Chicago Affinity Groups

The University of Chicago Alumni Association

March 2010

Statement of Purpose and Overall Objectives

The University of Chicago relies on the strength and diversity of its alumni community and actively supports the formation of new Chicago Affinity Groups and the strengthening of existing ones. Alumni who form, lead, and participate in these Groups do so with the understanding that their respective Groups exist to strengthen their community of alumni and the University as a whole, and must follow certain guidelines if they are to be official Chicago Affinity Groups that may utilize University resources.

All Chicago Affinity Groups must be organized and governed in accordance with the guidelines and policies set forth by the Office of Alumni Relations and the University of Chicago Alumni Association which is governed by the Alumni Board of Governors. The Alumni Board of Governors acts on behalf of all University alumni as constituted by the Board of Trustees of the University of Chicago.

Introduction and Background

The University of Chicago Alumni Association is dedicated to fostering an energetic engagement between its worldwide Alumni in order for alumni to connect and to extend the values of the University of Chicago. The goal is to facilitate groups through which Alumni may continue their association with the University of Chicago and to build a lifelong commitment to a globally renowned community of scholars and critical thinkers with mutual benefits for students, alumni and for the University as a whole.

President Emeritus Hanna Holburn Gray expressed her expectations for the University’s unique students and future alumni who are connected to and share the legacy of our great University in her 1987 Aims of Education address.

“...I hope that you will find and make this a place where the spirit of criticism and a genuine civility exist together in a productive relationship. I hope that your respect for disciplined intelligence and rigorous scholarship will always make you demand due process in thought and judgment. I hope that you will combine seriousness of purpose with a continuing sense of the absurd. I hope that you will have the courage to be a little eccentric, while being thoughtful of others. I hope that you will combine commitment to independence with a concern for interdependence of our individual and institutional existence. I hope you will remember that, as someone once said, “It is impossible to learn what one thinks one already knows,” and that you will sustain a taste for both the complexities and the limitations of knowledge...”
Definition

The University of Chicago Alumni Association supports alumni who wish to create a Chicago Affinity Group to actively engage in communicating and gathering around a central unifying purpose or interest. An implicit component of the mission of these Chicago Affinity Groups is to establish a long term mutually beneficial relationship between alumni and the University. The Chicago Affinity Group’s primary objective is to engage alumni and provide opportunities for them to remain connected to the University in a way most meaningful to them.

An example of a Chicago Affinity Group is the University of Chicago, Chicago Women’s Alliance (or CWA.) CWA is a Chicago Affinity Group targeted to women with significant life experience who are alumnae, faculty, or staff of the University of Chicago. CWA’s primary mission is to provide an opportunity for like-minded University of Chicago women with great intellectual curiosity to connect and to share common personal and professional interests as well as to provide a forum for new knowledge.

Formation

Chicago Affinity Groups will work under the guidance of the Alumni Board of Governors, and the University of Chicago Alumni Association to establish the specific priorities of their respective Group.

To establish a Chicago Affinity Group that is recognized and supported by the University, a Chicago Affinity Group Application form should be submitted to the University of Chicago Alumni Association.

A mission statement and goals for the Group (aligned with the overall goals and objectives of the University of Chicago Alumni Association) should be developed.

The structure of each Group may be determined by the alumni involved. The University of Chicago Alumni Association can provide examples of organization models it currently supports. Defined roles and responsibilities with a fair and transparent method of selecting leadership should be established. (See Appendix A.)

Each Affinity Group submission to the University of Chicago Alumni Association will adhere to the following process:

- The Alumni Association must review all Affinity Group applications.
- The Alumni Association will have thirty days to review the application and make a decision.
- Notification will be made by the Alumni Association staff and CAG operations may begin as soon as this notification is in effect.
Once the Group is established, the leader(s) of the Group will communicate regularly with an assigned staff member from the Alumni Association to aid in planning.

A brief written report on the activities of the Group should be filed with the Alumni Association by July 30 of each year. A standardized template will be provided. These reports will be an important resource for new Chicago Affinity Groups, thus the Alumni Association strongly encourages their timely submission.

**Goals**

Currently the primary means of alumni affiliation is by region, academic degree, and by class, through Regional Alumni Clubs, Reunion Committees, Class Councils and Alumni Schools Committee.

