Table of Contents

Affinity Chapters Overview

What is an Alumni Affinity Chapter? ................................................................. 4
How to Start an Alumni Affinity Chapter ...................................................... 5
Recommended Chapter Leadership Structure ............................................. 6
Partnership with the Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) ......................... 9
Interaction with Current Students .............................................................. 10

Event Procedures

Planning an Event and Event Ideas ............................................................. 11
Timeline for Planning an Event ................................................................. 12

Guidelines and Procedures on Marketing

Email and E-Newsletter Guidelines ............................................................. 13
Chapter Websites ..................................................................................... 14
Social Media............................................................................................. 15
Updating Contact Information ................................................................. 15

Finances ..................................................................................................... 16

Forms ......................................................................................................... 17
Affinity Chapters Overview

What is an Alumni Affinity Chapter?

Fordham University’s affinity chapter program has been designed by the Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) to strengthen the relationship between alumni and the life of the University through association with specific clubs, interests, and careers. The affinity chapter network provides opportunities for alumni to participate in a variety of programs that encourage professional development, social networking, and constructive engagement with current students. Chapter goals can include any or all of the ideas below.

For a full list of chapters, visit the affinity chapter homepage at forever.fordham.edu/affinity.

Affinity Chapter Goals

- Keep Fordham alumni engaged with the life of the University through regular communication and social and educational events.
- Enhance the education of current students through meaningful mentorship as well as internships and job opportunities.
- Share pride in Fordham University.
- Represent the ideals of the Jesuit education received at Fordham University.
- Facilitate networking among alumni.
- Participate in community service.
- Keep Fordham University informed of alumni accomplishments.
- Provide a mechanism for leadership development and continuity within Fordham University chapters.
- Encourage financial support for the University when appropriate.
How to Start an Alumni Affinity Chapter

Those interested in starting and leading a chapter should gather a minimum of four alumni who are proud of Fordham; recognize the need and value of an alumni affinity chapter; and have the energy, determination, and time to commit to this project as the original leadership team. Proposed chapters should have at least 50 to 100 alumni associated with the specific interest group.

Leadership Development

- Once a chapter is proposed, OAR will reach out to the alumni community about the possibility of starting a new chapter. The leadership team will assist in crafting an email or a survey that targets their proposed chapter population.
- OAR will create a webpage on the Fordham website for the new chapter and post contact information and a call for volunteers.
- OAR and the leadership team will compile feedback from interested alumni.
- The leadership team, with the assistance of OAR, will use this feedback to recruit additional chapter volunteers.

Kickoff Event

- The leadership team will plan a kickoff event.
- The leadership team (with assistance from OAR, as needed) will be responsible for spearheading the event logistics, including securing a venue, determining cost and registration fees (if relevant), creating and emailing an invitation, and posting details on the chapter's webpage.
- Following the event, the leadership team will provide OAR with a recap of the event and will follow up with attendees to continue to identify additional alumni to help run the chapter.

Moving Forward

- The leadership team will continue to work with engaged alumni who are interested in improving and maintaining the chapter in order to build a chapter board.
- The chapter board will identify goals and develop a 12-to-18-month plan for events and communications.
• The chapter must hold one kickoff event and at least two additional events that are well organized, well communicated, and well attended.

• Regular chapter events must be run entirely by the alumni chapter with minimal support from OAR.

• There must be continuous and effective communication among the chapter leaders and with OAR.

• The chapter must be self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

Recommended Chapter Leadership Structure

We recognize that each alumni chapter is a unique group with different goals and needs. Depending on the size and expected activity of the chapter, formal roles including a president, vice president, communications chair, development chair, and special events coordinator(s) may be appropriate. For smaller chapters, a four-person leadership team with one person serving as the primary contact with OAR may suffice. Regardless of the shape of a chapter’s leadership, the structure should be designed in a way that highlights chapter members’ strengths and ensures a balance workload.

As an alumni chapter grows and gains volunteers, OAR will work with the leaders on best practices appropriate for their specific chapter. A key factor in leadership is planning for the future—the most successful affinity chapters are those that work strategically and for the long term, both in terms of staffing and event planning.

*Please see the next page for examples of officer roles and responsibilities.*
Example Chapter Officer Structure

President

- Serve as the primary contact liaison between OAR and the affinity chapter.
- Assist in developing the calendar of events.
- Assist in the planning of events that reach a variety of audiences and further the interest of the chapter.
- Monitor the implementation of the planned calendar of events; delegate responsibilities, appoint committees, and follow up with OAR.
- Work with OAR to appoint and train an informed and enthusiastic successor to ensure the continuation of the chapter.

