to graduate alumni (notify the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni) and members of Princeton’s affiliated groups (notify the groups in which s/he is active, such as the ABPA, ALPA, A4P, and FFR/BTGALA).
  - Spread the word among the officers of other local alumni clubs from peer institutions–especially if there is a connection between a particular school and the event.
  - Always send information about all gatherings to the Office of the Alumni Association; this ensures they will be included in the central online regional calendar, as well as in “Take Note,” the quarterly Alumni Association newsletter in the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*.
  
- **WHAT IS A REASONABLE EVENT PROMOTION TIMELINE?** – In general, it is advisable to spread the word about their scheduled events as far in advance as possible, so as to allow people to make plans to attend if they wish. For major functions, at least 4 to 6 weeks is a fairly standard practice. Some associations plan even further in advance, announcing a calendar of activities for several months or up to a year in advance – this strategy can be particularly helpful when treasury funds are limited and it makes sense to mail only once for a slate of events.
  
- **HOW SHOULD EVENTS BE MANAGED?** – Clearly designate responsibility (whether to an officer, event chair, or committee) for every function. Encourage this person or group to set and stick to a planning timeline for making all related arrangements (see **Form G** for a sample event planning worksheet), as well as plan to be the on-site manager during the actual gathering. A few other notes related to logistics:
  - **Registration Table** – Plan to have a registration table where arriving attendees will check in and/or pay and receive a nametag (the Alumni Association Office can annually supply regional officers with some University nametags; some of the more active associations with many events order their own large supply).
  - **A/V Check** – If planning a function with an audio-visual component, carefully review the available equipment (and the fees involved in using the equipment) and be sure everyone is clear about who will provide auxiliary cables, tech support, etc.
  
- **HOW SHOULD AN EVENT BE EVALUATED?** – Soon after an event is over, evaluate the function’s success, as well as the effectiveness of the whole event process. Was the gathering well-attended and well-received by the membership? What was the net cost for the club? Were lessons learned that will help the club plan successful future events?

## ***B. Types of and Ideas for Regional Events***

Aside from the logistics and mechanics just mentioned, the most important remaining question is “what.” What kinds of events might regional associations organize? Here is a sample of program ideas:

- **ANNUAL MEETING** – Most active associations hold at least one event every year that is billed as an annual meeting of the association. This is when elections may be held, awards announced, and other association business conducted.

- **LUNCHEON, DINNER AND/OR RECEPTION** – A group meal can be either a formal or informal function, depending on the venue, cost, and program. For instance, some associations hold pay-your-own-way monthly breakfasts or luncheons without a planned agenda—just providing Princetonians with a chance to gather and talk with each other. On the other end of the spectrum, a meal can serve as the occasion for an annual meeting and/or a distinguished speaker.
- **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS** – Princeton University is an educational institution that promotes lifelong learning, and regional associations can help fulfill this mission by providing interesting educational opportunities to their members. Options include:
  - Presentation by a visiting Princeton faculty speaker through the Alumni Association Faculty Speakers Bureau (see **Form D** for more information on the Speakers Bureau Program)
  - Presentation by a local Princetonian—this could be on the field in which she teaches at a nearby college, a book he just published, an art exhibit she just launched at a downtown gallery, his distinguished career, etc.
  - Presentation by a notable community member, even if not affiliated with Princeton
  - Panel or debate involving multiple speakers
  - Precepts, seminars or small group discussions themed around certain issues
- **CAREER-NETWORKING AND MENTORING FUNCTIONS** – In addition to the informal social networking that happens at all regional events, some associations hold “NetNights” or other functions specifically designed for local Princetonians to have the chance to make business and career connections. This kind of event may or may not have a speaker addressing related issues (i.e., how headhunters work, how to achieve work-life balance, how to write a stand-out resume, etc.), but usually does provide a structured networking session for participants. (Note—The Alumni Council Committee on Careers can provide assistance and suggestions to regional associations on career-related programming; please contact the Alumni Association staff for further details.)
- **ASC INTERVIEWERS GATHERING** – Some Alumni Schools Committees hold a gathering for new and returning interviewers at the beginning of the interview season. This gives the Chair the chance to review procedures and answer questions, as well as provide local interviewers with the chance to meet each other.
 

