



Corporate Chapters

Workplace Programming that Deepens University-
Industry Relationships

Advancement Forum

The New Rules of Engagement: Building the Next
Generation of Alumni Leaders and Volunteers

Advancement Forum

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Corporate Chapters

Workplace Programming that Deepens University-Industry Relationships

Practice in Brief

Reimagining the concept of traditional affinity and regional chapters, corporate chapters consist of alumni who work for the same company at the same work site.

Rationale

Creating alumni clubs within company sites allows institutions to engage alumni in their 30s and 40s, a segment that is typically difficult to penetrate, and whose philanthropy can be amplified by volunteer and matching gift policies. Corporate chapters also deepen relationships and create inroads of support within organizations that can then be leveraged to create partnerships across the university.

Implementation Considerations

Unlike traditional chapters that are permitted to proliferate based on alumni interest, staff carefully direct the development of corporate chapters in alignment with university interests. There are four steps to starting a corporate chapters program:

1. *Find the Right Partner(s)*: Identify initial organizations where internal champions can found the chapter
2. *Align Internal Structure With Company Culture*: Structure the internal organization of the start-up chapter to match the culture of the organization
3. *Surface and Execute Win-Win Activities*: Design a calendar of activities that benefit the corporate chapter members and the parent company
4. *Scale Through Organic Growth and New Pilots*: Grow the size of individual corporate chapters and of the overall corporate chapter community

Institutions near metropolitan areas may find it easier to develop chapters thanks to the greater availability of partners. Rural campuses can instead organize corporate chapters in other nearby cities or regions, pending the availability of regionally-located or traveling staff to manage them.

Resource Considerations

Profiled institutions dedicate between 0.35 and 1.25 FTE to staff corporate chapters, but report no consistent expenses associated other than staff time.

Profiled Institutions:

- Seattle University in Seattle, WA
- Temple University in Philadelphia, PA

If You Can't Beat'em, Join'em

The workplace represents a largely untapped channel for alumni relations. Even as professional development and career networking become the dominant theme in alumni programming, few institutions seek to engage with their graduates through their places of employment. Moreover, alumni spend an increasing amount of their time either at work or connected to their work.

However, the workplace is more than simply a captive audience of constituents. There are clear benefits to developing deeper relationships with alumni where they work: this investment creates champions who can later advocate for partnerships with career services, industry-sponsored research and technology transfer, executive and graduate education, and corporate philanthropy, among others. On the whole, workplace programs have been seen to attract higher-capacity constituents than traditional alumni. Finally, many corporations maintain generous volunteer and matching gift programs, which amplify any incremental gains in individual giving that result from greater engagement.

Today's Alumni are Overworked and Overconnected

Harvard Business Review

"Welcome to the 72-Hour Workweek"

"...60% of those [executives, professionals, and managers] who carry smartphones for work are connected to their jobs 13.5 or more hours a day on weekdays and about five hours on weekends, for a total of about 72 hours... 62% of their waking hours every week connected to work (82% on weekdays)..."

Center for American Progress

"The Three Faces of Work-Family Conflict"

+11

More hours worked each week in 2006 than in 1979 by average American family

"...Americans work longer hours than workers in most other developed countries, including Japan, where there is a word, *karoshi*, for 'death by overwork'..."



Getting in Alumni Line of Sight

"We're always saying to our alumni: 'come to this happy hour,' 'come to campus and see us', 'come to us and do all these things.' **For once, we thought, we should go to them.** It should be about them and about what the university can for these companies and alumni in their own professional lives."

*Mollie Repetto
Executive Director, Industry Partners Program
Temple University*

Source: Deal, Jennifer, "Welcome to the 72-Hour Work Week," *Harvard Business Review*, Sept 12, 2013, <https://hbr.org/2013/09/welcome-to-the-72-hour-work-week/>; EAB interviews and analysis; Williams, Joan, and Heather Bouchee, "The Three Faces of Work-Family Conflict The Poor, the Professionals, and the Missing Middle," *Center for American Progress*, Jan 25, 2010, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/labor/report/2010/01/25/71194/the-three-faces-of-work-family-conflict/>

Bring Your Alma Mater to Work

In the last five years, first-moving institutions have begun to create corporate chapters. Corporate chapters are akin to regional clubs or affinity organizations around interests or identity groups, but the commonality that all members share is their alma mater and current employer.

