



**The  
Creative  
School**

# **Alumni Association Guidebook**

**Toronto  
Metropolitan  
University**

**The  
Creative  
School**

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# Introduction

Thank you for volunteering! The Creative School Alumni community exists because of the dedication and passion of volunteers like you! Your contributions to the school are greatly appreciated.

This guide contains supplementary information to complement your efforts in engaging alumni, including best practices, helpful tools, and an outline of current policies and processes used in the operation of official Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU or the University) Alumni Groups.



# The Creative School Alumni

## Definition of Alumni

Alumni Groups are guided by the The Creative School's principles and values, including equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Gender-inclusive language is encouraged in written, verbal and other forms of communication to acknowledge diverse gender expression, promote gender equality, eliminate gender bias as well as support non-binary and non-gender conforming persons.

This guidebook uses gender-inclusive language to describe and engage with persons who have received degrees, diplomas or certificates from Toronto Metropolitan University. Alum (singular) and alumni (plural) describe persons who have received formal recognition of completion, regardless of gender identity.

## Alumni Groups at The Creative School

The Creative School Development Office, supports alumni-led groups that coordinate programming and special events to engage alumni with the The Creative School community and create opportunities for networking, volunteering and mentorship among fellow graduates and students.

Most Alumni Groups at the School are organized around academic programs, called Associations. This guidebook will use the term "Alumni Group" for clarity, but this includes any Alumni Association, Group or Network affiliated with the School.

## Goals of Alumni Groups

The goal of each Alumni Group is to grow their community and deliver valuable programming. Frequently engaging alumni helps increase awareness and promote the best interests of the alumni community, students, the The Creative School and TMU at-large. As part of their continued affiliation with the School, Groups elevate the profile of The Creative School degree offerings and embody the School's academic success stories.

Other goals that successful Alumni Groups fulfill include:

- Nominating outstanding candidates for the Alumni Achievement Awards.
- Assisting the search for "lost alumni" and enhancing the accuracy of the University's central database.
- Record keeping of event attendees, volunteers and other data as requested by our team.
- Supporting the University's fundraising efforts.



# Starting an Alumni Group

This section refers to an alum interested in starting an alumni group as an 'interested party'. The following steps can be taken after consulting with The Creative School Development Office to discuss the formation, prospective members, a Faculty/ Staff Liaison and available resources for establishing a new Alumni Group. Over the course of these steps, the interested party should work to build an on-going relationship with their respective Program Directors/Chairs and Departmental Advisor(s).

**Step 1:** On behalf of the interested party, The Creative School Development Office can send an email with a survey to poll and solicit potential alumni interested in forming the Group's inaugural Executive Committee.

**Step 2:** The interested party hosts individual calls with prospective volunteers or information sessions to present the process of forming an Alumni Group.

**Step 3:** The inaugural committee formalizes as alumni determine the roles they will take on in the group. Roles such as President/Chair, Vice President Events, Vice President of Marketing, etc. can be appointed or the committee can create a general executive team that distributes responsibilities based on members' strengths.

If more alumni express interest than required for roles in communication, event planning, fundraising, etc., then consider creating sub-committees or advisory boards based on an alumni's area of expertise.

**Step 4:** Key documents should be drafted over the course of these sessions, including a constitution with by-laws.

**Step 5:** Following a working draft of the Group's constitution, the committee meets to discuss planning and coordinating events, potential funding and event promotion/marketing.

**Step 6:** The constitution and by-laws are finalized. The finalized constitution includes fixed terms and Group roles that are up for elections in the future.

**Step 7:** If a Faculty or Staff Liaison was not included in the Group formation, Group members determine which professor(s) to reach out to. A Faculty/Staff Liaison is vital to represent the Group to the department and fellow faculty members.

**Step 8:** Group members determine how frequently they will meet. Depending on the needs of the Group and their agenda, this can be quarterly, monthly, bi-weekly, etc. At this stage, Group members discuss upcoming events, potential collaborations with other Alumni Groups and student groups.

