



Guide to Alumni Club Operations

Table of Contents

A Mission Related Purpose	3
Structure & Governance	3
Club Membership	3
Club Leadership	4
Club Recognition	4
Operational Best Practice	5
Connecting Alumni: Communication	5
Engaging Alumni: Events	6
Purpose and Type	6
Coordination	6
Scheduling	7
Communications	7
Investing in Relationships: Development and Support	8
Celebratory Life Events	8
Life Events for Condolences	9
Welcome to the City / Area	9
Rules for Alumni Club Success	10
Rule #1 – Do Not Be Concerned with Numbers	10
Rule #2 – Stay Consistent	10
Rule #3 – Small Wins Lead to Victory	10
Rule #4 – Persevere	10
Rule #5 – Have a Good Time	11
Putting It All Together	11
Alumni Club Operational Models	12
Annual Model	12
Bi-Annual Model	12
Event Planning: Examples & Checklist	13
Event Planning Timeline and Checklist	13

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A Mission Related Purpose

The Mission of Sigma Nu Fraternity is:

To develop ethical leaders inspired by the principles of Love, Honor, and Truth.

To foster the personal growth of each man's mind, heart, and character.

To perpetuate lifelong friendships and commitment to the Fraternity.

Alumni clubs can impact all components of this mission, but they are intended to support the development of relationships between alumni brothers and maintain a connection to the Fraternity, primarily.

Clubs play a special role within the Fraternity. When we join Sigma Nu, we do so through a collegiate chapter, and we can continue that affiliation, as an alumnus, via the alumni chapter. In this manner, we develop close-knit relationships with chapter brothers and alumni, as well as a sense of loyalty to our chapter designation. Clubs, though, take on a broader view, blind to chapter designation. In fact, [The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.](#) prohibits affiliation of a club to a chapter designation (Article Eight, Section 8.1):

Sigma Nu Alumni Clubs shall be known with some geographical or other designation that they shall select. No Alumni Club shall bear the name of a Collegiate Chapter.



Clubs are an example of the extraordinary bonds and connections that exist in our brotherhood. They facilitate meaningful interactions among the diverse pool of brothers that populate a metro- or geographic area. The Fraternity is dedicated to ensuring that all alumni can continue to enjoy the camaraderie and fraternal bonds of our brotherhood and clubs help in creating opportunities that continue the brotherhood experience.

Structure & Governance

Club Membership

Members of an alumni club come from Sigma Nu alumni within a metro- or geographic area. Typically, there is not a membership roster associated with a club because it services a geographic area. In other words, by default of their address, an alumnus should receive invitations to club events and, therefore, may be considered a part of the club.

Club Leadership

The leadership structure of a club can be as extensive as the club desires. Per [The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.](#) (Article Eight, Section 8.3):

An Alumni Club may perform those services and functions that are consistent with the powers, duties, and purposes of an Alumni Chapter, and with The LAW and welfare of the FRATERNITY, except that no Alumni Club shall be accorded representation at the Grand Chapter.

Historically, club leadership has been especially simplified, often with a single alumnus serving as the sole organizer. Unfortunately, this model has not proven to be operationally sound; therefore, club leadership should include at least three alumni brothers.

- Elected officers (e.g., President, Vice President, Secretary, etc.).
- Self-transition / recruited successors.
- Organizing / Executive Committee.

Multiple brothers serving in a leadership / organizing role ensures continuity of operations if / when one, or two, of those brothers is unable to continue participating. In the single organizer model, if that individual moved, or “burnt out,” then the club, effectively, ceased to exist. For the area alumni, this start-and-stop reality creates a sense of disinterest and disconnection.

When taking steps to start a club, recruiting two or three additional alumni to serve in a leadership role is the first “to do” item.

Club Recognition

Clubs do not require official recognition from the General Fraternity. However, for a club to receive assistance from the General Fraternity – including assistance with communication to area alumni, listing on the General Fraternity website, and promotion of club events and efforts – it must be registered and submit an annual report in May.



Maintaining Club Leadership

Of course, maintaining the club’s leadership team to ensure it always includes multiple alumni brothers – remember, three is the goal/ideal.