Alternatively or in addition, some ASCs schedule a mass interviewing day, where students and ASC members meet at a central location. Though the interviews are still conducted one-on-one, this set-up allows many interviews to get done systematically and gives the ASC members the feeling that they’ve participated in an association event with other Princetonians.
- **ADMITTED STUDENTS GATHERING** – Once the Admission Office has made its offers of admission, regional associations are strongly encouraged to invite admitted students and their families to an event so they can be persuaded to matriculate and welcomed to the Princeton family! With the end of Early Decision, the Admission Office views such events as a crucial part of the recruitment process and deeply appreciates all local efforts made to encourage admitted students to pick Princeton.
 

An admitted student gathering can be a stand-alone event, or it can be incorporated into another association function (such as an annual dinner). Every year, the Admission Office provides ASC chairs with the dates of April Hosting and encourages the regional associations to hold admitted student gatherings within a specified time frame (so as not to conflict with the on-campus recruitment program).

Associations may also include admitted graduate students in this kind of event. Though alumni do not interview these students as part of their application process, the association can still play a role in introducing them to the Princeton community and encouraging them to matriculate. Involving admitted graduate students can also be a good way to get graduate alumni living in a

region interested in association activities. To obtain a list of admitted graduate students within a region, please contact the Alumni Association staff.

- **STUDENT “SEND-OFF”** – Many associations hold a summer “send-off” party for students heading off (or back) to campus in the fall. This can be a stand-alone event, or it can be combined with another regional function within the right time-frame. This kind of event can be held in addition to an April admitted students recruitment event (described above).
- **PARENTS PROGRAM** – Often held in conjunction with undergraduate- and/or admitted student-focused events, some regional associations create a special program for non-alumni parents to feel included. A format that provides opportunities for parents to ask other parents about their children’s experiences on campus encourages them to consider the regional group to be a resource for them and their children, and to stay involved in other association activities.
- **FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS** – Don’t forget the little tiggers! Many associations plan some family-friendly events, to which constituents can bring their children and grandchildren. These can be as informal as a park play-date, potluck picnic, backyard barbeque and swim party, or a more organized excursion for a behind-the-scenes tour of the local zoo’s tiger exhibit. With all of the demands upon people’s time in today’s busy world, a family-friendly event sends a message that the regional association is not asking its members to choose between spending time with Princetonians and their loved ones.
- **SPECTATOR SPORTING EVENTS** – Watching a game can be a fun group activity. There are many different ways to plan an association event around spectator sports:
  - **Princeton’s Away Games** – Many Tigers will rally to attend a match-up of Princeton versus a local college team. The University sponsors more than 30 varsity sports that travel widely (even internationally, on occasion). To view a full list of upcoming sporting events, please go to Princeton’s Athletic Department Web site at [www.goprincetontigers.com](http://www.goprincetontigers.com).
  - **Princeton’s Televised Games** – Even if a University sporting event is not being held nearby, Princeton’s televised games (usually basketball or football) can still make for a great gathering, whether held in a local sports bar or in someone’s home. To determine which games will be televised, please go to the Athletic Department Web site at [www.goprincetontigers.com](http://www.goprincetontigers.com).
  - **Local Professional Games** – Many major- and minor-league teams will offer a special package for groups and, often, they’ll even welcome the group with their name in lights on the big screen! Regional associations may also want to ask their membership if anyone has corporate connections to utilize box seats; this can turn an ordinary game into a special occasion. Likewise, the team’s public relations staff may be able to find someone within the organization who would be willing to speak to the group and/or offer a behind-the-scenes view.
- **PARTICIPATORY RECREATION** – Not just for watching, sports and recreational activities make for great regional events. In recent years, associations have sponsored group hikes, ice skating, cycling trips, golf or tennis tournaments, ski days, and softball games (with just Princetonians, or against another local alumni association from a peer institution). Rafting, birding and whale-watching expeditions have also proved popular.

