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# Volunteer Handbook

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FOR ALUMNI AFFINITY GROUPS



# AFFINITY GROUP HANDBOOK

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## **PART I: INTRODUCTION**

### **A. What is a BGSU Alumni Affinity Group?**

The Alumni Affinity Group program offers opportunities for alumni of shared interests and common bonds to connect on meaningful levels beyond the traditional class and regional structure. Much like Regional Networks, these groups actively support the University through student recruitment, career mentoring, scholarship fundraising, community service, and social activities.

The Bowling Green State University Alumni Office recognizes the importance of these special interests and encourages alumni to connect with others who share this common bond.

Affinity groups are formed in one of two ways:

- A group of BGSU alumni take the initiative
- Based on current trends, the Alumni Office takes the initial steps to form an Affinity Group and then seeks alumni volunteers

This handbook provides further details and requirements for their establishment and ongoing support from the Alumni Office.

### **B. Why have an Alumni Affinity Group?**

An Alumni Affinity Group allows alumni to stay connected to BGSU through shared interests or experiences, including student organizations, identity and/or careers. Specifically, an affinity group program:

- Creates a medium through which alumni can reconnect with each other around shared experiences, interests, and identities
- Increases opportunities for alumni to get involved and meet other BGSU alumni
- Promotes leadership
- Fosters a sense of community within the BGSU alumni population
- Supports a culture of philanthropy for the University

### **C. What Alumni Affinity Groups already exist?**

Although recognition of the Alumni Affinity group structure is new, alumni have gathered around special interests for many years in an ad hoc and informal basis. Often these gatherings were driven by key milestones, such as anniversaries, or by special events important to the community. The Alumni Affinity Group Program is designed to further cultivate and engage these communities beyond a single event or activity. A current listing of active Alumni Affinity Groups can be found online at:

[www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/affinity-groups.html](http://www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/affinity-groups.html).

## **PART II: STARTING AN ALUMNI AFFINITY GROUP**

### **A. Steps to form an Alumni Affinity Group**

#### **1. Initial request**

- Check the alumni website at [www.bgsu.edu/alumni](http://www.bgsu.edu/alumni) to ensure that the group you wish to create does not already exist.
- Contact Ellie McManus at the Alumni Office to discuss your interest in starting a group based on a shared special interest/affinity (student organization, career interests, identity, activities). Contact can be made via email or phone. Contact information can be found in Part IV: Resources.

#### **2. Informational meeting/call**

- A member of the BGSU Alumni Office will contact the person who made the initial request to schedule a call or in-person informational meeting and will email an Alumni Affinity Group Application to be completed and returned to the Alumni Office prior to the meeting/call.
- During the meeting/call, the completed Application will be discussed. Other topics to be reviewed may include the contact's relation to BGSU, the number of other alumni interested in forming and supporting the group; the list of alumni associated with the proposed group, if applicable, affiliations with other organizations, ideas for events, related student groups, etc.

#### **3. Submission of required materials**

- After the informational meeting, the primary alumni contact will gather any other necessary required materials and submit them to the Alumni Office.

#### **4. Approval**

- Once all materials are received, Alumni Office staff will review the documents and approve the organization for listing on the Alumni website. The reviews will take place on an ongoing basis.

#### **5. Orientation**

- Once approved, the designated leaders/contacts of the Alumni Affinity Group must complete a brief orientation session with a member of the Alumni Office staff. This orientation will review policies and procedures on information and list sharing, event planning, and continuing Alumni office support.

## **PART III: CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS**

In order to become a Bowling Green State University-affiliated Alumni Affinity Group, the group must be compliant with the criteria and requirements established by the BGSU Alumni Office. Additionally, the group must adhere to all Alumni Office standards in order to receive ongoing support and services.

### **A. Membership Requirement**

To initiate an Alumni Affinity Group, a minimum of one individual is needed to serve as group leader and Alumni Office contact person. To maintain an effective group, additional alumni members will be needed to serve as part of the group leadership. Various leadership positions can be initiated as more members are recruited. The Alumni Office should be notified as new leadership positions are created and filled.

### **B. Group's Mission**

All Alumni Affinity Groups must have a written mission statement outlining the purpose of their existence. The mission statement will inform alumni of the group's direction and serve as a guide for future programming and events. Each group's purpose must be aligned with the general mission of the BGSU Alumni Association to benefit the alumni community and is subject to review and approval by the Alumni Office.

