

WHEATON COLLEGE

2008-2009

REGIONAL HANDBOOK

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WHAT IS A REGIONAL CLUB?

Regional clubs are formed where there is a geographical concentration of alumnae/i and where common activities can be organized. Regional clubs are open to all alumnae/i, parents and friends of Wheaton College. The Alumnae/i Association strongly encourages regional clubs to reflect the diversity of its alumnae/i population in its leadership and programming efforts.

Wheaton regional clubs exist to:

- Create a Wheaton presence within a community;
- Provide opportunities within geographic regions for fellowship among alumnae/i, current students, parents and friends of the College;
- Foster a sense of association between alumnae/i and the College;
- Encourage alumnae/i of all generations to maintain contact with Wheaton and to build a sense of pride in and understanding of what Wheaton is today;
- Promote alumnae/i commitment to Wheaton's educational mission by encouraging volunteer assistance for its admission (APAC), career services (Filene Center), and fund-raising efforts (Annual Fund).

REGIONAL LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

All it takes to form a new club is one or two people who are interested in regional activities and who are willing to assume leadership responsibility in the beginning. Some clubs are kept alive by the selfless commitment of one or two volunteers. **However, to ensure that your club develops future leaders, it is important to delegate responsibilities and to include others in both the planning and implementation of events and activities.**

You may need a number of volunteers to carry out your planned activities and to effectively communicate with alumnae/i in your region. Recruiting and utilizing a range of volunteers is one of the biggest ongoing challenges for all Wheaton regional clubs. If you develop a structure that is deep at the committee level, you'll have a natural pipeline of volunteers to bring up the leadership ladder.

Regional coordinators should make every effort to identify their successors during the course of their term. It is often helpful to form a Steering Committee to help share the responsibilities and to increase the number of alumnae/i involved. The Alumnae/i Association offers the following suggestions for possible Steering Committee structures based on the experiences of past regional clubs and volunteers. The size and structure of Steering Committees will vary by region.

REGIONAL COORDINATOR

The Regional Coordinator is appointed by the staff in Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving, often in consultation with the past Coordinator, and serves a specific term as determined by the staff and regional representatives.

Responsibilities:

- Serves as the primary link between the regional club and the College
- Shares all club communications with the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving
- Completes an evaluation form after each regional club event
- Convenes and chairs committee meetings
- Coordinates activities with the APAC Chair and Filene Center Liaisons, as needed
- Attends volunteer training sessions offered by the College

ASSISTANT or CO-REGIONAL COORDINATOR

The Assistant or Co-regional Coordinator is appointed by the Regional Coordinator in consultation with the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving and succeeds the Regional Coordinator at the end of her/his term.

Responsibilities:

- Presides over meetings in the Coordinator's absence
- Assists the Coordinator in organizing and implementing all regional club events and activities
- Makes a gift to the Annual Fund that reflects her/his own resources and commitment to Wheaton as a philanthropic priority

WEBMASTER

Appointed by the Regional Chairperson and the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving.

Responsibilities:

- Maintaining the online presence for the Regional Club by encouraging alumnae/i and friends to interact and add content
- Sharing event details and highlights online, which includes written descriptions and photos, etc

FILENE CENTER LIAISONS

The appointment is made by the Filene Center Associate Director, in consultation with the Regional Coordinator and the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving.

Responsibilities:

- Collaborates with the Filene Center to address the career development needs and interests of current Wheaton students (i.e., January internships, networking, etc.)
- Coordinates responses to requests for career-related information, including alumnae/i who have offered to serve as contacts
- Makes a gift to the Annual Fund that reflects his/her own resources and commitment to Wheaton as a philanthropic priority

OTHER POSSIBLE POSITIONS

Additional opportunities for Steering Committee involvement include:

- Newsletter Editor
- Program/Events Chair
- Young Alumnae/i Activities Chair
- Secretary/Treasurer
- Photographer at events to provide photos for possible publication in the *Wheaton Quarterly*, in club newsletters, or on club Web sites

WAYS TO INCREASE YOUNG ALUMNAE/I INVOLVEMENT

Young alumnae/i (generally considered to be those who have graduated within the last decade) have been identified as a critical growth population by the Alumnae/i Association. Alums who have graduated since 1984 represent one-half of the current alumnae/i population. Therefore, it is critical to plan events and activities that appeal to this key demographic.

