



# **Alumni Association**

## **ULM Alumni Association Chapters & Clubs Event Toolkit**

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The ULM Alumni Association expects chapters to assist in the engagement of alumni in identified areas/and or associated with formal clubs. In doing so, this often involves hosting events of interest for our alumni. We want to equip your chapter/club with tools to ensure successful events! Utilize this toolkit to assist in creating and managing an events committee, hosting amazing events and keeping alumni engaged.

The Alumni Association staff is your partner when planning events. Please contact us with questions, for guidance or ideas, procedural knowledge, etc.

## Get started!

The first question that's often asked is "where do we start?" The outline below gives you a *general* overview of the steps needed to host an event.

1. Form an events committee that focuses on hosting chapter/club events.
2. Identify events the chapter/club wants to host for the year. Remember to determine the purpose of each event.
3. Complete an **Events Application Form** each event.
4. Participate in an engagement call with a designated member of the Alumni staff overseeing chapter/club management.
5. Once an event is approved, the chapter/club can proceed with planning the event.
6. Host the event!
7. Participate in a follow-up call with a designated member of the Alumni staff overseeing chapter/club management.
8. Follow-up with alumni in attendance at the event to thank them for attendance and seek feedback on the event.
9. Implement feedback where relevant.

### **Events Committee**

To kick-off each new year, identify chapter/club members who are willing to help by serving on an events committee. The events committee should be responsible for all chapter/club events that will be hosted, from planning, execution, to follow-up. Consider the following when identifying committee members:

- Recruit current members of your chapter seeking specific skill sets relevant to planning and hosting events (i.e. organizational and communication skills; creativity; event planning/management; fiduciary experience, knowledge of local area, etc.).
- Ask one person to serve as the lead (the chapter/club president can't do everything!).
- This is a great way to engage new/potential chapter/club members. Often volunteers just need to be asked to do something. This is a perfect time to specifically ask someone that's not currently a member to join and contribute to the chapter/club.
- Seek to have a committee that represents the broad depth of ULM - consider volunteers of different generations, majors, interests, etc. When hosting events, you will need to appeal to a wide range of alumni, thus, you'll want input from various perspectives. Don't forget about our recent alumni! Engaging them is important to start their alumni experience on the right foot.

The events committee lead should contact the designated events committee and schedule a planning meeting/call to create a calendar of events. Contact the alumni staff to notify them of the meeting. Utilize the tips for a successful meeting found in the **Chapter/Club Webpage** and use the following best practices specifically for event committee meetings/calls.

- Send calendar invites via email (Outlook, Google, etc.) so the meeting/call appears on personal calendars. This often results in better attendance.
- Assign responsibilities to committee members creating “to do lists” for them
- Ensure that assignments for follow-up action are clearly understood and include deadlines.
- Set the date/time for the next meeting/call.

### **General Event Planning Tips**

All events are different, but there are some general items to consider when planning any alumni event for ULM. The below is useful to consider when planning the perfect event for your chapter/club.

- Engage your ULM Alumni Association staff! They are here to partner with chapters/clubs and can provide guidance and insight for all things regarding events and the Alumni Association.
  - ULM Alumni Association staff can assist with event planning including; advertising for the event, budget specifications, etc.
- Plan in advance. The best events don't just “happen.” You'll need time for ULM approvals, to find venues, advertise the event, collect RSVPs, etc. It's suggested that you have all plans finalized at least six weeks prior to the event.
- Determine the type and purpose of the event. Do you need/want a speaker from ULM?
- Know your audience! Are you trying to appeal to young professionals, families, specific majors, locations, etc.?
  - Be fiscally responsible and ensure you're within budget and keep cost at a minimum to attendees.
- Pick a date and time that doesn't conflict with other ULM events or major events in the chapter/club's area (school holidays, religious holidays, festivals, high school football, etc.). It's often great to plan events to coincide with ULM events like a virtual watch party, or happy hour prior to a ULM event, etc.
- Select locations that are easy to access and find and have a quality atmosphere that will appeal to and welcome all guests.
- Have chapter/club volunteers help with planning and execution. A President doesn't have to do all the work! Form an events committee to assist with the planning and day of needs.
- Advertise for events utilizing all avenues possible such as social media, email, “snail” mail, university calendars, etc. Relying on just one type of advertisement limits the audience and you want as many people as possible to know about the event.

*Always promote an image of friendliness, support for ULM and positivity. Ensure someone is front and center welcoming guests and introducing guests to each other. Overall, help guests form a connection to want to attend and support more events/activities.*

# Event How-tos

## **Ideas for Events and Activities**

Alumni events often vary from the “tried and true” like crawfish boils to new and trending events like axe throwing. Whatever the case, remember to have varying types of events throughout the year in order to appeal to a broad range of alumni. Be creative and don’t be afraid to try something new! Below are some examples to get you started, but use your creativity and knowledge of what will work for your area and/or interest. If you need other ideas, reach out to our Alumni staff or other **chapters or clubs** to see what they are doing and experiencing with events.