To that end, develop a succession plan to replace members of the club leadership either at regular intervals (i.e., elections) or at any point when they cease fulfilling their responsibilities (i.e., recruit and/or appoint a replacement).

This practice is an investment that can pay huge dividends down the road by ensuring a continuous existence, rather than one of various starts and stops.

Operational Best Practice

Connecting Alumni: Communication

Communication is the first step to all alumni engagement, so consider the question, *"How do alumni know if they want to get involved if they don't know what's going on?"* Short answer – they don't.

Sigma Nu has more than 190,000 living alumni and, according to recent alumni surveys, almost 65% of them have an interest in receiving information and updates from alumni clubs and alumni chapters.

There are two readily available methods to inform brothers of the club's plans.

1. **Club announcements.** For registered clubs, the General Fraternity is prepared to assist in delivering email messages to all area alumni for whom it has a good email address.

Generally, these would be event announcements, or a series of emails about an event the club is hosting. The benefit of clubs is that they do not have to worry about maintaining contact listings. Further, the General Fraternity can and will assist in message development.

Unlike alumni chapters, there is less of a need / expectation for clubs to provide regular updates or news about alumni, so a consistent schedule of producing an alumni club newsletter is not expected. However, if a club decides it would like to do so, it certainly can.

2. **Establish an online presence.** Digital communication continues to be on the rise and having an online presence has become a standard for any organized entity. Making use of these online opportunities includes some definite benefits:
 - a. **Large pool** – easy connection to many alumni.
 - b. **Efficiency** – posting a communication online can be done quickly.
 - c. **Improved Odds of the "Smaller World"** – the growth of social media has shrunken the digital world to the point that finding brothers has become much easier.

In the age of social media, how often new content is pushed out is important to keep your followers (i.e., area alumni) engaged. For clubs, it is recommended that a schedule of at least one piece of content per week be posted. Examples of such content might include:

- ▶ An article of interest / relevance.
- ▶ An event announcement or reminder.
- ▶ A celebratory announcement / update about an area alumnus (e.g., birth of a child, marriage, new job or promotion, etc.)
- ▶ A call for support for a brother (e.g., loss in his family, passing of a brother in the area, etc.)

Something to Consider

- Information creates interest.
- Interest leads to participation.
- Participation turns into involvement.
- Involvement strengthens organizational goals and purpose.

Remember...

- The internet is forever and "delete" does not guarantee it is gone.
- "Private" is not necessarily private, online.
- Carefully consider all content before posting online.

Engaging Alumni: Events

The central purpose of clubs is to connect alumni brothers in a geographic area – *to perpetuate lifelong friendships*. To do this, it is imperative that clubs host at least one event per academic / fiscal year. Otherwise, it will be difficult for clubs to fulfill this central purpose. Putting together a successful event is relatively simple but does require attention.

Consider these five components for every event the club hosts:

PURPOSE AND TYPE

What purpose does this event serve? What do the alumni get out of attending that specific event? These are two important questions that need to be answered prior to planning and announcing any event. The answers to these questions should also be communicated to the alumni. Additionally, clubs looking to host multiple events in a year should consider offering a variety of event types, which broadens the appeal of the event.

Generally, there are four (4) types of club events:

- **Social** – often a casual gathering of area alumni for the purpose of camaraderie and getting to know one another (e.g., happy hours, coffee meet ups, etc.).
- **Professional** – can also be casual but typically would involve a specific focus on networking, making business contacts among area alumni, or professional development (e.g., networking events, professional services presentations, lunch gathering with a development speaker/presentation).
- **Family** – often a casual gathering of area alumni and their families for the purpose of extending the camaraderie of Sigma Nu to family members (e.g., sporting events, potluck picnics, etc.).
- **Community** – an organized effort to do something beneficial for the local community where the club is located (e.g., food drive for a local food bank, park or roadside clean up, local habitat for humanity build, etc.).

Of course, the type of events a club chooses to host are the purview of the club. However, it is important to note that all Sigma Nu entities are to adhere to the Fraternity' [Risk Reduction Policy](#).

