

# 2019 Harvard Club of Sacramento Alumni Survey: Results & Recommendations

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## Survey Objectives

1. Understand motivations for alumni engagement  
*Decision impacted:* Further information to focus club programs, activities, and engagement along various lines: professional networking & development, social events, intellectual stimulation, community impact, support Harvard, other
2. Understand program interests  
*Decision impacted:* Help us to create a program calendar that brings in the highest and most balanced alumni participation.
3. Understand interest level in volunteerism  
*Decision impacted:* Is there interest in volunteerism/community engagement? In what form/factor? What topic areas? Harvard packaged programs (e.g. Early College Awareness program)? Are there any alumni who wish to interview prospective students?
4. Understand convenience/logistics factors  
*Decision impacted:* Which venues will pull in the most alumni – location? Day of the week? Timing? Frequency?
5. Understand alumni preferences for communication vehicles  
*Decision impacted:* Which communication channels have the greatest acceptance? Should we invest more energy in social media channels?
6. Understand the extent to which event costs may deter attendance  
*Decision impacted:* How many events per year should we attempt with a higher price point? How do we set fees for no-cost or minimal-cost events (e.g. hikes)?
7. Understand non-logistical hurdles to event attendance  
*Decision impacted:* Are there additional outreach efforts to encourage alums to attend their first event or to recapture alums who may have attended one event but did not make any connections that encourage them to attend future events?
8. Understand desire for collaboration with other groups  
*Decision impacted:* Do we attempt more joint events with other NorCal Harvard alumni clubs? With other schools' alumni groups?

## Survey Demographics

1. 108 Harvard alumni completed the survey.
2. Responses were fairly balanced across age ranges and professional areas of interest.
  - a. Age – Using undergraduate graduation year as a rough metric for age, our survey respondents were roughly split as follows:
    - i. 6% under 30 years old
    - ii. 32% between 30-50 years old
    - iii. 42% between 50-70 years old

- iv. 20% over 70 years old
  - b. Kids under 18 at home – 35.5% of respondents have kids under 18 at home.
  - c. Profession – Based on the responses to graduate areas of study, we received the most responses from those in the Arts & Sciences field, followed by Healthcare and Law, which had roughly the same number of respondents. Business and Government were tied for 4<sup>th</sup>, with Education coming in 6<sup>th</sup>. Only 2 respondents had an engineering/technical area of study.
3. Just over half of respondents provided their names and contact info for follow up, down from 2/3 of respondents in our 2016 survey.

## **Survey Findings**

### **1. Motivations for alumni engagement and program interests**

#### **a. Identifying top motivators:**

- i. The top three motivators for alumni engagement stayed consistent with our 2016 alumni survey findings. These include “exploring professional or intellectual interests through lectures and round table discussions”, “participating in local cultural, arts and sporting events”, and “socializing and having fun with other local Harvard alumni”. Although “socializing/having fun” took the top spot in 2016, this year “participating in local events” was the top ranked objective overall, with 88% of respondents ranking this as a high or medium importance objective for the club.
- ii. 84% of respondents ranked “socializing/having fun” and 82% ranked “exploring professional or intellectual interests” as a high or medium importance objective.
- iii. Looking solely at motivations deemed “high importance” by respondents, “exploring professional or intellectual interests through lectures and round table discussions” took the top spot, with 50% of respondents considering this to be of high importance.
- iv. “Providing exclusive local opportunities” and “exploring new areas of interest” tied for 4<sup>th</sup> place, with each considered a high or medium importance objective by 78% of respondents.
- v. “Providing connection to Harvard University” and “Engaging the local community through volunteer activities” had a decent showing, with 56% and 58%, respectively.
- vi. Only 28% of respondents felt that it was important to connect with local alumni groups from other universities.

#### **b. Attendance at past events:**

- i. About half of respondents have attended between 1 and 5 events over the past 2 year; only 12% of respondents have attended more than 5. We typically put on 15-20 events each year (not including book club).

- ii. 36% of respondents have not attended any Harvard Club events over the past 2 years.

c. People who attended alumni events have generally been satisfied:

- i. We asked for feedback on 6 types of events (networking event, lecture event, holiday/summer party, arts/cultural event, outdoor/nature event, and book club) that alumni have attended in the past 2 years.
- ii. 76 people responded on one or more of the events. The total responses to events was 349 (some people responded to multiple and some only to one depending on whether they attended). This is a much greater number than the number of responses we received in 2016 (127 responses).
- iii. Only 3 or 4 Responses for event type indicated the event did not meet their expectations.

d. Select alumni comments:

