

REUNION PLANNING GUIDE



MSU Alumni
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY



SUGGESTED PLANNING TIMELINE

12-24 MONTHS

- Begin planning and generating ideas
- Recruit committee members and set initial meeting
- Select dates
- Begin making inquiries about hotel, banquet/meeting space, etc.
- Request a mailing list of potential guests from the MSU Alumni Office

9-12 MONTHS

- Begin spreading the word (formally or informally)
- Update addresses and collect email addresses
- Send a "Mark Your Calendar" reminder
- Make reservations with hotels, facilities, caterers, photographers, etc.

6-9 MONTHS

- Gather ideas for activities and entertainment

6 MONTHS

- Finalize all reservations with hotels, facilities, caterers, photographers, etc.
- Finalize schedule of activities/events
- Determine participant cost
- Set budget and designate financial account
- Arrange for special tours of campus sites, i.e. residence halls, campus tour, facility tours, college visits

4 MONTHS

- Continue to meet with committee
- Make informal contact with potential guests and encourage them to attend
- Purchase gifts, door prizes, etc.

3 MONTHS

- Design/print reservation materials
- Compose email content and have the MSU Alumni Office review
- Request name tags and decorations from the MSU Alumni Office

2 MONTHS

- Send reservation materials

3-6 WEEKS

- Accept reservations
- Discuss details with hotels, facilities, caterers, photographers, etc.
- Re-confirm all arrangements

2 WEEKS

- Assemble registration packets — include name tags

1 WEEK

- Call caterers with final number

Since each reunion is different, some of these guidelines may not apply to you. Keep in mind, however, that there are very few things that you can do **too** early!

ALUMNI RECORDS

In today's mobile society, it can be difficult to keep alumni records up-to-date. The MSU Alumni Office can assist you by providing the most current addresses in list and/or mailing label format. Please allow four weeks to receive the mailing list. Email services are also available. Again, it is never too early to start!

Under no circumstances can alumni lists be used for solicitations or political purposes.

Ask the reunion coordinator for further details and for the paperwork required to receive an alumni list.

BUDGET AND FINANCE

Once you have a good idea of what your reunion will entail, it's very important to set a budget. This is one of the most difficult and important things to do. By calculating all of your costs initially, you can set realistic prices that will cover all of the reunion's expenses.

Step One: Make a list of all of the expenses that you expect to incur. Don't forget to include tax and gratuity, bartending fees, audio-visual fees, awards, photographer fees, etc. Consult the list on page eight for additional items to consider.

Step Two: Consider sponsors and provide the opportunity for donations. Do any members of your organization have business or personal connections that could potentially defray the costs of the reunion? Even something as simple as having items donated for door prizes or receiving a discount on printing can be helpful in enhancing the reunion and/or cutting costs. In addition, you may want to consider asking group members who are unable to attend the reunion to make a contribution (monetary or otherwise) to further offset expenses. You might be surprised at how many people are willing to help.

Step Three: Set the cost per guest. You may choose to put one price tag on the whole package, or itemize the events. The package approach is simpler and 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 consider "padding" your prices by a couple of dollars and/or including a nominal registration fee, particularly if you are starting your reunion account with a \$0 balance. Inevitably, 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 all of your reunion bills. Any extra money can be left in the account to encourage future alumni activities, used to thank your committee for their hard work or donated to your corresponding student organization.



COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

Nothing is more important than keeping members of your group informed about what is going on. Here are some different techniques:

“MARK YOUR CALENDAR” POSTCARD OR LETTER

This early mailer/email can be sent out nine-12 months prior to your reunion or as soon as your dates have been selected. This works well with groups of all sizes and is easy and inexpensive. Simply include the dates, a theme, if applicable, and a promise of more information to follow.

INVITATION

This is the most important piece you will send out. We recommend providing as much information as you can, including a schedule of events, locations, prices and contact information for those that alumni can call with questions. Make sure you have designed the form to include

everything you need to know about your alumni, their guests and their intentions for the reunion. We also recommend setting deadlines for the reservation forms and payment to be returned three to four weeks prior to the reunion. Not everyone will make the deadline, so be prepared for some to arrive at the reunion requesting to sign up and pay on the spot.