COORDINATION

Perhaps the most difficult part of planning and hosting an alumni club event is coordinating all the moving parts. Even the simplest of events has multiple parts and given the daily responsibilities of most alumni, will require more than one person to be involved. That said, how many people need to be involved in planning an event is fluid. For larger, formal events a three-person event planning committee / team (note that this matches with the number of people recommended be a part of the club leadership) should suffice:

- **Site Coordinator** – venue, food & beverage, entertainment.
- **Communication Coordinator** – event marketing and promotion, registration process.

- **Registration Coordinator** – manage the registration process; keep the planning team up to date on how many registrants there are; confirming attendance and providing that information to the General Fraternity.

Not all club events will necessarily require three people to be involved in the planning process but the above does serve as an example of the moving parts that even a simple event might include.

SCHEDULING

In a perfect world, a club should be able to announce its calendar of events for the year (fiscal or calendar, whichever “year” it wishes to operate). For each event, it is important that ample time be allotted for planning and promotion.

- **Annual event** (one event / year) – 4-8 months for planning, depending on scale and formality of the event.
- **Bi-annual events** (two events / year) – 3-6 months planning time for each event, again, depending on scale and formality.
- **Quarterly events** (four events / year) – 2-4 months planning time for each event, depending on scale and formality.

Casual events (e.g., happy hours) do not require the same amount of planning as a family tailgate leading into a sporting event. The point is that not all events are the same, in terms of planning time, and time does not stop when planning an event. You must allow yourself plenty of time to account for delays / postponements and procrastination. Moreover, if your event requires other services, such as caterers, a venue, or a guest speaker / entertainment, then you may not know how long it will take to get those detailed finalized.



COMMUNICATIONS

It is important to have a communication plan for each event a club plans to host. A thoughtful communication plan will keep the event “front of mind.”

An example of an event communication plan includes:

- Save the Date announcement – at least 60 days prior to the event.
- Three-to-five (3-5) email reminders – sent at 6, 4, 3, 2, and one week prior to the event.
- Four (4) social media promotions / reminders – posted 5, 3, 2 weeks, and one posted 2-3 days, prior to the event.

When developing an event communication plan, there is certain information that should be included in every piece of the plan.

- Why an alumnus should attend and the value of the event to them.
- Who is invited (alumni and guests, brothers only, etc.)?
- When the event is taking place – date and time.
- Where the event is taking place.
- Dress/Attire (i.e., Casual, Business casual, Semi-formal, Formal).
- Cost, if applicable.

Having a record of attendees for every club event is important; therefore, clubs are strongly encouraged to utilize some form of a registration process. It does not need to be complicated or fancy, but does need to collect specific information:

- Attendee's full name.
- Mailing address (if applicable).
- Email address.
- Phone number.
- Chapter designation and badge number.
- Guest(s) name(s) (if applicable).

[Eventbrite](#) is an online registration service that offers a wide range of services including registration data collection, payment processing, social media integration, and more. Facebook also offers a simple RSVP process through their [Events](#) feature.

An [Event Planning Timeline and Checklist](#) is provided at the end of this guide to serve as a resource of things to think about when planning an event.

Investing in Relationships: Development and Support

Life is a series of peaks and valleys, and we hope there are more peaks than valleys. When we experience those down times, we hope the depth of those valleys is minimal. With that knowledge, the alumni club can, and should, play an important role in terms of offering and providing support to fellow alumni. There are several ways in which a club may choose to provide its support.

Three general scenarios clubs can support fellow local alumni are:

Celebratory Life Events

Publicly share/announce these moments with area alumni either online or at an event. Announcements of this type are a prime opportunity to highlight good things being accomplished by, or happening to, area alumni.

Life Events for Condolences

These types of life events should be handled with delicacy; therefore, it is recommended that a two-step process be considered.

