



RICE ALUMNI

# Alumni Volunteer Toolkit

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Rice University Alumni Relations



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# Get Involved

Interested in becoming more involved with the Association of Rice Alumni? You've come to the right place! There are many ways to give back to your alma mater with your time and talents. Whether you're looking for ways to stay connected in your area, through Regional Groups or area of interest with Affinity Group involvement, there is something for everyone!

## What is a Regional Group?

There are many ways to stay connected with Rice University! A prominent example of staying engaged is being an active member or officer in your Regional Group. Regional Groups provide opportunities for alumni, parents and friends to interact with fellow Owls in their area and stay connected to Rice. The Association of Rice Alumni, in conjunction with local volunteers, establish these groups around the world with the goal of fostering community through a range of programs and activities that are unique to each region and its members.

There are many programs and activities that are unique to each region as well as a variety of staple programs conducted across regions. Have a new idea that you would love to participate in with fellow Owls? We'd love to hear it! Below are a few examples of signature programs that happen throughout the regions each year (\*) as well as examples of programs that regional volunteers have created.

- New Student Celebrations\*
- Holiday Party\*
- Rice Day\*
- Sporting event (Rice or professional teams)
- Faculty lecture or Brains in a Bar
- Service Projects
- Happy Hours
- Museum tours or performances

For more information about Regional Groups, [click here](#).

## What is an Affinity Group?

Not only can you stay involved by participating in a Regional Group, you can also take advantage of the various Affinity Groups connected to Rice University! Although most Affinity Groups are local to the Houston area, some groups exist throughout the regions. Affinity Groups are formed on the basis of shared ethnicity, professional pursuits, leisure activities, and other common interests. Current Affinity Groups are:

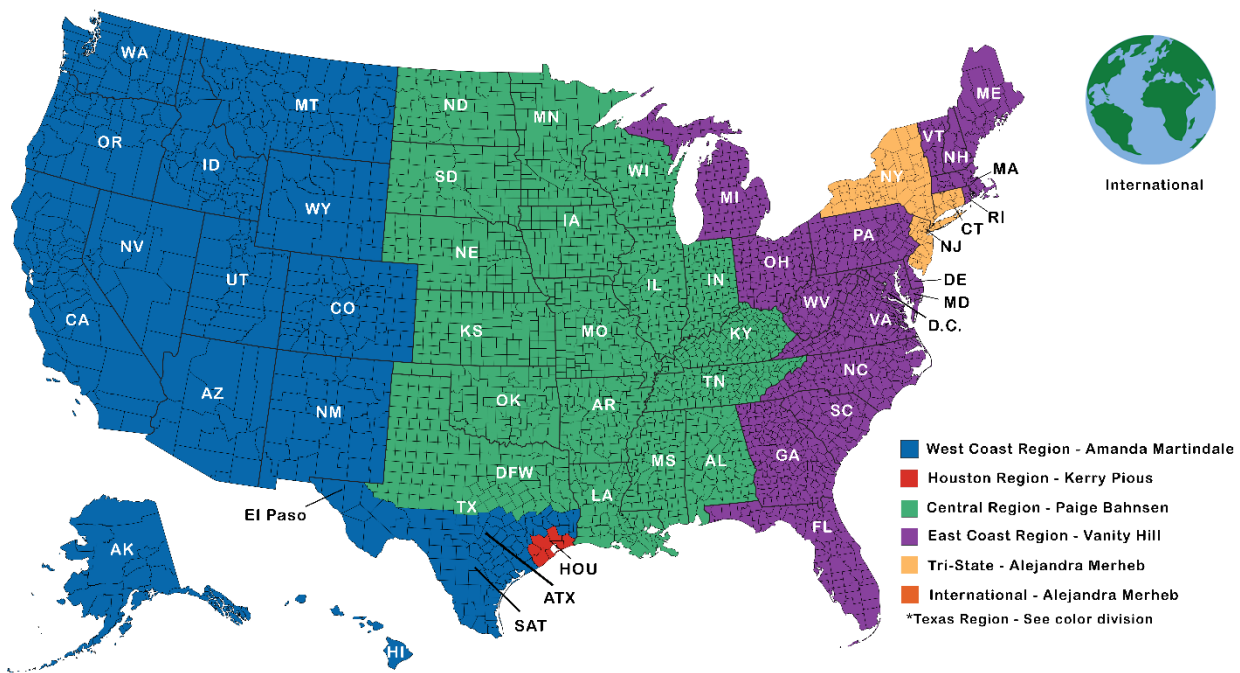
- Association of Rice University Black Alumni (ARUBA)