Family Friendly/Athletics	Social	Networking/Career Development
ULM watch parties/tailgates - don't forget to attend the games in person when in your area or within driving distance!	Happy hours; wine/beer tastings; axe throwing; escape rooms	Host ULM faculty on a Zoom call to discuss current, trending topics of interest
Crawfish/shrimp boil; cochon de lait; pizza party; picnics at a park	Form a team for a co-ed team (i.e., kickball, pickleball, softball)	Alumni lunch/dinner featuring speaker from a ULM program
Local cultural or community events	Host fundraising events for scholarships (silent/live/virtual auction; sports tournaments etc.)	Speed networking event or business card exchanges
Local sporting events (i.e., local minor league teams)		Host a panel on topics of interest to young alumni
Volunteer/community service		

## **Event Application Form**

An **Event Application Form** must be completed for each event held by a chapter/club. The form will ask questions related to event specifics which will inform our Alumni staff about the details of the event, in addition to providing necessary information related to University requirements. Prior to completing the form, have the following information confirmed regarding the event; however, do not make any commitments to any vendor prior to approval from the Alumni Association staff. This is not an exhaustive list, rather provides the initial, minimum details needed to begin discussions with the Alumni staff.

- Name and description of event
- Name and contact information for the chapter/club member coordinating the event
- Proposed date, time, location
- Projected total cost (includes food/beverage, deposits, rentals, etc. where applicable)

### **Engagement Calls with Staff**

After completing the Event Application Form a member of the Alumni staff will contact the event coordinator to further discuss the event and provide feedback and/or approvals to move forward with the event. It is the responsibility of the designated Alumni staff to set-up a call with the event coordinator of the event, preferably within 3 business days of the request being submitted. During the call the event coordinator and Alumni staff member will discuss specifics of the event to include compliance with ULM policies and specific needs from the Alumni staff.

Upon the completion of the event, the designated Alumni staff member will have another call with the event coordinator to discuss topics to close the event, to include, but not limited to final payments, reimbursement (if applicable), overview of how the event went, etc. It is the responsibility of the Alumni staff member to set-up this call with the event coordinator, preferably within 3 business days after the event.

Other calls can be scheduled as needed, especially as it relates to updates on RSVPs, payments, signing of contracts, etc.

### **Event Registration Pages**

The Alumni Association will create online registration for all alumni related events. Online registration pages allow chapters/clubs to have an RSVP count and to collect any event fees needed from participants. During the initial engagement call, the Alumni staff will collect information needed for the registration page and will update the event coordinator leading up to the event regarding RSVP count and other pertinent information.

### **Event Communications**

To assist in the success of your event, work with your designated Alumni staff member to advertise each event the chapter/club is hosting. The staff member will need eight weeks notice of the event in order to effectively advertise for the event and plan a communications plan for the event. As previously mentioned, it is recommended that the event is advertised via various outlets to reach a broader audience. The Alumni Association will print and mail event announcements such as “save the date” postcards, letters, invitations, etc.; send mass emails to relevant chapter/club members; post events to relevant online calendars; and post events to relevant social media pages. Events may also be advertised in the “Good News” alumni newsletter assuming the timing aligns to the bi-monthly distribution of the newsletter.

Any communications regarding events that are communicated via the chapter/club itself needs to have approval of the Alumni staff prior to sending, posting, etc.

Mailed communications:

- Each chapter/club event is advertised to relevant members by a “Save the Date” postcard that is mailed approximately eight weeks in advance of the event, provided the information is available.
- It can take approximately 3 weeks for mailed communications to be received from the time it is mailed from the University. Therefore, as soon as details are solidified for events, it’s recommended to work with the Alumni staff to begin mailed communications.
- Note: Not every event requires a mailed save-the-date or invitation!

Online and electronic communications:

- Each event, with sufficient notice, will be posted on relevant online ULM calendars such as the ULM Alumni Association **calendar** and the ULM calendar of events.

- Social media will be utilized to communicate alumni chapter/club events. The Alumni staff will ensure events are advertised on all ULM Alumni Association social media outlets (Facebook, etc.). Chapter/club event coordinators are responsible for posting to chapter/club specific groups on social media.
- Emails will be sent to relevant alumni to advertise the event. At a minimum, emails will be sent 1 month prior to the event and again 2 weeks prior to the event. Additional emails can be sent as needed to boost attendance, communicate changes or communicate additional information about the event.
- The “Good News” alumni newsletter is emailed to all alumni on the 15th of every other month. When timing aligns, chapter/club event information will be included in the newsletter.