ONLINE REGISTRATION

Consider using an online event management system like [Event Smart](#) or [Eventbrite](#) for email invitations and online registration. There may be costs to use these systems, but it will save you the cost of producing paper invitations and postal fees. Also, check to see if these systems can send payment directly to a Paypal account or other online cash system. Be sure to include fields in the online registration to learn what classmates have been doing since graduation.



SUGGESTED REGISTRATION FIELDS

These fields will help gather the proper data needed for the MSU Alumni Office to locate former classmates in the MSU database and will help you learn more about those attending the reunion.

- First name
- Middle initial
- Last name
- Maiden name
- Nickname
- Year(s) of undergraduate degree graduation
- Year(s) of graduate degree graduation
- Address
- City
- State
- Zip
- Home telephone number
- Cell phone number
- Email address
- Spouse name
- Did your spouse graduate from MSU? If so, in which year?
- Which events would you like to attend (*sample events only listed below*):
 - Cocktail reception [yes/no]
 - Football game [yes/no]
 - Reunion dinner [yes/no]
- What have you been doing since graduation? Please provide your bio for the biography booklet.
- Please provide memories for the reunion booklet.
- What student organizations were you a member of?
- Do you require a vegetarian meal or have special dietary needs?
- Please consider a monetary donation to help support this reunion.

CONFIRMATION CARDS/EMAIL

Ideal for larger groups, confirmation cards or an email can be sent upon receipt of the registration materials. Confirmation cards/email are especially helpful if a time change occurs on your schedule or if there is a discrepancy between the registration form and the payment.

CALLING COMMITTEE

Past experience has shown us that alumni are most likely to attend a reunion if they receive a personal contact from a friend who is also attending.



SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

Consider developing a Facebook group. This will give you and former classmates a way to connect with one another and will allow you to locate more classmates.

USING COMMITTEES EFFECTIVELY

Forming a reunion committee provides a number of benefits. First, it divides up the amount of work so that many people feel like they have a hand in the success of the reunion. Secondly, it provides for a checks-and-balances system. If there is something that you forget, chances are that someone else will catch it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, using a committee is the best way to spread the word and thus, increase attendance.

THE CALLING COMMITTEE

Calling committees are your best ambassadors for generating interest in a reunion. No matter how clever the theme or how exciting the schedule, the one thing that will **really** draw your alumni is the promise of seeing their friends again.



The idea of a calling committee is a simple one. Committee members agree to call (or write, tag or email) information about the reunion to their former classmates, urging them to attend. In addition, assuming that they will be attending, they endorse the reunion on all of your correspondence. Thus, when your alumni receive an invitation, they are receiving it from a whole committee of people rather than from just one person. A dozen names on a letterhead indicates a great deal of support and thus a large number in attendance.

When selecting committee members, try to include the most active members of your organization. If your reunion spans many years, try to include at least one representative from each class year. Your alumni will want to hear from someone they know.

We recommend giving committee members specific guidelines on what to include in their correspondence. It is also advisable to give committee members a deadline. Tasks of this type, while ultimately enjoyable, can easily get put off. When working with calling committees, we often make a formal list of which committee members have agreed to contact which alumni. This added bit of accountability will help ensure that your committee members get their contacts made.

TASK COMMITTEE

Task committee members are those who are available to roll up their sleeves and help get the job done. Most committees choose to divide up specific responsibilities among committee members. (For example, one individual may be responsible for registration, one for entertainment and another for the banquet.) The size and structure of each committee will vary. Touch base often with the committee members to make sure everyone is on the same page. Committee meetings are a great way for those committee members who are in town to report their progress to each other as well as to generate enthusiasm amongst themselves.

IDEAS TO ADD TO THE FUN

Here are some fun ideas that have been used by groups in the past to add a special touch to a reunion. Any of them would make a great project for a committee member!

VIDEO/SLIDE SHOW

Ask members of your organization to submit old photos to be made into a video or PowerPoint presentation to show during the reunion.