- **CULTURAL PROGRAMS** – Local museums, galleries, symphonies, theatrical houses and observatories may have exhibits or presentations that would lend themselves well to group participation. At such events, attendance can get a big boost if the regional association offers a special benefit along with the basic program—for instance, a curatorial tour or access to a normally-private area of the venue. Take advantage of any existing Princeton links—are there alumni cast or orchestra members? Is there a parent who is on the board of an institution who can provide special insight and access? Try to be aware of any such connections within your local population.
- **PERFORMANCE BY TOURING STUDENT GROUP** – Student performing arts groups such as the Triangle Club, some dance companies and *a cappella* groups often like to go on tour over breaks. Sometimes these groups know where they want to go and work directly with the association to set up and promote events. Other times, they contact the Alumni Association Office and ask for suggestions for regions that might be particularly welcoming. If a regional association would like to have a student group come to its area, please let the Regional Affairs staff know of this interest. NOTE – When students travel, they frequently look to the regional association for advice and assistance on housing. Please be prepared for this component of working with student groups.
- **CULINARY ADVENTURES** – More than just an occasion to bring people together, food and drink can themselves serve as the purpose for an event, from happy hours to wine-tastings to cooking classes. If a local alumnus/na owns or has special connections to an eatery, this may help secure an interesting venue.
- **BOOK CLUB** – There are several different methods for organizing a regional book club:
  - The Office of the Alumni Association offers an online book club called Tiger Tomes featuring about six selections a year, each written by a Princeton faculty member or alumnus/na. Regional associations could participate in this program by promoting one or more books to their members and sponsoring local book discussion groups.
  - The association can organize an independent book group, where local participants choose the books to be read and discussed.
- **IVY-PLUS COLLABORATIVE EVENTS** – Many of Princeton’s peer institutions (including other Ivy League schools but also Stanford, MIT, etc.) also have regional associations, and it can be fun and productive to collaborate with these organizations on some projects and events. Sometimes this can perpetuate a good-natured rivalry, but it can also provide a larger audience for some projects that may have limited appeal within the Princeton community alone.
 

The key to including Ivy-Plus events in an association’s schedule of activities is to provide balance between Princeton-sponsored and Ivy-Plus events. Some alumni will only want to participate in Princeton-specific functions, while others want to meet new and interesting people from a variety of alumni organizations. A good rule of thumb is to be sure that more than half of the events offered are Princeton-specific.

If regional officers wish to learn contact information for local Ivy-Plus leaders, please contact the Princeton Alumni Association office, which can facilitate contact with the alumni relations offices of other schools.
- **GALA EVENT** – Several associations organize an annual “gala” event, usually a big formal dinner at a nice venue, though a few groups hold a more elaborate dinner-dance. Attendance fees for this event tend to be high, but the association could use proceeds to benefit a special program (such as a scholarship or internship fund – see Section VI-D for more information on such projects).

- **CLUSTER PARTIES** – Often, a regional association covers a wide geographic territory over which its population is scattered in clusters. While it makes sense to hold most events in the area of greatest population density, if there are significant membership numbers in outlying areas, regional associations may wish to set up some programs in these communities. These “cluster parties” can be formal or less so, but they do ensure that alumni across the entirety of the region feel engaged and connected, no matter where they live.
  
- **REMOTE REUNIONS** – Several associations hold events they promote as remote reunions. These are usually designed to evoke the on-campus Reunions in some way, whether by holding a small P-Rade or presenting awards to the oldest returning alumni, the most spirited costume, and/or the class with the best attendance.
 

Also, many classes organize mini-reunions, which frequently involve out-of-town classmates visiting for a special event. Regional associations can partner with classes to organize supplemental events for the visiting alumni in conjunction with the rest of the local population.
  
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE OR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS** – With the University’s motto of “in the nation’s service and the service of all nations” in mind, many associations engage in a project of community service or civic engagement, such as literacy training, student mentoring, blood or book drives, nature conservation, neighborhood rehabilitation, etc. These can be one-time or ongoing efforts, and may or may not partner with existing community programs. The key is to find a way to involve alumni in providing direct or in-kind support, not simply raising funds for another worthy non-profit organization. For additional information, please view Appendix P and contact the Alumni Council Committee on Community Service and/or the Regional Affairs staff.
  
- **BOARD MEETING** – Board meetings can be kept open and publicized to the entire local population, so as to encourage more people to get involved in the association’s leadership and activity planning. However, some associations may designate one board meeting as a “retreat” just for the current leadership to think strategically about upcoming plans.
  