Here are some suggestions for ways to increase the interest and involvement of young alumnae/i in Regional Club activities:

- Appoint a Young Alumnae/i Activities Chair to the Steering Committee
- Offer a small admission reduction to young alumnae/i, or plan free events
- Create and distribute a survey to poll young alumnae/i and plan events best suited to their interests (online surveys work best for this population)
- Advertise Regional Club events by e-mail or on your club's Web page
- Host an annual "Welcome to the Region" event for recent graduates and other alumnae/i new to the region
- Involve young alumnae/i in the planning, marketing and implementation of events (word-of-mouth and personal invitations will increase overall attendance)
- Create eye-catching invitations

Some of the more successful young alumnae/i events include:

- Happy hours (or other strictly social events)
- Career or networking events
- Sporting events or outdoor activities
- Community service opportunities
- Events related to current "hot topics" with popular faculty speaker
- Events combined with young alumnae/i from other colleges

NEWSLETTERS and WEB PAGES

In addition to invitations and event announcements, a newsletter and Web pages are great ways to communicate with your regional constituency. Content and length varies by club, as well as by season, but a typical newsletter or Web page may contain:

- Upcoming calendar of events
- Articles about recent events
- Profiles of area alumnae/i
- News from the college
- Information about volunteering for your regional club or Wheaton College
- Scholarship fund raising plans or community service efforts
- Steering Committee member contact information
- Alumnae/i honors, awards, and achievements
- Regional statistics
- General information about your region

See sample Web pages on the following pages.

To see more examples of class and club Web pages, go to www.wheatoncollege.edu/alum/ and click on **Class and club pages**.

The Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving supports regional clubs by providing address labels and postage for **up to three** regional mailings per year. The staff appreciates the opportunity to review these mailings prior to production for the correct spelling of alumnae/i names and accuracy of class affiliations, as well as for editing if necessary.

Steps to follow to ensure the timely production and distribution of your regional newsletter:

1. Please plan ahead and allow the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving at least two weeks to edit, copy, prepare and mail all invitations or newsletters.
2. Please e-mail as an attachment or fax a draft copy of any invitation or newsletter to the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving at::

hcorbett@wheatoncollege.edu or (508) 286-8268

3. All camera-ready copies may be sent to the Office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving for reproduction and mailing.

THE ROLE OF THE OFFICE OF ALUMNAE/I RELATIONS & ANNUAL GIVING

The office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving (ARAG) coordinates and supports both on- and off- campus events and activities of Wheaton alumnae/i, parents and friends. The ARAG staff serves as the liaison between the regional clubs and the Alumnae/i Association and works directly with the National Regional Chair.

The staff in Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving is committed to supporting all Wheaton regional clubs and can assist them in the following efforts:

- Organizing regional steering committees and planning regional events;
- Identifying representatives from the College community to participate in regional programs;
- Visiting regional associations and communicating regularly with regional volunteers;
- Maintaining a database of alumnae/i addresses and biographical information;
- Organizing on-campus workshops during Alumnae/i Leadership Conference/Homecoming weekend to provide training and guidance for regional volunteers;
- Providing downloads or computer lists of alumnae/i by zip code;
Providing mailing labels of alumnae/i by zip code;
- Covering the cost of 2-3 regional club mailings per year (newsletter, invitation or flyer), depending on budget availability and the size of the club's constituency;
- Providing advice and ideas at any time.

As a member of the Alumnae/i Board of Directors, the **National Regional Chair** serves to provide the formal connection between the regional associations and the Alumnae/i Association. The National Chair:

- Serves a three-year term on the Alumnae/i Board of Directors;
- Updates the Alumnae/i Board on the progress and plans of Wheaton's regional associations;
- Serves as the liaison between regional volunteers and the College through post-event debriefings and regular communications;
- Encourages and supports regional volunteers to share their programming successes through alumnae/i publications, including the *Wheaton Quarterly* and alumnae/i website

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PLANNING A CLUB EVENT

Volunteers should organize an annual *event planning meeting* at the start of each year to recruit and involve new volunteers, and to gain a sense of your goals as you prepare to host the Wheaton community. These goals are to help you manage the club on a day-to-day basis. Establishing clearly-defined goals upfront will help the Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving Office plan ahead to meet the needs of your club. Without these goals, your club will most likely struggle to determine priorities, set budgets, and follow through on plans.

