

Alumni Ambassadorship: Guidelines for HAA Board Members

Alumni ambassadorship is about making Harvard and the HAA more present in the lives of your alumni community: Your Harvard friends, classmates, colleagues, family, acquaintances, and the alumni with whom you connect through your School, Club, Class, Shared Interest Group, or other avenue.

What is alumni ambassadorship? As members of the HAA Board, we are called on to fulfill the HAA's mission of fostering relationships and strengthening the common bond among Harvard's alumni. As such, we are all volunteer alumni ambassadors: we represent Harvard and the HAA to Harvard's greater alumni community and we also represent alumni to the University. In our role as ambassadors, we share information, form connections between individuals and groups across the University, model volunteer engagement and active participation in Harvard events and programs, ensure the continuity of a strong alumni community by recruiting volunteers, and much more.

Why is alumni ambassadorship important? The HAA's survey data tells us that our fellow alumni prefer to stay informed about Harvard and the HAA through their peers, and that they value the perspectives of fellow alumni above all other perspectives about Harvard. As a highly engaged Harvard alumnus or alumna, your voice matters the most to your Harvard community.

Who is my alumni community? Your alumni community is the set of fellow Harvard alumni with whom you engage, whether that be around Harvard matters (e.g. at your local Harvard Club) or socially in ways unconnected to Harvard (e.g. dinner parties with classmates).

Identifying your alumni community is an important first step to effective ambassadorship. Think about all the Harvard communities you are a part of—they might be your Harvard friends, your fellow Club or Shared Interest Group members, your classmates, alumni who work in your industry, alumni you see at Harvard events, and more. Mapping your alumni communities visually may be helpful. With whom are you most often in touch? To which communities do you feel closest? With whom are you currently sharing Harvard information? Once you have identified your alumni communities, you can begin to engage them as an ambassador. It's possible that some people in your community may overlap with people in another volunteer's network, but keep in mind that you both may be engaging this community in different ways.

What is expected of ambassadors? Each HAA Board Member brings different strengths, experiences, and perspectives to the ambassador role. However, all alumni ambassadors share a core set of key responsibilities:

1. Attend all HAA Board meetings three times per year and actively participate in conversations; bring your voice and perspectives to the table.
2. Make your alumni communities aware of your role as an HAA Board Member; make yourself available as a resource.
3. Communicate with your alumni community through e-mail, social media, or in person at least three times per year (share Harvard news that would be of interest to your alumni community, advertise engagement opportunities, invite people to a gathering etc.).

4. Attend at least one Harvard event each year, outside of the board meetings. This event can be on campus (like a Reunion or School event), an event in which you participate when you return to campus for board meetings, or a local Club, School, or Shared Interest Group event wherever you live.
5. Stay in the know about Harvard and HAA news and updates and lead by example, by being the first to learn about and implement new initiatives. You represent your fellow alumni, solicit information from your alumni communities, and share their feedback with the HAA. In turn, if you have an affiliation with a Club, Shared Interest Group, College Class, and/or School, it is helpful to be aware of the communications they are sending and to share them with your Harvard network. Your fellow alumni who are also affiliated with the same groups may be more likely to engage if communications are reinforced by you.
6. In addition to sharing HAA and Harvard news, there are also tools and resources available that might be of interest to your alumni community. For example, the HAA Alumni Directory could be a useful tool to share with your community. The online journals and e-books available through the Harvard Library may also be of interest. In turn, your fellow alumni might also be interested in knowing about how the HAA or Harvard Clubs or Shared Interest groups can be a resource to them.

What resources are available to help board ambassadors?

- HAA e-mails following Board Meetings to facilitate news-sharing
- Philip's email to HAA volunteers (as a board member, you receive this communication)
- Town Hall Meetings
- The HAA staff liaison for your initiative or committee
- HAA Board Manual
- HAA Alumni Directory

What are some examples of ways other board members have acted as ambassadors?

General:

- Share post-board meeting emails, Philip's email to volunteers, or other specialized communications you receive with your alumni community.
- Encourage your community to join you and attend upcoming local Harvard-related events or programs.
- Help your community find answers to questions or direct them to resources.
- Share practical news and updates from Harvard or the HAA with your community.
- Recruit fellow alumni to become more involved with your Club, Shared Interest Group, Class, and/or School.

Specific:

- In an effort to encourage more recent graduates to attend the Harvard Club of New York's annual meeting and dinner, Ryley Reynolds AB15 sent an email on behalf of the Club to all members who graduated within the past few years. The email received open rates of 70%, a clear indication of how responsive this community was to hearing from a fellow alum.
- During a gathering of her local community's Harvard alumni admissions interviewing team, Elisabeth Bentel Carpenter AB87, MBA94 shared information she had learned at a recent HAA board meeting about revised guidelines for interviewing and protocol. She

was also able to answer questions for the rest of the group that they weren't able to answer on their own.

- To build community and cohesion among the Harvard Graduate School of Design alumni in Denver, Allyson Mendenhall AB90, MLA99 organized a series of hard hat tours featuring site visits to buildings, landscapes, and new developments under construction. These sneak peeks of exciting new design projects, many involving Harvard alumni, connected alums to each other and to their alma mater, engaged them in topics of interest to their profession and their local community, and provided an opportunity to socialize while learning.