

LAS Alumni Engagement Recommendations

Autumn Quarter 2023

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1. Introduction

This guide is meant to help units who are interested in increasing contact and engagement with alumni. We understand that not all units have the room or capacity to take on alumni engagement as a project; however, many LAS units have expressed interest in increasing and improving engagement with their alumni community.

If your department is trying to do this, we have a few tips to help you get started or to enhance what you are already doing. We trust that each unit knows their students and alumni best, so we encourage you to combine our general advice with your unit's local culture to create events, programs, and initiatives that are interesting, engaging, and beneficial to your alumni and your unit.

2. Getting Started

Step 1: Evaluate the current state of alumni engagement at your unit.

If you haven't had a chance to talk with your faculty about alumni activities, it's a good idea to do so, just to get a good sense of the current state of alumni engagement in the unit. Here are some questions you might ask:

- What are your strengths and weaknesses where alumni are concerned?
- Where have you had success?
- What are organic "hotspots" of engagement with alumni that already exist?
 - do your alums like, retweet, or reply to your faculty/unit social media posts?
 - do your alums email faculty members about their career and life updates?
 - do your alums volunteer to speak on panels, mentor students, or connect students with opportunities?

Step 2: What are your goals for the future?

Now that you've determined where you currently engage with alums, discuss what you would like alumni engagement to look like down the line. Importantly, you don't have to reinvent the wheel! Rather than starting from scratch, build on your prior successes or reach out to Zoe or colleagues for ideas.

What are your unit's goals for alumni engagement?

Your goals might look like...

- creating a tight-knit community of alumni across the field.
- finding ways for alums to present their expertise to your students.
- better serving your current students with networking and internship opportunities.

What are your alumni's needs?

- Do they want networking opportunities?
- Do they want community and socializing?
- Do they want to give back as mentors?
- Do they want the chance to learn from you again?
- Are you unsure about what they want and need?

Understanding your alumni will help you connect more effectively, which will keep them coming back and have them spread the word to their own networks.

Do you know how your current students would like to engage with alumni?

You don't necessarily need to run a poll, but you might gather some information by chatting with students at events, asking students in your unit's student organization, committees, etc.

Special considerations for Graduate Students

When engaging with your graduate students and alumni at the individual or program level, the nature of the engagement should be even more professional than with undergraduate students. Consider emphasizing presence on LinkedIn (see below), promoting networking opportunities, and other professional events for your graduate alums.

Step 3: Planning

Once you've established your strengths and goals, it's a good idea to make a plan for how to implement your efforts over the academic year. Your goal could vary from having increased social media presence, to hosting one alumni event, to piloting a survey of your alumni, to encouraging your faculty to email 2-3 alumni they haven't heard from in a while – in any case, be sure to set a realistic objective that is in line with your overall goals, your unit's interests and capacity, and your alumni's needs.

We recommend taking a quality over quantity approach in order to make it worth everyone's while to engage with alumni (including yours, your staff's, and – of course – your alumni's).

3. Best Practices

Communication

Newsletters

Newsletters are a great way to present information to a broad audience. In addition to students and faculty, unit newsletters can be effective communication tools for alumni, donors, and prospective students.

Many LAS Units already have fantastic newsletters. Check some great past issues below:

- [Philosophy Newsletter](#) – Summer 2023
- [Geography Newsletter](#) – Spring/Summer 2023
- [PSC Chronicle](#) (Political Science Newsletter) – Spring/Summer 2023
- [El Centro](#) (Latin American and Latino Studies & Center for Latino Research Newsletter) – Spring 2023
- [MOLyglot](#) (Modern Languages Newsletter) — Winter 2023
- [English Newsletter](#) – Summer 2022
- [Catholic Studies](#) – 2021-2022

We currently have a newsletter. Should we send it to alums?

Many units already have newsletters, but not all send them out to alumni. If your newsletter contains information that is “alumni friendly,” such as interesting faculty news, student stories, and alumni spotlights, it may be worth working with the Office of Alumni Relations to send your newsletter via email to your alumni and/or promoting the newsletter on social media.

If your newsletter has more of an internal function, and you are not interested in expanding it to include this type of content, then it’s not necessary to include alumni.

What format should a newsletter take?

Though many units have historically created PDF newsletters, we recommend exploring alternative options that are more interactive, user-friendly, and accessible. PDFs are not optimized for the web as they lack key elements that are used for tracking and ranking pages on search engines. Additionally, PDFs are not ADA-compliant for all online readers, and thus have limited utility in reaching the broadest audience.

Instead of PDFs, we suggest trying a platform that provides interactive components and can give you insight about your newsletter readers. Platforms such as [Issuu](#) (like [this one](#) from the **Center for Latino Research** and the **Department of Latin American and Latino Studies**) and [Flipsnack](#) (see [this example](#) from **Modern Languages**), for instance, allow you to put together digital flipbooks. They are accessible and track certain metrics that can help you evaluate success and continue to improve your newsletter efforts.

