HARVARD
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Best Practices – Global Networking Night
Harvard Alumni Association

Thank you for hosting a Global Network Night (GNN) event in your city on Wednesday, January 11, 2017. As you make preparations, the Harvard Alumni Association's Clubs & SIGs team would like to share with you some best practices that you may wish to consider implementing into your own program.

- **Consider your space requirements**. How many people do you anticipate? Can you get a space that is appropriate for that number? Ideally, the space would be small enough to make for a cozy, yet energized, atmosphere but not so small that people are jostling against each other. Also, do you have any seating? In previous GNNs, some people have noted that it can be difficult to have to stand for two hours or more.

- **Food**. Although GNN should remain a free event, previous attendees have occasionally complained about not having any food available. Can your Club or the site host provide any free hors d'oeuvres? You might want to consider holding GNN at a restaurant or bar. Even if the establishment cannot offer any free food, at least attendees will have the option to order snacks and/or meals à la carte.

- **Market your event to your** members and make sure your event is listed on your Club or SIGs website.

- **Considering renting a PA system** if you anticipate a large crowd. The 19th century skill of oration without amplification is largely lost. Your large crowd is there to mingle, so it will be difficult to quiet everyone and shout out the instructions audibly. Get the electronic help.

- **Create a Facebook event** and invite people to get excited by posting a sentence or two about who they are and what they'd like to talk about at GNN. We are not suggesting that Facebook should be the only method you use to invite people, but one of many, since actual registrations will be handled by the HAA. The reply feature will allow attendees to survey who is coming and, ahead of the actual event, identify others whose interests match their own. You might want to encourage your board members in particular to post responses so that attendees can identify them as well. With a large group, it can be difficult to meet and wade through so many people to find the best networking opportunities at the actual event, so Facebook can aid attendees' abilities to identify people they'd like to meet.

- **Consider appropriate hours for the event**. What time do people in your area typically get off work? How far are people coming? How difficult will rush hour be? Consider reserving your space for an extra hour or two to accommodate latecomers. If the event is rolling, try to avoid cutting it short, and encourage people to keep talking (within reason).

- **Use facilitators**. Some attendees will have specific goals in mind about the people they wish to meet (e.g., "I am interested in moving from the private to the public sector, and I'd like to talk to others who have done the same.") But it can be hard to find those specific other people in a sea of humanity. You can help the sorting process by appointing a handful of facilitators for various career areas (e.g., law, media, medicine, non-profits, etc.). You might want to arrange your facilitators around the room in certain areas, or you can have them float around the room so long as they are easily identifiable (e.g., silly hats). While the facilitator might say, "I just met so-and-so and you need to talk to her," others congregating around this person will share an interest and may strike up their own conversations directly.

- **Use nametags**. Get nametags and big markers – pen is difficult to read on a nametag. Consider using color-coded stickers to help group people by professional area (e.g., yellow = finance, blue = education, etc.), so people can see right away the area in which everyone works without having to ask. Also consider allowing people to advertise their own messages (e.g., "SHOULD I GO TO MEDICAL SCHOOL?", "ASK ME ABOUT NON-PROFIT FUNDRAISING", "I AM A DOCTOR, BUT I LIKE GOLF", etc.). Consider opening it up to avocations so that conversations are more wide-ranging.

- **Do a formal introduction at the beginning of the event**. Take a few minutes to explain the ground rules. If you have facilitators, explain who they are and how to find them. If you are using a colored tag system, explain the system. If people don't have nametags, explain where they can get them.

- **Ring a bell**. While some attendees will naturally flit about the room making connections, others may feel stuck in conversation and don't want to offend someone by abruptly moving on. Save people the embarrassment by explaining in your opening remarks that it's OK to keep conversations short, and that you will ring a bell from time to time to signal that it's time to move on to another conversation.

We hope you find these suggestions useful, and that you and your Club and/or SIG have a successful Global Networking Night in June. Thank you for your time and efforts in bringing Harvard alumni together on this one momentous day!

HAA Clubs & SIGs Subcommittee on Careers & Networking