In the earliest stages of your event planning, answer these three main questions:

1. WHO do we want to attend the event?
2. WHAT is the nature of the event?
3. WHERE should it be held?

REASONS ALUMS GIVE AS TO WHY THEY ATTEND CLUB EVENTS:

- Hear first hand from Wheaton faculty, staff and students
- Keep in touch with Wheaton College
- Meet new friends and renew old friendships
- Participate in social, educational, cultural, or community service events and activities
- Provide scholarship money for the Alumnae/i Scholarship Fund
- Enjoy “behind the scenes” tours at local sites

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING CLUB ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS:

- Determine the purpose and goal of each program—a Wheaton presence is essential!
- Vary the types of events you plan (professional, social, civic, cultural, etc.) and the audience you’re trying to reach (new students, young alumnae/i, families, etc.)
- Focus on the quality—not the quantity---of your events
- Analyze the best time of year, time and day of week, and location of events
- Study the interests and demographics of alumnae/i in your area. Are you offering the types of programs your membership will want to attend?
- Provide a Wheaton presence with the Wheaton banner, nametags, speakers, etc.
- Review the strengths and weaknesses of last year’s programs. Keep in mind the feedback you received from your members.
- Thorough planning is essential to successful events.

Programming Ideas:

- Faculty/staff speaker
- Career/networking programs
- Event highlighting the accomplishment(s) of Wheaton alumnae/i who reside in the region
- Reception at a local museum or gallery (w/faculty/alum speaker), or other arts/entertainment activities (theatre, music, etc.)
- Athletic events or outdoor activities
- Wine-tasting event at a local winery or at the home of an alumna/us, or beer-tasting event at local micro-brewery
- Community service projects
- Summer send-offs or January reception for alums and current students

ORGANIZING A CLUB EVENT

A Wheaton club event is an opportunity to have fun, meet people in the community, learn about interesting subjects, and show support for the college. Although organizing an event takes some work, it should not be a formidable undertaking. It is also one of the best ways to develop leadership skills and can be used as a “rite of passage” for movement up the leadership ladder.

Successful club events will reflect the interests of club constituents and the general character of the club’s surrounding city or geographic area. **Ideally, club leaders should meet in late spring/early summer to plan the following year’s program of events and then announce it in advance (i.e., late summer/early fall), so that alumnae/i can plan to attend.**

As part of your planning:

- Identify dates for traditional events, such as a summer send-off, the club’s “signature” event, a holiday gathering, a spring faculty event with admitted students, etc.
- Review the strengths and weaknesses of the prior year’s program to avoid repeating events that were unsuccessful.
- Identify a chair or co-chairs for each event, and team experienced volunteers with those less experienced.

Your regional staff contact in the office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving can help your club with:

- Event ideas
- Location and planning tips
- Attendance strategies
- Succession planning
- Advice and consultation on club requirements
- Mailing procedures and labels
- Faculty and administrators as speakers
- Expenses for faculty and administrative speakers, including transportation costs, lodging, and meals (once per year)

****BEFORE THE EVENT****

Deciding on a date, time, place, and price for your event early.

It can take longer than expected to plan an event and find an appropriate, available meeting site—two or three months is not unusual. You will need to discuss the event's cost with other members of your committee. If you would like to engage a college speaker for your event, you will need to initiate a request to the Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving staff as soon as possible—ideally no later than three to four months prior to the desired date. Also, you'll want to obtain biographical details (education, work history, hobbies, etc.) on the speaker well before your event. All of this information should go into your event announcement.

Publicize it. Try these simple ideas to draw larger audiences to your events:

- Use an e-mail list to announce events and to send reminders
- Use a club Web page to announce events (club Web pages are hosted by the Alumnae/i Association on the Wheaton server. See page 21 for more.)
- Prepare a schedule of upcoming events; mail it in advance and also distribute it at each event
- Feature a local alumna/us who is a recognized leader in his or her field
- Involve a member of the Wheaton faculty or a senior administrator, and choose a current topic of national or world importance
- Plan activities with other university/college clubs, or open an event to the public

Establish a back-planning calendar:

Once you've set a date for the event, create a planning calendar and "to do list" in reverse chronological order, beginning from the event date. In general, you will need 10-14 weeks to plan a successful event. (This could be longer for a special event or if a speaker is involved.)

Here is a sample calendar:

- Event date
- Final count due to venue 3-5 days prior to event date
- RSVP deadline 3-5 days prior to final count due date
- Invitations received 4-5 weeks prior to RSVP deadline (allows people time to consider the event, clear their calendars, and respond by the deadline)
- Mail date 1 week prior to desired receipt date
- Information gathering 1-2 weeks prior to printing
- Printing/ mailing procedures 2 weeks prior to mailing

CREATING AND SENDING YOUR EVENT ANNOUNCEMENT

Create an invitation or announcement that will **SELL YOUR EVENT**. The announcement is your big chance to make your event attractive to prospective attendees. Be creative, as well as informative.

Stress the event's benefits. Is it educational, informative, relaxing, thought-provoking, a chance to make new friends or broaden horizons? Will it be held at a special location?

