

# Chapter Leader Handbook

*A Guide to Leading an Alumni Chapter*



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## OVERVIEW

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All Grand Valley State University graduates are automatically members of the Grand Valley Alumni Association for life. Membership is just another part of being a Laker for a Lifetime, helping alumni stay informed, get involved, give back, and have Laker pride. One way that alumni stay involved with their alma mater is through chapters.

The Alumni Relations office and Grand Valley State University (GVSU) value our alumni chapters, and are grateful for your leadership and involvement. The information provided in this handbook is designed to provide our Chapter Leaders with the information and tools to be successful.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact your staff liaison, at 616.331.3590 or [alumni@gvsu.edu](mailto:alumni@gvsu.edu).

## WHAT IS AN ALUMNI CHAPTER?

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A group with an affiliation to a certain college/major, program, sport, or other special interest group. These groups provide opportunities for alumni to network, volunteer, socialize, and fundraise in the name of their chapter and GVSU. Chapters are recognized by, and accountable to, GVSU Alumni Relations. They are led by volunteer alumni Chapter Leaders, as well as a liaison from a GVSU Department if appropriate.

The purpose of a Chapter is to:

- advance the mission of the Alumni Association, which advances the mission of the university.
- be a presence in GVSU alumni communities.
- promote the interests and welfare of GVSU and its constituents.
- provide at least one yearly opportunity for fellowship and networking.
- provide one yearly community service project during Community Outreach Week.
- support University Development and giving efforts.
- mobilize alumni to meet special needs of the university.
- contribute new ideas to the university about existing or possible programs.

## HOW TO START AN ALUMNI CHAPTER AND/OR BECOME A CHAPTER LEADER

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If there is no Chapter for your affiliation:

- Reach out to the [Alumni Relations Office](#) to set up a meeting to discuss inquiries and be assigned an Alumni Relations staff liaison.
- Find help - chapters with multiple leaders (2-3) find it easier to complete the planning process and to plan for succession. If you do not have other alumni contacts, the staff liaison may be able to provide assistance.
- If it aligns, work with a GVSU Department/College to support your new Chapter.
- Complete and submit the [Chapter Leader Commitment Form](#).
- Revise and submit the Chapter bylaws, which can be obtained from your staff liaison.
- After the commitment form and bylaws have been submitted, the Alumni Relations team will review it for consideration. Alumni Relations accepts new chapters based on alumni population size, strength of club leadership, and current budget. This process may take several weeks.
- Once approved, participate in orientation training with your staff liaison.
- Work with your staff liaison to send out an interest survey to help gauge the types of events, dates/times, and additional alumni who may be interested in becoming more involved.

If a Chapter already exists:

- Email the current leaders and/or the Alumni Relations staff liaison to learn more about the expectations and to express interest.
- Complete and submit the Chapter Leader Commitment Form.
- Once approved, participate in orientation training with your staff liaison.

## REQUIREMENTS OF CHAPTER LEADERS

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Chapter leaders are required to

- plan and attend the required annual events (a Community Outreach Week event in March and one other event);
- communicate consistently with the Alumni Relations staff liaison and inquiring alumni;
- manage and properly engage with alumni via the Chapter's Facebook Page;
- make an annual financial gift to the university and encourage others to do the same (there is no minimum requirement);
- show enthusiasm for and support of GVSU, as well as a desire to further the interests and visibility of GVSU in the community, among the affinity base, and nationally;
- be able to devote the necessary time to the organization; and
- complete the Annual Report at the end of each fiscal year.

# EVENT PROTOCOL

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Chapter leaders are required to plan at least two events per fiscal year (July 1 – June 30), one of which must be a [Community Outreach Week](#) event (end of March).

## Event Ideas

- Community Service
  - Collaborate with local organizations
  - Serve food at a shelter
  - Park/beach clean-up
  - Conduct a toy/clothing/food/book drive
- Social
  - Happy hour
  - BBQ/picnic
  - Gatherings around local events (parades, concerts, art festivals, etc.)
  - Local tours (architecture, museums, bike, boat, etc.)
  - Activities (bowling, arcades, sporting events, escape rooms, etc.)
- Educational/Professional Development
  - Highlight alumni guest speaker
  - Networking nights
  - Student + alumni gatherings
- Give Back
  - Host an event where donations are collected or a portion of the ticket price supports a related GVSU scholarship
  - Write encouraging cards to students during exams

## Event Planning

- Brainstorm and research your event's goals, date/time, location, and capacity. Remember to refer to your Interest Survey if you've recently completed one.
- Communicate with your Alumni Relations and GVSU Department staff liaisons regarding your idea.
- Work with your GVSU Department to book/pay/finalize any details.
  - The GVSU Department should ask for a fund transfer for event costs (up to \$500 for the fiscal year).
- Work with your GVSU Department to create the event/registration form in CMS and submit the event via the [Campus Partner Event Submission Form](#).
  - They will/can request a contact list of alumni through the [File and List Request Form](#) using this to email the event promotion to your alumni audience.
  - Both forms require a campus log-in and password.
- Create the Facebook Event and make the GVSU Alumni Association a co-host.
- Personally, promote the event via social media platforms and personal connections.
- Attend and host the event. This includes but is not limited to: set-up, welcoming, talking points, collecting information from walk-ins and taking pictures.
  - The registration information will come from your GVSU Department.
  - Swag can be requested from the Alumni Relations Department.
- Post the event, submit the walk-in sheet to your Alumni Relations staff liaison no later than three days post the event, including any pictures you took in the original form if you would like them to be considered for the GV Magazine and future e-news blasts.
- Post photographs to the Chapter Facebook page.

## BUDGET/EXPENSES

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To help offset the costs of an event, if it is not a “pay-on-your-own” event, Alumni Relations will support and cover various expenses. Chapters receive a budget of \$500 for the year to be used toward any costs of an event. Funds can only be transferred to a GVSU Department and are requested through your Alumni Relations staff liaison.

## SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

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A Facebook Page and official alumni Chapter logo are created by the Alumni Association for each alumni chapter. Your staff liaison will add Chapter Leaders as administrators to the page. An Alumni Relations staff member must remain as an administrator for the group at all times. Chapter Leaders are encouraged to post regular updates and engage the GVSU alumni community following the expectations.

As an institution, GVSU recognizes the value of social media applications and supports their use. Because social media blurs the line between personal voice and institutional voice, GVSU has crafted [guidelines](#) to help clarify how best to enhance and protect personal and professional reputations when participating in social media. Please review these guidelines. Links to the Alumni Association pages can be found [here](#).

If you should receive an unpleasant/disgruntled comment, please notify Susan Howard at [howardsu@gvsu.edu](mailto:howardsu@gvsu.edu) and she will handle it from there.

Additional information on GVSU’s marketing, messaging, or logo information may be found at [www.gvsu.edu/identity](http://www.gvsu.edu/identity). If you have any questions, please contact Susan Howard at 616.331.3591 or [howardsu@gvsu.edu](mailto:howardsu@gvsu.edu).

## RESOURCES

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[Alumni Association Home Page](#)  
[Campus Partner Event Submission Form](#)

[Clubs & Chapters Webpage](#)  
[File and List Request Form](#)