**Step 9:** After 12-24 months, the inaugural members organize an election for the constituency to vote on a new Executive Committee. The inaugural members are eligible to run.



# Roles and Responsibilities

Typically, there are four roles that form the basis of Executive Leadership in an Alumni Group, including President/Chair, Vice President of Events, Vice President of Marketing and Vice President of Finance. Depending on the size of the Group, there may be additional roles. The following includes the recommended responsibilities for traditional Executive Leadership roles.

## President/Chair

Supporting the mandate of the The Creative School and Toronto Metropolitan University, they are the official spokesperson for the Group. The President is responsible for strategic direction to ensure the Group actively works towards its goals. They lead Executive meetings and ensure that the Group has the necessary resources, including members and volunteers, to carry out its activities. The President/Chair is expected to represent the Group at events held by the School or University.

## Events

This role takes ownership of initiating the planning and leading the organization of approved events, designating roles and responsibilities leading up to the event itself, volunteer management and other resources available to the Group. These tasks and responsibilities are expected to be rotated among committee members.

## Marketing

This role is responsible for planning, drafting and sending marketing materials (including visual assets and promotional materials) to The Creative School for distribution.

## Finance

This role oversees creating the budget and keeping the group on track concerning expenses. Along with the President/Chair, they ensure funds accrued through events and activities are spent in accordance with Group goals.

The Creative School recommends two-year terms for the President and Vice Presidents. The terms of officers shall be staggered during the first election. The President and Vice- President shall be elected for two-year terms; other positions shall be elected for a one-year term. In each succeeding election, officers shall be elected for two-year terms. We recommend that Presidents/Chairs serve no more than two consecutive terms.

## **Constitution /By-Laws**

Alumni Groups are required to draft, adopt and adhere to a constitution. This is a set of by-laws that offer a frame of reference and help govern operations.

Drafting a constitution should be a collaborative effort within each respective Alumni Group. At minimum, the constitution ensures commitment among Group members, accounts for succession planning and mandates quarterly meetings to advance activities and other agenda items.

## **Running Effective Meetings**

Alumni Groups are free to organize and run meetings as members see fit. However, there are best practices to ensure meetings offer the best use of members' time. Meetings provide the opportunity to openly and freely discuss opportunities and challenges, event ideas and planning, scheduling, and communications.

Best practices include:

- Confirming the time, date and venue (if applicable) for the next meeting at the end of the current meeting.
- Preparing and following an agenda with new and carryover items to discuss.
- Identifying next steps, covering concluded agenda items and making sure members understand their upcoming tasks or deliverables (if applicable) at the conclusion of each meeting.

## **Succession Planning**

Succession planning is vital to ensure the longevity of the Alumni Group. This involves identifying, approaching and training replacements for key roles in the Group, such as Presidents. Succession planning is vital to ensure the longevity of the Alumni Group.

For senior members, it is especially important to prepare successors for leadership roles early by including them in events so they may feel a sense of belonging to the Group and alumni community.

Collectively, the Group should keep in mind which incumbent members are up to leave their roles and assess whether or not there are replacements to consider. Succession planning is more approachable as an on-going conversation in meetings. Preparing successors for Group roles is the first and last job of every member.

When looking for a replacement, evaluate what drew you to accept your position in the Group. Create job descriptions and associated skills sets for the various leadership roles, these are likely the motivating factors for another alum to succeed you.

Over the course of each member's tenure, develop a role-specific transition document to manage the logistics of the succession. These outline best practices to succeed in the role, where to locate certain documents or resources and points of contact relevant to the Group. Depending on the role, this document may also include administrative login information and signing authority on fund allocation or bank accounts.

