

Event Planning At a Glance

Pre-Event

First Things First: An Idea!

No idea is too big or too small when it comes to hosting an event. Call or email your OAR representative and we can begin the planning process. Ask yourself questions regarding the event: What type of event is it? Family friendly, young alumni social, etc. What is my region like? How active are alums in the surrounding area? What type of crowd am I looking to attract? What kind of crowd could I realistically expect? If you are unsure of the participation rates for events in your region, contact OAR for more detailed information!

Selecting a Date

Alumni chapters have great flexibility in selecting a date and time for their event. Be sure to consider potential barriers your target audience may have. Networking event? Allow people time to travel from work. Family-focused event? Avoid late nights when children might be in bed!

If your event involves networking with students or features a faculty member, you should also consult the Tufts academic calendar to avoid any conflicts, such as reading period or finals. You may also want to consider if there are annual or “hallmark” events that are important to your constituents around which you may want to organize an event (Mardi Gras, Yom Kippur). You will want to avoid cultural and religious holidays, if they are important to your constituent base.

Selecting a Venue

There are many aspects to consider when choosing a venue, including the following: capacity, availability, cost, audio visual needs, parking, central location, and the availability of private rooms. Use resources like Yelp to check site reviews if you are not knowledgeable on a particular location. Consider any free or low-cost event space that may be available to you through your employer. Reaching out to friends and colleagues is also a great way to learn of new venues! Don’t forget to access the alumni network through OAR!

Determining Cost

Whether you charge a fee for an event depends on the scale and cost of the event itself. Keep in mind that free events can result in greater attrition. Whether or not your event is free, an OAR representative can help you create a budget for the event, ensuring that all associated costs are

included, and determine an appropriate price point for your audience.

Contact Person

The contact person serves as the point person for the event. He/she will answer questions from alumni and track all event RSVPs. Jumbos often prefer talking with other Jumbos, so it's a great way to reconnect and encourage event attendance.

RSVP Methods

Use our online tool, which will allow you to collect money, view the attendee list, and request additional information like meal choice. The system also allows OAR staff to collect names to track attendance and alumni engagement.

Additional Event Details

In order to avoid getting inundated with emails, be as informative as possible on the front side. Consider including tips on how to get to the event, parking options, and public transportation information.

Ticketed Events

If your event requires tickets, you need to determine how best to distribute them. Tickets are often mailed or handed out at a pre-event social. When distributing tickets, be sure that attendees are seated with their guests.

Communications

In order to push out communications regarding any type of event, we will need to be provided with the following information:

- Date and Time
- Location
- Cost
- RSVP Method
- Contact Person
- Event Description

Timing is definitely important when planning events, especially during busy times of the year. Promote your event at least 4 weeks in advance of the RSVP dates. The sooner the communications go out, the more attendees you will have!

Print invitation: We will need to have finalized event information 7-9 weeks prior to the RSVP date in order to mail out a print invitation.

Communications request: The event description is your chance to tell everyone why they should attend your program. Be sure to include anything that will generate excitement and enthusiasm! If you need assistance with language or messaging, contact your OAR representative.

Regional Digests: Regions that have more than one event in a short period of time will be put on a digest, which will be sent out on a weekly basis. The digest will also include shared interest group and career services events happening during that period in your area.

Email Blasts: OAR will send out an email blast to all alumni of all schools in your region. Your event will be listed on the calendar of events on the Tufts Alumni website.

Given the importance of communications to successful programming, this handbook contains greater detail about communications procedures as well as a communications job request template on page 32.

Event Space Details

Once the communication plan is in place, you should now start planning a menu for the event. Typically you will work with a catering manager or someone similar who can provide information about menu options. Be sure to provide reasonable vegetarian options. If you are unsure whether to serve one item vs. another, let us know!

Key questions to ask a catering manager include:

- How will setup and clean-up be taken care of?
- How early can you arrive at the venue? How late can you stay?
- Are there particular rules or restrictions regarding decorations?

Be sure to confirm any insurance requirements; OAR can work with you and the venue to be sure all parties' needs are met.

In addition to planning the menu, you will also want to request any audio visual needs from the vendor.

Ensuring Attendance

If you are having trouble generating interest and RSVPs for your event, consider using one of the following techniques: email a list of attendees from past events, make individual phone calls to encourage attendance, and utilize Facebook and other social media sites. If attendance has been an issue in the past, consider partnering with local alumni groups from other schools.

Event Day

Set up

On the day of the event, be sure to arrive early to set up registration. Check in with all necessary staff at the venue and run through any AV. If you plan on passing out any gifts, make sure these are at the registration table and will have adequate space. OAR staff will send you nametags, giveaways, and Tufts literature if appropriate for the event. If possible, work with the venue to provide eco-friendly options for the event. Check out our Go Green! guide on page 39.

Photography

Take photos! More than anything else, alumni photo galleries on tuftsalumni.org receive the most traffic, so be sure to make your photos pop! Alumni love to see photos of them reconnecting, and you do not have to be a professional photographer to take a good photo. Try to shoot early and in the sun if you can, and don't be afraid to take candid shots.

Enjoy!

Don't forget to sit back and enjoy the event with all other attendees – you certainly deserve it after your hard work organizing the event.

Post-Event

OAR Follow-up

After the event, it's important to us to promote all your hard work! Please complete the Volunteer Coordinator Form. Email the form and photos to your OAR representative and the story with photos will be posted to tuftsalumni.org, Facebook, and Twitter. The story may even be featured in *Tufts Alumni News*, which is sent to more than 66,000 alumni each month.

Committee Follow-up

Regroup with your planning or steering committee. What went well? What didn't? Would you change anything if you did the event again? Be sure to document your observations for future planning.

Attendee Follow-up

In some cases, it is nice to send a thank-you note to event attendees. This gives you the opportunity to express your gratitude for their involvement as well as promote upcoming events or a chapter website!

If you would like to do a post-event survey, OAR can help you draft and distribute one to

attendees. Think carefully about what you are interested in knowing. Some event features may never change (such as the venue), and are therefore not worth including. OAR has sample event surveys for you to review.