BIOGRAPHY BOOKLET

Include a bio form in your registration materials. Ask one person to be responsible for compiling all of the completed forms into a booklet to be distributed at the reunion and mailed to absent members. The forms can simply be photocopied or the information can be typed for a more polished look. This allows people who are unable to attend the reunion to be included in the fun.

MEMORIES BOOKLET

Ask alumni to submit memories of their time at MSU. Compile all of the memories into a book to be presented to alumni at the reunion.

PHOTO DISPLAY

Ask members of your organization to send photos (old or recent) to one individual to construct a photo display. This can be done very inexpensively with items purchased at a craft store, and allows for considerable creativity and humor!

MSU ARCHIVES

MSU Archives is a great source for information regarding MSU. They can assist with providing photos if you plan to put together a reunion booklet. Email archives@msu.edu to request photos. Yearbooks can also be a source for photos and information.

FASHION SHOW

Were uniforms or costumes a part of your organization? Ask alumni to contribute the clothing to be modeled during your reunion. Current students make great models!

SPECIAL NAME TAGS

For large groups, nametags are a must. Even in the case of a smaller reunion, name tags allow spouses and children to be easily associated with group members. Why not spruce up the nametags with old yearbook photos or nicknames? The same idea can be used for place cards.

DOOR PRIZES

Create a contest for guests involving group member "trivia" and award prizes to the winners. Prizes can also be given for simple criteria such as the person who traveled the greatest distance or the person who has been a member of the alumni group for the longest time.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Every group has different rituals and traditions. Try to incorporate these into your reunion in a creative way. If your reunion group spans many years, it may be interesting to learn how the traditions have evolved.



ITEMS TO CONSIDER

Here are some things to think about when making plans and setting your budget. You may or may not want to utilize all of these for your reunion, but it's better to consider them up front than to do so after your prices have been set!

- Hotel/accommodations
- Banquet/meeting space
- Caterer
- Tax and gratuity
- Bartender
- Audio/visual equipment
- Room set-up needs (podium, stage, head table, etc.)
- Table linens
- Centerpieces
- Decorations
- Flowers
- Photographer
- Videographer
- Name tags
- Name tag badges and lanyards
- Placecards
- Awards
- Gifts/favors
- Printing
- Postage
- Transportation
- Parking
- Emcee
- Entertainment
- Speakers
- Music
- Honorarium
- Transportation
- Committee recognition

Discuss your ideas with the sales and catering representative at the facility of your choice. They may have suggestions and/or may be able to supply some of these things at little or no cost.

CAMPUS CONTACTS

The MSU Alumni Office's reunion coordinator is available to help you find the campus resources that you need. In addition, we work with many local businesses for our events, and we will gladly make recommendations for any of your needs. Some frequently requested information is below.