1. **A private message from the club leadership** to the alumnus, or his family, expressing condolences on behalf of all area alumni. In that message, if deemed appropriate, ask the brother, or his family, if it would be okay to share basic information about the situation and a method of contact if other brothers would like to reach out.
2. In appropriate situations, where the brother or his family have provided their blessing / permission to do so, **informing the area alumni that a brother is dealing with a difficult time**, outlining what the club has done to show its support (i.e., expressed condolences / well wishes on behalf of all area alumni), along with how other alumni may communicate any private messages they may have, is a tremendous sign of support and brotherhood. In these situations, it is recommended that such information be communicated in a way that is semi-private, such as a group email, as opposed to a public announcement on social media. Again, care for the feeling of the affected brother, and his family, is of the utmost importance in these scenarios.

Welcome to the City / Area

Alumni new to an area can use support when they move to the city / area. Clubs can be especially supportive in these situations by inviting these alumni to tap into the collective knowledge of the club by attending a “Welcome to the City / Area” event. This event does not need to be any different than any other club event, except to take some time during the event to recognize these brothers and offer some words of wisdom about the city / area.

Things to Share with New Alumni

- Favorite coffee shops and restaurants.
- Areas to avoid during rush hour.
- Best service providers (e.g., dry cleaners, plumbers, electricians, etc.)
- Parks and things to do for families.

Rules for Alumni Club Success

Rule #1 – Do Not Be Concerned with Numbers

Event attendance numbers are going to fluctuate over time. Would it be great to have 30+ alumni at every event the club hosts? Absolutely, but it is not likely to happen, especially early. If there are four people or forty, remember the purpose of the club – to facilitate meaningful interactions and perpetuate lifelong friendships – which has nothing to do with numbers.

Rule #2 – Stay Consistent

Pick an operational model – annual, bi-annual, quarterly – and stick with it for a while. Regardless of the operational model a club chooses, the events must be consistent on the calendar. Some examples would be:

- Second Saturday of December, each year.
- First Thursday in October and March, each year.
- Third Tuesday in August, November, February, and May, each year.

Consistency makes it easier on the alumni in the area. They know when events are occurring because, generally, that is when those events always occur. If they know this information, then it is easier to go ahead and put it on their calendar. Even if they just “pencil it in,” that is still an implicit commitment to attending.

Rule #3 – Small Wins Lead to Victory

Do not try to do too much right out of the gate. A big “blowout” event is not likely to be very successful right off the bat. Why? A brand-new club has not built up any credibility with the area alumni. Start with reasonable expectations and then build over time.

Another example of small wins relates back to Rule #1 (Do not be concerned with numbers). If you are the type who is going to focus on numbers, no matter what, then focus on the number 1. Is there at least one (1) alumnus at the event who is new/has not been to a club event before? If “yes,” then that is a win, because that means there is at least one more brother who can connect with other alumni, bring other alumni to a future event, and enjoy the camaraderie of our Fraternity.

Rule #4 – Persevere

Calendars and availability of alumni are going to ebb and flow. Attendance at club events is going to ebb and flow. One of the worst things a club can do is become discouraged because attendance is not as high as hoped.

There is excitement that comes with new alumni clubs starting up, but new clubs have not built up any credibility, so there will be some alumni who may not attend early events because they want to see if the club is going to

sustain. Stay consistent (see Rule #2) and keep going. The numbers will come, eventually.

Rule #5 – Have a Good Time

Think about it this way, “How do friendships begin?” Typically, they begin with people enjoying their time together. If a club needs something to focus on, then focus on whether the alumni who come to events enjoy themselves. If the alumni have a good time, then two things are more likely to happen at the next event – they are more likely to:

- Come to the next event.
- Bring another alumnus with them.

Having a good time speaks directly to the purpose of alumni clubs – facilitating meaningful interactions and perpetuating friendships.

Putting It All Together

There is no exact model that ensures success for an alumni club. The purpose of this guide is to provide a direction for club operations. Ultimately, the best resource to what a club needs to do to be successful are the alumni in the area – the club’s “members.” Talk to the alumni in the area and ask them what they want to do.

- What types of events will get them to come together?
- How frequently do they want to have events?
- How do they want to receive information from the club and how often?

In the end, it is important to remember the purpose of the club:

- Facilitate meaningful interactions between Sigma Nu alumni.
- Be an opportunity for relationship building among Sigma Nu alumni.
- To perpetuate lifelong friendships.



