



Career and Affinity Programs New Affinity Group Proposal Guidelines and Application

Introduction

First piloted in 2009, the affinity group program is designed to strengthen the connections that alumni have with the University of Chicago and with each other. A complement to alumni clubs in a city or region, affinity groups represent a way for alumni to organize around an industry or professional interest or around a shared identity. As the program started to take root, many affinity groups saw an organic, local formation, with increasing membership. In 2014, the Alumni Association instituted a system in which each affinity group has an elected national/global board of directors, with nonelected subcommittees that represent geographical areas where the group has a programming presence. The board of directors includes elected metro chairs who lead their respective local committees.

Affinity Group Guiding Principles

The University of Chicago Alumni Association provides opportunities for alumni, parents, and friends to maintain and build on their relationships through communications and programs that promote the welfare of the University and service to it, lifelong learning, and advocacy of alumni and University initiatives. Affinity groups are volunteer-led organizations that support the mission of the Alumni Association by encouraging alumni, parents, families, and friends to continue their affiliation with the University by engaging with each other and the University through shared interests and identities, in addition to the regional and class-year structure. Affinity groups help promote alumni career development and continuing education within their communities through intellectually stimulating programming, volunteerism, and fundraising to support University initiatives.

Affinity Group Membership

All affinity groups are national and/or global in scope and represent one of two areas:

- industry or professional interest
- shared identity

Though affinity groups have specific missions, membership is open to all University of Chicago alumni, parents, families, and friends. Active affinity group membership is determined by the following:

- any alumnus/a, friend, or parent coded as a member in the Alumni Directory

- requests to join, which include individuals attending affinity group events, logging in to the affinity group's University of Chicago Community Online (UCCO) site, or making a request via any other communication mechanism

Affinity Group Statuses

To measure the progress and impact of each group on the UChicago alumni community, two status levels of affinity groups have been established. Groups applying for official University recognition will be asked to submit a proposal for the group to be considered In Development. Once the group has completed the development criteria, such as commitments of volunteers to serve on a national board and a ratified set of bylaws, and has sponsored a minimum number of events for the UChicago alumni community, the group will be given the status of an Active group. Please find the criteria for each affinity group tier below.

In Development groups have been officially recognized by the University through an application process (see below) and are in a probationary period for up to 12 months after their initial application. Developing groups must have the following operational criteria in place before submitting a proposal for an officially recognized affinity group:

- A minimum of ten (10) steering committee members have pledged to lead the group during the probationary period.
- A minimum of three (3) cities are represented by members of the steering committee.
- A minimum of 200 email-able alumni members have been identified among the cities/markets represented by the developing group.
- A minimum of 30 alumni, including the ten (10) person steering committee, are recognized as members of the group.
- A value-proposition statement has been submitted along with the group's application that briefly details the purpose of the group and its ideal impact on the UChicago alumni community.

Should a group that is currently In Development meet the criteria for an Active group during the 12-month probationary period, the group may submit a petition to be recognized as an Active group prior to the end of the probationary period.

Active affinity groups must meet the following criteria to be granted this status:

- The group must hold six (6) events per calendar year with at least ten (10) individuals in attendance at each.
- At least five (5) individuals must be elected to the group's national board of directors, with 14 board members at most.
- The group must have a set of ratified bylaws that includes the affinity group's mission statement.

- At least five (5) metro markets must be represented by the group via metro chair positions on the board of directors, group-sponsored programming in these areas, the creation of a regional newsletter, etc.
- The group must have a web presence established on the University of Chicago Community Online (UCCO) website.
- The group must have at least 200 members who have signed in to their UCCO website.
- The group must work with the Alumni Association to create a year-end report at the close of each fiscal year.

Each year the Alumni Association will review all Active affinity groups to ensure that they have met the above criteria during the past fiscal year. If the group no longer meets these criteria, the group will be placed In Development for up to a year until the minimum requirements for an Active group have been met once again. After 12 months of noncompliance, the Alumni Association together with the Alumni Board of Governors will review the need to dissolve the group.

Starting an Affinity Group

The following steps are involved in starting an affinity group:

1. Request
 - a. Review existing affinity groups on the Alumni Association website to ensure that the interest area is not already covered.
 - b. Contact the Career and Affinity Groups (CAG) team to set up an initial conversation to discuss the proposed group. CAG can be reached via affinity@uchicago.edu.
 - i. Please come prepared to discuss how the group meets the criteria for a group In Development (see page 2), as those are the minimum organizational requirements for starting an affinity group at the University of Chicago.
2. Submission of required materials
 - a. A roster of a minimum of ten (10) steering committee members who have pledged to lead the group during the probationary period
 - b. A list of a minimum of three (3) cities represented by members of the steering committee
 - c. A roster of a minimum of 30 alumni, including the ten (10) person steering committee, who are recognized as members of the group
 - d. A value-proposition statement detailing the purpose/focus/interest area of the group and its ideal impact on the UChicago community
3. Approval
 - a. Once the proposed group's application has been received, the Career and Affinity Groups team will review the materials to ensure that the proposed group's mission and values coincide with the principles of the broader affinity group program. It will also be confirmed that the proposed group meets the minimum requirements for the In Development category of affinity groups.

- b. All applications will also be reviewed by two (2) additional staff members within the Alumni Association. Applications will then be forwarded to the senior director of Alumni Relations, or her designee, for review and approval of the proposed group as a recognized developing affinity group.
- c. Once the developing group has been approved, it will be assigned a CAG staff liaison. The staff liaison will hold a formal meeting with the developing group's leadership after six (6) and 12 months in order to measure the group's progress toward becoming an Active group. The staff liaison will also support the group leaders in
 - i. drafting a development plan that details how and when the group will meet the minimum criteria for an Active affinity group;
 - ii. creating an online form where interested alumni may submit a formal request for membership in the developing group; and
 - iii. listing the developing group's plans on relevant regional UCCO sites while the group works toward establishing its own web presence.
- d. Should the proposed group's application be denied by the Alumni Association, staff may make recommendations regarding where the proposed group already fits into other initiatives or identify campus program partners with a similar mission.

Active Affinity Group Resources

The following Alumni Association resources are allocated to affinity groups that achieve Active recognition:

- website
 - UCCO (volunteer-run)
 - full administrative functionality
- staff
 - staff visit with group
 - operational support
 - membership profile data
 - event support
 - guidance on applying for Alumni Association grant funding
 - board meeting assistance and volunteer invitations to Alumni Association leadership calls and alumni clubs training call
 - communications support including digital and print pieces, defined per region
- training and guidance
 - leadership and volunteer development training