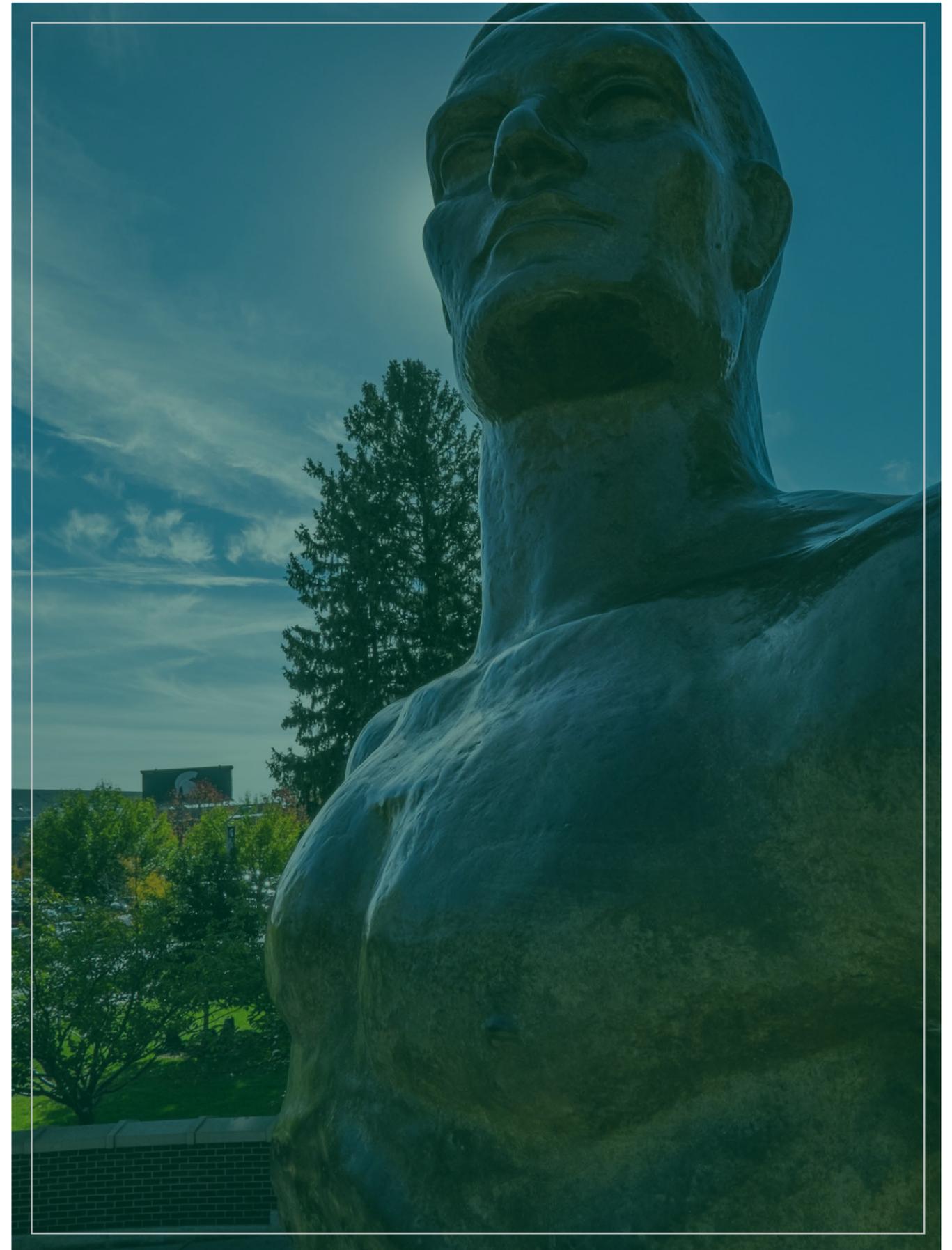
CAMPUS FACILITIES

- MSU Union, (517) 432-2446, union.msu.edu
- Kellogg Center Hotel & Conference Center, (800) 875-5090, kelloggcenter.com
- University Club of MSU, (517) 353-5111, universityclubofmsu.org
- Candlewood Suites, (517) 351-8181, cwsuites.com
- **Hotels:** A complete list of area hotels can be found at the Greater Lansing Convention & Visitor's Bureau website, lansing.org.

UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS

- Admissions Office, (517) 355-8332
- Alumni Office, (517) 884-1000
- Athletic Department, (517) 355-1623
- Athletic Ticket Office, (517) 355-1610, (800) GO-STATE
- Forest Akers Golf Courses, (517) 355-1635
- Recreational Sports & Fitness Services, (517) 355-5250
- President's Office, (517) 355-6560
- Eli & Edythe Broad Museum, (517) 884-4800
- MSU Museum, (517) 355-7474
- Wharton Center for Performing Arts, (517) 432-2000
- Abrams Planetarium, (517) 355-4672
- Residence Hall Events, (517) 353-9300
- Jack Breslin Student Events Center, (517) 432-1989

To reach additional departments or individuals on campus, consult the Michigan State University website at msu.edu or contact Reunion Coordinator Regina Cross at (517) 353-3069 or crossreg@msu.edu. For additional information, assistance and publicity contact the Greater Lansing Convention & Visitor's Bureau at (888) 252-6746 or lansing.org.





alumni.msu.edu