In addition to these traditional points of connection, we recognize that our alumni also affiliate in the following ways:

1. Industry or profession (law, entertainment, medicine, finance, education)
2. Interest (student life, multicultural affairs, human rights)
3. Life Stage (young alumni, parents, retired alumni)
4. Involvement as a student or an adult (fraternities/sororities, athletics, hiking, reading, ethnicity/race)

Through the creation of alumni-led Chicago Affinity Groups, we hope to encourage these affiliations and:

- Foster community and build personal and professional connections among alumni, faculty, administrators, students, and other friends or stakeholders of the University
- Cultivate pride in the University and all constituent organizations.
- Support mutually-beneficial aims among alumni for social, personal and intellectual, and professional growth
- Support and engage with University stakeholders.
- Encourage other alumni to volunteer time and contribute resources to support each other, current students and the overall University
- Train alumni volunteers and leaders
- Advocate on behalf of the University and its students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders

**Alumni Association Resources**

The University of Chicago Alumni Association has numerous resources available to University recognized Chicago Affinity Groups, including:
- Assistance to identify potential leaders and members of a particular Affinity Group.
- Management of the distribution of relevant information.
- Administration of event logistics such as event registration, name tags distribution.
- Management of the Chicago Affinity Group’s membership data.
- Manage the input of alumni contact information.
- List the Affinity Group on the alumni web community.
- Access to online services such as online discussion listhosts and online event registration.
- Provide limited funding to support co-sponsored events marketed to all alumni.*
- Provide communication support including, email blasts, event calendar postings, marketing and branding support to promote the Group’s programs and activities among the broader audience of University alumni and other constituents.
- Provide access, when available, to Alumni House or University Regional Offices for Group meetings and events.
- Facilitate training and guidance to alumni leaders through staff liaisons and volunteer leadership development programs.
- Share knowledge and serve as the liaison to University resources.
- Serve as the liaison between University faculty and facilitating their involvement in Affinity Group events.
**Guidelines**

In order to be recognized as an official University of Chicago Affinity Group, all Groups should adhere to the following guidelines during the initial formation stage and ongoing administration and operations.

**Structure and Leadership**
The structure of each Group may be determined by the alumni involved. We recommend two Group leaders (President and Vice-President) at a minimum. More active Groups may choose to engage more volunteers as needed. Each Group should craft an orderly, transparent process for developing leadership and transitioning as terms expire. Only alumni may serve in Group leadership roles. Leaders must agree to work under the auspices of the governance provided by the Alumni Board of Governors and will agree to participate in training and other volunteer leadership opportunities on a periodic basis.

Chicago Affinity Group leaders are encouraged to think carefully about the specific responsibilities of the leadership roles and work to assure that they are fairly distributed. Future leadership should be encouraged and cultivated. The pipeline of talent is a high priority and should be vigorously developed.

**Programming**
- All events must be open to all alumni and other University constituents regardless of degree, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or other factors irrelevant to participation in the programs of the University.
- Promotion of the Group may be limited to the members, however access to people outside of the Group cannot be denied based on the factors mentioned above.
- Activities must support, and not conflict with, existing University of Chicago Alumni Association events and activities.
- Chicago Affinity Groups may welcome and include alumni and their spouses/partners, current students and their parents, faculty, staff and other friends or stakeholders of the University.
- Chicago Affinity Groups will work with an assigned staff member to establish and submit an event calendar to the Alumni Association.

**Communications**
Chicago Affinity Groups operate in conjunction with and under the umbrella of the University of Chicago Alumni Association and all marketing materials, both print and electronic, will identify that affiliation.

Communication processes will be maintained through the appropriate means and frequency to be jointly determined by the Affinity Group and the Alumni Association.
The University of Chicago Alumni Association will facilitate communication between the Affinity Group leadership and constituent alumni, and will maintain up to date contact information.

**Information Management**

**Maintaining and Using Alumni Information**
The University of Chicago Alumni Association will continue to maintain the alumni database of record. If an alum is interested in joining a Chicago Affinity Group, they may do so online, or via postal mail, facsimile or by telephone to the Alumni Association.

Each Affinity Group will have an identification code to track Group membership within the alumni database. Similarly, any address/phone/email updates for the Group’s members will be sent to the University of Chicago Alumni Association, who will maintain the Group database of record.

**Website**
The Alumni Web Community is the most robust source of information for members in each Group. The Chicago Affinity Group will have password protected access to the Alumni Web Community for networking.

Through the Web Community alumni will be able to search for members of their Group, locate the most up to date contact information as well as access additional information alumni may have included on their profiles. The University is conscious of conserving resources and encourages alumni to learn about the many resources the Alumni Web Community offers. The ABG strongly encourages groups to promote the use of the online directory as the primary networking tool.

Chicago Affinity Group leaders are encouraged to think creatively about how they can help to ensure that they maintain current contact information for all of the alumni within their respective Group. One of the University’s biggest challenges is maintaining current alumni contact information; therefore this is one of the most fundamental ways that a Group may help fellow alumni stay connected with each other and the University.

**Group Communication**
The primary goal is to integrate communications while enabling alumni to connect through a variety of portals in ways that are meaningful for them.

The University of Chicago offers Chicago Affinity Groups the ability to create online discussion groups (listservs) so that all members of the Group may easily communicate with the Group at large. All Chicago Affinity Groups are encouraged to take advantage of this functionality.