Succession planning is also necessary to avoid volunteer burnout. Members should keep track of who volunteers and how often, to ensure that the Group is not over-reliant on a select few volunteers. Certain volunteers may be interested in furthering their involvement – Group leaders can identify standout volunteers and gauge their interest in assuming leadership roles.

## **Volunteer Recruitment & Integration**

Volunteers are key to the success of any Alumni Group – running events and supporting the Group's goal of growing their alumni community. Enlisting and retaining volunteers becomes easier as the Group gains momentum through activities and events. Consistency with meetings/meeting agendas, an active social media footprint and standardized event management processes will encourage new ideas for community-building activities and attract prospective volunteers.

Groups can consult with The Creative School Development Office to assist with volunteer recruitment. Groups can also take advantage of the organic connection between Groups and academic programs within the The Creative School, as departments, staff or faculty may have suggestions for new volunteers. Meetings and events may also serve as recruitment opportunities.

## **Volunteer Relations**

Publicly acknowledging volunteers is important for volunteer relations. Thanking them at the end of an event or sending a Group-wide email of gratitude are zero-cost ways of recognizing the time and effort a volunteer has put in to support their community.

Turnover is expected and maintaining a steady pipeline ensures new ideas and a growing volunteer community. Outgoing volunteers support volunteer acquisition by acting as Group advocates to their network. As part of succession planning and on-going volunteer management, outgoing volunteers should continue being treated as members of each Group's respective alumni community and invited to attend any future events or activities.

For substantial contributions, Groups are highly encouraged to nominate individuals for an Alumni Volunteer Award.

## **Finances**

We encourage all Alumni Groups to seek sponsorship money or in-kind sponsorship from corporations and affiliate academic departments. Alumni Groups are expected to operate on at least a cost recovery basis. Financial updates should be part of each Executive Team meeting and reflected in the minutes.

**Sponsorships** In seeking event funding, we encourage members to look within their own networks to secure sponsorships for events and other alumni initiatives. The names of sponsors for specific activities may be listed in publications or other print materials. The listing should not be done in such a way as to suggest affiliation with or endorsement of the sponsor or its products or services by TMU or its units.

To comply with CRA regulations, funds provided through sponsorships are not eligible for charitable income tax receipts. As sponsorships are marketing-orientated, they do not qualify as per the TMU's Sponsorship Policy.



# Marketing and Promotion

Social media is an opportunity to support in- person or virtual community building efforts – an effective tool highlighting the benefits of being an engaged alum. Community management includes responding to direct messages and comments, as well as engaging with followers' social media feeds.

Alumni Groups are encouraged to leverage external communications channels to help promote Group events and activities. These channels include a website event page, social media and email mailing list. Please note that we require at least 5 business days' notice to share content to our mailing list.

While Alumni Groups are welcome to create and maintain a social media presence, members should be mindful of the time and resources it takes to actively maintain accounts and engage in community management. Inactive social media pages may confuse or dissuade prospective members, volunteers or other interested parties. If the Group is committed to maintaining a channel, consider which social media platform works best for their needs and audience.



# Events

Events implement the goals and practices described in this handbook. Alumni Groups use events as a means to bring their members together and further the goal of growing their alumni community. Events can be hosted solely by the group, or in partnership with other Alumni Groups, student groups or academic programs. While there are no minimum or maximum events per year, we recommend at least one event per year to keep the Group active and the alumni community engaged, and we recommend no more than 3 events to avoid overextending volunteers.

Lifelong relationships between alumni and The Creative School are maintained through networking opportunities/professional development and gauging the interest of alumni for upcoming Group activities. In addition to raising the profile of the Group, events provide content opportunities for social media which support key messages and outreach to alumni, current students and the associated academic program. Groups are welcome to include fundraising initiatives for general operations, special projects or awards as part of an event.