As for design tools, you have employee access to [Adobe](#) or free access to [Canva](#). [Marq](#) (formerly Lucidpress) also offers free newsletter templates and a design platform. Student workers can be recruited to help with the design process.

What should we include in our newsletter?

- Latest activity by faculty
- Interesting student projects, news, or achievements
- Topical stories by faculty or students on issues of common interest
- Upcoming events or opportunities to engage (virtual, hybrid, in-person)
- Alumni news and/or spotlights

Breaking down the target audience into subgroups, such as alumni, students, and prospective students (as well as their parents and alumni parents) can help guide your decision-making process.

Social Media

Social media can be a very effective tool for promoting your unit and engaging with your audience. For social media use for alumni engagement, we recommend focusing primarily on **LinkedIn**, as it is the platform where most alumni will be most excited to engage with units, the college, and the university.

Please see the next section for specific LinkedIn practices and tips.

In addition to a primary focus on LinkedIn, we recommend identifying 1-2 additional platforms that may be worth maintaining based on existing engagement and potential. If most of your faculty members are active on X (formerly Twitter), it is likely that they are being followed by some or many alumni, so you could choose to prioritize X (formerly Twitter) as a platform to be active with posting. Alternatively, your alumni may have a Facebook group they already participate in, which you may want to join. Identifying the “hotspots” of engagement that already exist will increase your return on investment.

To streamline the social media management process, platforms such as [Later](#) and [SproutSocial](#) can help your staff pre-schedule posts.

Lastly, and especially if your unit has social media accounts but is not super active, please make sure your unit is following LAS social media accounts and boosting the content when possible and appropriate. This way the work that the LAS social media team does to promote events and news can reach a wider audience, and you have content to post without having to create it yourself.

LAS Social Media Accounts

- LinkedIn: [College of LAS at DePaul University](#)
- X (formerly Twitter): [@DePaulLAS](#)
- Instagram: [@depaul.las](#)
- Facebook: [@DePaullas](#)

More on LinkedIn

Most young people going into the job market are going to get a LinkedIn account, so it makes sense for units to use LinkedIn to foster professional networking among, and share relevant information with, alums, faculty, and students.

Where possible, it's a great goal to try to get your alumni connecting with you on LinkedIn and your students by creating accounts and connecting with you before they graduate. Encouraging LinkedIn for students will help us keep them engaged as they move on from LAS and into the workforce. **Read more about the benefits of setting up a school page with an alumni tab on LinkedIn [here](#).**

What follows are step-by-step instructions for setting up your unit's LinkedIn pages. LinkedIn requires that a school page be linked to a human's personal profile, so you may use a Department Assistant or Chair's personal page to create the school page.

Please note that once you have created the school page, you may add additional page admins, and remove any admins who are no longer associated with the unit. In fact, each school page should always have at least 2 admins in case of any departmental turnover. If you do not have enough people to add as admins, you may add Cristina Rodriguez as an admin.

How to create a school page:

- You'll want to first create a LinkedIn profile using your first and last name. We recommend the department assistant or chair/director start a personal LinkedIn profile with their first and last name if they do not have one already.
- After the personal profile account has been established, proceed to creating a SCHOOL PAGE for the unit.
- Use this LinkedIn resource page to get started:
<https://www.linkedin.com/help/lms/answer/a543852>
- Make sure you set up a **school page**, not a company page.
- The person whose personal page is associated with the school page will be the primary admin for the school page (you will have the ability to add other admins, as well, to the page).
 - LinkedIn requires a real name to verify ownership over pages created.
 - Use this LinkedIn resource page to get started:
<https://www.linkedin.com/help/lms/answer/a553289?trk=hc-articlePage-sidebar>

How to build your following on LinkedIn:

- Look up and follow your alumni from your school account, so that they follow you back. (This may be time intensive, so it's a good summer project for a department assistant or student worker.)
- Include a request to follow you on LinkedIn in your newsletter.
- Design a graphic inviting your followers from other social media accounts.
- Encourage faculty members to invite students to follow the unit's page.
- Send out a targeted email to alumni through Office of Alumni of Alumni Relations, in which you include links to news and LinkedIn.

- Send an email to graduating students on behalf of the Chair/Director: “As you’re preparing to sign up for commencement make sure to follow us on LinkedIn and join our network of alumni!” etc.
- Add your LinkedIn account to your website homepage along with other social media accounts (if you need assistance with this, you may contact Cristina Rodriguez, LAS Website & Social Media Administrator).

