

## 3.9 COSTUMES

### 3.9.1 The Job

The class reunion costume or uniform serves to identify and unite the class at Reunions. It also characterizes your class in the P-rade and expresses the theme of the reunion. There are a number of traditions surrounding class costumes. Seniors wear a 'Senior Jacket' (formerly called a 'beer jacket'), usually including a design that illustrates something unique about their class. The 25<sup>th</sup> Reunion class designs a class blazer, often constructed from a fabric designed specifically by and for the class. Costumes typically change at each major reunion through the 25<sup>th</sup>; after that minor variations may be made, but the blazer is usually maintained (it is sometimes changed again between the 40<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>).

The responsibility of the Costume chair is to design and procure all costume components and receive, track and distribute costume orders. Tasks include:

1. Design the costume, coordinating with Reunion Chairs, Theme, Artwork and other committee members. Classes sometime solicit ideas from the entire class for costume elements (jackets, vest, shirt, pants, shorts, hats, etc.) and design along with theme ideas. There are often variations on the costume components for classmates and spouses, and usually at least a T-shirt for children. Some classes have had "color your own t-shirts" which the children color as an activity and then wear in the P-rade. Also consider extra accessories, such as hats, tiger tails, umbrellas, canes, totes and the like that can accentuate the theme, particularly in the P-rade.
2. Coordinate with the Artwork Chair on designs, artwork and use of the reunion logo.
3. Coordinate with the P-rade Chair on ordering any giveaways. These are small items, often given to classmates right before the P-rade, that can add interest to the costume and the P-rade. Many classes have fun sunglasses, kazoos for a band theme, etc. Even something as simple as temporary tattoos, especially for the children, can add to the fun for all involved.
4. Identify and work with vendor(s) for all costume components.
5. Order buttons to be used as name tags at Reunions. These often display the logo or some part of the logo. Remember to leave enough space for names to be written legibly. Note that enough buttons need to be ordered for the major reunion alumni and guests and ALL expected attendees from the satellite classes at your headquarters.
6. Receive, track and organize costume orders from classmates and vendors.
7. Create a process to distribute costumes at Reunions.

### 3.9.2 Timetable

We strongly recommend you use the detailed Reunion Planning Checklist with all relevant deadlines, available on the Office of the Alumni Association Reunions Volunteers web page.

### 3.9.3 Related Information

**Soliciting class input.** It is very important to get classmates involved in costume design, particularly for the 25<sup>th</sup> blazer selection. Some classes do surveys for design and component ideas. Others have held contests. Using the web to show samples can be very helpful in reaching a large, widespread constituency. Don't work in a vacuum – be sure to run your ideas past the Reunion Chairs and Committee Members. The Reunion Chairs and Class President must approve the final design.

**Costume traditions.** The Senior class wears Senior Jackets, and the 25<sup>th</sup> is the youngest class to wear a class blazer. Liberal use of orange and black is the norm, but other colors sometimes appear, such as green for a tiger/jungle theme, or purple for a Mardi Gras theme. A more recent tradition was begun by the Class of 1963, whose jackets have the name of each classmate woven into the fabric. Some 25<sup>th</sup> Reunions have built on this idea by listing all classmates in the lining of their jackets.

**Budgeting.** There are two sides to budgeting for costumes. The first is to determine what the cost per classmate and family member will be (i.e. jacket - \$30, T-shirt - \$8, Hat - \$6, tote - \$5 for a total of \$49). Then you need to factor in extras to be ordered on speculation about the number of registrations that you expect to receive after costume orders are due to vendors. Also factor in attire needs for the crew (typically 2-3 T-shirts each; they don't have much time to wash them during the weekend), and any extras you hope to sell on-site. Remember to add in any other accessories and P-rade giveaways. A review of past registration forms and Reunion Financial Reports obtained from the Office of the Alumni Association can be helpful. Costume vendors can also give you ideas for quantities and size distributions.

**Working with vendors.** The more clearly you can communicate your ideas, the more efficiently the design iteration process will run. In design, a picture truly is worth a thousand words. The more you can draw, and the more refined artwork you can provide the vendors, the greater the likelihood that you will get what you had in mind. Remember that the vendors are working with many groups, and conversations can blur. **Put everything in writing and review contracts with Risk Management.** Following up with a letter or e-mail after a meeting or detailed phone conversation is not only very effective – it can be essential if something goes wrong. Require samples of your pieces with enough lead time for design changes and final production. Many vendors will be working themselves with manufacturing companies; be sure to ask whether they have had experience with these companies before and about lead times for production and shipping. Negotiate as many details as possible up front. Give yourself a cushion--you don't want to be sweating about whether your costume is going to arrive. (We recommend you contract for a May 1 delivery date, with a penalty clause for late delivery.) Remember that the more complex the costume is, the greater the opportunity for something to go wrong.

**Costume orders.** The other side of the process is receiving orders from classmates. Design the order form carefully to avoid confusion. It should be very clear what parts of the costume are included in the registration fees (and this may be different for classmate, spouse and children) and what parts can be purchased for an additional fee. Check with your vendors on specific sizing information to allow classmates to order correct sizes as much as possible (sizes, and item costs, become very significant when you get into ordering jackets and similar items). Design a system to track the incoming orders and create totals for each size and component.

**Costume distribution.** There are a few basic approaches to ordering and distributing costumes. The first is essentially “batch processing.” Use the incoming orders to estimate total needs, and distribute on a first-come first-served basis at reunions without concern for sizes (or even orders) previously given. The second is more a “specific order” approach. Again existing orders are used to estimate totals, but costumes are distributed based on the specific order received from the classmate. All the components may be packaged together with the classmate’s name, or only the more expensive piece (such as the jacket) might be labeled. The former system is easier to implement, and size exchange is easier, but can leave classmates who arrive on Saturday with ill-fitting or missing pieces, even if they registered early. The latter takes more preparation time, but allows classmates to get what they ordered (though if sizes are wrong, exchange can be more difficult). When more expensive pieces are involved (such as jackets), the specific order approach is strongly recommended.