Alumni relations staff appreciate that corporate chapters excel at creating connections with busy alumni in their 30s and 40s who are otherwise difficult to engage. Development staff relish the opportunity to target wealthy companies or lucrative industries that can create relationships with potential prospects a decade before they reach the C-Suite. By creating volunteer roles in the workplace and/or opportunities where they can network with other alumni employees, universities make it both convenient and valuable for individuals to engage.

This brief will discuss the successes of two very different institutions: Temple University, a large public university, and Seattle University, a mid-sized Jesuit institution. However, the range of institutions experimenting with this approach demonstrates its applicability to almost any institutional sector, region, and demographic. Universities not located in a metropolitan area can organize corporate chapters in a nearby city.

Organizing Alumni Employees Into Corporate Chapters

Diverse Institutions Experimenting with New Approach¹



Non-Urban Campuses Also Deploying Corporate Chapters

in Nearby Cities

- University of Georgia
(Located in Atlanta, not in Athens campus)
- SunTrust
 - Coca-Cola
 - Home Depot

- Oklahoma State University
(Located in Oklahoma City, not in Stillwater campus)
- Chesapeake Energy
 - Devon Energy

With Local Branches of Larger Organizations

- University of Alabama-Huntsville²
- Raytheon regional branch
 - Lockheed Martin regional branch
 - Nearby general hospital, part of system

1) Only select partners shown
2) 8 corporate chapters in total

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Multiple Bottom Lines

Temple University and Seattle University have experienced tremendous success with engagement and major gift discovery through their efforts.

For example, within a single chapter, Temple University fostered new partnerships around career services and corporate philanthropy. Moreover, without any special or segmented appeal, they increased annual fund donations and annual giving participation rates among chapter members. Temple University has seen similar results among other chapters, but has not yet quantified them.

Seattle University has led with engagement rather than philanthropy by establishing numerous connections between graduates, students, and staff.

The results of corporate chapters are especially striking considering the limited investment of staff time. At Temple, an Associate Director spends half their time working with corporate chapters, while an Executive Director spends three-fourths of their time with them. At Seattle, a single Assistant Director manages all regional, affinity, and corporate chapters, and spends about one-third of their time with these groups in particular.

Chapters Lead to Increased Engagement, Partnerships, and Revenue



A Look at One Chapter's¹ Results After Two Years

Student Career Placements

39 Jobs and internships in FY 2014

45+ Jobs and internships projected for FY 2015²

#3 Now the third biggest feeder school to this company

Philanthropic Gains



Laying A Strong Foundation

"We're playing the long game:

- We've set up multiple recruitment and internship partnerships with Microsoft.
- Boeing sponsors many business school events, and sends hundreds of mid-career people and executives to them.
- We've created many deep relationships with alumni who have become go-to class speakers and mentors in our science and engineering college.

...We are excited about corporate chapters and their future. We have no doubt that eventually this will all translate into giving, but we're not going to shoot ourselves in the foot by hurrying it."

*Susan Vosper
Assistant Vice President for Alumni Engagement*

1) Philadelphia branch of national professional services and accounting firm
2) Still calculating final figures, but on track to meet or exceed goal as of December 2014 with 32 hired
3) These figures are before the corporate match
4) Financial literacy curriculum design project with education school

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Step 1: Find the Right Partner(s)

Launch Pilot(s) in Alumni-Dense Organizations with Preexisting Relationships

The first step in establishing a corporate chapters program is to identify a small number of pilot companies. Because a corporate chapter requires a critical mass of members for viability, Temple University seeks a minimum of 75 alumni employees, while Seattle University seeks a minimum of 250 alumni employees. They also prioritize companies with community impact programs that support employee volunteering and matching gift programs. Interviewees stress not starting from scratch to penetrate “ideal” companies without any preexisting relationships. Instead, identify a short list of potential partners where the university already has at least a few internal champions willing to use their social capital and clout to gain company buy-in and form a nucleus of members.