- Graduate Alumni Network (GAN)
- Graduate Liberal Studies Alumni Association (GLSAA)
- Praying Rice Owls (PRO)
- Rice Alumni Entrepreneurs & Innovators (RAEI)
- Rice Alumni in Medicine (RAM)
- Rice Alumni Pride (RAP)
- Rice Business Network (RBN)
- Rice Engineering Alumni (REA)
- Rice University Baseball Players Association (RUBPA)
- Rice University Business and Professional Women (RUBPW)
- Rice University Community of Asian Alumni (RUCAA)
- Rice University Lawyer Alumni (RULA)
- Rice University Muslim Alumni (RUMA)
- Society of Latino Alumni of Rice (SOLAR)
- Society of Rice University Women (SRUW)

[Learn more about Affinity Groups.](#)

## Alumni Relations Alumni Group Officers

If you're looking to connect with the [Alumni Relations staff](#), please see the directory below and breakdown of each staff member's region or responsibilities. We look forward to hearing from you with any questions, comments or concerns you may have. If you are unsure of who to contact, please reach out to [alumni@rice.edu](mailto:alumni@rice.edu) or call 713.348.4057



Alumni Regional Outreach - Regional Division Map

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## Regional Volunteer Group Structure

Volunteers are truly the livelihood of alumni engagement, so thank you for your interest in participating in this Regional Group! As a regional volunteer, visibility is key in

achieving the goals and mission of the Rice Alumni group in the region and the university as a whole.

So, what exactly does this mean for you?

## Volunteer Expectations

### Attend Meetings

As a member of a Regional Alumni Leadership Group, you are expected to attend planning meetings and calls that set the agenda and plan the calendar of activities for the upcoming year.

### Serve

To be considered an active volunteer, you can hold a leadership position, serve on a committee, attend an event or volunteer at an event. Other volunteer opportunities are listed on the [Become a Volunteer](#) page. Even the smallest volunteer roles make a big difference!

### Participate

As a regional or affinity volunteer, it is important to actively participate in the programs and events sponsored in your geographic area or area of interest. Participation can take many forms, including helping with set-up/clean up, working the registration table, sharing events and programs via social media and/or personal outreach.

### Become an Ambassador

Regional/affinity volunteers can serve as goodwill ambassadors in the community, create meaningful connections with other alumni and build audience and community participation. It is expected that volunteers respect, uphold and support the [strategic mission](#) and values of the Office of Alumni Relations and Rice University.

### Update your biographical information

Be sure to log in to the [Rice Portal](#) to update your address, what you're doing now, find your friends and create a profile to help streamline your event registration process.

### Give what you can

Donations at any level are appreciated. Your contribution may be designated to a program sponsored by/held in your region, a specific academic department or program, student scholarships or just available to support the annual strategic initiatives of the university. Investing in Rice shows you are committed to the university's future and count your alma mater's priorities among your own.



## Rules of Engagement

While interacting with Rice alumni, we ask that you keep the following actions in mind.

### **Be Kind and Courteous**

We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Kindness is required and please respect each person.

### **No Hate Speech or Bullying**

Make sure everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed, and degrading comments about things like race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity will not be tolerated.

### **No Promotions or Spam**

Give more than you take from online platforms. Self-promotion, spam and irrelevant links aren't allowed.

### **Respect Everyone's Privacy**

Being part of this environment requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private.

## Volunteer Leadership Roles

Each group is different — one size does not fit all!

Groups vary in structure based on size, interest and personality. For instance, Regional Groups sometimes vary in terms of structure compared to Affinity Groups and some larger groups have more structured leadership roles compared to smaller groups with less formal structures. For an example of an established Regional Group structure, click [HERE](#).

## Start a Regional Group

### **Partnering with the Office of Alumni Relations**

Oftentimes, staff members are aware of individuals who are interested in volunteering their time and talents to help advance the work of the university. Staff members are happy to assist with identification of possible volunteers and creating a strategic outreach plan to increase involvement and engagement.

### **Partnering with Peers**

**\*If you are interested in starting a Regional Group in your area, you will need two additional volunteers who are willing to actively participate.\*** The Office of Alumni Relations can send a recruitment call for interest to your full region to get involved in your alumni group after three alumni identify themselves available to start the group.

## Utilizing the Alumni Directory

The online alumni directory at [alumni.rice.edu](https://alumni.rice.edu) allows you to search for alumni. This can be a valuable tool in making connections with those who might be interested in your group. View an example of a [peer-to-peer outreach template](#).

## Creating the Best Experience

- Regional and Affinity Groups operate under the auspices of the Office of Alumni Relations. This allows groups' access to staff support, communication systems and event management tools such as registration pages and other resources. When possible, budget dollars will be made available for programming.