Below are examples of event types:

- Networking or mentoring sessions
- Pub nights
- Reunions
- Formal dinners
- Golf tournaments
- Cultural event/trips
- Holiday parties
- Sport activities
- Family and/or children's event
- Keynote/guest speaking event
- Community-oriented volunteer work





## Event Timeline

Best practices suggest beginning the planning process approximately 12 weeks in advance of the event to account for pre- event logistics, marketing, finalizing and post-event activities. We recommend using the following timeline as a guide.

### 12 Weeks Before:

- Discuss event idea
- Outline event goals and target audience
- Identify the budget
- Identify event leadership, including event coordinators (if applicable)

### 8-10 Weeks Before:

- Secure venue
- Confirm speakers (if applicable)
- Determine on-site staffing needs, including Group members and volunteers
- Identify costs or fees
- Consult with The Creative School Development Office on resources available to support the event, including required equipment we can source from the university

### 4-6 Weeks Before:

- Secure catering (if applicable)
- Seek assistance if needed for an event registration page
- Secure volunteers with necessary designated roles
- Begin promoting the event on social media
- Connect with The Creative School Development Office so we can send an event email to our alumni mailing list and newsletter

### 2-3 Weeks Before:

- Confirm necessary details with the venue, catering, audio-visual equipment etc. (if applicable)
- Continue social media promotion

### 1 Week Before:

- Finalize list of attendees
- Confirm attendance with registered volunteers
- Prepare any necessary registration materials
- For longer events, create a run-of-show document highlighting the agenda and on-site contact information for the event coordinator(s)
- Continue social media promotion

## **Day of the Event**

- Ensure a Group member is on-site early to oversee and manage volunteers involved with setting up the venue, including the registration table, audio-visual equipment, etc. Take photos that can be used for social media, newsletters or other external communications.
- Record event attendees.

## **After the Event**

- Send thank you notes and/or emails to event volunteers, attendees and speakers (if applicable).
- Pay invoices or fees (if applicable).
- Prepare reimbursement forms (if applicable). Plan social media content recapping the event.
- Share Event Registration list including attendees to the Development Office.

# **Operational Guidelines**

## **Memorandum of Understanding**

Official Toronto Metropolitan University alumni groups shall remain unincorporated groups of individuals who serve as agents of the University.

The Creative School facilitates and supports the formation, development and operation of alumni- driven groups.

Groups will operate according to the guidelines outlined in this handbook and/or direction otherwise received by the The Creative School. Alumni Groups and volunteers must, at all times, comply with applicable laws.

Alumni Groups or individuals whose actions and activities are not in keeping with the spirit of partnership described in this Guidebook, who become inactive or who contravene the Code of Conduct may have their status removed. In the case of individuals, they may be relieved of their position. The Creative School reserves the right to make this determination in its sole discretion.

## **Code of Conduct, Accessibility and Inclusivity**

Volunteers engaged with The Creative School, our network of groups, ambassadors or in any other affiliated capacity are expected to conduct themselves in a professional manner that respects the The Creative School and TMU as a whole, and represents those entities in the most positive light at all times.



To that end, alumni volunteers:

- Recognize and acknowledge that they serve as public ambassadors for The Creative School and Toronto Metropolitan University.
- Must treat all individuals with the highest degree of civility and respect.
- Adhere to The Creative School's principles and values, including equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
- Recognize that differences are enriching, and that when they arise remain cognizant of other people's feelings, actively listening and seeking common ground as an initial point for dialogue.
- Ensure that they will not take any action that could diminish the reputation of The Creative School or University.

Whenever feasible, address Code of Conduct concerns or breaches with peer to peer communication. If the concern cannot be addressed at this level, it may be necessary to elevate the issue to the group president for mediation or other appropriate action.

Alumni Group events, communication and executive teams should be organized and conducted in such a way that is open and welcoming to all alumni community members, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or disability.

Every event organized by Alumni Groups needs to be founded in accessibility and inclusivity. We are committed to furthering collective learning within these areas.

