

Alumni Club Leader Resource Guide

2020-2021



Alumni Clubs Team:

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Introduction:

This guide is designed as a resource and reference point for best practices and techniques to establish and sustain a successful alumni club. While each alumni club is unique, the broad expectations and resources outlined help create a foundation. The Alumni Clubs team can help strategize with individual leaders for specific club growth and success.

Role of Alumni Clubs & Alumni Club Leaders:

- **Role of alumni clubs:** with alumni around the world, alumni clubs are critical to keep alumni engaged and connected to the School community.
- **Role of alumni club leaders:** alumni club leaders serve as the primary liaisons between Columbia Business School and the alumni in their region; these clubs and associations provide alumni with access to a global network of business leaders and offer a range of opportunities for continued development through professional and social events.

Alumni Club Statistics:

- **86** alumni clubs
- **7** affinity alumni clubs
- **28** domestic alumni clubs in **17** states and Washington, DC
- **51** international alumni clubs on **6** continents and in **42** countries, excluding the United States



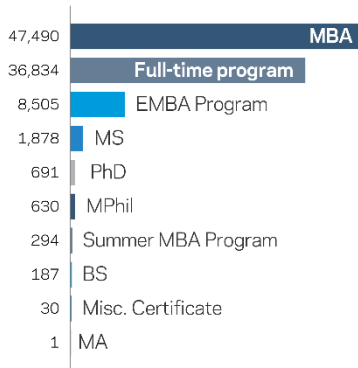
A full listing of all our [affinity](#), [domestic](#), and [international](#) alumni clubs and their leaders can be found online.



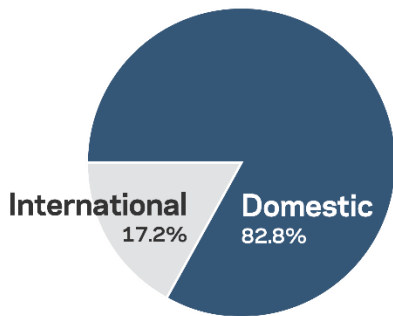
Alumni at a Glance Statistics:

Total living alumni: 47,490

(includes all degree programs; does not include certificate alumni)



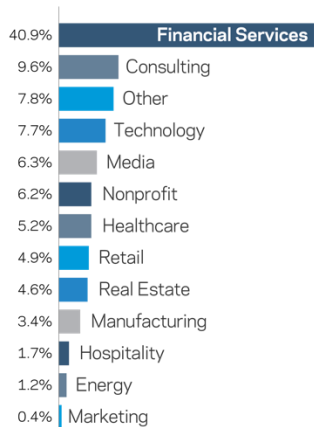
Geographic distribution*:



GEOGRAPHIC REGION BY POPULATION	STATES BY POPULATION
Europe (7.4%)	NY (31.4%)
Asia/Oceania (5.6%)	NJ (9.5%)
Central/South America & Caribbean (2.1%)	CA (9.1%)
Middle East (1.0%)	CT (5.5%)
Canada (0.8%)	FL (4.2%)
Africa (0.3%)	MA (3.5%)

*Of 47,490 total living alumni, 96.7 percent have preferred addresses on record. Percentages in this section are based on 45,957 alumni with preferred addresses on record and are rounded to the nearest one-tenth. A "preferred address" refers to the physical mailing address an alumnus/a has indicated is the preferred destination for all mail from the University, but it may not be the address at which they spend the majority of their time.

Industry sector distribution *(Based on 33,784 alumni with valid industry information)*



Columbia Business School Departmental Overview:

Alumni Clubs Team:

- **Alexandra Kennedy**, Associate Director, Alumni Clubs, Events, and Engagement
Email: ak3924@gsb.columbia.edu Phone: **212-854-7947**
- **Star Sawyer**, Executive Director, Alumni and Corporate Relations
Email: ss3858@gsb.columbia.edu Phone: **212-854-9113**

Alexandra Kennedy should be your first resource and point of contact on all club related matters and inquiries.

External Relations and Development:

- **Mission Statement:** The mission of the department is to cultivate and deepen relationships with all of the School's constituents, and to further the School's objectives by increasing awareness of its priorities, showcasing its strengths, and raising funds in support of its needs. The department advances a culture of respect and professionalism that shapes the team's environment and relationships with alumni and friends, faculty and students, corporate partners, colleagues across the University, and our peer schools.
- **Vision Statement:** Creating a powerful and engaged global community of compassionate and effective leaders.

The **Office of External Relations and Development** is broken into the following sub-teams:

- Advancement Services
- Alumni Relations
- Corporate Relations
- Individual Giving
- Major Gifts
- Special Projects
- Strategic Communications

Alumni club leaders will work most closely with the Alumni Relations team, with additional facetime with Individual Giving and Major Gifts teams, especially during staff/faculty travel. Gift officers are also crucial resources to identifying possible event speakers and hosts for club events.

