REUNION BEST PRACTICES

This document will be periodically updated. If you have advice, lessons learned, or anything to add to this compendium of our best reunion minds, please contact Mibs Southerland Mara at Milbrey@princeton.edu or 609. 258.5836.

Reunion Chairs
- For conference calls, consider the use of “Go To Meeting” type software.
- Consider co-chairs for each position (one with experience, and one who may be newer) to build continuity over the years as well as a chain of support from reunion to reunion.
- Always try to bring new people into the committee at each major so that the reunions committee does not become cliquish.
- Consider scheduling regular calls with the committee so that there are regular brainstorm sessions in the lead-up to the reunion.
- Some classes create a spouse committee (spouses of committee members or other classmates) to coordinate the spouse experience.
- Create a master calendar and send it out in advance to all committee members, including their cell numbers and email contacts.
- If you want to close your site during a meal to classmates only, be sure to coordinate this effort with the Office of the Alumni Association prior to Reunions.
- On the Sunday of Reunions, any leftover office or headquarters supplies and costumes can be turned into the Office of the Alumni Association for donation to a local charity.
- Reunion Chairs should consider arriving to campus early (Tuesday or Wednesday). The Housing Chair needs to communicate to the Office of the Alumni Association the names of any committee members planning to arrive early for Public Safety. Be sure a crew member will be on hand to provide key cards and linens for your early arrivals. Classmates and guests are not permitted to arrive early.

Alumni Faculty Forums
- Utilize social networks, e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, to identify classmates working in fields related to Forum topics.
- Check which classmates participated on Forums at your previous major reunion and, as much as possible, identify and invite classmates who have not participated in the past.
- If a particular classmate cannot attend or declines, ask if s/he has a recommendation for an alternate participant.
- If using email to invite a classmate, make the subject line as specific and personal as possible. Be prepared to send one or more emails as follow up.

Artwork
- No current advice

Associates
- No current advice
Beverages
- Some classes find it helpful to arrange for a rental unit for storage and refrigeration of beverages.
- If serving specialty alcohol or drinks, consider a separate bar line designated for attendees from your major (alumni, guests and satellites) to prevent others from depleting your supply. Your Public Safety office can help with this effort.

Children’s Programs
- Work with the student crew manager(s) closely and utilize their help as much as you can. It helps to meet them in person before things get really busy (on Thursday) and to check in with them throughout the day on Friday and Saturday.
- It helps to have a co-chair to divvy up some of the responsibilities, both before reunions but also during reunions.
- Good signage and communication of the children’s events (such as handouts at registration) helps.
- Working with vendors that have worked at Reunions in the past/know how things work at Reunions makes insurance, deliveries, communications much easier.

Community Service
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Costumes
- Get samples of costume items in advance of the final production run to ensure sizing, colors, and so forth are as expected.
- Some classes have used costumes as an ancillary revenue stream to help defray the costs of the reunion while mitigating the risk of running short on costume supplies; specifically, give classmates the option of ordering extra costume items before, during, and after Reunions.
- However, other classes choose to price items a modest percentage above cost to cover the cost of unsold items.
- For post Reunions sales, the Costume Chair -- or someone willing -- will need to inventory leftover items at home and pack and ship individual orders as they come in. If doing this, remember to add an additional shipping and handling charge to cover cost of packaging and shipping.
- Some vendors may be willing to store and ship unsold inventory.

Entertainment
- Remember to order meals for entertainers, if requested, and to reserve a campus room with your Housing Chair if a “green room” is a requirement of the entertainment agreement.

Finance
- Some classes find it makes sense to use reunion surplus to subsidize class dinners and other class activities but not to subsidize class dues, as they have received more pushback on reunion costs than on the dues amount.
- The Alumni Council can provide examples of budgets that deal fully with estimates, with fixed and variable costs, and with incremental analyses to help with budgeting.
- Some reunions find it useful to share the budget, and the budget status, across all members of the reunion committee, while others do not.
- While the University encourages reunions to plan for a breakeven budget, if your reunion runs a surplus, consider keeping the entirety of the funds in the reunions account for future Reunions, not just a moderate amount. You can use the surplus from prior Reunions to help defray the costs of special Reunions (namely, the 25th and 50th), and to provide additional funding for class-related activities outside of Reunions.
- Where possible, money should be held in a reunions account as opposed to a class account, enabling the flexibility to spend the money for either Reunions or class activities.
- One class budgeted for a surplus for each of the 15th and 20th reunions, in order to have $75k fund to support the 25th reunion, using any extra to fund class activities and to keep dues levels lower.

### Food

- No current advice

### HQ

- Headquarters and Reunion Chairs should visit the headquarters site the year before, to see the site in action and to get a sense of what will and will not work. University staff from Grounds and Buildings Maintenance encourages volunteers to meet for a site walk-through in the fall to help determine the site layout.
- Plan well in advance where and how at headquarters you intend to communicate with classmates. A central bulletin/message board is a must; but with the expansion of social media, some classes have positioned flat screens around the headquarters site to enable postings, tweets, and the like to be made public. However, watch out for posting of misinformation; use a monitor to check on out-of-line postings, and non-classmate postings.
- Flat screens used for communication also can be used to enhance visibility to and awareness of key events, such as class speeches, and to display images of the bands playing at night.