### **Working with Vendors**

Working with vendors can be very detailed and overwhelming at times. Again, partner with your Alumni staff! The staff will work with chapters/clubs to ensure vendors meet all ULM requirements and will facilitate a great experience for all guests. Use the list below to work with vendors, ensure the chapters/clubs compliance with ULM policies, etc.

- **Only ULM employees can sign contracts with vendors; chapter/club members cannot sign contracts on behalf of the university.** For alumni specific events a member of the Alumni staff will be responsible for signing contracts.
- Prior to the Alumni staff signing any contracts for a facility, someone on the events committee should physically visit the facility to assess handicap accessibility, parking, climate control needs, restrooms, kitchen area, electrical capabilities, lighting, etc.
- It takes ULM approximately 7-10 days to generate a check for venues, etc. Take this into consideration when working with venues and discuss this with vendors to set expectations.
- In accordance with ULM's **non-discrimination policy**, ULM will not engage with any vendor that doesn't support our policy to not discriminate, or tolerate discrimination, based on sex, race, color, creed, national origin, of physical or mental disability.
- When working with vendors, get all confirmation of agreements in writing via email.
- Ensure you have contact information (cell number) for vendor contacts for any emergencies that pop up.
- Non-alcoholic beverage options always need to be present during events sponsored by the ULM Alumni Association and its affiliates.
- Select a location and venue for your event and consider your needs related to the venue such as:
  - Ease of parking that doesn't include additional fees for guests
  - Is there a deposit or food/beverage order minimum?
  - Food/catering needs
  - Access to a private room or reserved space
  - Proximity to chapter membership
  - Audio/visual capabilities
  - Weather - for example, if the weather is extreme and was originally scheduled to be held outdoors, can the venue provide a “plan B” and move the event indoors?
  - Number of expected attendees
  - Clean-up responsibilities
  - What does the venue provide and what needs to be ordered from an outside vendor? Consider things such as tables, chairs, decorations, electrical outlets, podiums, microphones, etc.

- Do they require you to hire/pay for extra security?

## Chapter/Club Budgets

Chapter/club activities and events should be as self-supporting as possible, particularly where meals, entertainment, building and room rentals, etc. are involved. An adequate activity fee or cover charge should be assessed to participants to cover these costs but not one so high that it deters our alumni and their families from attending the event. The costs should be kept as low as possible to encourage participation by an entire family. The ULM Alumni Association will pay for chapter operating expenses such as mailing lists, printing and postage, and will assist by subsidizing the cost of the event.

- ULM Accounting Procedures:
  - Chapters must submit a request for approval from the ULM Alumni Association for any activities or events involving expenditure of funds or collection of money.
  - Chapters must submit an estimate of costs to the Alumni Association prior to scheduling the event by completing the **Event Application Form**.
  - Chapters must submit deposit requests to the Alumni Association for payment.
  - Chapters will reimburse the Alumni Association from event revenue received.
  - Any excess funds collected during chapter events will be deposited into the Alumni Affairs account.
  - Regarding reimbursable expenses:
    - Every effort should be made for the Alumni staff to purchase items needed to host an event
    - All reimbursable expenses must be approved prior to the event by the director of the Alumni Association
    - Receipts should be submitted with all requests for reimbursement along with a complete explanation of the expense

## Quick Guide

### **Event Responsibilities**

The Alumni Association is here to help chapters/clubs with events from start to finish. While the Association can't do everything for the event, we are able to provide support in various capacities. Thus, the Alumni staff will work in partnership with chapters/clubs event committees dividing responsibilities as follows:

- Chapter/Club organizers
  - Submit **Event Application Form** in advance of the proposed event to the Alumni Association staff.
  - Secure vendors, venues, etc. and work with vendors to coordinate, manage and execute event logistics and details



- Work with the Alumni staff to create email invitations and other advertising.
  - Request relevant ULM speakers
  - Contact area alumni and invite them to attend
  - Recruit alumni to assist with the event
  - Attend the event as the primary host
  - Complete engagement calls (minimum of 2) with Alumni staff members
  - Provide a copy of sign-in sheets to Alumni staff
  - Return “Event in a Box” items to the Alumni Association
  - Working within the given budget from the Alumni Association
- Alumni Association staff
    - Consult with the chapter/club on locations, budget, scheduling of dates, event ideas, menu selection, etc.
    - Set up engagement calls with chapter/club event coordinator to review event details and logistics.
    - Work with chapter/club to develop a promotion plan (social media, emails etc)
    - Post event information to ULM Alumni Association website
    - Create and monitor the event registration page, to include RSVPs and monetary payments from guests.
    - Oversee event communications for “snail” mail, emails and and ULM Alumni Association social media and online accounts
    - Securing ULM/alumni speakers
    - Send “Event in a Box” items with a return shipping label.
    - Overall budget and financial responsibilities
    - Send follow up event survey to attendees