How to engage your alumni on LinkedIn:

- Repost interesting posts shared by the College and the University
- Share Student, faculty, and alumni spotlights
- Share faculty news or faculty-authored posts on interesting topics current in your field
- Promote unit events (see next section) and happenings.
- Promote alumni events or other initiatives.

****A tip from units that are currently active on LinkedIn:** incorporate LinkedIn usage into your existing routines and activity so that students see it persistently (to get them to follow your page). For example, in WRD, first they mention it when sending the email announcing the assignment of the student’s faculty advisor, then it goes in the chair’s quarterly advising email. Once there’s a consistent flow of communication reminding students of the existence of the LinkedIn page, it’s a matter of using the page to engage with students/alumni who are already connected!

Events

Inviting alumni to already existing events

One of the easiest ways to connect with your alums is to invite them to any public talk, conference, or other event that you are already planning during the year.

If you would like to invite alumni to an event, submit your event information and materials to Alumni Relations **at least 3 weeks prior to when you would like the communications sent out.**

Please note the difference between alumni events – i.e., events specifically catered to alumni – and unit events to which alumni are invited. Some, but not all, of your unit’s events may be appropriate for alumni. While we think it’s a great idea to invite alumni to events already planned and budgeted for, it’s important to maintain a certain level of formality to welcome alumni back to campus (physically or virtually). If your unit doesn’t have capacity to execute the event in a way that is welcoming to alumni as well as students and faculty, it’s okay to opt out of inviting alumni.

Before the event, ask yourself:

- Is this event oriented heavily toward current students? If so, it may not be appropriate to invite alumni.
- Is this event oriented to interested public from around the university? If so, this may be an appropriate event to invite alumni to attend.
- If you decide to invite alums, be sure to:
 1. Create an Eventbrite to register attendees and include an option to select student/alumni/faculty/staff so you know who is coming.
 2. **Share the time and date of the event with Zoe, so she can add it to the shared calendar.**
 3. Email Effie Mores in the Office of Alumni Relations and CC Zoe with the following items. This information is required for OAR to send out an invitation to your alumni on your behalf. As a reminder, the information below must be sent to OAR **at least 3 weeks in advance of the date you would like the invitation to be sent.**
 - Title of the Event
 - Short description of the Event
 - Date, Time, Location of the Event
 - Brief but warm message inviting your alumni to attend.
 - Eventbrite Registration Link:
 - Registration required? (Yes/No)
 - Unit Point of Contact
 - Date you would like the invitation to be sent.
 - Audience (what alumni segments should this invitation be sent to?)
 4. Post about it on social media (especially LinkedIn) and in your newsletter, if applicable.

At the event:

- Prior to the event, double check your Eventbrite registration to know ahead of time how many alumni will be in attendance.

- Acknowledge that alumni are in attendance: “Welcome students, staff, alumni, etc.”
- If the event is in-person events, provide name tags and consider including a marking or key on the nametag that indicates if a guest is a student, faculty, staff, or alumni.
- Consider how you could make alumni in attendance feel welcome and special—this is sometimes as easy as asking designating a member of the planning team to greet alumni and engage them during pauses and transitions, so they don’t feel awkward or out of place.

After the event:

After every effort, event, or campaign, take a moment to assess its success. Do you think it was a good use of your time and resources? Would you do an event or project like this again? What would you change for the future? Always feel free to reach out to Zoe if you’d like to debrief, bounce ideas around, etc.

Organizing Alumni-Specific Events

A purpose-built alumni event will require considerable advance planning and coordination with OAR. Please reach out to Effie Mores and Zoe Berensztein to discuss and coordinate before moving forward.

4. Key Contacts & Policies

Multiple offices and individuals work with alumni and alumni relations. What follows is a list of key contacts for you to use to support your efforts.

[Zoe Berensztein](#)

Alumni Engagement Coordinator
Office of the Dean | College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
zberensz@depaul.edu

- First point of contact for unit-level alumni activities, brainstorming, planning, communication, etc. Zoe can help connect you with additional contacts in Advancement and Alumni Relations, when needed.

[Effie Mores](#)

Director, Alumni Relations
Office of Alumni Relations | Division of Advancement & External Affairs
emores@depaul.edu

- Contact Effie if you need any communications sent out to your alumni, such as event invitations, important unit news, etc.

[Abigail Ares](#)

Executive Director of Development for LAS
Office of Development | Division of Advancement & External Relations
abigail.ares@depaul.edu

- Abigail is your main point of contact should an alum reach out to you regarding a financial contribution to your unit or the College. Please also notify the Dean of such outreach at the same time.

[Caileen Crecco](#)

Assistant Director
Office of Annual and Special Giving | Division of Advancement and External Affairs
ccrecco@depaul.edu

- Main point of contact for inquiries and issues relating to Blue Demon Challenge, DePaul's annual small donor fundraising campaign that happens in January.