Think of your audience. Why would the event be of interest to a young or a more senior alum? Is the event aimed at families or individuals? Many Wheaton alumnae/i change careers or interests after only a few years, so broader appeal is often better than a narrow focus.

Graphics—photos or artwork—also help sell your event.

- **Use electronic/new media whenever possible**

The following information should be included in **EVERY** announcement:

- **TITLE**—Make it catchy to capture people's interest.
- **WHAT**—If it is not self-explanatory, write a brief description of the event and its benefits.
- **WHERE**—Give the address of the event's location, including specific room, if known. A small map can be helpful. In some cases, there is not enough space for detailed instructions and you will want to send follow-up directions or a map to people who sign up.
- **PRICE**—Listed price should include all costs. Consider a young alumnae/i discount, if possible.
- **RSVP**—Provide a deadline for response. If you will need to send follow-up information (e.g., a map or tickets), ask registrants to include a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE) with their response. This is for your convenience, and it keeps costs down. Don't forget to include the mailing address.
- **CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**—Include your name, class year, work and/or home phone numbers.

LOCATION

Be creative when selecting a location for your event. Consider using a location that is not typically accessible to the general public. People enjoy going somewhere they haven't been before, or where they normally couldn't go on their own. Consider using a facility that already has entertainment or a focus built into it, such as a winery, museum, aquarium, historic site, performing arts facility, or culinary academy. Check to see if any of your committee members or alumnae/i constituents belong to private clubs or have access to any unique facilities through their businesses. You might be surprised at the wealth of resources in your own backyard! Keep track of suitable, interesting sites/venues for future events. Be certain to determine all costs involved when using any facility, and ask for a written confirmation of all agreements. If the event involves a speaker or speaking program, ensure that the room is private and away from outside noise.

ATTENDANCE

If your attendance numbers seem low, **phone calling and eblasts** are effective ways to encourage people to attend. Set up a phone tree with members of your committee. Sometimes alumnae/i just need a little encouragement or a reminder of an upcoming program.

If you are having attendance problems consistently, consider the types and suitability of events you are planning. Do your events appeal to couples, when you have lots of families or singles in your group? Are all events held in one part of your regional area? Are your programs too expensive? Are your invitations arriving five to six weeks in advance of your programs to give alumnae/i adequate notice? Brainstorming with your committee might give you ideas, or **you might use email to survey your members about their interests**. A sample survey appears elsewhere in this handbook. (See **Appendix C** for survey and other resources.)

Designate a “hospitality” committee or person to greet new members and introduce them to others at your events. This will make participants feel welcome, and they’ll be more likely to attend future events.

Keep track of contact information for everyone who signs up for your event. You may have to contact them in the event of a cancellation or a last-minute change in time or place.

DURING THE EVENT

Have someone welcome attendees as they arrive, record their names (a sign-in sheet will suffice) and confirm payment. Have membership information/forms available to recruit new volunteers or to solicit event ideas. Provide nametags and pens. The College can provide Wheaton nametags.

If you are having a speaker, determine who will host the speaker and introduce her/him to various guests.

Before the presentation, warmly introduce the speaker/host to the audience. (Ask the speaker for information about him/herself in the weeks before the event. Usually, a few highlights from the speaker’s biography, in addition to some informal comments that relate the speaker or topic to the group, are better than an exhaustive narrative of the speaker’s history.)

After the talk, leave about 20 minutes for questions and answers, but end the session earlier if questions taper off or the hour is late. (Don’t embarrass the speaker by making him or her do it.)

Finally, thank the speaker on behalf of the club, and consider presenting a gift or token of appreciation. Don't forget to introduce Wheaton staff if they are present, and offer them the opportunity to say a few words.

Take photographs to include in your club newsletter, to post on your club's Web site, or to advertise the event again in the future.

Thank other volunteers, and announce future activities.

AFTER THE EVENT

Send the Secretary/Treasurer all checks, expense invoices/receipts, and a note with the following information: name of event, number of attendees, total income received, number of checks enclosed, and itemized expenses.

Send follow-up letters of thanks to your guest speaker/host and others; one of your or the Club's future activities may depend upon their goodwill.

Send the list of attendees to the appropriate committee member and to your staff contact in the office of Alumnae/i Relations & Annual Giving for future reference. Attendee lists represent a potential pool of volunteers and future leaders, and they also highlight the popularity of various events.

Update your staff contact on details of the event, including the event name, number of attendees, how the speaker was received, and who served as the contact for the event. Providing your leadership with the details as you go will help them to compile data at the end of the year for annual reporting. (See **Appendix B** for a sample evaluation form.)