- i. “Love the outdoors, museums (particularly where children can participate), and culinary or viniculture event ideas. When traveling, my wife and I will often do walking food tours and get a lot of local culture, but we've never done it in Sacramento! I also love getting out to Kings games, so I'm partial to sporting events as well.”
- ii. “I would love to see events involving any of the following: outdoors, nature, farm, holistic health (meditation, yoga, detox for example), healthy whole food growing/preparing.”
- iii. “I really enjoy the Harvard faculty speakers you seem to bring out once a year.”
- iv. “Exclusive opportunity for the Sac Kings would be amazing!”
- v. “\*Sailing \*Hiking \*Local day trips to locations of cultural importance for California (Gold Rush towns, Old Sacramento, Central Valley tours, Allensworth, Rosie the Riveter museum, etc.)”
- vi. “I would enjoy speaker-lunches, which included discussions among those attending”

e. Recommendations:

- i. Continue with annual calendar or programs and events with targets by top areas of interest

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Lectures/Roundtables	1	1	1	1	4
Museum/Performance	1	1	1	1	4
Networking	TBD	TBD	TBD	TBD	2-3
Outdoor/Nature	1		1	1	3
Celebrations/Socials	New Year Potluck	Spring event (New)	Summer Potluck	Harvard/Yale Viewing	4
Other		Destination event	Young alumni mixer		2
Book Club	4	4	4	4	16

- ii. Balance types of events generally as follows:
1. Local cultural, arts and sporting events – 1 per quarter (4 annual)
    - a. Focus on cultural events (museums/performances) which 87% respondents had a high or medium interest in attending in the future.
    - b. Only 35% of respondents had any interest in attending sporting events so cap that at 1 per year. If an event is organized, consider the Kings (multiple comments for Kings)
  2. Lecture/Round table events – 1 per quarter (4 annual)
    - a. Due to the overwhelming popularity of the lecture and roundtable events, consider more informal lecture events beyond the university-coordinated lecture each spring. Consider reaching out to alumni in the club to see if they have friends or connections to local speakers that don't necessarily need to be connected to Harvard. Consider hosting these speaker events in board member homes, such as the event Jack Reynen is hosting in January 2020 with rocket scientist Andrew Rader.
    - b. Consider hosting one annual lecture event as a lunch event.
  3. General social events – 1 per quarter (4 annual). Continue winter and summer potlucks, Harvard/Yale viewing party, and an additional spring social event. Several respondents were interested in a culinary event so strongly consider adding such an event to the calendar.
  4. Family friendly events – Consider making 1 cultural event, 2 social events, and 1 outdoor event family-friendly each year. Possibly add a 4<sup>th</sup> family friendly event (hands-on art event, farm event).
    - a. Most events should cater to all ages, though there is a slight preference for events geared towards middle and high-schoolers.
    - b. Family friendly events should always be held on the weekend.
    - c. Given the number of grandparents in our alumni base and multiple comments, consider a “grandparents & special friends” event tailored to alumni who would want to take a grandchild
  5. Young alumni events – We have decided not to participate in the Harvard Global Networking Nights the last few times this event was hosted. We attempted an event for young alumni this past year with the help of a recent graduate, but it was poorly attended. We may wish to

try one more time and expand the pool to include other local alumni clubs. While career-oriented networking and connecting with local alumni groups from other universities did not rank high overall, these areas did have strong showing from respondents under 30 years old. If this event is held in the summer, we may attract some current students or recent grads in the area.

6. Destination event – 50% of respondents are “not likely” to attend an event hosted in either Napa/Sonoma County or the Bay Area; however, it may be worth trying one destination event with the expectation that it would draw a smaller group.
  7. Book club – while survey results indicate that most alumni are not interested in book club, the group has a strong core of roughly 10 attendees that meet the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month. The group is self-sustaining and requires little effort on the Board’s part. As a result, the recommendation is to continue to promote book club.
- iii. Include socialization component at every event and think of strategies to encourage members to mingle outside their age bracket or friends. For example, the 3 minute “speed questions” game at the summer potluck encouraged attendees to mingle.
  - iv. Ensure name tags are available at each event. Work on obtaining Harvard insignia on name tag holders.
  - v. Continue to include 2-4 outdoor/nature events per year, at least 2 of which are low-cost activities such as hikes.
  - vi. Monitor Harvard data sources for new alumni. Work on personal outreach to new alumni to introduce them to the club, particularly in the first few months of moving to the area.

## **2. Interest level in volunteerism**

### a. Identifying interest in volunteerism:

- i. 58% of respondents ranked “engage in the local community through volunteer activities” as a high or medium importance objective. Support for this objective was strongest in alumni under 50 (72%), although 60% of alumni in the 50-70 demographic considered it of high or medium importance.

### b. Interviewing:

- i. 34% of respondents indicated that they have been involved (either past or current) in interviewing potential Harvard students.
- ii. 9 respondents expressed interest in becoming interviewers and left contact info; of these, 4 attended Harvard graduate schools and not the College.

