Affinity Networking

We all know (and our surveys support this) that Reunion attendance improves when classmates are contacted by their peers. It is that simple. During their college years, most undergraduates are affiliated on average with two affinity groups. We have over 500 affinity groups coded in our system. Affinity Networking will boost your attendance at Reunion; however you do not want to wait until Year Five of your class life cycle to begin your Affinity Networking plan. Start in Year Four so that you will have plenty of time to build a good base!

Suggested guidelines:

1. Decide how you will coordinate your network. We suggest that you find someone who is willing to take on the role of Affinity Group Chair (AGC). This is a great task for a class council member.
2. The AGC should review classmate lists and choose affinities that represent a diverse group of classmates’ interests (i.e. fraternities and sororities, sports, music groups, etc.). Start small and determine what structure works best for your class.
3. The AGC will need to create affinity-based committees and identify several volunteers called Affinity Group Leaders (AGLs) for each committee. AGLs are alumni who are well connected to the class such as: dues payers, Reunion attendees, members of other Cornell committees, or alumni that are active with their affinity. For example, if someone has expressed an interest in helping reconnect with their club or group, you can post information on your class website, class Facebook page, and in your class column asking classmates to contact the AGC. You should also review the results from your Pre-Reunion survey to see who may have indicated their interest in reconnecting with their affinity groups.
4. The AGC should send each affinity contact AGL a letter or e-mail enlisting their support. If a classmate agrees to participate, further discussion and information needs to be provided by the AGC about how much time is involved and outlining the expectations.
5. The AGC along with the committee members will decide how they would like to proceed with their Affinity Networking Plan, and set a realistic timeframe to conduct their work. One option is to have the AGLs write personal notes on postcards that are mailed to classmates. This option involves working with your staff contact who will pull lists and mail packets that contain: postcards, stamps, mailing labels and the lists (either electronically or printed copies) to each of the AGLs.
6. Other options involve sending letters, e-mails, or making telephone calls. AGLs may also visit www.alumni.cornell.edu/remember/postcards/ to send electronic postcards of Cornell campus scenes to classmates.
7. Follow up with the AGC. Is there any news for the class correspondents? Do you have address information to forward to the university? Did any classmates have questions that need additional follow-up?

To help your AGC with his or her efforts, a list of coded affinity groups and an affinity template can be found on the CACO website www.alumni.cornell.edu/caco/caco2.0.cfm under Officer Support and Services - Affinity Networking. Your Class Programs staff contact can provide affinity lists of your classmates who are coded in these affinity groups in several different formats:
Printed Reports:
- Class flatlist sorted by affinity group with classmate information
- Class flatlist sorted alphabetically with affinity group information
- Class flatlist sorted by college with classmate information
- Class flatlist sorted by region with classmate information
- Individual group affinity flatlist with classmate information

Printing and sending lists:
If the AGC or the AGL are not electronically savvy, you will want to contact your staff contact to print these lists, as they may require some modifications, legal sized paper, and can also be quite lengthy.

Electronic Reports:
Excel documents containing the above reports can be sorted in multiple ways. Your staff member can supply the AGC with a total list and individual affinity lists can be sent to each of the AGLs for their use.

Final Thoughts:
Hearing from a former classmate who shared a specific interest while on campus may be very meaningful. It is well worth the time and energy to network through affinities. Please feel free to call your Class Programs staff if you have additional questions or need more information.

When sharing the information of other classmates, it is important to remember that information provided by Alumni Affairs is strictly confidential and should only be used by volunteers for approved Cornell-related business.