- The BGSU Alumni Association exists to maintain its members' connection to BGSU by providing value-added programs and services with the goals of: supporting the personal and professional success of our alumni; and inspiring pride in, promoting involvement with, and providing support for the University and its mission.

### **C. Ongoing Requirements**

To receive ongoing support, assistance and services from the Alumni Office, the Alumni Affinity Group must adhere to the following requirements each year of its existence:

Programming: Plan and sponsor events designed to bring alumni together and recruit more members. Program ideas should be discussed with Alumni Office staff before planning begins and resources are available online in the "Volunteer Toolbox" to help with the process. The group should utilize the Alumni Office to assist in marketing and follow-up messaging.

Annual Report/Renewal: The Affinity Group Renewal Form (found online) should be completed annually within the first month of every fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). A brief Annual Report should accompany the Renewal Form. The report should include:

- The names of new alumni included in the group, with degree year and contact information
- An updated leadership and membership list
- (If applicable) A member acknowledgement section, recognizing promotions in the professional lives of members and other note-worthy accomplishments.

**PART III: CRITERIA AND REQUIREMENTS, *Continued***

Use of Funds: All requests for reimbursement, purchasing and contracted services must fit within the stated purpose of the fund agreement. Contact University Advancement prior to purchases or contracts for approval. Contacts and authorization may be updated through a new confidentiality agreement.

Membership Maintenance: The Alumni Affinity Group should actively recruit more alumni to be general members and serve in leadership positions. The Alumni Office must be updated whenever a leadership position is created or changed.

Alumni Affinity Group Principles of Practice: All groups will conduct their activities according to the following principles:

- Accurately promote the overall mission of Bowling Green State University and the Alumni Office in a positive manner
- Promote a spirit of service to the University and alumni community
- Strive to strengthen the relationship between alumni and the University
- Actively engage with the Alumni Office for planning communications, event planning guidance, and support.
- Accurately represent the interests of its members and other constituents
- Create opportunities for diverse alumni participation in organization activities
- Support the University by encouraging group members to make annual gifts

## **PART IV: BENEFITS AND SUPPORT**

### **A. Fundraising Assistance/Donor Information**

At the start of each calendar and fiscal year (January and July), the Alumni Office will provide the Alumni Affinity Group with a listing of the names and email addresses of donors who have designated their gift for the group's benefit.

### **B. Advertising and Marketing**

Alumni Affinity Groups are encouraged to take advantage of marketing opportunities available to them as recognized groups of the Alumni Office. These include: online Alumni events calendar, email communication and social media promotion. The "Event Planning Worksheet" can be found in the online Volunteer Toolbox.

### **C. Event Collaboration**

The Alumni Office sponsors numerous events throughout the year, including Homecoming, campus events, and regional activities that are wonderful opportunities for collaboration.

Homecoming Host Events: Alumni Affinity Groups can host an event as part of Homecoming Weekend and enjoy the benefit of having hundreds of alumni on campus and in the Bowling Green area. Because the weekend requires extensive planning, your event ideas should be discussed with Alumni Office staff at least 4-6 months prior to Homecoming.

Collaboration on Existing Events: Alumni Affinity Groups may partner with alumni events that are planned by Regional Networks or with those organized by the Alumni Office staff. Involvement may include ways to encourage alumni participation and/or awareness of your group.

Follow-up Messaging: The Alumni Office can assist with follow-up messages to Alumni Affinity Group event attendees. Contact the office for further details.

### **D. Use of Mileti Alumni Center**

The Mileti Alumni Center can be reserved for Alumni Affinity Group activities, events, and meetings. Contact the Alumni Office at (419) 372-2424 to check availability.

Visit [www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/volunteer-toolbox.html](http://www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/volunteer-toolbox.html) to view the numerous resources available for Alumni Affinity Groups. They include new and renewal application forms, event ideas, event planning and budget worksheets, and more.