### c. Selected comments:

- i. “Provide opportunities for alumnae to engage in various efforts to address various issues e.g. hold a forum featuring homeless providers making a case for their needs and in addition to money what expertise is needed to assist them in their efforts. Other issues to feature, organizations that serve high risk youth and young adults 16 to 30, providing low income housing, reducing and recycling waste, making local and state government more functional, increasing the involvement of people in local (district, city, & county) and state politics.”
- ii. “Service learning opportunities”

d. Recommendations:

- i. There is strong interest in interviewing student applicants. Coordinate with our Interviews Chair to supply names of people that expressed interest.
- ii. Housing/homelessness appears to be an area of interest based on survey feedback and informal feedback received at events. Consider an education/service opportunity targeted to this need.

### **3. Understand alumni preferences for communication vehicles**

a. Identifying preferences for club communication:

- i. Email was ranked as the most effective communication vehicle by 96% of respondents, with the website coming in second. Facebook and USPS mail were roughly tied for third and preference was split by age group. Facebook was favorited over mail by alumni under 50 years old; Facebook and mail were tied in the 50-70 demographic, and mail was preferred over Facebook for those over 70.
- ii. Over 65% of respondents ranked LinkedIn as their fifth choice or “not applicable”.
- iii. 40% of respondents in the 30-50 and 50-70 demographics are “likely” or “very likely” to engage with an active Harvard Club Facebook group, with 24% of respondents over 70 “likely” or “very likely” to engaged. Perhaps surprisingly, no respondents in the under 30 demographic said they were “likely” or “very likely” to engage.

b. Recommendations:

- i. Email should continue to be the primary communication vehicle. Given the large number of emails people receive, emails must be informative, visually appealing, and ideally have attention-grabbing subjects.
- ii. Prioritize getting event emails out a month in advance; this requires event planners to coordinate with the Communications Chair to prepare the email and calendar/strategy for sending.
- iii. Market research shows that late afternoon in the beginning of the week (Monday and Tuesday) is the best time to send emails for maximum readership.
- iv. Continue to maintain website so that it is up-to-date. Add photos and recaps of past events. Include a calendar with dates for future events, even if specific timing is not finalized.

- v. Continue to leverage social networking and cross-promote Facebook in our emails; however, keep in mind that social networking appears to be more effective for our members 30-70 years old and less so for our younger alumni.

**4. Understand factors effecting event attendance: convenience/logistics factors, event costs, and other non-logistical hurdles**

a. Identifying convenience/logistical factors:

- i. About 50% of respondents live in or adjacent to Sacramento (47 Sacramento, 4 Elk Grove, 3 Carmichael, 2 W. Sac); 17% live in Davis; 12% hail from South Placer (5 Granite Bay, 3 Roseville, 3 Lincoln, 2 Rocklin,); and 6% from the Folsom/El Dorado Hills area.

Q13 In what city/town do you live?



- ii. As with the 2016 survey and consistent with our demographic information, Sacramento continues to be the clear favorite for location, with only 3% of respondents saying they are “not likely” to attend an event in Sacramento downtown or midtown, compared with 14% who said that they would be unlikely to attend an event in Davis and 28% who said they would be unlikely to attend an event in Folsom, Granite Bay or Roseville.
- iii. The results on best day and time have changed since our 2016 poll, which found Mon-Thurs evenings as the best time, followed by Saturday afternoon or evening.
- iv. Our 2019 respondents strongly favored Saturdays. Of respondents who had any preference as to day, 60% chose Saturday as the first choice, followed by 23% for Mon-Thurs, and Friday and Sunday tied for last. Sunday was the clear favorite for a second-choice option, presumably because those respondents who preferred weekends picked Saturday as their first choice and Sunday as their second choice.
- v. 42% of respondents had no first-choice preference for time. Of those who stated any preference, afternoons and evenings were strongly favored. Given the number of events we have previously hosted on Saturday mornings, it is interesting to note that of the 93 respondents who answered this question, only 12 people picked morning as any preference, with 4 people picking as a first choice, 4 as a second choice, and 4 as a third choice. Even among alumni with kids under 18, mornings performed poorly in the poll.
- vi. Preferences for dates and times were generally consistent across age brackets and among alumni with children under 18 at home and those without children at home.

b. Determining whether event pricing acts as deterrent:

- i. Based on the comments, willingness to pay higher (above \$50) ticket prices is highly tied to the quality of the event.
- ii. 32% of respondents have a high or medium likelihood of being deterred by an event costing over \$30, so the majority of our events should remain around this threshold.
- iii. 59% of respondents have a high or medium likelihood of being deterred by an event costing over \$50. We can experiment with 1 or 2 events a year over this threshold, but should plan on receiving smaller crowds.
- iv. People are more willing to pay above \$30 if it is for an adults' event, not for a whole family.
- v. Selected comments:
  1. "I'm ok with higher prices as long as it's worth it to me. I'm also ok with a portion of every ticket going to Harvard giving funds, or having that option to donate."
  2. "I will attend higher priced events, just more comfortable under \$50."
  3. "It's really much more about the quality of the experience. I really like the culinary ideas that I can do with my wife or other fun events to do with the children. I'd also enjoy more opportunities to network and talk with other smart people who may have already overcome whatever obstacles I may face professionally or to give back to fellow alumni where I may have something to offer."
  4. "Depends on what it is. I am willing to pay over \$100 to see the seventh game of the Warriors and Raptors not the summer league Kings."

c. Inclusion and comfort at events:

- i. Several comments related to comfort level of alumni and lack of feeling included at events, particularly younger alumni.
- ii. Selected comments:
  1. "It was the first (and so far only) event I've attended and yet no one in the organization introduced themselves or welcomed me or engaged me in conversation. My husband and I very much enjoyed the lecture, but it seemed like only people who knew each other conversed. The social aspect was disappointing."
  2. "The people in the club are extremely aloof and unfriendly."
  3. "The holiday party had almost no one of my era. Not within decades! This was a huge disappointment, and I've never gone back because the effort it took to get my young family there was not worth the experience. If I could be sure there would be a quorum of alumni within 5-10 years of my age I'm either direction I would go again."
  4. "Everyone is so arrogant and unfriendly."

d. Other reasons for non-attendance:



- i. Selected comments:
  1. “My lack of participation is mostly due to my conflicting schedule with business and family commitments. Not for the lack of interest in what you have presented in the past.”
  2. “There have been a few events that conflicted with family events over the last two years that have prevented me and my family from participating more, but I've been happy with the offerings and look forward to being more involved.”
  3. “...hard to get to events during the week as we are located about 2h away. Would be nice to have some of the lectures etc more on the w/e”
  4. “Since I'm 77 years old, I prefer not to attend events in the evening. Also, most family-oriented events aren't my thing. For tours I'd need alternatives to walking.”

e. Recommendations:

- i. Plan the vast majority of events in Sacramento.
- ii. Consider planning 2-3 events in Davis, 1 in South Placer, and 1 destination event to either Napa/Sonoma or Bay Area.
- iii. Limit weekend morning events to 2-3 per year.
- iv. Consider Saturday afternoon/evening to be the prime time for event planning.
- v. Monday-Thursday evenings should be targeted as next priority.
- vi. Sunday afternoon/evening events should still be continued. Historically, social events such as potlucks held in this time frame have attracted good crowds.

## **5. Understand Desire for Collaboration with Other Groups**

a. Interest in collaboration with alumni groups from Harvard or other universities:

- i. Except for those in the under 30 demographic (which was a very small sample size), there was little interest in connecting with local alumni groups from other universities.
- ii. Some comments did mention coordinating with other Harvard alumni groups, including the business school, med school and graduate school of arts & sciences.

b. Recommendations:

- i. Continue to organize 1 or 2 events with other alumni groups (Stanford, Yale, etc.) if it fits conveniently with our existing programming or helps us meet minimum attendance numbers, but do not make too much of an effort to do joint events with other universities

## **6. Other Topics**

a. Kid-focused activities:

- i. Only 36% of respondents have children under the age of 18 at home and approximately 1/4 of respondents have an interest in attending family-focused

events, with events focusing on middle and high school-aged children slightly favored over events appealing to children under 10.

- ii. Multiple responses suggested that alumni have grandchildren in the area and would like to attend activities with them.
- iii. Other commenters suggested zoo, rock climbing, children's theater and/or music, play-oriented events, art events, nature/wildlife events.
- iv. Selected comments:
  - 1. "I'm always looking for enrichment opportunities for my kids and to plug them into social circles where families are preparing children for the tournaments of life."
  - 2. "It would be great to have some family-friendly volunteering events. I think that many parents (us included) would show up for an opportunity to be involved in some kind of charity work or public service with our kids. I think most of the events skew old because they are not child-friendly."

b. Reaching younger alumni

- i. Multiple comments
  - 1. "Having events for younger alumni as well"
  - 2. "I feel the actives do not cater to the younger half of the Sacramento alumni. It's not to say that we should do away with the current interests but propose activities that younger folks may have an interest in so that it is more inclusive."
  - 3. "I would like to see more events specifically geared towards Young Alumni"
- ii. Recommendations:
  - 1. Enlist recent alumni to help with coordinating at least 1 event geared towards young alumni, perhaps in connection with other alumni groups.
  - 2. Consider tapping an engaged young alumnus to be a "young-alumni liaison" to separately email and try to encourage this demographic to attend the social events and other club programming.