Alumni Club Expectations & Resources:

Expectations:

- **Organize at least two alumni club events per fiscal year (July 1–June 30).**

All alumni clubs are asked to organize at least two alumni club events per fiscal year. These events are at the discretion of the alumni club leaders/leadership board. Event success is largely dependent on the specific alumni club and the general interests of the alumni population. While some possible ideas are outlined below, we defer to club leaders to deliver the appropriate content based on the alumni. We encourage alumni club leaders to build off fellow club leaders' events and successes.

Ideas for Alumni Club Events:

- Alumni speaker panel/fireside chat with industry/topic focus
 - Faculty speaker event, when applicable, with traveling faculty or School centers and programs
 - Event focused on specific social initiatives – Giving Day, Women's Circle, WACE, etc.
 - Career growth and development event (possibly in conjunction with the Career Management Center)
 - Prospective student events in conjunction with Admissions
 - Summer intern events/welcome new graduate events
 - Networking event
 - Social happy hour/beer or wine tasting
 - Book talk with recent faculty or alumni publication
 - Volunteer/community building event
 - Cooking class
 - Museum/cultural institution events/tours
 - Event at the zoo/aquarium
 - Art focused event – wine & paint night, arts and crafts class, etc.
 - Family-focused events
 - Exercise focused events
 - Outdoor-driven events – parks and botanical gardens
 - Holiday parties or seasonal kickoff events
 - City/state/country specific events – bat watching, State fairs, etc.
 - Events in conjunction with [Columbia Alumni Association alumni clubs](#) and/or peer Business School alumni clubs
- **For all events, provide event recaps, attendee lists, and photos (if available) to Alexandra Kennedy.**

Event recaps, attendee lists, and photos can all be sent directly to Alexandra Kennedy via email at ak3924@gsb.columbia.edu or through this [online form](#). Event recaps and attendee lists aid in the School's metrics and rankings, and help provide faculty and staff with talking points/connections as they meet with alumni around the world. The Alumni Clubs team will frequently feature alumni club photos on the [website](#).

- **Assist with peer-to-peer outreach for Columbia Giving Day and other School initiatives.**

As the primary liaison between Columbia Business School and regional alumni, club leaders are asked to assist with peer-to-peer outreach for [Columbia Giving Day](#) and other School initiatives. Often communications and messages are best received from fellow alumni rather than School administrators and offices. The Alumni Clubs Team will provide monthly emails to club leaders outlining School initiatives, priorities, and upcoming events.

- **Commit to leadership for at least two years with a plan in place for leadership succession.**

Successful alumni clubs require consistent leadership to provide vision and expansion. We ask all club leaders for at least two years of service, though many commit beyond this time frame. Through this time commitment, club leaders build relationships with the School and have the opportunity to develop a club strategy with the Alumni Clubs team. The School is grateful for all alumni who are willing to serve in leadership roles and does not place term limits/require elections on alumni clubs. Leadership and its structure (whether informal or formal) are at the discretion of the alumni club and its community. Succession planning should begin well before club leaders intend to vacate their leadership position. Alumni club leaders should consider possible successors and more heavily involve them as they transition. The Alumni Clubs Team can help identify strong individuals, if need be, and will work with you to ensure a smooth transition.

- **Make an annual participatory gift to the [Columbia Business School Annual Fund](#).**

Alumni club leaders are asked to lead by example and make an annual participatory gift to the Columbia Business School Annual Fund to invest in the School and the power of their degrees. These gifts are the driving force behind the School's ability to innovate and excel in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Alumni club leaders have, by far, one of the highest annual fund participation rates—over 43 percent in FY19—of all of our alumni groups.

- **Club leader attendance at the [annual Columbia Alumni Leaders Weekend](#).**

Columbia Alumni Leaders Weekend and the Business School Leadership Summit provide the opportunity for alumni club leaders to network, hear updates on the School, and share best practices. This weekend provides alumni club leaders with valuable time to connect with each other to build off of each other's successes and learn from others' experiences. The energy and momentum helps propel the successes of alumni clubs through the year. The Business School provides a travel stipend for one club leader per alumni club.

- **Join the [Columbia Business School Alumni Club Leaders CBS Hub Group](#).**

This group provides a platform for online discussion where club leaders share successful practices, event updates, and general club leadership knowledge. As fellow volunteer leaders are a vital resource, we strongly encourage leaders to join this group. Club leaders can join [here](#).

Resources:

The Alumni Clubs Team provides support to alumni club leaders at all stages of club growth and development. Outlined below are some of the general resources we can offer our alumni clubs. We remain available to strategize with individual clubs based on their needs and goals. In addition to the Alumni Clubs Team, fellow club leaders should also offer best practice sharing.

- **Alumni lists and contact information** for regional alumni.
- **Event support:** invitations, event marketing, registration tracking (if needed), etc.
- **Event reimbursements** on an ad hoc basis, as funds are available, to clubs who meet all expectations.
- **Access to faculty, staff, and centers/programs** when they are traveling on behalf of the School.
- **Community platforms** for club leaders to connect, including the WhatsApp group, CBS Hub group, and MyCBS platform.
- Invitation to **annual Alumni Club Leader Summit and Columbia Alumni Leaders Weekend** to network, hear updates on the School, and share best practices.