Vice President

- Support the president and all chapter efforts.

Special Events Coordinator

- Work with the chapter president and OAR to plan a calendar of events for the year.
- Work with the communications chair to create promotional emails, flyers, webpage content, etc.
- Work with OAR to create invitations.
- Provide OAR with a copy of the final attendance sheet, a post-event report, suggestions/feedback for future events, and photos.

Communications Chair

- Inform OAR of any information that should be updated on the chapter webpage.
- Communicate with chapter members and interested alumni via email and event mailings.
- Manage the chapter’s social media platforms (if applicable).
- Devise alternate ways to promote upcoming events and activities.
Identifying Volunteers

- Chapter leaders should empower other alumni to take on volunteer roles in planning and staffing events.
- Always ask! People are more willing to volunteer for a project if someone asks them personally.
- Keep an ongoing file of possible chapter volunteers and continually solicit new names from members.
- Announce that new volunteers are needed and welcome in chapter marketing and at chapter events.
- Contact previous event attendees, or plan special events with the goal of recruiting new volunteers.
- Assign each board member or volunteer the task of recruiting at least one new volunteer each year.
- Remind potential alumni volunteers of the many benefits of volunteering.

Benefits of Volunteering

- Meet alumni from around the world and develop lasting friendships.
- Help shape current and future life at Fordham University.
- Gain or enhance your leadership, communication, problem-solving, consensus, and team-building skills—skills that can help your personal development and your professional career.
- Get in touch with current Fordham students and draw on their energy, enthusiasm, and fresh ideas.
- Build your career skills as you are challenged with new roles or opportunities.
- Get satisfaction from giving back and making a real difference.
- Have lots of fun!
Partnership with the Office of Alumni Relations (OAR)

Effective volunteer leadership depends on a strong and supportive relationship with OAR. Each partner in this relationship has specific responsibilities for the success of the alumni chapter.

OAR Supports Alumni Chapters

- Provide staff assistance and advice for planning events and recruiting alumni.
- Communicate with chapter leaders on a regular basis.
- Assist in finding a Fordham representative to speak at your events (when appropriate).
- Send regular newsletters and event invitations via email to all alumni in the chapter.
- Provide a webpage for each chapter and post events and updates on the chapter webpage as requested.
- Provide event supplies (i.e., name tags, attendance sheets, publications, etc.).

Alumni Chapters Help OAR

- Provide opportunities for alumni to strengthen their commitment to and support of the University.
- Create and execute a diverse series of events.
- Provide web content and invitation copy in a timely manner.
- Identify and recruit enthusiastic alumni to help the chapter plan events.
- Provide updated lists of chapter leaders and members.
- Submit an annual report to OAR.
Interaction with Current Students

Affinity chapters are encouraged to work with current students in order to keep themselves informed of current developments on campus.

- Affinity chapter leaders should work with OAR to get contact information for current student leaders.
- Events involving both students and alumni must be approved by OAR and the Office of Student Involvement.
- Alumni should remember that many undergraduates are under 21 and cannot legally consume alcohol.

When working with current students, we suggest the following events:

- Mentor the students in a panel or networking format.
- Watch the students' work in action (i.e., see a Mimes and Mummers play, go to a Ramblers concert, etc.).
- Invite students to a showcase of alumni talent in New York City.
- Plan a service event around one or both of the campuses.
- Invite a group of students to tour your office and plan a Q&A session with colleagues.
- Take a group of students out to dinner on Arthur Avenue.
- Join a group of current students at a Fordham sporting event.
**Event Procedures**

**Planning an Event and Event Ideas**

In planning chapter events, keep in mind the fundamental questions:

- Who is this event for? Is it for all members? Is it for young alumni?
- Why is this event being held? Is it for social, networking, or spiritual reasons?
- What are the goals for this event?
- When is the best time to hold the event?
- Where is the ideal location?

