



Rensselaer

Office of Alumni Relations
Rensselaer Alumni Association

Special Interest (Affinity) Group Guidelines

The Rensselaer Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni Relations works to support the engagement and involvement of all of our alumni. In support of Rensselaer's vision of becoming a top tier technological research university with global reach and global impact, the RAA and the Office of Alumni Relations supports activities that connect alumni to each other and to the university.

There are many vibrant ethnic, cultural, and interest/activity groups that enrich the educational experience of students at Rensselaer. With your help, the RAA and Office of Alumni Relations will build upon this strength of the student experience to create a fulfilling and exciting alumni experience.

The RAA and the Office of Alumni Relations encourages alumni to develop interest groups-groups of engaged alumni whose focus or constituency stems from professional or academic interests, fraternal/cultural identity, a common student activity, or common alumni interest. Like alumni chapters, interest groups are volunteer-driven and volunteer-led. Volunteer leaders set the group mission in alignment with the RAA and Rensselaer's mission, determine and execute events or programs, and communicate regularly with group members.

Whether there are 50 potential members of the interest group you'd like to found, or 5,000, the RAA and the Office of Alumni Relations can support you in its development. There are successful models for interest groups of all sizes. Interest groups can range from large groups with a national board and geographically located chapters, standalone national committees that serve the group's members across the country, even single interest group representatives who participate in an RAA chapter and represent the interests and members of a group in that area.

You won't be completely on your own! The Office of Alumni Relations staff and RAA volunteers for interest groups work with you to get the group started and stay successful. Our primary role is to **guide** alumni leaders in volunteer management and event planning, **handle** information/data management (updating alumni records, creating mailing lists), **administer** "back-end" duties like event registration and budgets, and **be a liaison** between your group, other alumni groups, the RAA, and Rensselaer.

The Office of Alumni Relations will provide:

1. Updated lists of self-identified members of the particular interest group
2. Access to alumni online services, including a chapter, affinity web pages and online event registration
3. Limited funding to support co-sponsored enrichment programs marketed to all alumni
4. Distribution of communications to your alumni group to promote group programs
5. Communication tools like e-mail listservs to facilitate volunteer work and planning

6. Access to the Heffner Alumni House for group meetings and events, scheduled in advance
7. Training and guidance to alumni leaders through the Office of Alumni Relations staff liaisons
8. A description of special interest (affinity) group and a link to contact person on Rensselaer Alumni Association website

Special Interest (Affinity) Groups associated with the Rensselaer Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni Relations must, in turn, operate within specified parameters set by the RAA and the Office of Alumni Relations. These include:

1. Operating on a self-sufficient basis. Selecting leadership, conducting meetings, planning programs and events, staffing programs and events, developing leadership succession are important elements of being volunteer-led.
2. Being mindful of the RAA's and Rensselaer's mission, and determining events and programs in alignment with furthering those goals.
3. Collecting updated address and biographical information from affinity group members and providing it to Rensselaer.
4. Conducting only University-approved fundraising efforts which need prior approval by the Vice President for Advancement at Rensselaer.

We value your service as alumni leaders and your hard work in developing a special interest (affinity) group. Volunteering with the RAA and Rensselaer builds leadership skills and strengthens your connection to other graduates and to Rensselaer. Your leadership in an alumni interest group can enrich the student experience, add value to alumni life, impact Rensselaer in a meaningful way, and influence your local community. It's an amazing way to give back to the community who helped you become who you are today.

In order to foster a strong alumni community, the Rensselaer Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni Relations recognizes the need to recognize, value and support the diverse groups that make up our alumni body. The Office of Alumni Relations as the primary support and liaison to special interest groups reserves the right to make the final decision as to whether a group may be properly considered an "Affinity Group."

Office of Alumni Relations
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1301 Peoples Avenue
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, NY 12180
Tel 518-276-6205 Fax 518-276-4081
Email alumni@rpi.edu
www.alumni.rpi.edu

Staff Contacts: Professional/ Business Interest - Kathy Kinsey (518) 276-2832
Athletic/Cultural/Student Activity - Peter Pedone (518) 276-6061
50 Year Club/Retirees - Laura Bedford O'Donnell (518) 276-3757

Method of Development for Interest Groups

1. Identify core group of volunteers.
 - a. Contact regional listserv to ask for suggestions of alumni that may be interested in being involved.
 - b. Search the database for alumni that fit criteria for leadership i.e., past student leadership and/or interest in other alumni/student groups with similar focus.
 - c. Review past correspondence from alumni who expressed interest in being involved with groups or alumni work.
 - d. Publicize to the broader alumni body that a group is being formed and they are welcome to be involved in the leadership of the group.
2. Set a date for the first meeting with the alumni identified as being interested in working with the group.
3. Work with core group of volunteers to construct a survey for their constituent base.
 - a. Use template from other surveys in survey monkey to develop the survey.
 - b. Be sure to include the key question “would you like to be involved.”
4. Send survey and dedicated email regarding interest group establishment to constituent group.
5. Create e-mail/listserv for leadership communication to facilitate group communication and ensure everyone is in the loop.
6. Have second meeting to go over results of survey, create structure and plans for moving forward. This meeting should include those that identified via the survey as well as the core group of volunteers.
7. Establish leadership roles and work with volunteers to assure they are assigned appropriately.
8. Hold follow-up meetings focused on establishing a calendar and plan for implementing programs and communications with the goals developed by the group.

Ongoing Work with Interest Groups

- Manage volunteers to stay on track with executing their events and goals
- Guide volunteer leaders in volunteer management within the group
- Develop current and future leaders
- Increase alumni membership/involvement in interest group activities
- Support volunteers in event planning and execution
- Facilitate communication between leadership board and constituent alumni, i.e. newsletter, web site
- Support volunteer leaders in special initiatives and projects
- Represent Rensselaer’s and RAA goals and interests to the group, aligning work of the group with overall RAA activities
- Educate groups about RAA chapter and alumni programs, encouraging participation
- Develop marketing materials and opportunities for interest group, internally and externally

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