- Groups flourish best when they are led by a team of alumni volunteer leaders who help plan, host and communicate about events.
- Most groups participate in annual planning meetings during the summer where ideas for events are given and calendars are made. This is a great time to give your input and help your ideas come to life!
- You can join the regional and Affinity Groups at any time. If you are interested in being an active participant in your group, reach out to the alumni relations staff member responsible for your regional or Affinity Group information.
- If you are interested in information about a regional or Affinity Group not listed on our Regional Group information page or Affinity Group information page, contact a staff member to learn more.
- [Share your story with us!](#) Show what cool things or fun activities your Regional Group is doing, or tell us your experience getting involved with Owls in your area. You can also recognize a deserving volunteer by sharing their story.

## Events Resources & Communication

Now that you've become a volunteer, it's time to start connecting and engaging your fellow alumni!

## Volunteers & the Alumni Office

Annually, each Regional/Affinity Group will set goals with their respective leaders to determine the events they plan to host locally or virtually over the course of the year. These plans will include events sponsored by Alumni Relations as well as locally organized efforts. A rough calendar of events will be determined at the beginning of the year. When ready to move forward on planning an event, the following Event Timeline will be used.

Alumni Relations will provide hands-on logistical and, in most instances, some financial support to help Regional Groups plan local events in the following ways:

- Staffing support in planning and coordinating event logistics, i.e. venue rentals, down payments, menu planning, room set up, etc. Events that require a contract, upfront deposit or payment, such as ticketed events, must be coordinated through Alumni Relations. The Regional Group will determine the program, event format and speakers with the input of Alumni Relations.
- Identifying local alumni or faculty speakers for your events and serving as a liaison to invite guest speakers.
- Setting up an online event page, linked to the Rice Alumni Events calendar with event details. A registration tool is available for which we will provide registration forms, registrant lists, etc. for your event.
- Coordinating emails to regional alumni and answering any registrant inquiries.

## Determining the Event Purpose

Alumni programs should be meaningful and strive to engage a variety of alumni in different ways. Each region should aim to collaborate with the alumni office to create 4-6 events per fiscal year (July 1-June 30). In general, your group's events and programs should:

- Engage alumni in a way that is meaningful to them
  - It is important to remember that alumni are of all different backgrounds, experiences, ages and interests. To maximize engagement and involvement, it is important to host a variety of types of events, with varied days of the week, times of day, price points and locations, and communicate them through different channels, so that alumni feel that there are offerings of interest to them. Regions may choose to repeat a handful of successful events at the same time each year, trying to avoid crowding too many events together, and also scheduling to avoid Rice Homecoming or other big events.
- Connect Rice alumni back to the university and with each other
- Enhance each alum's personal Rice network and community
  - Provide a welcoming and inclusive environment
  - Engage socially, intellectually and professionally

## Selecting the Event Category

### Virtual Events

In the time of social distancing and beyond, virtual events play a key part in alumni engagement. Here is how you can create a virtual experience for your alumni group:

The Rice University Alumni Relations team is here to support our regional volunteers virtually and in-person. This Virtual Engagement Toolkit provides tools, resources and guidance on implementing virtual events and activities that will keep your alumni communities connected and engaged even when you can't be together.

This section will include:

- A Virtual Event How-To Guide
- Social Media Guidelines and Tips

If you have a virtual event idea, please submit it [HERE](#). Questions? Reach out to your regional alumni officer.

### Virtual Event How-To Guide

So, you want to plan a virtual event? You're in the right place! Virtual events are a way to engage your alumni groups. Use this guide as a tool to take you through the process to bring your virtual event to life.

#### Step 1: Choose Your Event

**Below are a few examples of virtual programs:**

- Regional/All-Alumni Happy Hour
- Trivia night
- Instructional, hands-on class (culinary, arts, etc.)
- Wellness sessions
- Dance parties
- Netflix party
- Book club

Questions to consider:

- Do you want this event to be available to just your region or to the full alumni base?
- Do you already have a host or facilitator in mind for this event?

- Will the proposed platform be available to all of your audience?
- How interactive do you want the event to be? (Lecture style vs. conversation)

\*After reviewing these questions, please fill out this [project form](#).

### Step 2: Contact the Alumni Office

We love that you want to create or host your virtual event! The next step in this process would be to contact your regional alumni officer. Together we will:

- Finalize the type of event
- Identify the host
- Discuss technology and outreach

You can use the [directory](#) to find your alumni relations contact person.