**Some Successful Event Ideas**

- Fall: Athletic events, career networking opportunities, holiday celebrations
- Spring: Communion Mass and brunch, community service projects
- Summer: Family-friendly picnics, outdoor activities

**Event Planning for the Long Term**

- Affinity chapter presidents and their boards should be mindful to plan events that are substantive and put Fordham’s best foot forward.
- Events that are too dependent on the contributions of one person are difficult to replicate; affinity chapter boards should be mindful to plan events that are professional but that do not set an impossible bar for future affinity chapter leaders to cross.
- Events should be planned to be as welcoming as possible. Many attendees will not have been back to Fordham for a long time, and the affinity chapter board should take special care to engage with our most disconnected alumni. If they feel welcome, they’ll come back again and again!
Timeline for Planning an Event

10 to 12 Weeks Before the Event

• Discuss the proposed event with your chapter liaison.
• Finalize plans for the event (date, time, place, cost, RSVP contact, information contact, event description).
• Make billing or deposit arrangements with the venue and caterer (if necessary).

6 to 7 Weeks Before the Event

• Work with OAR to create a registration webpage and to design and send electronic invitations.
• Share information across social media.

3 Weeks Before the Event

• Count RSVPs and update the caterer/venue and OAR. If the number is less than anticipated, OAR can send a reminder email and volunteers can make personal calls to other alumni.
• Recruit volunteers to help on the day of the event.

2 Weeks Before the Event

• Request materials from OAR (e.g., nametags, signs, registration list, etc.).

5 Days Before the Event

• Confirm details with caterer.

Day of the Event

• Arrive an hour early to check the room, set up A/V equipment and the registration table, etc.
• Check with the caterer/venue to ensure no last-minute changes are needed.
• If payments are being taken at the door, be sure to have cash to make change.
• Volunteers working registration should check off attendees who registered in advance and add names of any walk-in guests to ensure an accurate record of attendance.
• Make the event as Fordham as possible. Decorate with maroon and white, use the Fordham masthead/logo, and display Fordham photographs or other memorabilia.
Guidelines and Procedures on Marketing

Email and E-Newsletter Guidelines

OAR is able to send broadcast emails and e-newsletters to alumni in your affinity chapter. There are some alumni who have not yet given the University their email addresses and a small number of others have requested that they not be contacted by email. However this approach is a fast and effective way of reaching alumni with news and events, and your liaison can share current samples of both emails and e-newsletters with you.

When considering an email or e-newsletter, please keep in mind that OAR needs 10 business days advance notice to build, schedule, and send an email blast. In an effort to not send multiple emails to alumni in a few days’ time, the best send date may be determined based on other emails that have already been scheduled.

When to Consider Sending an Email Blast

- When marketing a single event, including save the date and reminder messages
- When announcing chapter elections
- When encouraging new membership

When to Consider an E-Newsletter

- When updating your chapter on multiple activities, including past and upcoming events
- When highlighting chapter members or to welcome new leadership
- When asking for volunteers to serve as mentors or speakers for chapter events
- When welcoming new leaders
Submitting Text for an E-Newsletter or Email Blast

- Remember that event listings in your newsletter or email should include title, date, time, location, registration link, and a short description (maximum 50 words). OAR can then link to the event calendar listing for more information.

- Please note that OAR sends out an e-newsletter to all Fordham alumni on the first Tuesday of each month.

- Try to keep your content as brief and succinct as possible. Remember that people are more likely to read an entire email if it’s short and sweet.

All emails and e-newsletters must be sent out through OAR in order to ensure we comply with the CAN-SPAM act of 2003, a set of rules for email marketing. More information on CAN-SPAM can be found at ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemaking-regulatory-reform-proceedings/can-spam-rule.

Chapter Websites

Each chapter is given a webpage under the affinity chapter section of the University’s alumni website. Sites are used to recruit new members, advertise upcoming events, promote social media pages, highlight past events, and post photos. OAR continually updates these pages based on information provided by the chapters. All events can be listed here.

- OAR is in charge of posting content and photos to these pages. Chapter leaders should be the point people for these materials and then forward the content to OAR.

- Chapter leaders should be aware that it might take up to three days to post the information (depending on how much content is being updated and on staff availability).

- Chapters are encouraged to use only the University’s alumni website and chapter Facebook pages.
Social Media

Facebook is a great tool for chapters to market upcoming events and chapter news, and chapter leaders are encouraged to create Facebook groups.

- Chapter leaders are responsible for updating their Facebook group.
- Share your Facebook group with OAR so that it can be added to your chapter’s webpage.
- For more information on how to create and manage a Facebook group, visit facebook.com/groups.
- You can also look at the Fordham University Alumni page at facebook.com/fordhamalumni for an example of how the University manages its social media presence.
- Chapters are encouraged to use only the University’s alumni website and chapter Facebook groups.

