

Engaging Recent Grads: Tips for HAA Clubs & SIGs

A number of Clubs and Shared Interest Groups (“SIGs”) have expressed a desire to develop or expand their membership among recent graduates of Harvard. The Recent Grads Subcommittee at the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) has assembled this guide with ideas for Clubs and SIGs to grow their membership and welcome recent grads into the HAA community.

Clubs and SIGs use various definitions of “recent grads,” a category which may be used for targeted outreach, discounted or waived membership fees, or access to special programming. Recognizing that recent grads from Harvard College are likely to be younger, more geographically mobile, and less financially established than recent grads from Harvard’s graduate or professional schools, Clubs and SIGs may consider focusing their efforts on alumni and alumnae who are either:

- Within 0-10 years of graduation from Harvard College
- Within 0-5 years of graduation from Harvard’s graduate or professional schools

With a fixed geographic base, Clubs have a number of options to build their connections with recent grads, both by strengthening ties with students from your area and welcoming new alumni and alumnae to your community:

- Request the name of your “City Captain” from the most recent graduating class and invite them to collaborate with your Club on programming and outreach to recent grads;
- Invite recent grads to join your board or form a separate young alumni board to encourage active participation in the Club’s leadership;
- If your Club charges dues, establish free membership, a reduced rate, or a two-for-one membership rate to encourage recent grads to join;
- Host a Welcome to Your City event, a mixer targeted at recent grads, or events linking established professionals with recent grads entering professional fields in your area;

- Host inter-club events to create critical mass – for example, a Harvard-Yale event, Inter-Ivy mixers, or collaborative events with different SIGs under the HAA umbrella;
- Host an undergraduate or graduate student panel and invite local high school students to hear from undergraduate and graduate students about their experiences at Harvard;
- Recruit recent grads in your area to participate in interviews of prospective applicants to Harvard;
- Contact Harvard’s Office of Career Services (“OCS”) to arrange winternships and mentorship opportunities pairing undergraduates with Club members in your community;
- Consider setting up a Harvard Summer Community Service Fellowship through the Club;
- Foster intellectual community by hosting discussions, for example, by using the HAA’s Speakers’ Bureau to bring Harvard professors to your clubs as speakers;
- Make contact with other regional Harvard Clubs and publicize reciprocity arrangements for members who may be regionally mobile or interested in regional events.

Although SIGs are often geographically dispersed, they may use many of the same strategies to engage recent grads and keep them connected to the communities they built at Harvard:

- Build your community before students leave Cambridge by contacting affiliated SIGs at the College and graduate or professional schools, requesting the names of members, and contacting them with an invitation to join your SIG (or, if privacy is a concern, send a generalized invitation that the leadership can forward to the membership);
- Invite recent grads to join your board or form a separate young alumni board to encourage active participation in your SIG’s leadership;

- If your SIG charges dues, establish free membership, a reduced rate, or a two-for-one membership rate to encourage recent grads to join;
- Contact OCS to arrange winternships and mentorship opportunities pairing undergraduates with members of your SIG, especially those with professional ties to the shared interest in question;
- Consider setting up a Harvard Summer Community Service Fellowship through your SIG;
- Increase collaboration with Clubs – for example, an annual or periodic event – to have speaker events that draw in recent graduates, including professors through the HAA Speakers' Bureau – and SIGs for alumni and alumnae from other universities in your area;
- Develop a system to follow up on recruitment of recent graduates who sign up for emails or attend SIG events;
- Consider establishing a social media presence through Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn to establish a self-sustaining community among members and affiliates.

These ideas offer a starting point for Clubs and SIGs to begin building a membership base of recent grads, but every Club and SIG is different and has its own strengths to draw upon. We'll continue compiling ideas and suggestions for Clubs and SIGs over the upcoming academic year. If your Club or SIG has used other strategies to foster engagement or would like to share feedback or ideas, we would love to hear from you – drop us a line at ryan.thoreson@post.harvard.edu!