### Step 3: Choose Your Virtual Event Format

After submitting your [new project form](#) and corresponding with your regional alumni officer about your event idea, the event platform will need to be chosen. The alumni office will assist you with choosing the best platform for your type of event.

Below are a few (not all) different virtual tools you can use for your event.

- [Zoom](#)
- YouTube
- Facebook Live
- Instagram Live
- Others

### Step 4: Publishing and Promoting an Event

The alumni office will take care of a lot of promotion for the event, but you can do your part as well! Here is a breakdown of outreach efforts:

The Alumni Office can/will:

- Create Zoom (or other platform) link
- Create registration page
- Include event in regional leader email, VirtuOWLConnections emails\*
- Create Sallyportal event, Facebook event\*
- Submit event information to be included in @RiceAlumni social media

**\*Note: Please see email communication section.**

The Alumni Group Volunteer can:

- Provide information to be included in registration
- Create Facebook events and posts within alumni group pages

- Email their own regional/Rice contacts about event

## Step 5: Follow-Up

The Alumni Relations office can send a follow-up email to all event registrants as soon as the event recording is available (if applicable).

## In-Person Events

The below **marquee** events historically happen each year across all regions and are planned by both the Alumni Office and the Regional Groups:

- **New Student Celebrations-** The Association of Rice Alumni welcomes incoming Owls and their families each summer at New Student Celebrations, held each summer across the U.S. and internationally. These fun and casual events provide new students and families with a personal welcome from alumni, other families and current students from their home area. New Student Celebrations are the perfect setting to ask questions about Rice, college life in general and living in Houston — and to make new friends before transitioning to college.
- **Rice Day-** Rice Day is a time when Owls in cities across the world gather to celebrate the anniversary of Rice’s formal opening in 1912. Taking place on and around Oct. 12, Rice Day events range from happy hours to sporting events to service projects — anything that brings Owls together to network and have fun. The Association of Rice Alumni partners with the Rice community to help create several of the events, while others are planned by volunteers.
- **Holiday Parties-** Rice alumni, parents and friends from multiple Regional Groups come together in the winter to celebrate the holiday season and the start of the new year. Parties are held in backyards, breweries, restaurants, museums and more, starting in December and wrapping up in late January.

## Event Ideas and Advice

There are a wide variety of types of events and programs that can be hosted to engage and connect Rice alumni. Below are some suggestions, but we encourage you to be creative. Also, if you have done an event that was successful and it is not listed here, please share with our office so we can let other volunteers know. Your events could land in the following categories:

**Cultural**

**Career**

**Social**

**Service**

**School**

## Spirit Students

[Click here](#) for a list of event ideas and sample event calendar.

### Event Timeline

Below is the suggested timeline for event planning and outreach. This timeline may be shortened for virtual events.

#### 3-4 MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Discuss event with the Office of Alumni Relations, decide on an ideal date, location and venue.
- NOTE: Check dates for possible conflicts with other college events, holidays and peak vacation times.
- Secure date and venue.
- Send contracts and any event-related documents to Alumni Relations staff liaison. Confirm any speakers or panelists.
  - NOTE: Alumni volunteers do not have the authority to sign any contracts. All contracts must be submitted to the Office of Alumni Relations well in advance of the event to be signed by university officials.

#### 2 MONTHS BEFORE THE EVENT

- Send details to be included in email invitation to Alumni Relations staff liaison.
- Work with Alumni Relations to determine ideal geographical area to include on invitation list
- Staff liaison will get event information to communications team to trigger email schedule configuration
- Registration page built and opened
- Event created on region's Facebook page

#### 5 WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- Send first email invitations
- Provide venue with menu and drink selections
- Alumni office will prepare event materials package

#### ONE WEEK BEFORE EVENT

- Reminder email sent to registrants
- Event materials package sent
- Assign members to event roles (check-in desk, speaker if applicable, photographer,

ticket taker, directional support, etc.)

## AT THE EVENT

- Host a registration/check-in table to obtain contact information for walk-ups
- Utilize your leadership committee, board and other volunteers to personally welcome all guests
- If the event program/agenda allows, address the crowd with a welcome, information, thank you and announcement of upcoming events. **Here is an [event script](#) example to consider for your in-person or virtual event.**
- If it is a networking event with an appropriate size group, allow for personal introductions (limit to 30 seconds each – think “elevator pitch”)
- Track attendees and then send your registration sheet to the alumni office
- Assign the role of photographer to someone during the event.

