



Alumni Clubs Event Programming Guide *Revised 6/6/2011*

A. Important Event Planning Principles and Practices

A little bit of advance thought will go a long way toward ensuring events are successful. The following questions and answers reveal practices and principles to consider when planning regional club activities:

WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE?

- Is an event aimed for just alumni or also for families, current students, prospective students and/or friends? Within any of these categories, there are a variety of interests to be served.
- It's acceptable to plan activities that may have more appeal to a certain demographic (e.g. families, young alumni, prospective students, etc.), so long as other events are planned that attract a different demographic and/or a wider array of Blue Hens.

WHEN SHOULD EVENTS BE HELD?

- Think about what days and times will provide the greatest opportunity for club events, recognizing that different constituencies will be more or less likely to attend functions at certain times.
- Varying the time slots for events over time can ensure that many types of schedules are accommodated.
- Club boards should spread events out over time as much as possible.

WHERE SHOULD EVENTS BE HELD?

- Take into consideration the demographic distribution of the local alumni population (i.e., if most people work downtown and live in the suburbs, then events on the weekend might be best located in the suburbs), as well as the particular draw a certain venue may have (i.e., holding an event in a trendy new location or a historic site may draw more people than a hotel meeting room).
- Varying venues both prevents alumni from becoming tired of one location and encourages people from different parts of the region to participate.
- Look to free or low-cost locations whenever possible, such as alumni homes, public parks, civic facilities, and spaces that Blue Hens can make available through their own connections (e.g., corporate conference rooms). Whenever possible, coordinate gatherings to support University signature events (Reunion Weekend and Homecoming).
- Club board members are encouraged to hold events in locations that are accessible to those in wheelchairs and/or with limited mobility.

HOW MUCH SHOULD EVENTS COST TO ATTEND?

- Consider how much the event costs to run (see below), what the refund policy will be (if any), and perhaps most importantly, what alumni will be willing to pay.
- People are more likely to attend if they feel the price reflects the opportunity provided and constitutes a good deal.
- Set event fees at multiple price points throughout the year, so that people with different budgets can attend an occasional event without creating financial hardship.

HOW MUCH SHOULD EVENTS COST TO RUN?

- Events should generally break even or achieve a small surplus between the cost of running the function and the income gathered from attendance fees.
- A few other notes related to event costs:
 - **Non-Paying Guests** – Include the expenses of non-paying guests—such as featured speakers—in the event budget.
 - **Cash Bar** – Many clubs do not host cocktails for their events, only providing non-alcoholic beverages as part of the attendance fee.
 - **Require RSVPs** – Asking alumni to pay in advance (and specifying there will be no refunds after a certain date) will make certain the club can provide an accurate count to venues and caterers, as well as ensure all expenses are covered.

HOW MANY PEOPLE SHOULD ATTEND?

- The goal is usually to have as large an attendance as possible and as is fitting at events; but be realistic in setting attendance goals that take into account past trends.

HOW SHOULD EVENTS BE PROMOTED?

- Advertise events through a variety of communication mediums. Other mechanisms to promote activities include:
 - Mention upcoming gatherings at each event and, if possible, have flyers or copies.
 - Always send information to the Office of the Alumni Relations; this ensures events will be included on the Alumni Relations website calendar of events, Alumni Relations Facebook page, UDaily, Messenger, UD Twitter account, etc.

WHAT IS A REASONABLE EVENT PROMOTION TIMELINE?

- Spread the word about events as far in advance as possible, to allow people to make plans to attend.
- For major functions, at least 4 to 6 weeks is a fairly standard practice.

HOW SHOULD EVENTS BE MANAGED?

- It is the responsibility of the clubs to manage the event in its entirety. In some instances someone from the AR office will be in attendance, etc. All board members or regional representatives are expected to attend all events to provide ample networking and engagement opportunities.
 - **Registration Table** – Have a registration table for attendees to check in and/or pay and receive a nametag (Alumni Relations Office can supply nametags).
 - **A/V Check** – Review the available equipment (and the fees involved in using the equipment) and be sure everyone is clear about who will provide auxiliary cables, technical support, etc.

HOW SHOULD AN EVENT BE EVALUATED? – Soon after an event is over, evaluate the function's success, as well as the effectiveness of the whole event process. Was the gathering well-attended and well-received by the membership? What was the net cost for the club? Were lessons learned that will help the club plan successful future events? This feedback should be provided to the Alumni Relations Office, as soon as possible, not to exceed two weeks after the event.

