

IOWA

Center for
Advancement

REUNION EVENT

Planning Toolkit



This toolkit provides information on planning a successful reunion, including budgets, venues, and best practices. If you have questions, please contact alumni.engagement@foriowa.org.



REUNION PLANNING

Thank you for your passion and enthusiasm for the University of Iowa. We appreciate your volunteer efforts and are committed to assisting you in your reunion planning. As you give your time and energy, know that you are helping shape the strategic direction of the University of Iowa by strengthening the connections of proud Hawkeye alumni and friends.

Advance Planning

We recommend at least four to six months for planning an informal gathering, and nine to 16 months for a larger reunion. Every reunion is different, and this guide has some helpful suggestions to make your reunion special.

Why Reunions Are Important

Year after year, alumni return to campus to mark a milestone of the time since their college days at the University of Iowa. And each time there's a group of people working behind the scenes to make it all happen. Without dedicated volunteers, reunions would not occur. Thank you for being a volunteer!

Reunion Organizers: Who Will Be Coordinating This Event?

A successful reunion depends on a dedicated committee of volunteers who will start planning early, work throughout the year, and share in the coordination and promotion of the reunion.

Most reunion committees include five to eight individuals (depending on the size of the reunion) and have a chair (or co-chairs) to oversee the committee and all aspects of the reunion planning. Regular meetings should be held in person or by conference call, along with regular emails that keep members updated on the progress of the reunion planning. Committee members should be given designated responsibilities and clear time commitments. To make the best use of your committee members, identify their strengths and assign roles appropriately.

Reunion Committee Responsibilities

The reunion chair and committee are responsible for providing programming and activities that balance the interests of the group with time for attendees to enjoy visiting with old friends.

General duties for the committee chair include:

- Support the mission (provost.uiowa.edu/ui-academic-mission) of the University of Iowa.
- Research, organize, and implement reunion events.
- Recruit and work with a committee of at least five other volunteers.
- Act as a liaison to the UI Center for Advancement.
- Schedule committee meetings and coordinate committees.
- Create and finalize a budget.
- Welcome reunion attendees and volunteers during reunion.

To broaden interest, we recommend selecting a cross-section of volunteers (i.e. different affinity groups, geographic areas) who are enthusiastic, organized, and detail-oriented. Responsibilities can be shared to decrease individual workloads, and co-chairs can be appointed for some of the larger roles.



Reunion Program Ideas

There are several ways you can enhance the reunion experience. Choose activities and events that will be meaningful and fun for your attendees.

Campus tour – For a trip down memory lane, the UI Office of Admissions offers complimentary guided campus tours (admissions.uiowa.edu/visit-campus).

Supporting Hawkeye Students – Alumni donations play an increasingly important role in helping our current students. A reunion is a fantastic opportunity to raise money and contribute to the success of current and future generations of students. Reunion groups interested in giving back to the UI may consider incorporating a GOLDrush crowdfunding initiative on behalf of their class year or student organization. More information is available at goldrush.uiowa.edu.

Keynote Speaker – Although most alumni events include a featured speaker, it's not a necessary component of a great event. Be proactive in securing a speaker who can drive home the mission of your event. Start by asking your planning committee to identify anyone who could assist in furthering the intended goals of your program. Some reunions will have several speakers, including graduates from different eras, a former faculty member, or a current student.

Video/Slideshow – Ask members of your organization to submit old photos to be compiled into a slideshow or video that will be shown during the reunion. University Archives (lib.uiowa.edu/sc/archives) is a great source for information and photos, and can provide documents/photos if you put together a reunion booklet. Yearbooks are another source for photos and information.

Rituals and Traditions – Try to creatively incorporate your group's rituals/traditions into the event. If your reunion group spans many years, it can be interesting to learn how the traditions have evolved. Your group might consider reviving a class tradition or song; reading your class commencement speech; creating a trivia contest based on your time at the University of Iowa; or displaying T-shirts, athletic uniforms, or any past fashion relevant to the group.

Family-Friendly Activities – Incorporating campus and community activities into your planning may help draw guests back to Iowa City. Consider holding a family program separate from reunion events for any spouses or children who may come. Appendix B lists campus resources and contact information to assist you in your planning.