## PART V: RESOURCES

### A. Resource Contact List

**BGSU Alumni Office:** Mileti Alumni Center, Bowling Green State University, Bowling Green, OH 43403  
Phone: (888) 839-ALUM {2586} or (419) 372-2424 Fax: 419.372.7697  
Website: [www.bgsu.edu/alumni](http://www.bgsu.edu/alumni) Email: [alumni@bgsu.edu](mailto:alumni@bgsu.edu)

#### **BGSU Alumni Office Staff:**



**Rebecca Kocher**  
Assistant Vice President,  
Alumni and Annual  
Giving  
[rkocher@bgsu.edu](mailto:rkocher@bgsu.edu)



**Ellie McManus\***  
Assistant Director,  
Alumni Engagement  
[emcmanu@bgsu.edu](mailto:emcmanu@bgsu.edu)  
*\*Staff contact for new  
Alumni Affinity Group  
applicants*



**Kim Jacobs\*\***  
Assistant Director,  
Programming  
[kjacobs@bgsu.edu](mailto:kjacobs@bgsu.edu)  
*\*\*Staff contact for  
established and renewing  
Alumni Affinity Groups*



**Doreen Bateson**  
Manager,  
Events  
[batesdc@bgsu.edu](mailto:batesdc@bgsu.edu)



**Kelly Lawrie**  
Assistant Director,  
Alumni Affairs  
[klawrie@bgsu.edu](mailto:klawrie@bgsu.edu)



**Pam Fall**  
Manger,  
Accounting Services  
[pfall@bgsu.edu](mailto:pfall@bgsu.edu)



**Jenny Wensink**  
Associate Director,  
Alumni Annual Giving  
[wensinj@bgsu.edu](mailto:wensinj@bgsu.edu)



**Jordan Cravens**  
Assistant Director,  
Annual Giving  
[jcraven@bgsu.edu](mailto:jcraven@bgsu.edu)



**Diana Foster**  
Administrative Assistant  
[lynnfos@bgsu.edu](mailto:lynnfos@bgsu.edu)



**Roberta Garcia**  
Administrative Assistant  
[ravalos@bgsu.edu](mailto:ravalos@bgsu.edu)



**Ann Hoyt**  
Administrative Assistant  
[ahoyt@bgsu.edu](mailto:ahoyt@bgsu.edu)



## B. Marketing Considerations

Branding/Use of BGSU Logos: Logo use and graphic standards can be found at:

<http://www.bgsu.edu/marketing-and-communications/bgsu-graphic-standards-manual/purpose-of-graphic-standards.html>.

Donor Lists: At the start of each calendar and fiscal year (January and July), the Alumni Office will provide the Alumni Affinity Group with a listing of the names and email addresses of donors who have designated their gift for the group's benefit. Donors will be organized according to giving level categories.

Email Distribution: Emails are an effective way of generating interest in Alumni Affinity Group activities. *With advanced planning*, the Alumni Office can offer assistance in utilizing the media for the greatest return by providing clean, up-to-date, and accurate contact information from our database. Please consider the following.

- Frequency: Plan outreach to avoid overuse of email
- Length: Keep messages short and to the point – Less is more!
- Content: Promote upcoming events or make a call to action
- Don'ts: Do not promote personal events, outside products, or other non-sanctioned activities

Social Media: Social media outlets can provide a very cost-effective method of communication with members of your Alumni Affinity Group. Keep in mind that any social media presence must reflect the values and mission of your group and the broader mission of BGSU and the Alumni Office.

- Facebook and Naming Standards: This is a great tool for generating interest in your Alumni Affinity Group. We encourage you to create Facebook *pages* (not Facebook *groups*) to promote your activities and news. Please update or name your page "Bowling Green State University – {group name} Alumni Affinity Group."
- Contact the Alumni Office for assistance and to answer questions.

Publications and Mailings: Print publications are often the most expensive means to communicate with your Alumni Affinity Group. Advance planning with the Alumni Office is recommended and message must be sent for approval prior to mailing.

## C. Fundraising

The Alumni Office appreciates the efforts of Affinity Groups to grow their membership and conduct fundraising campaigns. Our office can assist with writing purposeful campaign materials and we request that solicitations are submitted for our approval, in accordance with University policy. Our support can insure accurate messaging and up-to-date prospect lists.

Additionally, we encourage individual Affinity Group members to sponsor or underwrite the costs for events. All groups should support the University by encouraging group members to make annual gifts.

#### **D. Volunteer Toolbox**

Visit [www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/volunteer-toolbox.html](http://www.bgsu.edu/alumni/get-involved/volunteer-toolbox.html) to view the numerous resources available for Alumni Affinity Groups. They include new and renewal application forms, event planning and budget worksheets, and more.