B. Types of and Ideas for Alumni Club Events

Aside from the logistics and mechanics just mentioned, the most important remaining question is “what.” What kinds of events might regional clubs organize? Here is a sample of program ideas:

- **ANNUAL MEETING** – Most active clubs hold at least one event every year that is an annual club board meeting.
- **LUNCHEON, DINNER AND/OR RECEPTION** – For instance, some clubs hold pay-your-own-way monthly breakfasts or luncheons without a planned agenda—just providing Blue Hens with a chance to gather and talk with each other. On the other end of the spectrum, a meal can serve as the occasion for an annual meeting and/or a distinguished speaker.
- **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS** – The University of Delaware is an educational institution that promotes lifelong learning, and regional clubs can help fulfill this mission by providing interesting educational opportunities to their members. This includes a presentation by a local Blue Hen or notable community member; and seminars or small group discussions themed around certain issues.
- **CAREER-NETWORKING AND MENTORING FUNCTIONS** – Some clubs hold functions specifically designed for local Blue Hens to have the chance to make business and career connections. This kind of event may or may not have a speaker addressing related issues (i.e., how headhunters work, how to write a stand-out resume, etc.).
- **YIELD EVENTS** – Once the Admissions Office has made its offers of admission, regional clubs are strongly encouraged to invite admitted students and their families to an event so they can be persuaded to matriculate and be welcomed to the Blue Hen family! An admitted student gathering can be a stand-alone event, or it can be incorporated into another association function. To obtain a list of admitted students within a region, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations.
- **STUDENT “SEND-OFF”** – Many clubs hold a summer “send-off” party for students heading off (or back) to campus in the fall. This can be a stand-alone event, or it can be combined with another regional function within the right time-frame.
- **WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD** – Many clubs hold a welcome event for alumni that just graduated to welcome them to the area and to provide networking opportunities.
- **FAMILY-FRIENDLY EVENTS** – Don’t forget the little Blue Hens! Many clubs plan some family-friendly events, to which constituents can bring their children and grandchildren.
- **SPECTATOR SPORTING EVENTS** – Watching a game can be a fun group activity. There are many different ways to plan a club event around spectator sports:
 - ***University of Delaware’s Away Games*** – Many Blue Hens will rally to attend a match-up of UD versus a local college team. To view a full list of upcoming sporting events, please go to UD’s Athletic Department Web site at www.bluehens.com. Even if a University sporting event is not being held nearby, UD’s televised games (usually basketball or football) can still make for a great gathering, whether held in a local sports bar or in someone’s home.
 - ***Local Professional Games*** – Many major- and minor-league teams will offer a special package for groups. Regional clubs may also want to ask their board members if anyone has corporate connections to utilize box seats or to someone who would be willing to speak to the group and/or offer a behind-the-scenes view.
- **PARTICIPATORY RECREATION** – Alumni clubs have sponsored ice skating, cycling trips, golf or tennis tournaments, and softball games (with Blue Hens, or against another local alumni club from a peer institution).
- **CULTURAL PROGRAMS** – Local museums, galleries, symphonies, theatrical houses and observatories may have exhibits or presentations that would lend themselves well to group participation.

- **CULINARY ADVENTURES** – Happy hours, wine-tastings and cooking classes are great events.
- **BOOK CLUB** – Local participants choose the books to be read and discussed.
- **COMMUNITY SERVICE OR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS** – Many alumni clubs engage in a project of community service or civic engagement, such as literacy training, student mentoring, blood or book drives, nature conservation, neighborhood rehabilitation, etc.

WHAT ELSE? – This list is by no means comprehensive, and regional clubs are encouraged to be innovative and creative in your programming. You can come up with many other good ideas through such mechanisms as:

- ***Survey*** – Asking your alumni about the kinds of events in which they'd like to participate through a survey may yield new suggestions for interesting events.
- ***Utilizing Alumni Resources*** – Local Blue Hens may be well connected to limited-access venues and/or local civic or professional organizations; when possible, take advantage of the resources your constituents can provide.
- ***Visit the Campus*** – Though many alumni return to campus at Alumni Weekend and Homecoming, returning at other times during the year when classes are in session and regular activities occur can provide you with a better sense of what the University of Delaware is like today. While on campus, be sure to stop by Alumni Hall and say hello!