## AFTER THE EVENT

- Complete the event wrap-up by submitting to the Office of Alumni Relations:
  - [Expense Reimbursement form](#)
  - [Sign-in sheets](#)
  - Photos
  - Contact updates
- Review the event with volunteers and staff liaison
  - What worked and how can we incorporate that into future programs?
  - What didn't work and how can we fix it for next time?
  - Did we identify any new potential volunteers or ideas for new programs?
- Follow up with participants — say thank you and let them know of upcoming activities
- Share photos via social media and tag participants

## Email Communications Timeline

### Your event will receive:

- 3 event registration emails sent to regional alumni base
- Confirmation emails for each registrant
  - Please note: Depending on event, once a person receives a confirmation email for registering, they will not receive any additional registration emails
- A final email will be sent to all registrants will be sent 48-72 hours before the event containing event details and other important information.

*\*Please note: This email communications timeline is based on the 3-4 month event planning model. The closer it is to the event, this timeline and deliverables will have to be adjusted.*

## SOCIAL MEDIA & BRANDING



The Alumni Relations Office generally handles social media and branding for alumni groups, but we encourage participation from volunteers. Please do not make any social media groups or pages without submitting a request first.

## **Volunteer Social Media Tips**

Please see the below Facebook and Instagram tips if you are controlling the social media for your alumni group. The Office of Alumni Relations must have administrative access to all social media pages.

### **Facebook Best Practices**

Facebook pages/groups increase awareness and engagement because the page's status updates will appear on fans' news feeds.

Updating regularly signifies to potential new fans that the content being posted is fresh and relevant and that the page is active

- Post a few times per week
- Posts should be kept relatively short — about 2-3 sentences in length
- Drive traffic to [Rice Alumni website](#) and encourage followers to take an action
- Encourage fan commenting and engagement through photos, videos and questions
- Share posts directly from the [@RiceAlumni](#) page to share information

To increase content visibility, you can periodically mention other relevant pages that are aligned with Rice University. In order to do this on Facebook, type “@” and proceed with the page name you're mentioning and then choose the page you specifically want to insert. Mentioning other pages supports organic growth because the mention will appear on the receiver's page.

You can also share information on your own personal page and tag friends to increase awareness to your alumni group page and posts. Using specified hashtags, like #RiceAlumni, will also increase your post's visibility within the platform.

Photo and video content are accredited to a very large percentage of page views. Users are more likely to engage with this type of multi-media content because it is entertaining and dynamic. Engaging content includes liking, commenting, sharing and more. Followers are attracted to albums and wall photos. This is a great way to encourage people to visit the rest of the page's content.

### **Instagram Best Practices**

Instagram is a mobile app for sharing and finding beautiful visual content. You can take photos and short videos, use filters and effects to further stylize them and publish directly to Instagram or to other social media sites. Owned by Facebook, Instagram uses a similar algorithm to show you posts that Instagram thinks are most relevant to you, rather than what was most recently published by those you follow.

- Be active and post at least once a week
- Do not get text heavy. Post visually appealing items
- Use hashtags (ex. #RiceAlumni)
- Don't use links in captions because they are not clickable
- Encourage conversation (ex. Respond to comments)
- Tag other profiles in your posts, if applicable
- Repost others' posts if you are tagged with their permission to do so

Instagram Stories are a series of videos or photos posted by a user that are only available for 24 hours. You can add text, icons and drawings to them. Visuals posted to an Instagram Story do not appear in the regular Instagram feed nor on a user's profile (sometimes called "the grid").

Recommended photo sizes:

- Square Post: 1080 x 1080
- Vertical Post: 1080 x 1350
- Story: 1080 x 1920
- 

Resources: [Wesleyan University Communications](#)

## Branding

- The alumni office can create additional designs as requested. For the creation of collateral designs, please contact your alumni office regional officer.
- Utilize Rice University [Brand Standards](#) when posting.

## Volunteer Resources

All resources mentioned above and more are located below.

- [Event Ideas & Programs, Sample Event Calendar](#)
- [Rice Alumni Engagement Checklist](#)
- [Sample Event Script](#)
- [Peer-to-Peer Email Template](#)
- [Project Form](#)
- [Event Sign-In Sheet](#)
- [Expense Reimbursement Form](#)
- [Zoom Guide](#)
- Data Management & Privacy Policy
  - Due to the privacy policy in place, we cannot directly share our complete alumni data with the group or individual volunteers. However, we will share the basic info of your regional constituency.
  - [Rice Portal](#)- Create or log into your Rice Portal account to access regional alumni data and event information.
  - [Sallyportal](#)- We encourage alumni to opt in to Sallyportal, an online alumni network that allows graduates to connect directly with fellow alumni who can search by city, state, or country.
  - [Confidentiality Agreement](#) (separate document)
- [Brand Standards](#)