In an emergency or if you have immediate safety or security concerns, call 911. When in need of assistance that is not of an emergency nature, TMU Security is available, 24/7. They can be reached at 416-979-5040 or extension 555040 from any TMU phone.

## **Breach of Conduct**

If any volunteers, founding or executive members engaged with The Creative School, our network of groups or in any other affiliated capacity fails to comply with the Code of Conduct or the requirements set out in this Handbook, we reserve the right to restrict the individual from participation and/or to disallow the Alumni Group to participate in sanctioned activities of The Creative School.

# Operational Guidelines

## Privacy Legislations

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA), which supports access to University records and protection of privacy.

Some key purposes of the Act are:

1. To provide the public a right of access to university information subject to limited exemptions.
2. To protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by universities and to provide individuals with a right of access to that information.

As a publicly funded institution, TMU has upheld these principles in its operations for many years. As such, TMU faces some challenges in sharing alumni data and information with alumni groups.

Under FIPPA, the contact information of alumni is considered to be private and confidential.

Although not generally available upon request, sharing of this information is permitted under specific circumstances, and at the discretion of The Creative School Development Team, for:

1. Alumni Reunion Coordinators.
2. Alumni Associations, Branches, Chapters or Regional Contacts.
3. Faculties and Departments within Toronto Metropolitan University.

The completed Volunteer Confidentiality Agreement must be returned to The Creative School Development Team as a hard copy, email or pdf. This is a one-time requirement before receiving any information. Confidentiality Agreement Forms are available through the Development Office upon request.

When collecting updated information from alumni, please get consent that the information can be passed on to the University, so that alumni can continue to receive information on benefits of our affinity programs, information about social, career and educational programs, allow alumni to keep current on university developments and to facilitate participation in all alumni activities of both The Creative School and TMU.

## CASL

Toronto Metropolitan University is fully committed to complying with Canada's Anti-Spam Legislation ("CASL"). Volunteers in Alumni Groups are acting on behalf of The Creative School and must therefore also comply with the legislation.

## Understanding CASL

CASL is a federal law that came into force on July 1, 2014. CASL aims to put an end to SPAM and by ensuring individuals can consent and unsubscribe from commercial electronic messages ("CEM"s). Email's become CEMs when their purpose is to encourage participation in commercial activities.

As such, all communications must be CASL compliant. CASL plays an important role in building and maintaining trust with our alumni and the The Creative School community at large. Giving the option to consent and unsubscribe from emails ensures that we respect the communication preferences and privacy of our alumni.

To learn more about TMU and CASL compliance, visit

<https://www.torontomu.ca/gcbs/what-we-do/compliance/casl/>

## **Risk Management**

In the interest of safety, we want to minimize risk for organizers and participants of alumni group events.

When planning events and activities, try and keep risk management top of mind, and avoid any types of situations that a reasonable person might deem as a risk of danger.

Certain types of sports events and situations where alcohol is served are two prime examples of where good risk management should be exercised. In addition, it is a good idea to be aware of on-site safety measures, including emergency exits, the location of first aid kits, nearest phone, security personnel, etc.

If your group is unsure about the level or risk associated with a particular event, please consult the The Creative School Development Office.

There are certain types of events where participants may need to sign an acknowledgement of risk/waiver form (for example, sporting events, construction events or any event where there is risk of injury). Please contact us for the appropriate form well in advance of holding your event. These will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

## **Photo policy**

It is strongly encouraged to have a Photography Notice sign for events. Groups who need a photo/video consent form for a shoot or photography notice request one through the The Creative School Development Office.

## **Support from the Alumni Team**

The Creative School Development Office is the alumni group's primary point of contact and connection to the The Creative School. The Development Office can update you on other alumni activities, and act in a liaison and advisory role.

Offerings include but are not limited to;

- Assist with communications and promotional efforts of events and initiatives
- Serve as a resource for strategic planning on any Alumni Group programming
- Swag and promotional materials
- Banners

## CONTACT US

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