While chapter leaders aren’t actively discouraged from venturing out into other social media, bear in mind that the quality of your efforts will suffer if spread too thinly over multiple platforms. Facebook and other social media platforms aren’t magic; they require frequent postings and quick responses to attract and hold an audience.

Updating Contact Information

New members or members with a change of address should be encouraged to log in to forever.fordham.edu and visit their directory profile to update their contact information. Chapter leaders may collect this information, but they must also share it with OAR so that we can update our database. OAR receives updates on a daily basis, so make sure to request new lists from OAR frequently.
Finances

Chapter Event Costs

Chapter events need to be conducted on a cost-recovery basis. Event costs should be estimated as accurately as possible. You may add a small amount to the actual cost of an event to cover unexpected expenses.

OAR may periodically be able to assist with a chapter’s key event by reserving space, securing a Fordham speaker, or sharing the costs. Please speak with your liaison for additional information.

Fordham Affinity Chapter Events

If an affinity chapter is hosting a Fordham-sponsored event, OAR will take care of the costs and provide a representative to speak on behalf of the University.

Chapter Dues and Bank Accounts

OAR discourages all chapters from charging dues or opening bank accounts. OAR can work with your group to provide a good experience for your members without charging them for their membership. Event registration fees should be handled through OAR’s online registration system for cost-neutral events, and any fees or donations paid by check should be made out to Fordham University and sent to OAR.

Avoiding Additional Expenses

By using the online resources and electronic marketing provided by OAR, many chapter costs are eliminated. Please use email as a preferred method of correspondence, and collect RSVPs for chapter events online or via email. Post office boxes are no longer necessary, and their costs cannot be reimbursed by OAR.

Sponsorship

If your chapter is hosting an event or sending out an additional mailing and needs extra funding, consider asking a local business to become a sponsor. All sponsors must be approved by OAR before moving forward. The sponsor’s logo and/or name can be added to the invitation, webpage, etc., in exchange for a donation. Fordham requires approval of any item that uses Fordham’s logo along with a sponsor’s logo prior to printing or manufacturing.

If an event’s expenses will be underwritten, please notify OAR in advance so that the appropriate party or parties can be given gift credit.
Forms

Event Planning Form

Please complete a copy of the form below with preliminary information on your upcoming event. This will help us to publicize the event in the most effective manner possible. Don’t worry if you are not able to complete all sections. The Office of Alumni Relations (OAR) will contact you about the next steps.

This form should be submitted 10 weeks before your event.

1. Sponsoring Chapter: ____________________________________________________

2. Event Date: ___________________________________________________________

3. Event Time: __________________________________________________________

4. Event Location: ________________________________________________________

5. Admission Fee(s): ______________________________________________________

6. RSVP Contact: ________________________________________________________

   RSVP Method: _________________________________________________________

   RSVP Deadline: ________________________________________________________

7. Event Description: _____________________________________________________

8. Desired Communication (please check all that apply):

   □ Save the Date Email       □ Reminder Email       □ Online Registration Page

   □ E-Newsletter            □ Website Calendar Listing

10. Primary Event Contact (if different from RSVP contact):

   ____________________________________________________________
Affinity Chapter Annual Report

An annual report is requested to provide updated information to Fordham University’s Office of Alumni Relations (OAR). The information provided should cover the 12-month period between July 1 and June 30 of the current fiscal year.

Chapter Name: ____________________________________________  Date:__________

Person Completing Report: ____________________________________________________

Title: ______________________________________________________________________

Chapter Profile (please list the names and titles of your chapter leaders or board members):

___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________
___________________________________   _________________________________

Please describe the transition plan (if any) in place for your chapter leadership.

__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
Please describe the strength of the chapter. Are there specific challenges you are facing?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Chapter Activities

Please list each event your chapter held during the past year (July 1–June 30).

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<th>Event</th>
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Which event/events did you feel was/were the most successful? Why?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

How did you market the event(s)?

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________
Please use the space below for any questions, comments, suggestions, or concerns that you would like to share.

__________________________________________________________________________
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__________________________________________________________________________
Signature: ________________________________________________ Date: _____________

Please return a copy of this form to the Office of Alumni Relations.

Fax: 212-636-7855

Email: alumnioffice@fordham.edu

Mail:
Fordham University
Joseph A. Martino Hall
45 Columbus Ave., 8th Floor
New York, NY 10023