In addition to online discussion groups hosted by the University of Chicago, some Groups may choose to create or use already-existing groups on alternate third-party sites,
such as Yahoo Groups or Facebook. Chicago Affinity Group leaders should send monthly updates to the Alumni Association with the names and contact information of the Group members to ensure that everyone within the Group receives acknowledgements and communications sent from the University. Chicago Affinity Group leadership will also provide the name and location of Groups on third-party sites to the University so that links can be established between that site and the University’s site.

**Fundraising**

The University of Chicago will support and allow fundraising activities whose purpose is to raise money specifically for University students, programs, scholarships, faculty and staff. In determining whether such activities will be approved, the following will be considered: the types of activities planned to generate funds (i.e., events, outings, direct solicitations); the proposed use of funds (i.e., scholarships, programs); any restrictions on the use of funds (i.e., specific gender or ethnicity restrictions) and any tax implications applicable to donors. It is suggested that recognized Affinity Groups and alumni clubs provide a brief overview of their planned activities for each fiscal year to the Alumni Board of Governors or the Alumni Association no later than July 1 of each year.

**Annual Report:**

Each Affinity Group will be asked to turn in an annual report by July 1 in order to qualify for their yearly support. The annual report will be a basic template requiring the following information:

- Event list
- Total alumni attendance and biographical information of attendees
- Financial breakdown
- Current board list
- Board meetings minutes

**Submission Form**

If you have questions, or would like to submit a Chicago Affinity Group submission form, please contact the University Alumni Association:

Email [affinity@uchicago.edu](mailto:affinity@uchicago.edu)
Appendix A:  

Chicago Affinity Group By-laws

Clubs are not required to use these sample by-laws; however, all by-laws must be reviewed by the Association prior to filing

Article I: NAME

The name of this organization is the University of Chicago Alumni club of (city or region).

Article II: MISSION STATEMENT

The common purpose of University of Chicago alumni clubs and organizations is to provide opportunities for alumni, parents and friends of University of Chicago to meet to serve as it’s advocate, articulating the role and direction of the University; to encourage intellectual enrichment and professional growth through forums and presentations; and to elevate the stature of the University in our communities through club programming.

Article III: GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The proposed geographic area of the club shall be filed with the University of Chicago Alumni Association. The geographic area of the club is subject to the approval of said office.

Article IV: MEMBERSHIP

Alumni, parents, and friends of University of Chicago shall be eligible for membership.

Article V: OFFICERS OF THE CLUB

Section 1 - Officers
The officers of the club shall include but not be limited to: President & Vice President. The board of directors as may be deemed necessary can elect other officers from time to time.

Section 2 - Duties
The duties of the officers shall be those duties and powers usually incident to their respective offices and as detailed in the University of Chicago Alumni Club Handbook.

Section 3 - Qualifications
a) All officers must be members in good standing at the time of their election and at all times during their tenure.
   b) The members nominated to serve as president of the club shall be limited to those members who have already served at least one term as an officer.

Section 4 - Term of Office
The term of office shall be two years. Officers shall serve not more than two consecutive terms in any office. Each officer shall work to identify his/her successor during the second year of his/her term.

Section 5 - Election of Officers
The officers shall be elected at the Annual Meeting by a majority vote of the members present and voting.

Article VI: BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1 - Members and Qualifications
The board shall consist of the officers of the club, the immediate past President, _____ members at-large and contacts from various University programs and initiatives.

Section 2 - Duties
The duties of the board shall be to manage the operation and activities of the club in accordance with the Mission Statement, the University of Chicago Alumni Club Handbook and the University of Chicago Alumni Association's by-laws, including but not limited to:

a) Holding a minimum of four meetings per year.
   b) Coordinating a minimum of six events per year.
   c) Electing officers and directors to fill vacancies occurring during the club year.
   d) Electing additional directors during the year as may be deemed appropriate.

Article VII: COMMITTEES

The board of directors may appoint committees that include members in good standing who are neither directors nor officers. Such committees have authority to bind the club to the extent that such authority has been specifically delegated to the committee by the board of directors.

Article VIII: DISTRIBUTION OF ASSETS

In the event that the club shall cease active operation, all assets of the club shall be given to the University of Chicago Alumni Association.

Article IX: FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the club shall begin on July 1 of each year.

Article X: AMENDMENTS

The by-laws may be adopted, repealed or amended, in whole or in part, at any time, by the affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the board of directors.
Article XI: ADHERENCE TO ALUMNI ASSOCIATION GUIDELINES

These by-laws shall adhere to all existing Alumni Association guidelines. In the event that Alumni Association guidelines are amended or revised, these by-laws shall be reviewed for compliance and amended accordingly.

Adopted this ___ day of ____________, __________.

University of Chicago Alumni Club of
By: President _________________________
    Secretary _________________________