- **WHAT ELSE?** – This list is by no means comprehensive, and regional associations are encouraged to be innovative and creative in your programming. You can come up with many other good ideas through such mechanisms as:
  - **Membership Survey** – Asking your alumni about the kinds of events in which they’d like to participate through a membership survey may yield new suggestions for interesting events. See Section V-F for more information about surveying and **Appendix K** for a sample survey.
  - **Utilizing Alumni Resources** – Local Princeton alumni may be well connected to limited-access venues and/or local civic or professional organizations; when possible, take advantage of the resources your constituents can provide.
  - **Publications** – The *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, *With One Accord*, *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*, and many other University publications may provide inspiration for an event or speaker. Local newspapers may also feature interesting projects or opportunities to gather.
  - **Visit the Campus** – Though many alumni return to campus at Reunions, returning at other times during the year when classes are in session and regular activities occur can provide you with a better sense of what Princeton is like today. Whether for Alumni Day or a random weekday, being on campus can provide alumni not just with nostalgia, but also inspiration for Princeton events in their hometowns. While on campus, be sure to stop by the Alumni Association Office in Maclean House to say hello!
  - **The Alumni Association Office** – The Regional Affairs staff members are happy to assist you with event idea brainstorming, as well as providing a sense of what kinds of programs seem to work well in other areas of the world.

### *C. A Few Notes about Young Alumni Events*

In most cases, young alumni are encouraged to attend all association functions, but often recent graduates have different interests and goals than alumni ten or more years out. Thus, many associations plan young alumni events to specifically draw out this constituency. A few special considerations to remember:

- **LEADERSHIP** – It's a good idea to appoint a Young Alumni Chair or Committee to oversee programming for this group. This will ensure the events will be appropriate for this group, and it is a great way to get young alumni involved in and groomed for the leadership of the overall association.
- **COST** – Many young alumni may not have the disposable income available to older generations, so it is advisable to plan low-cost or no-host gatherings for this age group.
- **TIMING** – Evening and weekend events may be more appealing to young alumni, as they may not be able to leave work or school early or in the middle of the day.
- **PROMOTION** – Young alumni have been essentially raised online and are accustomed to communicating electronically. E-mail announcements about activities are likely to be sufficient advertising and generate the best response.
- **ENGAGING ACTIVITIES AND TOPICS** – Young alumni will most likely be attracted to events that are fun and appeal to their needs and interests, such as casual social gatherings, participatory sports and career networking functions.

One final note – the undergraduate and graduate students of today are the alumni of tomorrow! Regional associations are encouraged to include current students in appropriate events, so they are aware of the local group's presence and activities. Though not all students return to their hometown after graduating Princeton, associations can make a long-range investment in the health of all regional groups and help each other by making a habit of inclusion.

### *D. Other Kinds of Special Projects and Regional Programming*

There are a few other types of programs that many regional associations operate. Though some of these may involve events, their primary focus is instead providing a service to the University and its students and alumni, or recognition for community high school students.

- **INTERNSHIP AND JOB PLACEMENT PROGRAMS** – Several regional associations coordinate programs to place undergraduates and young alumni in jobs in their communities. Sometimes this is a formal process, including applications from Princetonians and employers as well as a schedule of events for all program participants. For others, this is a more simple service of asking alumni and parents to help students who ask find rewarding summer work. To learn more about different operating models for internship and job placement programs, please contact the Regional Affairs staff.
- **BOOK AWARD PROGRAM** – Many Princeton regional associations and clubs sponsor an award program for outstanding area high school students, usually juniors, to raise the visibility of Princeton University in the community and spread awareness of the University among exceptionally-able potential applicants and high school counselors, administrators and faculty. Awards frequently take the form of certificates of recognition and/or books by University faculty members or by notable alumni. To learn more about different models for book award programs and how the Alumni Association Office can support regions that organize them, please see [Appendix E](#).

- **PRINCETON PRIZE IN RACE RELATIONS** – The purpose of the Princeton Prize in Race Relations is “to promote harmony, understanding, and respect among people of different races by identifying and recognizing high school age students whose efforts have had a significant, positive effect on race relations in their schools or communities.” This program began in 2003-04 in two cities and has since expanded to more than twenty cities across the United States. To learn more about the Princeton Prize and the cities that host it, please visit <http://www.princeton.edu/PrincetonPrize/> and contact [PPrize@princeton.edu](mailto:PPrize@princeton.edu).
- **SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS** – More than fifty regional associations have endowed or annually contribute scholarship funds for University undergraduates. These typically comprise part or all of the financial aid package for one or more students living within or near to the regional association. To learn if a regional association has previously established a scholarship or for information about establishing a new regional association scholarship, please contact Jotham Johnson '64, Director of Stewardship, at (609) 258-5956 or [jjohnson@princeton.edu](mailto:jjohnson@princeton.edu).
- **ANNUAL GIVING PHONATHON** – Some associations conduct a local Annual Giving phonathon in conjunction with the Development Office to encourage greater participation from local alumni in the current campaign. Such efforts are usually coordinated and managed by the regional Annual Giving chair. The Annual Giving Office can provide assistance in finding a location, invitations, supplying materials including calling lists, and helping with refreshments. To learn more about conducting an AG phonathon, please contact Bruce Freeman '69 in the Office of Annual Giving at [bfreeman@princeton.edu](mailto:bfreeman@princeton.edu) or (609) 258-2713.