Strategies to Identify Champions at Alumni-Dense Companies

- Scan rosters of campus boards, councils, and committees that already host members who work at targeted companies, preferably in senior roles.
- Search the advancement database to find active donors or volunteers with appropriate titles or roles. Prospect researchers can use [Linkedin.com/alumni](https://www.linkedin.com/alumni) or LinkedIn Advanced features to do the same.
- Companies that have business relationships with the universities (e.g., suppliers, vendors, renters) are often quick to partner.

Brand the Program to Attract Initial Participants Beyond Large Corporations

Because Temple University has targeted several partners that do not identify with the “corporate” moniker, such as a local newspaper and the Philadelphia school district, they instead call their program “Owls @ Work.”



Coordinate Approaches Across Campus

Aggregate Existing Corporate Relationship Intelligence Across Silos to Identify Best Prospects for Corporate Chapters

One university leveraged the initiation of corporate chapters as a Trojan horse to bring together what had historically been a decentralized effort to engage outside partners.



Collect Information From Campus Partners

One-on-One Interviews

- Alumni relations staff collects information on corporate connections from campus partners (e.g., central and school-based career services, academic unit advancement teams, sponsored research, athletics, procurement, continuing and executive education units, graduate admissions)
- Staff makes the case for how corporate chapters could benefit each campus partner



Collaborate Monthly

Stakeholder Roundtables

- Organize a monthly meeting for all partners with corporate relationships
- Each stakeholder updates a document on a shared drive with new collaborations and pursuits before each meeting
- A shared listserv is used to communicate with all stakeholders



Coordinate Future Approaches

New Approaches

- Cross-pollinating relationships across campus partners allowed them to make introductions, referrals, and joint approaches that ultimately expanded the number of dimensions through which many companies were partnering
- This new approach projects a more coordinated image to external parties

Enfranchise Alpha Partners By Asking Them to Design and Execute Larger Strategy

One university started its program by appointing several potential champions to join a task force on how the alumni association could form stronger corporate partnerships. Staff pitched the corporate chapters concept. Because they helped to refine the idea, taskforce members felt a sense of ownership over it. Several of the most enthusiastic members offered to be early-adopters, role-modeling the program to other companies.



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Step 2: Align Internal Structure With Company Culture

Designate Company Employees to Lead the Chapter

To the extent possible, forgo the bureaucratic trappings of chapters (e.g., newsletters, websites, bylaws) and work with designated champions and early-adopters to craft a structure that aligns with the company's available resources and culture. While regional and affinity chapters tend to be homogenous in structure and host fixed-term executive board positions, corporate chapters tend to evolve more informally over time, especially in their early years. Contacts explain that because coworkers can collaborate freely during the work-day and meet in-person more easily than members of traditional chapters, they require less formal structure. They also may possess greater natural accountability for task completion than other chapters, since failure to follow through on a chapter project would reflect negatively on their reputation or relationship with coworkers within the company.

Corporate Chapter Organizational Structures Range in Formality and Structure



Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Step 3: Surface and Execute Win-Win Activities

Ensure Two-Way Value for Individual Participation and Organizational Support

The activities of corporate chapters include standard alumni events fare (i.e., social, service, mentorship, and professional development) that are uniquely valuable in this context as they allow members to develop valuable intra-company networks. Corporate chapters also work with university staff members to design customized programming that meets the needs and interests of both its members and of the larger company. It is critical that employees and the larger company *both* find value in these partnerships.

Examples of Chapter Activities Across Observed Institutions

Typical Alumni Club Programs Adapted to Corporate Chapters



- Surprise coffee and donuts breakfast provided to chapter members
- Provision of university pride paraphernalia for office display (e.g., pennants)
- Happy hours and speed networking
- Mentorship program between senior and junior employees
- Invitations to attend university Day of Service events
- Invitations to special Homecoming, Alumni Weekend, and other traditions-based and athletics events, either on campus or at the workplace (i.e., tailgating in the office, special pre-basketball game reception), planned for specific chapters or the entire corporate chapter community