Communications Process

Personal communication is the most effective method to draw classmates to the reunion, particularly through peer-to-peer interactions. Committee members can contact classmates and encourage their attendance at the reunion. If your group creates a reunion website and registration link, sharing information on social media is another great way to reach classmates.

If you wish to send invitations using university alumni records, please contact alumni.engagement@foriowa.org to place a data request (please allow three weeks to process the request). Per our privacy information policy, we can only release contact information to approved vendors. Your reunion committee will need to work with an approved vendor to send invitations. A list of approved vendors is available at portal.uilicensing.com/index.cfm/licensee/search.

Alumni Records - Privacy Information Policy

The UI Center for Advancement's mission is to advance the University of Iowa through engagement and philanthropy, which requires maintaining connections with individuals who have an affinity with and for our great university. Our privacy notice (foriowa.org/about/privacy) includes an overview of how and why the UI Center for Advancement collects, holds, and processes your alumni information, as well as provide information on our safeguarding procedures and your rights in relation to personal information.



Reunion Timeline:

This timeline can help you prepare for any size and style of event and can be tailored depending on your specific needs.

18 Months Before - Initiating the Planning Process

- Contact our staff (alumni.engagement@foriowa.org) to schedule a meeting to discuss reunion guidelines, establish a tentative timeline, answer preliminary questions, and start the planning process.
- Determine the target audience. Who would want to come to celebrate this occasion with you?

16 Months Before - Developing the Reunion Foundation

- Organize a reunion committee. The committee size will vary based on the size of your potential reunion group, but you can never have too many volunteers. At your initial committee meeting, delegate tasks to various members based on each person's strengths.
- Define the events. For example, a Friday night meet and greet session over appetizers and drinks; a Saturday picnic and family games in the park; and a Saturday night dance with a DJ playing the hits from your graduation year.
- Survey classmates' preferences on dates and activities.
- Create a budget. Add up the expected cost of the reunion and determine a realistic ticket price. Your ticket sales may be the only source of income for your budget, or you may be able to raise some money through fundraisers ahead of time.
- Ask fellow alumni to update their contact information using our Update Your Information form (foriowa.org/update-information) to ensure you have the most current email and mailing addresses for your members.
- Determine if a block of football tickets will be needed for your event and work with Hawkeye athletics to secure a block. (hawkeyesports.com/grouptickets)

9-12 Months Before - Research and Prioritize

- Research and reserve venues. Discuss rental rates and parking, confirm audio/visual availability as needed, identify items to be rented and if an approved caterer is required, etc.
- Determine the reunion activities and set a reunion date based on feedback and availability.
- Develop any promotional giveaway items you wish to distribute at the event (as needed). Be sure that the vendors you are researching are approved by the University of Iowa Trademark Licensing Program - uilicensing.com.
- Research and reserve accommodations. Choose hotel and block hotel rooms.
- Research and reserve catering. Request sample menus and price estimates. Confirm when guest headcount is due.
- Book the venues as well as any other vendors (caterers, DJ, photographers, etc.).
- Determine any liability insurance needs (some venues require it).
- Draft the save-the-date invitation.
- Draft the registration invitation and information.
- Set up an official registration web page with all information on the reunion.
- Send registration/invitation email to alumni and friends. Make sure the invitations include all relevant information including directions, hotel discounts being offered, food being served at each event, and appropriate attire. Clarify that the listed ticket price is good until the RSVP date (one month before the reunion).



3-6 Months Before - Finalizing Your Reunion Details

- Decide how to honor deceased classmates. Usually this is done with a small memorial table with photos and quotes about how they will not be forgotten.
- Meet with your caterer and plan the menu. Make sure to keep classmates who follow a vegetarian and/or gluten-free diet in mind.
- Confirm all reservations and bookings.
- Invite former faculty and university staff.
- Select and confirm keynote speakers.
- Select event master of ceremonies.
- Purchase reunion decorations.
- Collect photos of classmates and compile a slideshow or video.
- Order special giveaways through a licensed vendor (uilicensing.com).