## VII – Operational Notes, Finances and Legal Considerations

In addition to engaging their local Princetonians, regional officers also conduct the business of operating their association. This section of the handbook covers topics related to legal and financial responsibilities and requirements.

### *A. Annual Reporting*

Regional officers are encouraged to be in regular communication with the Regional Affairs staff of the Alumni Association Office to keep the University aware of what is happening within each association. In addition, the regional president or ranking officer will be asked to submit an annual report of association activities and an updated leadership roster. These are usually mailed in the summer; prompt submission is hugely appreciated! A sample of the regional association annual report can be found in **Form E**.

### *B. Alumni Council Dues*

Every fall, all active classes and regional associations are requested to pay dues to the Alumni Council. A dues request letter will be sent from the Alumni Council treasurer to the regional association treasurer, which will instruct you as to where funds can be sent. Dues help fund a wide variety of special events and projects that support volunteers and the greater alumni body, including:

- periodic Leadership Assembly weekends on campus for class and regional association officers
- the Alumni Council's Annual Meeting and the Old Guard Luncheon at Reunions
- the annual Service of Remembrance on Alumni Day honoring Princetonians who died in the previous calendar year
- the Reunions reception honoring three winners of the Award for Service to Princeton
- special projects taken on by the Alumni Council's standing committees

The dues rate for regional associations is **85 cents per dues-paying member with a \$70 minimum**. The dues rate has stayed constant since 1995, though it is subject to periodic increases.

### *C. Constitution and By-Laws*

All associations are strongly advised to operate under the aegis of a constitution and by-laws that establish rules of local leadership and operation. If you are unsure whether your regional association has ever completed and filed this paperwork, please contact the Regional Affairs staff; if not, a template constitution and sample by-laws can be provided. One sample set of by-laws is also provided in Appendix M.

### *D. Federal and State Tax-Exemption Status*

Approximately half of Princeton's regional associations have completed the process to establish their legal status as a non-profit subordinate organization of the University's 501(c)3 group tax-exemption with the U.S. Internal Revenue Service. Associations that are part of this group exemption receive individual Employee Identification Numbers for their organizations, but they are considered to be part of the separate tax-exempt organization, Princeton University. Benefits of participation in the group exemption include:

- elimination of the requirement for each association to file its own Form 990 with the IRS (see section E below)
- coverage under the University’s insurance policy for alumni organizations (see section G below)
- tax-deductibility of the association’s membership dues, as well as other gifts and financial contributions (see Section VII-F for clarification of what contributions qualify for tax-deductibility)
- tax-deductibility of volunteers’ un-reimbursed expenses (including mileage, as determined by the current IRS rate per mile) incurred in the course of providing service to the organization (Note – expenses incurred for merely attending a function are not tax-deductible)

To determine whether your association is one of those included in this group exemption, please contact the Regional Affairs staff.

For a variety of reasons, some associations chose to obtain 501(c)(3) status independently of the University. These associations may also qualify for tax deductibility of membership dues and other donations; however, the association then assumes responsibility for filing Form 990 with the IRS and independently obtaining insurance coverage for the association and its activities.

Some states will allow regional associations (either as part of the University’s group exemption or as independent 501(c)(3) entities) to qualify for state sales tax exemption. Regional officers can check with their individual state governments to determine whether their particular state offers this.

### ***E. Filing of Tax Returns***

The University will prepare a single “group” return on behalf of all alumni organizations (classes and regional associations) that are part of its group exemption. The information provided will be based upon annual financial reports from each group. (A sample financial report and instructions for completing it can be found in **Report A** and **Report B**.) Princeton University’s fiscal year ends June 30; alumni organizations should complete and submit their financial reports by no later than August 15.