Programming Customized to Interests of Chapter Members



- Mentorship programs or mock interviews for students interested in working at the company
- Faculty member presentations to corporate chapter on relevant research
- Matching of executives interested in board or high-level volunteer roles with university opportunities
- Deployment of corporate members as go-to guest speakers for particular classes or as judges for pitch competitions and that relate to their jobs
- Special programming focused on interns or retirees
- Information sessions on the value of philanthropy and how members can maximize their giving through payroll deductions and corporate match
- Furnishing of university's photographer to take professional headshots of chapter members for personal use
- Presentations by student affairs or career services staff on topics like communication, leadership, and networking
- Fireside chats, intimate salons, or "State of the University" presentations by the president or key deans

Programming Customized to Interests of Parent Companies



- Conduct of large-scale company events in university facilities at reduced pricing, such as an executive leadership speaking series held at the business school featuring company managers, with special receptions afterwards for those who were alumni, attended by development officers and senior administrators
- Assistance to HR in navigating creation of special internship and externship programs with the university, or of expanded career fair programming
- Graduate admissions and executive education information sessions for cohorts of employees considering enrolling in company-sponsored education together
- Creation of "student treks": half- or full-day visits to a company headquarters by groups of interested students where HR staff and chapter members present on industry trends, explain the skills and experiences that make for strong candidates, and share career opportunities; these help to enhance company brand among prospective employees

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Step 4: Scale Through Organic Growth and New Pilots

Collaborate with Company Staff to Steadily Grow Chapter Memberships

Much like affinity and regional chapters, corporate chapters grow steadily on their own as members recruit colleagues. However, supportive companies can accelerate this process through the following:



Companies can provide names and e-mails of all alumni employees for chapter members to contact, or HR staff can send a message to potential members on chapter leaders' behalf if such employee information is tightly controlled



Companies can broker connections between potential members or even prospective employees and corporate chapter members during interviewing (to "sell" candidates on the job by showcasing company culture and community connections) or onboarding (to make new employees feel welcome)

Advertise Initial Victories to Larger Alumni and Corporate Community to Generate New Pilots

To increase the number of corporate chapters, staff promote the successes and highlights of the first few pilots to the rest of the alumni community through media like their main alumni website, regular alumni or donor newsletters, and alumni magazines, where this content is likely to reach alumni who would be interested in participating in or sponsoring their own. Advertising the work of corporate chapters not only helps to generate interest in new chapters, but it also has several positive effects for the parent companies themselves:



Business-to-customer sales organizations in communities where alumni might choose to shop or buy based on this demonstrable support of their alma mater appreciate the positive public relations for their brand.



Business-to-business sales organizations highlight corporate partnerships for employee engagement and recruitment. Moreover, B2B organizations are more inclined to sponsor one if they know that competitors in their same industry that compete for the same staff or recruit from the same university host them as well.



Generate Alumni Interest, But Do Not Allow Alumni to Drive New Corporate Chapter Development

Staff may market content that educates alumni on the concept of the corporate chapter to solicit those interested in starting their own to contact the alumni association. However, due to the unique work involved in chartering new corporate chapters, staff prefer to control the selection process for new organizations instead of letting alumni interest steer their efforts to low-priority companies. To compromise, universities might communicate clear criteria that new corporate chapters must meet.

Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Considerations for Program Administration

Staff That Manage Corporate Chapters Require Unique Competencies for Success

While corporate chapters share many similarities with regional and affinity chapters, several key differences distinguish their staffing from their traditional counterparts. Consider the following unique responsibilities and preferred competencies of staff members who work with corporate chapters.

Sample Job Posting for Corporate Chapter Staff

Description

This individual will lead the university's program to organize and manage volunteer-driven alumni chapters within corporate companies and other large employers in the community.

Competencies

- *Diagnose Linkages Between Business Needs and University Assets:* Proactively listen for opportunities to deepen company-university relationships
- *Navigate Cross-Institutional Silos on Behalf of Chapters:* Become organization's single-source relationship manager and control access to the chapter by university interested parties
- *Develop Relationships with Senior Executives:* Hone high-level communication and professionalism skills and internalize corporate lingo, reporting structure, products, and goals
- *Recognize and Act Upon Revenue Opportunities:* Discover and qualify potential individual prospects and identify corporate philanthropy priorities
- *Manage Volunteer and Chapter Development Effectively:* Possess organization, facilitation, and interpersonal skills

Preferred Qualifications

- ✓ At least five years of work experience preferred, with these possible backgrounds in order of preference:
- ✓ Prior experience in alumni relations, development, corporate relations, or university-community partnerships
- ✓ Prior experience in corporate-facing university functions, such as career services, sponsored research, or industry relations
- ✓ Prior experience in B2B sales, account management, or product roles that entail development of two-way value propositions with private-sector executives

...A Day in the Life...