### Housing

- Many reunions find it advisable to hold some “buffer beds” in the event of unexpected housing issues.
- In addition to securing blocks of off-campus rooms, include information and inventory levels in registration information. Consider not only location, availability, and proximity to Reunions bus routes, but also a range of rates to deal with attendees’ tastes and financial situation.
- The Housing Chair needs to communicate to the Office of the Alumni Association the names of any committee members planning to arrive early for Public Safety. Be sure a crew member will be on hand to provide key cards and linens for your early arrivals. Classmates and guests are not permitted to arrive early.

### Memorial Service

- No current advice
Prade  
- No current advice  

Program  
- Many reunions find it valuable to establish the schedule of events early in the planning cycle.

Publicity/PR  
- Several recent majors have relied on telephone/email/other linkage concept to create excitement around the reunion. Alumni Association staff can provide examples of this.
- Consider using your crew as a pre-Reunions resource to call classmates, encouraging attendance and relaying any pertinent information about registration and costume deadlines. If planning a crew phonathon, budget for this time, as crew must be paid.
- A recent 20th used a registration pledge idea a year in advance to get early indications of attendees.
- A recent 30th sent a note of thanks to each registrant, encouraging a reach-out to former roommates and friends. That class also sent e-missives to the class, listing all who had registered.
- Many classes make use of social media to help build excitement, engagement and commitment for Reunions. In using these platforms, include information on activities at Reunions, sponsored by the class and promote events, such as Alumni-Faculty Forums, featuring classmates.
- For one recent reunion, and through Facebook, several classmates arranged an early morning bike ride around the Princeton area. For many classes, getting people to join these social media groups is an important part of the registration publicity process.
- For one recent reunion, classmates used their tennis-themed major to set a new Guinness Book of World Record title for "Largest Gathering of People Wearing a Tennis Outfit." In doing so, they created class unity and excitement.

Registration  
- Do a trial run on a few check-in scenarios prior to opening registration.
- Several recent classes have used a Saturday-only option idea, but generally do not offer this option until later in the registration period.
- Test each step in the registration process: errors in in the process create much more work later.

Satellites  
- Some classmates of major reunions have spouses/partners in satellite classes and use the satellite registration to attend their major for free, so think through scenarios of this sort, and plan how to handle them.
Student Crew

- Regarding crew bonuses, reward those who work hard and do a great job: building a history that your class pays for performance will help to have better performing crews over time.
- Work with the University to set up an account with Campus Dining so that crew members can have an allowance to buy food at the Frist Campus Center while they are working, particularly during the days prior to the start of Reunions (that is, Tuesday through Thursday), when crew members are setting up.
- Some classes note the plan in place to feed the crew should not be limited to Frist Campus Center as the crew might enjoy more food offerings in town.
- Consider eliminating use of petty cash by having the treasurer or Finance Chair use a credit card to make unexpected purchases; some classes do not use any petty cash, eliminating the need for any cash management.
- Many classes prefer to meet with the Student Crew prior to Reunions, and to meet socially shortly before Reunions week to clarify and reinforce the written outline of responsibilities.
- Some classes have found it helpful to have a daily agenda for Reunions Committee and Student Crew.
- Consider using your crew as a pre-Reunions resource to call classmates, encouraging attendance and relaying any pertinent information about registration and costume deadlines. If planning a crew phonathon, budget for this time, as crew must be paid.

Technology

- Many classes use Reunion Technologies to handle their class websites and registration. Other classes have used AlumniMagnet and EventBrite. When choosing a software platform consider costs, functionality, customer service, and ease of use.
- Keep in mind that the class is ultimately responsible for the security of the alumni data if not using Reunion Technologies or Harris for broadcast emails.
- The class websites are completely separate from the TigerNet website and the University help desk cannot support the individual class websites. Be clear in communicating with your classmates that they must contact the class webmaster for assistance with the class website.

Theme

- A recent 25th contends that 24 months before Reunions is not too early to choose a theme, as it can be a key to recruiting Reunions Chairs and should be done in coordination with the Class Officers as well.
- Soliciting ideas from classmates is a great idea, but have a process for deciding on the use of such ideas.
- Note the difference between “Theme”, which becomes fixed; and final Statement/Phrase around the theme and the logo, as these can build over time.

Transportation

- No current advice
Yearbook
- The Office of the Alumni Association has a Survey Monkey account that can be used for a class survey. The Survey Monkey account stores past major reunion surveys that are available to review and might help generate ideas.

5th Reunion
- No current advice

25th Reunion
- A recent 25th contends that 24 months before Reunions is not too early to choose a theme, as it can be a key to recruiting Reunions Chairs and should be done in coordination with the Class Officers as well.

50th Reunion
- No current advice

APGA
- No current advice