

Michigan Ross Alumni Club Event Guide

Beyond a strong leadership team, events and programming form the core of the Michigan Ross Alumni Club Program. The alumni clubs are essential to the creation of successful – and meaningful -- Ross alumni engagement activities globally. Likewise, organizing and advertising a palette of interesting activities that brings together local alumni of diverse degree backgrounds, career stages and industries is integral to individual alumni club success.

To optimize event appeal and attendance, it's important to balance a social/networking event itinerary with lifelong learning and professional development opportunities that differentiate the Michigan Ross alumni clubs from regional AA-UM clubs and other local events competing for alums' time and interest.

As branded *Michigan Ross*-affiliated chapters, the Michigan Ross Alumni Clubs' value proposition exists in rooting alumni club programming in the School's mission, vision, and AlumniAdvantage pillars.

Whenever event planning or content inspiration is needed, we recommend returning to these central principles as guidance.

The Michigan Ross mission: Developing leaders who make a positive difference in the world.

The Michigan Ross difference: An inclusive community known for leadership development, groundbreaking entrepreneurship, and a commitment to sustainability, social impact, and positive business.

The Ross AlumniAdvantage pillars: (1) Networking & Events

(2) Career Resources/Professional Development

(3) Lifelong Learning

(4) Volunteering

To provide creative support, here is a list of alumni club activity ideas, grouped by theme. A well-rounded club event palette should include, at minimum, an equal to greater number of lifelong learning activities than social/networking activities (while acknowledging that all in-person events will possess an intrinsic networking component).

Social/Networking Events:

Social events allow alumni to meet and mingle in a more relaxed setting. We have found that traditional social activities appeal most to younger alumni, alums with flexible personal/family schedules, and new alumni to the region. However, thinking outside the box to include creative venue locations (such as museums or cultural hotspots) and family-friendly options/times can encourage a wider segment of the alumni population to participate.

- **Traditional social activities:**

- Happy hour at an interesting local venue or business*
- Brewery tour or wine tasting
- Annual club holiday party
- Summer BBQ
- Social, happy hour or reception held in conjunction with national or regional conferences hosted in your locale or for your affiliation*
- Theater ticket in conjunction with a talk with the play's director, producer, actors, etc. (club purchases group tickets to sit as cohort; each alum pays for own ticket)
- An "after hours" social event at a local museum

- **Sporting activities:**

- Football tailgates*
- Michigan sports watch parties*
- Golf outings
- Cycling or hiking meet-up at a popular outdoor spot
- Professional sporting event outings (in which folks are responsible for paying for their own ticket but sit as a Ross cohort)

- **Family-friendly activities:**

- Seasonal activities such as a picnic in the park, apple picking, or outdoor ice skating where families with children are welcomed and encouraged to attend
- Ross meet-up at a popular local (and family-friendly) festival
- Guided museum tour
- Morning, afternoon or full-day hiking, canoeing/kayaking, or camping trip (among outdoor activities)

- **Activities with a Student Outreach Component:**

- Summer intern picnics, BBQs and other networking activities that allow current Ross students to network with alumni and fellow interns in your city/region
- Student trek networking receptions and happy hours
 - These requests from students for an alumni club to co-sponsor a student/alumni happy hour occur most often in late October, when student clubs conduct their treks around the nation and globe, and in March/April, when MBA MAP teams travel to their sponsored project destinations worldwide.

- Admitted student coffees or receptions, with FT MBA Admissions team support, during high priority business school decision/acceptance periods (January for Round 1 admits; March for Round 2 admits)
- Accepted student send-off: In which the alumni clubs help local admits/new students celebrate their impending departure for Michigan Ross (no later than end of July)
- New Ross graduates/alumni welcome reception / happy hour / BBQ
- **Volunteering and Community Service:**
 - Organize a volunteer event with a local non-profit or charity organization.
 - Some clubs have formed long partnerships with Habitat for Humanity, local soup kitchens or donation centers, and environmental awareness organizations like a wildlife refuge, local habitat clean-up/restoration group, or zoo.

Lifelong Learning and Professional Development Opportunities:

These activities provide the heart of your club's programmatic content, and are designed to provide business-related learning opportunities "beyond the classroom" that Ross alumni would expect from a Michigan Ross affiliate organization. Consider industries and recent business developments relevant

The Michigan Ross Office of Alumni Relations is establishing a new program, *RossChats*, that will actively engage with faculty members to identify opportunities for them to connect with alumni clubs while they are already scheduled to travel to a certain region or city.

Beyond faculty presentations and chats, many other lifelong learning and professional development opportunities exist for clubs to offer local alumni. We have frequently heard that alumni most want to hear from other alumni. Who do you (or who does someone in your network) know locally who could share their professional expertise with your alumni club?