One Final Suggestion

Keep detailed records about all aspects of your event. Good, accurate records not only reduce last-minute uncertainties and problems, but also provide valuable information for the chair of the next event. Get your committee together for a post-event evaluation and discuss what worked, what didn't work, and what you might do differently the next time. Good, consistent planning and evaluation will result in top-quality, successful events time and time again.

Sample Calendar of Events

SUMMER:

- Steering Committee meeting – Set goals/establish calendar of events

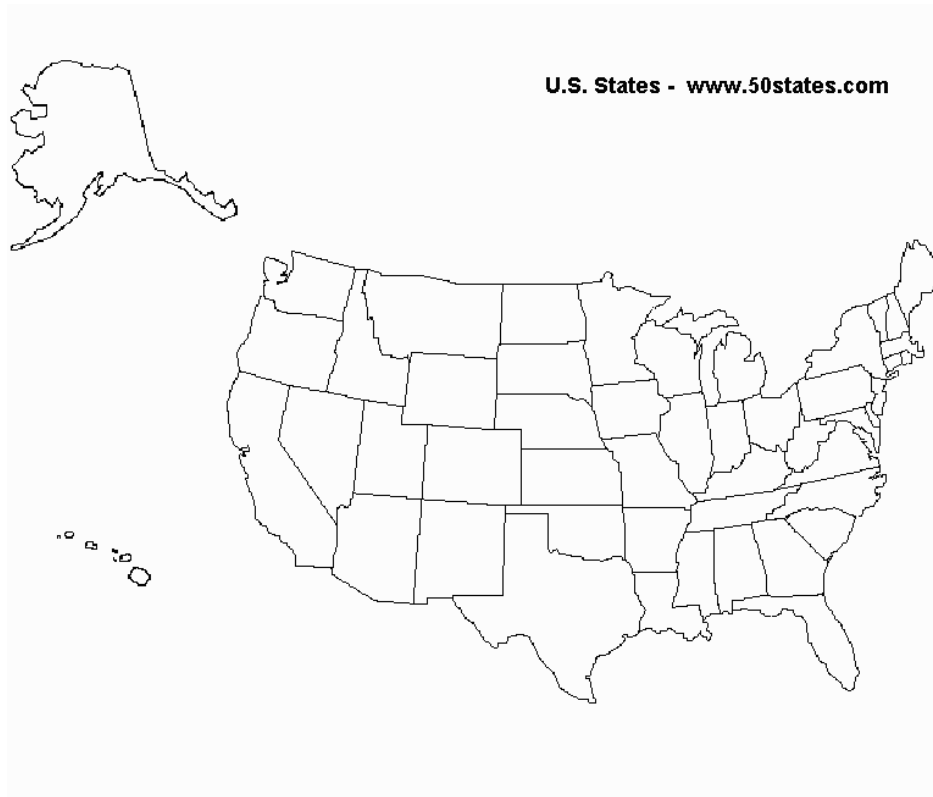
- Summer send-off for new and returning students, their families and alumnae/i to welcome first-year students to Wheaton

FALL/WINTER:

- Young alumnae/i event—monthly Happy Hours begin
- All–alumnae/i event—faculty lecture at Museum of Fine Arts
- Family event—apple picking

SPRING:

- All alumnae/i event—Boston Red Sox game
- All alumnae/i event—community service project
- Steering Committee Meeting—review events of the past year



Wheaton Clubs and Regional Associations on the Map!

SF/Bay Area CA = 402

Los Angeles/Orange County CA = 274

San Diego CA = 60

Denver CO = 127

New Haven/East Shore CT = 433

Hartford CT = 352

Fairfield County CT = 402

Washington DC = 569

Southeastern FL = 337

Atlanta GA = 98

Chicago IL = 197

Portland ME = 586

Baltimore MD = 319 (also metro DC = 175) = **Total 494**

Boston = **Total 3866**

Cape Cod MA = **360**

Lexington/Winchester MA = **114**

St. Louis MO = **39**

SE New Hampshire = **407**

Princeton NJ = **171**

New Mexico (Albuquerque/Santa Fe) = **33**

New York City & Suburbs **Total = 1623**

Westchester County NY = **212**

Rochester NY = **43**

North Carolina Triangle = **56**

Cleveland OH = **39**

Cleveland/Akron = **53**

Philadelphia PA **Total = 393**

Pittsburgh PA (Wheeling/Morgantown WV) = **74**

Dallas/Fort Worth TX = **76**

Seattle WA = **132**

Plus the states of:

New Hampshire = **526**

New Jersey = **503**

Oregon = **97**

Vermont = **244** (and sometimes NH = **68**) **Total = 312**

Rhode Island = **532**