



# Starting an Alumni Chapter

## RSCC Office of Alumni Relations

### Why Have An Alumni Chapter?

Alumni chapters make up the grass roots level of support for Roane State Community College by striving for certain college goals. Some specific goals for each chapter can include:

1. *To Promote the Interests and Welfare of Roane State Community College and Its Alumni*  
Alumni chapters can assist through the recruitment of students, support of financial development initiatives and cultivation of alumni leaders. A well organized chapter can be a valuable forum for RSCC in local communities.
2. *To provide an opportunity for Alumni to become acquainted*  
This social function of an alumni chapter is an important one. The common RSCC bond can help provide business contacts or bring more recent graduates together. Breaking the ice at a social gathering can open many doors both for the alumni chapter and the individual alumnus.
3. *To perform a public relations role in the community*  
Alumni chapters are the eyes, ears, and voice for Roane State Community College. Chapters are in excellent position to help form a positive image of Roane State, by creating a better understanding of RSCC and to spread the word about RSCC. Chapters can also provide RSCC with important feedback about its reputation and programs.
4. *To assist with career networking*  
Historically, alumni have looked to alumni chapters for social opportunities; however, with a change in the job market the interests of the alumni body has transferred to career networking. The RSCC family can assist in providing contacts, career advice and job leads.

### RSCC's Obligations to its Alumnus

The Office of Alumni Relations exists to support alumni chapters in the enhancement and enrichment of Roane State Community College and to ensure that alumni have an opportunity for a continued relationship with their alma mater. Our goal in working with chapters is to have strong effective chapters involved in membership development, student recruitment and the establishment of scholarships.

As such our obligations to our alumni are:

- To ensure that a vigorous and productive alumni program exists
- To respect the integrity of the alumni program
- To enlist alumni in supporting the college and the community

# Points to Consider

## Choosing Leaders

- **Term of Office:** in order to retain the experience of a leader and at the same time prevent burnout, a limit of term is suggested for officers. An established length of service will bring a definite period of commitment. Staggered terms will foster community.
- **Officers:** Although the alumni chapter size and scope of activities will determine the number of the officers, the typical chapter has the following regular officers:
  - **President:** an interested, enthusiastic and motivated leader who is highly regarded by the chapter. Provides and communicate the vision of the chapter. Presides over all general and business meetings and is the primary contact with the alumni, chapter and Roane State Community College. Reaches out to the community to promote the chapter and its goals.
  - **Vice-President:** successor and alternate to the president; coordinates chapter programs by working with all officers and committees.
  - **Treasurer:** maintains local bank account(s) and prepares an annual statement of chapter finances to be sent to the Office of Alumni Relations.
  - **Promotions Officer:** coordinates the production and distribution of promotional materials to the alumni, Roane State Community College and the community.
  - **Campus Liaisons:** appoint chapter members as liaisons for each campus. An alumnus from his/her campus (Roane County, Oak Ridge, Loudon, Scott, Campbell, Cumberland, Knox) can network with other fellow campus alumni in the area, communicate with the campus faculty/staff and address the specific issues related to the different campuses. (continuing education opportunities, etc.)
  - **Committees:** Committee members are the worker bees of the chapter. They handle all logistics and planning for events, fund raisers, etc. Solid committee membership is key to successful chapters.

## Maintaining Volunteer Interest

1. Conduct business meetings on a regularly scheduled basis. Not only does this help officers remember to attend the meetings, it also makes them feel they're part of a professional and important organization.
2. Keep business meetings organized, efficient and productive while not overly structured. Prepare a meeting agenda and distribute it before the meetings so officers are reminded of their responsibilities and the chapter's aims and timetable.
3. Make it fun and keep the meeting lively. Encourage an informal camaraderie among the officers.
4. Recognize officers for their contributions both privately and in front of others.

## Organizing Your New Chapter

1. **Gather data:** The Office of Alumni Relations can provide a complete list of alumni in your area, including current addresses.
2. **Pick a meeting location:** Based on zip code analysis, target the obvious alumni population centers for your initial meeting location.
3. **Conduct an organization meeting:** Organizational meetings should be held to select chapter officers and plan activities. This is your first opportunity to plan subsequent general chapter meetings and events.

4. **Follow up:** Within the week following the organization meeting, contact all attendees to get their feedback, solicit their attendance at the next meeting and identify potential volunteers.
5. **Plan your chapter activities:** once regular meetings are established, you may start to plan future activities, develop a budget, recruit attendees, etc.
6. **Chapter Charter:** apply for a chapter charter. Each chapter is chartered by Roane State Community College and therefore governed by the college. Sample articles of association are provided by the Office of Alumni Relations and can be adapted to the unique circumstances of each chapter, but must be in conformance to the spirit of the chapter charter. As a chapter sanctioned by Roane State Community College, the Office of Alumni Relations is here to assist and provide guidance to your new chapter.