If your regional association is recognized by the IRS as part of the University’s group return, but the University does not receive your financial report, the IRS will be notified that this association is not included in the group return. The association is then responsible for filing its own Form 990 if its revenues exceed \$25,000, and if it does not submit this form, penalties may be charged by the IRS. Beginning in 2008, every association not included in the group return (Form 990) will be required to complete an “E-Postcard” filing with the IRS each year.

### ***F. Guidelines Concerning Tax-Deductibility of Donations and Dues***

Regional associations that are either part of the University’s 501(c)(3) group tax-exemption or independent 501(c)(3) entities often wish to promote the fact that dues and contributions to the organization are tax-deductible. However, this is not always the case. Here are some general guidelines:

- Dues or donations are wholly tax-deductible if they do not provide any “goods, services, benefits or privileges” of substantial value in return for the contribution.
- Under the IRS regulations governing *quid pro quo* gifts, if a donor or dues-payer receives “goods, services, benefits or privileges” (hereafter referred to as a “premium”) of substantial value in exchange for their contribution, the value of the charitable deduction must be reduced

by the “fair market value” of the premium.

- Fair market value (or FMV) may or may not be equal to the retail cost of an item. For instance, a scarf that retails for \$20 would likely have a FMV of \$20. But if an association holds a fundraiser dinner event and charges \$300 per ticket, but only provides \$100 worth of benefits and goods (such as food and vendor rentals), the FMV of that dinner would be \$100.
- If the FMV of the premium is *insubstantial*, then the charitable deduction would not be reduced. There are several categories of insubstantial value:
  - **Small Premiums** - Items utilizing the University logo (such as a scarf) will be considered to be of insubstantial value (a retail or fair market value no greater than \$9 per IRS standards) if the dues payment is at least \$42. (For example, when a scarf selling for \$7 is given in exchange for a dues payment of \$50, then the entire \$50 is tax deductible. However, if the same scarf is given with a dues payment of \$25, only \$18 of the dues is tax-deductible.)
  - **Large Premiums** – In exchange for contributions, a charity may provide premiums with a total FMV up to 2% of the amount of the total contribution with a total cap of \$89, which is reached at a contribution level of \$4,450. For instance, if an alumna agrees to sponsor a student group performance by contributing \$5,000 toward the cost of a theater rental, and the association gives the sponsor a DVD of the performing group that retails for \$25, this would be an insubstantial premium and her charitable deduction would not need to be reduced.
  - **Membership Benefits** – It is permissible to offer limited benefits to donors and/or dues-paying members in exchange for annual contributions of \$75 or less. Qualifying benefits include rights or privileges that can be exercised frequently, such as free or discounted admission to facilities or events, and/or free or discounted admission to “members-only” events where the per-person cost (not including overhead) is less than \$9. Special privileges without inherent value associated with the payment of dues or donations—such as priority seating at special events, or the listing of names in a program or newsletter—are considered to be “insubstantial” by the IRS and do not require a FMV deduction.
- For tax purposes, all dues payments or donations larger than \$250 and any donation that is made in cash should be acknowledged in writing for a donor to obtain a tax deduction. A written acknowledgement is also required if a premium is received in exchange for a contribution in excess of \$75.
- If written acknowledgement of dues payment or a donation is sent and no premium was distributed, the acknowledgement should include the phrase “No goods or services have been provided in connection with this gift/donation/payment.” If a premium was exchanged, then the receipt must include a description of the premium with a good faith estimate of its FMV.
- Fees paid to attend or participate in most regional association events—those that are simply seeking to recoup event costs—are not tax-deductible. If an association wishes to conduct a fundraising event for itself or one of its signature programs, then only the portion of the event fee above and beyond the FMV of the function would qualify for tax-deductibility.

The Regional Affairs staff members, as well as the University’s Treasurer Office and General Counsel, are happy to answer any further specific questions that may arise on this subject.