### **Event in a Box**

An Alumni Association staff member will mail an “Event in a Box” to the event coordinator in sufficient time to arrive for the event. The box will include items needed for each event. While some items may change based on needs of the event, below is a minimum of what to expect to receive to assist with the event. All items should be mailed back to the Alumni Association after the event; the Alumni staff will provide a shipping label to return the items.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Stick-on name tags</li> <li>● Sharpie markers and pens</li> <li>● Printed off sign-in sheets</li> <li>● ULM branded tablecloth</li> <li>● ULM branded door prizes/giveaways</li> <li>● Door prize/giveaway registration tickets</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ULM themed decorations</li> <li>● Paper/plastic needs such as cups, napkins, plates</li> <li>● ULM branded “thank you” note cards and envelopes</li> </ul> |
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### **Day of Event**

When your big day arrives, the work continues! The recommendations below may not all apply to your event, but are a great guide to walk chapters/clubs through what needs to happen prior to, during and after the event.

- Prior to guest arrival
  - Event committee volunteers should arrive anywhere from 1 hour to 30 minutes prior to the beginning of the event to make sure the venue is set up as requested
  - Set-up registration table with ULM branded tablecloth, name tags, sign-in sheets, decorations, etc. Table should be prominently positioned at the entrance but still allow for free movement in and out of the room/space.
  - Set-up any audio/visual needs and test to make sure visual is working and audio is set to an appropriate volume.
  - When the speaker arrives (if applicable), make sure they are welcomed and provide details related to the agenda and timing of when you anticipate they will speak.
  - Designate someone to take pictures.
  - Designate volunteers to circulate during the event to encourage conversation between alumni (when relevant) and to network with chapter/club guests.
  
- During the event
  - Greet guests and guide them to sign-in and write a name tag for themselves; provide guests with details regarding food and beverage service, expected timeline of events (speakers, door prizes, etc.), provide guests with raffle tickets for drawings, etc.
  - Once the majority of guests have arrived, have the chapter/club president or other designee collectively welcome guests, highlight ULM news, introduce speakers, etc.
  
- After the event
  - Thank guests for attending as they leave the event
  - In accordance with vendor agreements, clean up as needed; at a minimum, ensure things are left in the condition upon which you found them.
  - Secure items sent by the Alumni Association and return to staff via mail to include sign-in/attendance lists.
  - Send all receipts, bills, etc. to the Alumni staff
  - Complete final engagement call with Alumni staff member.
  - Write and mail thank you notes to key volunteers, vendors, etc. Recognize key volunteers on chapter/club social media accounts.
  - Post pictures to social media accounts and send pictures to Association staff
  - Alumni Staff will send an event survey to all attendees once sign in sheet has been received.

# FAQs

## ***Will alumni staff attend events?***

Alumni staff will attend events, when available, if the event doesn't coincide with another University event requiring staff attendance (i.e., home football game, Homecoming, etc.) or previously scheduled/committed chapter/club event. It's not a guarantee that someone from the staff can attend so speak with your Association staff to discuss their attendance at your event. If cash will be exchanged a University or Alumni Staff member must be present to accept cash.

## ***Is there a better time to plan chapter events?***

It depends on the event and what you want at the event. For example, during the fall and football season, the Association staff is very busy with campus events and won't be able to travel to attend a chapter/club event. However, during this time, we encourage watch parties, etc. to support our university.

## ***How do I know what other ULM events are happening so events don't conflict with already scheduled events?***

Check the [ULM Calendar of Events](#), [Alumni Association Calendar of Events](#), [Athletics calendars](#) and most importantly, talk with Association staff to verify the date will work.

## ***How do I secure a University speaker for an event?***

During your engagement call with an Alumni staff member, you'll discuss all pertinent needs and plans, to include if you'd like a ULM representative to attend and speak. The staff member can talk about the best fit for your event and will secure the speaker on behalf of the chapter.

## ***How many events should we host each year?***

At a minimum, we ask that each chapter/club host 2 events per year, however, it's encouraged to host more, if possible, to keep our alumni engaged. Remember, it doesn't have to be a physical event anymore! Hosting webinars for your alumni members or jointly with another chapter via Zoom or other platform is an option.

## ***How do I request a list of alumni in my area for events?***

During your engagement call with an Alumni staff member, you'll discuss all pertinent needs and plans, to include if you need a list of alumni in your area. Keep in mind the Alumni staff members are bound by privacy policies to protect personal and sensitive data. Thus, you may not be able to secure personal information such as email addresses or phone numbers. You should discuss this during your engagement call to see what information you can request and how it can be utilized.