Establishing a New Alumni Club:

Currently we have **86 alumni clubs across the globe**, but are always looking for the opportunity to expand the community's network based on the needs and location of the alumni population. Those interested in starting a new alumni club should contact Alexandra Kennedy. At this foundational stage, the Alumni Clubs Team will advise if enough alumni live in the region for club activity to be sustainable, and if so, provide guidance on next steps and connect new club leaders to current club leaders who can serve as mentors/advisors.

In FY21, the Alumni Clubs team is looking to expand alumni club activity in three European countries: **Belgium, Denmark, and Portugal.**

Building a New Alumni Club:

- **Step one:** connect with local alumni and gauge alumni interest. The Alumni Clubs Team can provide a list of regional alumni with contact information. Utilize personal and professional alumni connections to understand the alumni community and its needs. The Columbia Alumni Association club leader/board may also be a valuable tool, if such a club already exists in the region.
- **Step two:** identify at least one additional alumnus/a who is willing to take a leadership role. Schedule a call with Alexandra Kennedy to discuss strategy and next step. Reach out to other Columbia Business School club leaders for their advice/guidance. The Alumni Clubs Team is happy to facilitate such connections.
- **Step three:** announce the establishment of the new alumni club to the regional community. The Alumni Clubs Team can send this email on your behalf. Identify the platform(s) that will best reach the targeted alumni population – email, WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, WeChat, etc. This announcement can also include a call to action for additional club volunteers.
- **Step four:** promote and host the club's inaugural event. Allow ample lead time for the club's first event. The Alumni Clubs Team can help with event promotion via mass invitations and including the event on the alumni events calendar. Be sure to reach out to fellow alumni you have a personal or professional connection with to invite them to attend. The Alumni Clubs Team can also help fund the club's inaugural event, up to \$500 USD.
- **Step five:** event recap and discussion with Alumni Clubs Team to prepare and strategize for club's future.

Alumni Club Events Best Practices:

Event Planning: alumni club events are often most successful with ample lead time. We recommend you consider establishing an annual calendar of events. As you do this, consider hosting seasonal events and events coinciding with School initiatives (Columbia Giving Day, Women's Week, etc.). Events should be planned and promoted well in advance – often 2-3 months out, if not more. As an event begins to take shape, be sure to consider your intended purpose and target audience. You will need to take into consideration all facets of the event: venue, registration, costs, content (if any), potential hosts, discounted venues/Columbia University connections, etc.

Event Promotion: event success is largely driven by event promotion. We recommend you start promoting an event at least four to six weeks out. Larger signature events may require even more notice. Consider promoting via multiple platforms/channels, including but not limited to: email, text, WhatsApp, Facebook, LinkedIn, social media, etc. Be sure to share the event details with the Alumni Clubs Team for inclusion on the [alumni events calendar](#). This calendar is linked to in most School communications and is highly trafficked.

Event Registration: alumni clubs take registration using all different methods – email, text, registration survey (Qualtrics, Google Form, Eventbrite, Survey Monkey, etc.), Facebook, etc. Identify the method(s) that works best for your targeted audience. The Alumni Clubs Team can manage registration on your behalf, but please note they are not allowed to collect any money on behalf of the club. Club finances must remain entirely separate from the Alumni Clubs Team and the School.

Event Hosts/Speakers: content/speaker events require advanced notice and planning, especially if multiple speaker calendars need to be accounted for. The Alumni Clubs Team, in conjunction with their External Relations and Development colleagues, can help identify alumni hosts and speakers. Additionally, alumni clubs will have access to faculty and staff speakers during their travel on behalf of the School.

Event Cost: alumni clubs must factor in event costs as planning commences. Clubs are welcome to consider charging a nominal fee to offset expenses and/or securing event sponsors. Alumni club leaders should utilize their connections and alumni communities to minimize costs – for example, consider hosting an event at an office space at minimal charge, or asking an alum to donate food or beverages to the event. Alumni clubs can also minimize costs by providing a gathering space but have food/drinks at cost. Charging a nominal registration fee often helps decrease the event drop-off rate.

Social Media: alumni clubs are encouraged to use social media when applicable. A full “how-to” social media guide for alumni club leaders is available [here](#).

Helpful Resources to Keep in Mind:

- A list of all Columbia Business School **faculty members** can be found [here](#).
- A list of all Columbia Business School's **Centers and Programs** can be found [here](#).
- A list of Columbia Business School's **Board of Overseers members** can be found [here](#).
- A list of the **Columbia Alumni Association alumni clubs** can be found [here](#).
- A list of Columbia University's **Global Centers** can be found [here](#).
- The Business School's **online alumni community** can be found [here](#).
- The Columbia Business School Alumni Club Leaders **CBS Hub Group** can be found [here](#).
- Our newest alumni community, **MyCBS**, has officially launched! If you are interested in managing your alumni club group page on the platform, please contact Liana Began at lb3180@gsb.columbia.edu.