Alumni Club Operational Models

ANNUAL MODEL

- Executive Planning Committee (at least three people)
- One event per academic year
 - Registration Process
 - Attendance list provided to the General Fraternity
- Program to include Fraternity content/information
- Event Communication Plan
 - Event “Save the Date” – 8 weeks prior to event
 - At least three reminders between “Save the Date” and event date
- PROS – Ample planning time between events; All club leaders can be focused on a single event; Consistent scheduling of event makes it easy for alumni to plan to attend from one year to the next; Well executed event becomes a highlight on the calendar of alumni in the area
- CONS – Only one event limits the depth of the connections alumni can make at the event; If it does not fit in the calendar of an alumnus, then they are unlikely to participate in the future; Limits club’s ability to engage multiple event types any given year

BI-ANNUAL MODEL

- Executive Planning Committee (at least three people)
- One event per academic term (one in the fall [July-Dec.]; one in spring [Jan.-June])
 - Registration Process for each event
 - Attendance list provided to General Fraternity for each event
- Program at one event to include General Fraternity content/information
- Event Communication Plan for each event
 - Event “Save the Date” – 8 weeks prior to event
 - At least three reminders between “Save the Date” and event date
- PROS – Sufficient planning time between events; Consistent timing of each event makes it easy for alumni to plan to attend; Allows for a broader mix of event types
- CONS – Twice the planning for club leadership; Still some limitations on club’s ability to engage some event types

Quarterly Model

- Executive Planning Committee (at least three people)
- One event per fiscal quarter
 - Q1 = July – September
 - Q2 = October – December
 - Q3 = January – March
 - Q4 = April – June
- Program at two events to include General Fraternity content/information
- Event Communication Plan for each event
 - Event “Save the Date” – 8 weeks prior to first event; next event date announced at each following event
 - At least three reminders between “Save the Date”/Announcement and event date
- PROS – Multiple event types can be planned; Allows alumni flexibility in their calendar; Consistent scheduling makes it easier for alumni to plan to attend
- CONS – Four events require significant planning, depending on the event; Leadership burnout

Event Planning: Examples & Checklist

Event Planning Timeline and Checklist

12 Months Prior to Event

- Event purpose established
- Coordination team set
- Event type (brothers only / guests welcome)
- Preferred date(s)
- Preferred venues list

9 Months Prior to Event

- Event budget finalized / set
- Communication plan under development
- Event program outlined

6 Months Prior to Event

- Venue confirmed
- Catering review begins
- Speaker / Entertainment confirmed
- Registration process review

3 Months Prior to Event

- Communication plan finalized
- Registration process finalized
- Event program confirmed
- Audio / Visual needs identified
- Save the Date announcement sent

2 Months Prior to Event

- Social media promotions begin
- First Invite / Reminder sent (6 weeks out)
- Registration opens
- Catering booked and menu selection
- Audio / Visual booked

1 Month Prior to Event

- Second Invite / Reminder sent (4 weeks out)
- Social media promotions continue
- Third Invite / Reminder sent (3 weeks out)
- Event program adjustments (if needed)
- Fourth Invite / Reminder sent (2 weeks out)
- Other Needs: nametags, decorations, etc.

1 Week Prior to Event

- Fifth Invite / Reminder sent
- Final social media promotion posted
- Catering - final food count provided
- Confirm: menu, A/V, setup time at venue

Post Event

- Thank You email sent to attendees (24-48 hours after event)
- Highlights story for alumni newsletter and General Fraternity (include attendee list to General Fraternity)
- Attendee list sent to General Fraternity (headquarters@sigmanu.org)

Event Type Examples

Social Events

- Happy hours
- Coffee meet ups
- Watch party
- Welcome party
- Wine tasting

Professional Events

- Speed Networking (think speed dating)
- Industry / Service Presentations
- Lunch & Speaker
- Maximizing Your LinkedIn Account

Family-Based Events

- Potluck Picnic
- Family / Kids Bowling
- Sporting Event
- Beach / Pool Day
- Culture Tours (museums, libraries, etc.)

Community-Focused Events

- Canned Food Drive
- Park / Road Clean Up
- Habitat for Humanity Build
- Toys for Tots



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