Michigan Ross can also assist clubs that would like to invite very highly placed Michigan alumni to speak, serve on a panel, or engage in some other way with the club. Please reach out to us at MiRossAlumniClubs@umich.edu to facilitate these connections.

Here are a variety of ideas that other clubs have employed to further the clubs' lifelong learning programming.

- **Lifelong Learning:**
 - Alumni/Industry panel discussion (or debate) relevant to your region focused on a specific theme or topic
 - Themes that some Michigan Ross clubs have spotlighted are entrepreneurship, healthcare, investing/finance, energy, real estate, life

stage-specific career development, leadership, women in business, and minorities in business

- Faculty or local alumni book release meet-up, discussion group or fireside chat
- A themed series of breakfasts, coffees, lunches, dinners or seminars with invited speakers – which could potentially be hosted at the featured speakers' companies
- Tours of local corporations, real estate developments, or start-ups by the founder or upper-level company leadership
- Economic outlook report by an (alum) industry expert
- Retirement/investment planning seminars
- Build a viewing event around a [Michigan Ross livestreamed talk or presentation](#)
- **Professional Development/Career:**
 - Lunchtime or evening professional networking/speed networking reception or cocktail event for alumni in a single or related industries. If hosting at a firm or business, potentially have a partner, CEO, President or other upper management speak.
 - Collaborate with the Michigan Ross Alumni Career Consulting Associate Director to host a career-focused webinar or in-person talk for local alumni. Email MiRossAlumniClubs@umich.edu to enquire about availability.
 - Organize industry-specific peer counseling or mentoring groups
 - Depending on the size of your club, host job seekers meetings
 - Fireside career chats: Invite 1+ senior- or mid-level manager(s) to speak about his or her career progression to new alumni to the field and provide insight regarding stable versus changing industry trends.

***Co-Sponsored, AA-UM, or Michigan Ross-hosted events:**

Many of these activities can be transformed into a co-sponsored event with another local business school alumni club, Alumni Association of the University of Michigan club, or, potentially, a department within Michigan Ross. Michigan Ross will also communicate to you region-specific activities the school is hosting. Some examples of both include:

- Piggybacking off bigger AA-UM sporting or networking events in your region to organize attendance by a cohort of Ross alumni
- Mixers with local peer b-school alumni clubs (multiple business school-branded events may even be more likely to attract corporate sponsorship, speakers and attendance)
- If you are a Tier 3, 4, or international club, opening your event to all University of Michigan alumni in the region (though you may consider charging non-Ross alums a

different/higher event fee)

- Ross *Talks*, which is hosted entirely by Michigan Ross, visits many cities in which there is a Ross alumni club (Ross *Talks* is a series of worldwide opportunities for alumni to learn and have a conversation with Michigan Ross faculty or alumni and guest speakers about the latest business research, ventures, trends and tools)

Consider repeating successful events, but continue to regularly assess the popularity of your activities – as well as local alumni demographics.

Does your area have more families and older alumni? Regular happy hours will likely not be as successful or realistic as professional networking and lifelong learning activities or family-friendly programming. Mostly younger alumni? Socials, mixers and football watch parties may be more appealing.

Finally, whenever you cross paths with a local Michigan Ross alum, don't miss an opportunity to discuss the type of club programming that they would be interested in attending.

On Funding, Resources and Generating Additional Club Revenue

Michigan Ross provides domestic alumni clubs with a financial stipend, alumni club leadership resources, logistical guidance, an alumni club website, and full-time staff support. Any revenue that alumni clubs collect themselves (primarily through attendance or membership fees) rolls forward yearly; unused Michigan Ross stipend funds do not. To stretch your club's funding, or to generate additional revenue, consider these strategies:

- **Identify alumni or companies with (or without) University of Michigan ties** that would be willing to act as corporate sponsors or venue hosts for your activity. Michigan Ross Alumni Relations staff will provide support in this endeavor where possible.
- **Explore the possibility of alumni club membership fees.** This may be a more realistic option for Tier 1 and 2 clubs that offer a wide selection of frequent events. Clubs that have established membership fees have built a membership payment structure that can be renewed annually, every three years, or last for a lifetime.
 - Because all Michigan Ross alumni in a region, paying and non-paying, are automatically considered 'alumni club members,' additional membership benefits might include:
 - Reduced price for events
 - Preferred seating at events
 - Club/group eNewsletter for members
 - Priority to limited capacity events
 - Member-only event access
- **Charge an attendance fee for club events.** Depending on the event, the fee can be anywhere from \$5 to \$45. Event fees are standard practices for many Michigan Ross