Final Steps

One Month Before

- Get a final attendee head count (or as close as possible). Give this count to the caterer.
- Finalize all plans and make any final purchases or confirmations.
- Put any necessary reminders on your reunion website.
- Confirm and discuss event details with rental companies, hotel, florist, photographer, etc.
- Recruit additional volunteers as needed.
- Create and print programs for the event. Be sure to include all logos or recognition for the people/organizations that assisted.
- Create gift for keynote speaker and master of ceremonies (if desired).

One Week Before

- Assemble reunion packets/welcome kits.
- Finalize details with venue, caterer, and any other vendors.

One Day Before/Day of Event

- Decorate the venue.
- Prepare a sign-in table for name tags, reunion packets, giveaways, etc.
- Ensure microphones work and the podium is correctly placed.
- Have a copy of the keynote speaker's biography available.
- Have speaker gifts on-hand and ready to be presented.



After the Event

- Hold a final planning committee meeting to critique the reunion and the guest experience. Discuss the positives and negatives.
- Write a summary of each committee member's duties, the event timeline, what worked, what the next planning committee could consider when planning the next reunion, etc. Be sure to share with our staff as well.
- Send thank-you notes to the keynote speaker and master of ceremonies.
- Share the final attendance list with your UI Center for Advancement liaison.
- If proceeds were raised, submit it to the gift accounting department at the UI Center for Advancement within 30 days of the event or fundraising activity.

Send to: The University of Iowa Center for Advancement
 Director of Gift Accounting
 One West Park Road
 Iowa City, IA 52242



Appendix A – Budgeting

Be proactive in estimating expenses, negotiating, and keeping track of costs to avoid running short of funds. Use this handy sheet to help you throughout the process!

Step 1: Estimate Attendance

Estimate the number of reunion attendees, which will help in planning the dinners, hotel rooms, and mementos. Review prior class reunion attendance figures for the best estimate. On average, about one-fourth of your group/graduating class will attend. Time of year, registration fee, and reunion milestone/reason for celebration can adversely affect your attendance. On average, 80–90% of your former classmates will bring a guest. If you expect 100 classmates to attend, closer to 180 people may attend.

Step 2: Identify Your Needs

To begin budgeting, decide on the kind of class reunion you're hosting. How many dinners, lunches, and activities are being organized? What kind of entertainment will be provided? What about mementos, awards, website costs? How long will the class reunion be?

Step 3: Itemize Expenses and Get Quotes

After identifying its needs, the committee should get estimate costs of each item. Compare expected expenses against the budget from previous reunions to ensure you didn't miss any large ticket items. Encourage committee members to be aggressive in negotiating costs for large items like catering and hotels. Once a detailed list of costs is prepared, it should be submitted to the treasurer or finance committee head.

Step 4: Present Estimated Budget

Subtract the income from your total expenses to determine the amount you need to raise from registration fees. To estimate registration ticket fees, divide the total estimated cost by the number of expected attendees. The resulting number is how much you will need to charge as admission. Is it affordable? If not, what events/activities can be cut to reduce costs? Research unconventional event spaces to host your reunion and think outside the box for cutting costs and entertaining your guests.

Step 5: Fine-Tune Budget

As actual expenses occur, replace estimated costs with real ones. If expenses are higher than expected, determine what can be cut to bring costs back in line. Bring any unexpected costs to the committee's attention and provide a revised budget if there is going to be a shortage. If expected costs are lower, you may be able to add more activities or donate the additional proceeds to a class gift or scholarship.

Step 6: Set Admission Price

You can set one price for the whole reunion or itemize the events. The one price approach is recommended for smaller reunions; the itemized approach allows more flexibility for your guests and works well with larger groups and multiple-day reunions. You may want to "pad" your prices by a couple of dollars and/or include a nominal registration fee, particularly if you are starting your reunion account with a zero balance. No matter how well groups plan, one or two unanticipated expenses always seem to surface after the budget has been set. Adding a few extra dollars to the registration fee ensures that you will collect enough money to pay your reunion bills.

Hold your guests accountable with a nominal fee that helps cover reunion costs and encourages them to show up. Fees may range from \$20 to \$150 depending on the size and events hosted during your reunion, printing and mailing, entertainment, and other expenses.

