

Michigan Ross Alumni Club Event Guide

Beyond strong club leadership, 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 bring 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.

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*
 - Regular coffee meeting alumni discussion group

- 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.

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 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)
- 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) can help boost attendance.
- *RossChats*: A new Michigan Ross Office of Alumni Relations program that connects faculty members who are already scheduled to travel to a certain region/city with the local alumni club there

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 Club Resources and Generating Club Revenue

Michigan Ross provides alumni clubs with [alumni club leadership resources](#), logistical guidance, an [alumni club website](#) with an eCommerce section for collecting revenue, and full-time staff support. Any unused revenue that alumni clubs collect themselves (primarily through event attendance fees) rolls forward annually. To generate and stretch club 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 can provide support in this endeavor where possible.
- ***Charge an attendance fee for club events.** Depending on the event, the fee can be anywhere from \$5 to \$45 U.S. Event fees are standard practice 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.
 - ***[Here is a link to instructions for using the club website to collect attendance fees.](#)** (Looks specifically at the sections about "Adding Events" and "Setting Up a Registration Page.") Email MiRossAlumniClubs@umich.edu with any questions.

*If you decide you would like to build a club operating fund by charging attendance fees, please contact MiRossAlumniClubs@umich.edu to learn the process for accessing your collected revenue for future club expenses.

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

- **Focus on quality, not quantity.** *Depending on the country*, a few content-driven, high-quality lifelong learning / 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. For example, a club could have quarterly or biannual meet-ups around approximately the same time each 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 Association activities](#)** being hosted in the area.

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
- Alumni of Michigan Ross semester- or year-long international exchange programs

Having alumni representation from multiple degree programs and experiences 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!**

