

A Primer for Chapter Leaders

Section 1: What is a chapter?

Chapters are organizations that form the central building blocks of the Qatar University Alumni Association.

Chapters, alumni volunteer-led groups, connect Qatar University alumni who share a common affinity or interest to one another and back to the University.

Chapters are organized by:

- Geography (e.g. alumni living in a specific area of Doha)
- College (e.g. alumni who graduated from the College of Business)
- Shared interests (e.g. alumni who played sports while at QU)
- Profession (e.g. graduates working as petroleum engineers.)
- Graduation year

The goal of each chapter is to engage alumni in the ongoing life of the University – to make the relationship between graduates and the University a part of an alumnus's life "today". Most chapters strive to reach this objective by holding activities, providing information in gatherings of their members, gatherings with an educational, networking, service-oriented and/or social purpose.

Since all QU graduates are members of the Association, all QU alumni are potential members of the several chapters for which they qualify. The goal of chapter leaders is to move every alumnus who qualifies for membership in their chapter from passive to active engagement.

Successful chapters vary in size and activity. No two chapters operate in precisely the same way. Most active and successful chapters, however, tend to have the following qualities:

- A strong, enthusiastic leader with an active and involved leadership team
- A strong, engaged membership energized by effective communications
- Programs and messages that highlight the ongoing life of the University
- Unique activities and communications that deliver in ways that cannot be found elsewhere in day-to-day life

Section 2: Chapter Leadership

Below is an outline of the key chapter leadership positions. Positions can be elected or appointed as best fits the chapter's needs so long as the process is in accordance with the By-laws of the Qatar University Alumni Association.

1. The President

The President manages all chapter activities, delegating specific duties to the leadership group. Selecting a strong person in this key leadership role is critical to the success of the chapter; just as crucial is the process for effective succession once the President's term is over.

The first and most important job for the leader is the selection and recruitment of a leadership group. This group may be smaller (no less than 4 including the President) or larger (10-15) but in every case individuals who accept this role must be committed to making the chapter a success through interesting events and meaningful communications.

- presides at meetings involving the leadership group of the chapter, and/or general membership
- maintains contact with the Alumni Office and the QUAA Board Committee on chapters
- serves as a member of the Alumni Assembly and represents the chapter at the annual meeting of the QUAA
- publicizes QU news and information to the chapter, and carries alumni views back to the University

2. The Vice President

Individuals who stand second-in-command of the chapter are considered members of the leadership group. In most cases, this will be the team from which the next chapter President will be chosen.

- The key to success for chapters is the early development of a strong leadership group
- Defining clear, individual responsibilities for every member of the leadership group is essential for chapter success – the allocation of responsibility within the leadership group is the responsibility of the chapter President.

3. Members of the leadership group:

- lead important QUAA functions such as planning an event
- learn the duties of the President in order to ensure a smooth leadership transition
- keep information flowing to the general membership of the chapter make personal contact with potential new members to encourage their involvement
- provide the resources necessary to support the chapter's activities

Each chapter determines term length for the leadership positions in light of its own membership strength, following the guidelines of the QUAA By-laws. The Alumni Relations Office recommend two or three year terms of office, a timespan that allows adequate time to establish effective leadership while providing continuous opportunity for change and inflow of new talent.

Section 3: College Chapters

Given the key role of the College in the life of QU, it is not surprising that the establishment of College chapters is critical. These chapters will be among the first to be announced at the launch of the Association in December (Fall) 2012-2013.

Section 4: Ideas for Chapter Activities

Chapters that provide effective communications about the University to their members while engaging them in events deliver the key connections necessary for the ultimate success of the QU Alumni Association. Success for all chapters is measured by the degree to which their members form a closer relationship with the University.

Effective planning of the channels of communication and the structure of the activities must be done within each chapter.

Here are a few general examples that might be helpful to new chapters as they contemplate putting forward an engagement plan:

PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
1- Honoring an outstanding QU alumnus (whose activities relate to the chapter's core focus area or interest)	A public meeting with media in attendance so that QU is associated with the outstanding graduate.
2- Devising and holding a publicly accessible forum that invites expert faculty members and alumni to speak about topics related to the chapter's core focus area or interest thus creating a forum that offers fresh and relevant content to chapter members.	



PURPOSE	EXAMPLE
3- Events that can include chapter members' extended family, such as an Iftar or Suhoor dinner.	
4- A monthly breakfast meeting on the same day each month in the same location to exchange views on events within the chapter's area of interest.	A session of secondary school administrators in the College of Education chapter focused on the evolution of the school system and the strains of change.
5- An ongoing educational program offered four times during the year to catch chapter members up on the latest thinking in the field.	A faculty member and key alumni talking about the latest financial challenges in the oil industry.
6- Behind the scenes access: events where the special access for members of the chapter to a unique experience	Backstage access to football games, musical shows, theatres, art galleries etc.
7- A regular career-networking meeting	For example, setting up an open-house for companies in the finance industry, or pharmaceutical industry that are looking to hire graduates.
8- Mentoring program for current students	Setting up resume workshops, career advice workshops etc.
9- A group focused on helping guide secondary schools students into considering QU as their first choice for University attendance.	Tours of the university for Grade 11 students, or presentations in high schools to give details on what each college at QU can offer to prospective students.
10- A welcome gathering for newly admitted students	Hosting a start-of-year lunch or dinner get-together for new students, fresh graduates, faculty and the alumni chapter.
11- Spectator events at sports matches featuring University athletes or local professional teams.	Arranging a trip of QU students/alumni to attend an away football game at a different university
12- Participation in cultural programs	Offering a service or element to the event that would otherwise not be available- perhaps sponsoring that aspect of the event.
13- Supporting the Talent Show	Sponsoring some aspect of the event, or perhaps even contributing by showcasing the taken alumni have.
14- Culinary adventures	Gathering students and alumni to visit a newly opened restaurant
15- Book clubs	Weekly, monthly or quarterly book clubs as per the chapters' interests.
16- Developing opportunities for the chapter to engage in community service or civic engagement projects – especially those that are related to the chapters interests	The Pharmacy alumni chapter could volunteer at local health outlets to assist health professionals.
17- Informal chat sessions with the President and/or senior officials.	Off the record conversations in which chapter members hear candid comments about just what is happening at QU today.



The vast majority of these activities can be organized and directed by the chapter leaders and do not require the alumni staff to do more than provide start-up tips and occasional help in problem-solving.

The chapters must become self-reliant if they are to survive and succeed in their role as the central building blocks of the alumni association. If a chapter is self-operating and on the road to becoming self-funding, then it is delivering the kind of connection between QU graduates and the University that will provide the solid base within society that every University needs.

Section 4: Alumni Office Role

1. Recruit the right leader and assist in the recruitment of the leadership group
2. Support the start-up process with advice, counsel and seed capital
3. Stand-by as a counsel and step in only when needed
4. Provide tertiary and support services to chapters and the association in general