Step 7: After the Reunion

A final budget—with actual expenses and income—should be submitted to the class reunion chair.



Venues, Rental, and Accommodation Costs:

Item	Amount	Total Number	Estimate	Actual
Venue: -----	\$ _____ (per hour)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Deposit:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Tables:-----	\$ _____ (per table)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Chairs:-----	\$ _____ (per chair)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Linens:-----	\$ _____ (per linen)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Bar Service/Set Up:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Audio/Visual Equipment:-----	\$ _____ (per hour)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Security:-----	\$ _____ (per hour)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Music/Entertainment:-----	\$ _____ (per hour)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Balloons/Flowers:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Dance floor:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____

Meals:

Item	Amount	Total Number	Estimate	Actual
Hors d'oeuvres:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Meal:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Serveware:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
China:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Drinks:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Service/Delivery Charge:-----	\$ _____	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Gratuity:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Tax:-----			\$ _____	\$ _____

Printing Costs:

Item	Amount	Total Number	Estimate	Actual
Save-the-Date Printing:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Save-the-Date Postage:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Invitation Printing:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Invitation Postage:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Program Printing:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Handouts:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Nametags:-----	\$ _____ (per piece)	x _____	\$ _____	\$ _____



Giveaways (e.g. T-shirts):

Item	Amount	Total Number	Estimate	Actual
T-shirt Material: -----	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
Graphic Design Fee: -----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Setup Fee: -----			\$ _____	\$ _____
Giveaway Item: -----	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____

Miscellaneous:

Item	Amount	Total Number	Estimate	Actual
Reunion Folders: -----	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
Registration Supplies:				
_____	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
_____	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
Speaker Honorarium: -----	\$ _____ (per piece) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____
Photographer: -----	\$ _____ (per hour) x _____		\$ _____	\$ _____



Appendix B – Campus Contacts

Our staff is available to help you find the campus resources that you need. In addition, we work with many local and alumni-owned businesses for university-sponsored events, and we will gladly make recommendations for any of your needs. For more reunion assistance, contact the Office of Campus & Volunteer Engagement at 319-335-3305 or alumni.engagement@foriowa.org.

Campus Calendars & Maps

University of Iowa Event Calendar (events.uiowa.edu)

Hawkeye Athletic Calendars (hawkeyesports.com/calendar.aspx)

Campus Maps (maps.uiowa.edu)

University Departments & Campus Facilities

University of Iowa Center for Advancement (foriowa.org) - 800-648-6973

IMU (imu.uiowa.edu) – 319-353-4468

UI Parking & Transportation (transportation.uiowa.edu/parking) – 319-335-6647

CAMBUS (transportation.uiowa.edu/cambus) – 319-335-8633

BONGO (Bus On The Go) App (bongo.org)

Office of Admissions (admissions.uiowa.edu/contact-us) – 319-335-3847

Athletic Ticket Office (hawkeyesports.com/grouptickets)

Special Collections & University Archives (lib.uiowa.edu/sc/archives) – 319-335-5299

Division of Student Life (studentlife.uiowa.edu/departments/leadership-service-civic-engagement) – 319-335-3557

GOLDrush (goldrush.uiowa.edu) – 800-648-6973

Finkbine Golf Course (finkbine.com) – 319-335-9246

Recreation Services (recserv.uiowa.edu/facilities/campus-recreation-wellness-center) – 319-335-9293

Hancher Auditorium (hancher.uiowa.edu) – 800-426-2437

University of Iowa Athletics Hall of Fame (hof.hawkeyesports.com) – 319-384-1031

Iowa Hawk Shop (hawkshop.com) – 319-335-8662

Iowa House Hotel (iowahousehotel.com) – 319-335-3513

Campus Event Services (imu.uiowa.edu/event-services) – 319-335-3115

University of Iowa Trademark Licensing Program (uilicensing.com) – 319-384-2000

University of Iowa Office of Strategic Communication – (osc.uiowa.edu) – 319-335-0557

To reach additional departments or individuals on campus, consult the University of Iowa website at uiowa.edu. For additional information on the Creative Corridor, please contact the Iowa City/Coralville Area Convention & Visitors Bureau at 319-337-6592 or thinkiowacity.com.