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SMU Alumni Chapter Event Planning Tips

Step One: *Determine what type of event you would like to plan*

- Know your audience. Which group of alumni are you targeting (young alumni, alumni with children, professionals, older alumni)?
- Research what is going on where you live. Is there a new exhibit opening in town? A fun show at a new theater? Local sporting event? SMU game on national television? A local fair? A community service project?
- What time of year is it? Are people likely to be very busy with work and personal commitments?

Step Two: *Select a date and time*

- Poll your members to see what days of the week work best.
- Keep your target audience in mind - it may be hard for families to make it to an event at 5:00 pm on a week night; professionals may prefer power breakfasts to lunches.
- Once you know your event and date, fill out the SMU Alumni Event Request form and submit it to SMU Alumni Relations.

Step Four: *Engage in cost recovery planning*

- Select venues that will allow your guests to pay on their own. **Tip:** Many bars have free food during Happy Hour. Your guests can buy their own drinks but enjoy complimentary treats.
- Charge a fee for your attendees to recover any costs incurred.
- Go potluck style -ask guests to bring appetizers, deserts, or picnic food.
- Find an alumna/alumnus willing to host an event at his/her home.

Step Five: *Use best practices during the event*

- Leadership Team Members should arrive early.
- The Chapter President should try and say hello to every attendee.
- Always have a sign-in sheet and name tags.
- Plan time for 5 minutes of remarks - Welcome, introduction, ways to get involved/stay connected.

Step Six: *Don't forget post-event follow-up*

- Complete the event evaluation form and return to the Alumni Relations Office (this form will help you plan better and will serve as a great resource for Alumni Relations to track, observe, and share best practices).
- Send an email out to attendees thanking them for coming to the function.

Step Seven: *Remember this should be fun*

- SMU Alumni Chapters exist to help connect SMU Alumni to each other and the University. We don't want chapter leaders to get burnt out. Plan early, delegate tasks, work as a team, and ask the Alumni Relations Office for help.
- Don't be discouraged if your numbers are not as high as expected. Remember, people are busy and life happens. Not every alum is going to be able to attend every event—which is why diversifying the types of events you plan is key.