## Planning Programs & Events

Adequate planning allows the chapter to pace itself and allows the Office of Alumni Relations to provide support. With a one year plan in hand, chapter events can receive publicity in the alumni magazine, *Roane State Today*, as well on the RSCC website. In developing an annual chapter calendar, consider:

- **Types of Programs:** Select activities which are most likely to generate attendance.
- **Planning:** Programs should be planned well in advance and should be directly related to the chapter's objectives and the interests of area alumni.
- **Scheduling:** Space event dates evenly throughout the year. This provides adequate time for preparation and ensures better attendance and participation.
- **Program calendar:** A detailed program calendar can inform local alumni of future events and activities. When the calendar is completed, copies of it should be distributed to members and the alumni office for inclusion in magazines and on the Roane State website.

## Individual Event Planning

Each event should have a definite, worthwhile purpose that will appeal to area alumni. Committees work well for this activity. Consider:

- **Day and Date:** Select a day that is free of most conflicts in your community (i.e. UT football games, holiday weekends, etc.)
- **Time:** Evening events and weekends should allow commuters time to return home or should be early enough and in a central location to allow time to stop off before going home.
- **Place:** The physical meeting place does not have to be a Roane State facility; however, campus locations are centrally located, parking is assured and meeting facilities are free. Depending on the campus and time of the year event, food can be catered as well.
- **Alcohol & Smoking:** Alcoholic beverages are not allowed on any campus facility, no matter the event. Smoking is only allowed outside campus buildings.
- **Cost:** Make the cost as reasonable as possible. Price will affect attendance, especially for the more recent alumni. Plan for the expense of non-paying guests, such as a speaker.
- **Mailing:** The Office of Alumni Relations can assist in the printing and mailing of chapter event announcements but the chapter can create a variety of announcements and speed up the mailing process by providing camera-ready art work. All mailings should be sent to the Alumni Office at least 8 weeks prior to the event.

- **Publicity:** Use other forms of publicity to supplement the mailing. The chapter should make follow-up e-mail messages, telephone reminders, newspaper community calendars, etc. Submit the information to the Alumni Relations Office for inclusion in the alumni magazine and website.
- **Photographs:** Assign someone to take pictures of your event. Digital is best and allows pictures to be distributed immediately to members or to a website. It also provides a compact, historical record of your event.
- **Younger Alumni:** Watch for them. If they aren't made to feel welcome, you will never see them again. Assign friendly, outgoing alumni to act as greeters.
- **Commercial Solicitation:** Never solicit money for any commercial purpose at an alumni event. Roane State Community College is a non-profit organization and must not engage in commercial activities nor appear to engage in commercial activities.

## Types of Events/Programs to Plan

- Educational
  - Business luncheons featuring local alumni as speakers
  - Presentations including current topics
  - University information update with a faculty/staff guest speaker
- Networking
  - Invite headhunters/human resources professions to a reception or dinner
  - Solicit internship/co-op opportunities from area alumni
  - Getting involved in community philanthropy
- Special Projects
  - Scholarship fund raisers
  - Internships in local corporations or agencies for students
  - Informational seminars with extended campus faculty
- Recruiting
  - Mixers to welcome incoming freshmen and their parents
  - fundraising
- Social
  - Pre or post-game rallies
  - RSCC drama productions or concerts
  - Reception/dinner at a unique restaurant, private club or interesting attraction.

## Budgets, Fundraising and a Statement of Finances

An alumni chapter should have a continuing concern about a treasury of funds. Although the Office of Alumni Relations may provide some budgetary funds initially, the chapter will be called up to underwrite some of the activities of the organization.

- **Budget:** Each chapter is expected to become self-funded. Budget funds are to pay for up-front chapter expenses; deposits on event facilities, event tickets which must be pre-paid, catering, etc. Costs for mail-outs and postage will be provided by the Office of Alumni Relations.
- **Bank Accounts:** Chapter funds raised by dues or special events will be deposited in a Roane State Community College agency fund account and will be available for chapter use by request of the chapter president and the Office of Alumni Relations. Special projects such as endowments will be handled through the RSCC Foundation Office.

- **Statement of Finances:** Each chapter treasurer must submit a summary bank statement on a quarterly basis to its membership and the Office of Alumni Relations.
- **Special Funds:** Chapter income can be used to fund a project such as a scholarship or a unique project or program at Roane State Community College in the chapter's name.

Updated July 16, 2004