### ***G. Maintaining a Regional Association Treasury***

As outlined in the “regional treasurer” role description in Section III of this handbook, this individual is typically responsible for maintaining the association’s finances. Here are recommended procedures and tips for treasurers:

- The treasury typically consists of an operating account established at a bank or other financial institution in the legal name of the association. The treasury may not be commingled with any other funds (in particular, the personal funds of any member or officer).
- At least two officers (such as the treasurer and president) should have access to initiate transactions on the account, so that association business can continue uninterrupted even if one officer is indisposed or out of contact.
- Make the financial institution aware of the tax-exempt status of the association, when applicable. The bank will likely require the association to demonstrate this through the provision of its IRS-issued employee identification number (see section D above), IRS determination letter, and other documentation, such as a constitution or a letter from the University.
- Some associations may wish to create additional savings or investment accounts separate from the operating account, so that a treasury balance not needed for day-to-day operating expenses can earn interest, typically in a money market fund. In part or whole, the treasury may not be invested unless the organization's officers have given approval
- "Speculative" investments are not permitted. This includes anything risky (i.e., options and derivatives), anything that may lead to tax problems (i.e., tax shelters), and/or anything that creates or gives the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- Some associations may wish to create additional special accounts for the purpose of funding specific projects, such as the schools committee or Princeton Prize award ceremony. Separate bank accounts are usually established when contributions for this purpose are solicited separately from dues, so as to ensure the funds are only used for the intended purposes.
- Please note the following financial restrictions on all alumni classes and regional associations:
  - Outside of dues payments, gifts to the organization must be either unrestricted or restricted to a purpose that is of a current nature. Endowed or permanent gifts are not to be accepted by alumni class organizations without involvement of the Office of Development.
  - Gifts to alumni organizations do not qualify for Annual Giving or other credit.
  - Student or any other kind of loans are not permitted.
  - Contracts to borrow money other than from Princeton University are not permitted.
  - Organization funds may not inure to the benefit of any member, trustee, officer or other private person.
  - Organization funds may not be used to aid needy members of the organization or their families.
  - Organizations may not use their funds to influence legislation, nor may they provide assistance for a candidate for any public office (local, state or national).
- Suggested accounting procedures are available in **Report C**.
- Financial records supporting all receipts and disbursements for a fiscal year must be kept by the organization for at least four years, as the statute of limitations for tax return examination by the IRS is three years from the filing of the return (which could be as long as four years from the end of the fiscal year). In addition, the University (through the Internal Audit Department) reserves the right to review and inspect the organization's books and records, as it does for all University departments and subsidiary organizations. The following documents should be retained: bank statements, deposit slips, paid invoices, brokers advices, Forms 1099, and documentation supporting payments to officers and others who provide services to the organization for out-of-pocket expenses.
- If questions arise about any element of financial organization, please contact the Regional Affairs staff at the Alumni Association Office, who will work in conjunction with the University Controller and General Counsel's Office to resolve issues as quickly as possible.

## ***H. Insurance Coverage***

Princeton University provides coverage under its insurance policies (including Trustees and Officers, general liability and automobile liability) to “officially-related” alumni organizations, which are those groups which are members of the University’s group tax-exemption. For further explanation of coverage and benefits, please see **Appendix N** and **Appendix O**.

## ***I. Adherence to Princeton University Policies***

As detailed throughout this handbook, there are a few general Princeton University policies and restrictions that all of its alumni organizations are expected to follow:

- Contact information for Princetonians (alumni, parents, students, etc.) may only be utilized for official business (see Section V-G).
- As befitting Princeton University’s educational non-profit status, any activity related to political campaigning or fundraising for any non-Princeton entity is strictly prohibited.
- All Princeton entities must adhere to the University’s non-discrimination statement, which can be found online at <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/style/#d>.

## ***J. Relationship between the Office of the Alumni Association and Office of Development***

The Office of the Alumni Association handles matters related to Princeton alumni relations except those involving fundraising, which are coordinated through the Office of Development. Questions about fundraising, including Annual Giving and regional scholarships, should be directed to the Development Office; questions about all other regional business should be directed to the Regional Affairs staff of the Alumni Association Office. Contact information for the Development Office can be found on its Web site at <http://giving.princeton.edu/contact/>.

## ***K. Office of the Alumni Association Resources***

The Office of the Alumni Association, in particular the staff members within the Regional Affairs team, is available and eager to assist regional officers in the operation of their associations. Please do not hesitate to contact the office about any questions that arise after reading this handbook or in the course of day-to-day operations.

One final note – this handbook is intended to be dynamic, evolving to serve your needs. Please feel free to contact members of the Regional Affairs staff and the Committee on Regional Associations if you have suggestions to improve this resource. We welcome your notes on programs or communication strategies that worked particularly well for your local association, ideas for additional sections or appendices, or input about areas that need expansion and further clarification.