Some institutions task corporate chapter management to dedicated staff, while others assign them to the staff member already working with regional and affinity chapters as part of their role. *This description is for a dedicated staff member.*

- Upon learning of company challenges in recruiting for certain positions, introduce HR staff to career services director to develop feeder pipeline of candidates
- Arrange meetings between senior R&D executives and principal investigators

- Coordinate a mentorship program between students and alumni chapter members
- Assist a graduate program director in marketing a new MBA concentration to potential interested employees

- Respond to volunteer e-mails within 24-48 hours as they collaborate during work-day
- Socialize with chapter members in company's box during football games

- Write up contact reports after extensive interactions with potential donors and share intelligence with MGOs
- Ask corporate chapter members to send a letter of support to a corporate foundation program officer that is reviewing a university grant submission

- Ask the right questions to coach volunteers towards constructive outcomes similar to regional and affinity chapter management
- Serve as an information conduit between chapter members and the university
















Source: EAB interviews and analysis.

Weigh Benefits and Drawbacks for Housing Programs in Various Divisions

The challenges and opportunities of corporate chapter staffing require thoughtful consideration about the best administrative location to house such a program. The ideal structure is likely a standalone and broad-based industry engagement team reporting to the chief advancement officer, but few institutions maintain such units.

Selecting the right staff member with the appropriate skills exceeds the importance of the “right” administrative location. However, institutions should consider the advantages and disadvantages of vesting corporate chapter operations into particular units or university divisions:

Considerations For Housing a Corporate Chapters Program

Organizational Unit <i>Responsibility/Competency:</i> <i>Ability To...¹</i>	Alumni Relations Chapter Development Program Staff who also work with regional and affinity-based chapters	Corporate and Foundation Relations Office Staff who organize corporate philanthropy and partnerships	MGO Aligned with Academic Unit or Region Tasking a development officer with running a corporate chapter that aligns with their portfolio (i.e., a New York City-based MGO working with a Wall Street bank or an engineering college MGO working with a tech firm)
<i>Diagnose Linkages Between Business Needs and University Assets</i>			
<i>Navigate Cross-Institutional Silos on Behalf of Chapters</i>			
<i>Develop Relationships with Senior Executives</i>			
<i>Recognize and Act Upon Revenue Opportunities</i>			
<i>Manage Volunteer and Chapter Development Effectively</i>			
Net Assessment	Alumni relations staff have experience in chapter operations, and assigning corporate chapters to staff who already manage several is the simplest option. However, these staff often lack the gravitas and business savvy to maximize relationships and may not be able to act on strategic opportunities. However, this could be a stretch role for high-potential staff interested in building additional skills.	Corporate and foundation relations offices vary, with some optimized for grants and others playing a more strategic engagement role and serving as a “concierge” to corporations to partner holistically across campus. The latter are well-poised to manage chapters. However, staff may struggle with purely administrative or social aspects of chapter management and volunteer coordination.	MGOs with chapter duties should have smaller portfolios and metrics that prioritize discovery and stewardship to avoid a short-term focus on closing gifts at the expense of chapter development that could yield massive long-term benefits. MGOs may already know potential champions in their portfolios and unit-based MGOs may already have relationships they can leverage. However, a decentralized approach with each college hosting its own chapters fails to capitalize on the economy of scale of multiple chapters and may inhibit the ability to work across the entire university.

¹ Based on perceptions of typical advancement functions



Some Ability



Medium Ability



Substantial Ability



High Ability



Want to Learn More?

This practice brief is part of the EAB Advancement Forum's research initiative, entitled: "The New Rules of Engagement: Building the Next Generation of Alumni Leaders and Volunteers."

To learn more about this research and to find other resources, access the [Alumni Leadership and Volunteerism Resource Center](#). If you have any trouble accessing this page, please consult your Dedicated Advisor.



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