Alumni Clubs. Attendance fees carry a number of benefits, but foremost among them are:

- **Alumni who have paid to attend an event are more likely to attend it**, reducing the number of no-shows.
- **An event fee places a value on an event's quality.** Alumni want to attend events that are worth their time. A dollar value provides a numerical translation of that time into quality.
- **Attendance fees help hold club leadership teams to the highest event planning standards.** The realization that people have paid money to attend an event you are organizing adds a certain sense of accountability that might not be present otherwise.
- **Consider holding a more exclusive "signature event" that serves as your club's major source of revenue for the year.** Some clubs have secured full corporate sponsorships for a gala, highly-placed keynote speaker, reception or cocktail hour, so all income generated from attendance fees flows back into the club's operations budget.

Concerned alumni won't be willing to pay for a club event in your region? If so:

- **Focus on quality, not quantity.** This applies to Tier 3 and 4 clubs especially. A few content-driven, high-quality lifelong learning or professional development events that charge an attendance fee can generate more excitement and consistent engagement amongst a broader alumni segment than several free happy hours.
- **Be consistent.** Consistency breeds trust, and alumni must trust that their local alumni clubs will deliver on interesting/useful programming for those alums to take time out of their busy lives to participate. It is possible for all clubs to be consistent in delivery and quality -- even if the club is smaller and only offers a few selections per year.
- **Explore free local events (including already-planned AA-UM events)** and volunteer opportunities.
- **Utilize public meeting space** or organize meet-ups in fun locations like parks, museums or zoos.
- **Take advantage of University of Michigan alumni activities** being hosted in the area. (See *Useful Websites*, page 11.)

Remember that the purpose of the Michigan Ross Alumni Clubs are to bring alumni together to catch up, network, and to further their lifelong learning and development beyond the classroom with events that evoke the Michigan Ross experience. There must not necessarily be an expectation of free food or drinks.

Don't Forget Our Other Ross Degree Holders!

It is important to consider alumni of every Ross degree program in your event planning and *especially* event marketing. Some clubs have occasionally advertised an activity as being for 'MBA alums,' leaving BBAs and special degree alums feeling excluded. In actuality, those clubs meant the events were open to *all* Ross alumni, but their marketing materials didn't accurately reflect this.

Over the decades, Michigan Ross has offered many degrees, including the:

- BBA
- Full-time, Weekend, Evening, and Executive MBAs
- Master of Accounting
- Master of Management
- Master of Supply Chain Management
- Master of Entrepreneurship
- PhD

Having alumni representation from multiple degree programs on a club's leadership board, if at all possible, often helps avoid these situations.

Photos

If you or members of your leadership team take photos at your event, we encourage you to submit them to Michigan Ross for possible use in Dividend or on LinkedIn. This is also a great way to get the word out about your region's activities!

A few tips:

- ****Make sure to let people know that Michigan Ross may be using these pictures in Dividend or on social media.**
- **Try to shoot photos of faces!** People like looking for pictures of alumni they might know. Don't be afraid to ask alumni if you can take their photo, so they will look at the camera. Most people don't mind having their picture taken!
- **Take photos at the highest resolution** setting your camera has available (unless you have a dSLR; in that case, 9 – 12 MP or smaller is a better size setting for email transfers).
- Send your photos to Michigan Ross via MiRossAlumniClubs@umich.edu.
- **It you are submitting a group photo, please help us identify the names of the alumni in the image!**

Attendance Tracking and Event Documentation

In a department-wide effort to improve alumni data and metrics, Michigan Ross is committed to measuring and tracking alumni activities and engagement across the School, including through the alumni clubs.

Currently, the clubs are required to submit an attendance list with event expense paperwork. **We request that alumni clubs also send us attendance lists for any club events that are free/not funded through Michigan Ross.** This is the only way the School will be able to develop an accurate record of global alumni engagement!

For your convenience, I have included an Alumni Club Event Sign-In template on the last page of this guide. Please feel free to use this, or your own attendance list, to track your club's alumni participation.

Other tips for collecting sign-in information:

- If you have a list of RSVPs, print out that sheet and use it to check off alumni as they arrive.
- Write “walk-ins” on the bottom or back of your sign-in sheet to capture non-registrants.
- Make a concerted effort to greet people as they come in and check their names off.
- Put the list on a “welcome” table and ask that people check in as they arrive.
- Ask people to pass around the list at the event and check their name off.

To significantly lessen the information required in the mandatory Alumni Clubs Annual Report, the Alumni Relations team will follow up with you after each club activity with a one to three minute post-event survey. **Thank you in advance for supporting the School's data-tracking needs!**

