Query Your Board or Informal Cohort of Active Volunteers to see if there is anyone already active in your regional association who would enjoy exploring and promoting the development of community service efforts.

Reach out to your Public Using your newsletter or broadcast e-mails invite responses from local alums who might be interested in performing community service with local Princetonians. Also, ask for alums who are already connected to a local non-profit effort—as their day job, as active volunteers, as board members or donors—who would be willing to be the link between interested Princetonians and the their local non-profit.

Discuss It’s useful to spend some time fact-finding and brainstorming several different possible areas of interest—i.e. environmental, educational, hunger, homelessness, employment counseling—so that there is enthusiasm, buy in, and due consideration of what would be the most useful, effective and satisfying way for alums to get involved in community service. The possibilities and needs are endless—so it’s important to zero in on the project that will be most motivational to the people who have come forward.

Plug in to Existing Efforts One of the easiest ways to get started with alumni community service is for a core group of community service people to spread the word that they are forming a Princeton team to do a walk or run for a cause, to participate in a day of service—like “New York Serves” or the “Charles River Clean Up” or “Mt. Princeton Trail Clearing” or the “Christmas in the City” program. The ideal would be to have a few quite-enthused people each agree to coordinate one event per year. If you develop maybe 3-5 traditional events that your region offers spread throughout the calendar—i.e. perhaps one per season—you can see if you develop a group of regulars—who are either happy with the status quo of “just showing up” after a little reserving, scheduling and e-mailing—or whether the group would be interested in shaping and developing their own signature project.

Partner with Ivy Plus Alumni In Your Region Create critical mass for doing a community service project by connecting with alumni from Princeton’s friendly rival schools in your local Ivy Plus group—either by adding Princeton power to an ongoing Ivy Plus community service effort or by offering a community service opportunity to the members of Ivy Plus in your local area.

Commit to a Long-Lasting Signature Project To launch an ambitious, new project of your own creation, you have to have a passionate leader who is not scared by the time-consuming “unknowns” that invariably need to be worked through when attempting something new. There’s a delicate balance between persistently sticking to your vision and being flexible enough to adapt and evolve as personnel changes and needs change over the course of a multi-year project. It’s great when a project lasts—usually because that means people see its value and enjoy participating in it—but there is no shame—and lots of possible accomplishment, learning, and enjoyment to be had—for an association that commits to
trying a variety of different possible projects—maybe one or two a year with the idea that maybe someday one might take hold over a longer period.

**Enjoy the Social Benefits of “Hands-Off Projects”** Many regions are getting all the bonding and intellectual stimulation benefits of community service without physically, directly working on a project. Funding fellowships for undergraduates to perform important non-profit work creates the opportunity for intergenerational mentoring by alumni of undergraduates who are from their region—or come into the area for a summer internship. In addition, these efforts provide a natural spark for continuing education or social events in the region. For example:

- a book discussion/guest speaker event—for which everyone has agreed in advance to have read a current book about an important social issue, after which the group gathers for a social event/discussion with a local (alumni?) expert on the field. If the group enjoys this format, it can become a series, with the group coalescing around a next book/speaker combination

- a gathering to hear about the work of the region’s summer fellows before they go back to Princeton

- a panel of several Princetonians who work in the non-profit sector as their day jobs—as a means of raising awareness about issues to Princetonians who might want to volunteer their services, join their board, make a donation, etc.

**You Don’t Have to Do This Alone or “Reinvent the Wheel”** The organizational power of the University is standing by to help you get started:

- **The Alumni Council Standing Committee on Community Service**—Composed of a wide range of classes and regions of Princetonians, our committee seeks to promote, facilitate, and recognize community service among interested alumni groups. Our website is at: [http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/alumni_council_committees/standing_committees/community_service/](http://alumni.princeton.edu/main/volunteers/alumni_council_committees/standing_committees/community_service/)

- **The Pace Center for Civic Engagement (pace.princeton.edu)** Founded in 2003, Pace is the on-campus clearing house for most undergraduate, alumni, faculty and staff community service efforts. As their website states: *Pace connects individuals and groups with opportunities to thoughtfully address civic problems and have an impact through activities including direct volunteer service, civic action break trips, public service internships and fellowships, student civic engagement projects, and engaged academics.*

  Elsie Sheidler, Associate Director of the Pace Center and liaison to alumni community service efforts can be reached at: sheidler@princeton.edu

- **PICS—Princeton Internships in Community Service**—The Class of 1969 Community Service Project has evolved into the go-to umbrella organization that sparks and supports student summer fellowship efforts by a broad array of other Princeton classes and regional associations. The PICS website is at: [www.princetoninternships.org](http://www.princetoninternships.org)