

Vermont Law School Alumni Association Regional Groups

Guidelines for Becoming an Officially Recognized Regional Group

Each region of the country is unique in its resources, level of energy, and logistics. Regional groups provide an opportunity for our graduates to interact with each other, to learn from each other, to participate in the development and growth of VLS, and much more. These guidelines are intended to help alumni wanting to create regional alumni groups to do so with ease. *These are suggested guidelines – we do realize that every group will be different.* The Office of Alumni Relations will help you in this process. Another resource is the Regional Alumni Groups (RAG) Committee of the Vermont Law School Alumni Association (VLSAA). The Co-Chairs are **Heather Spurlock Kennealy JD/MSEL '02** and **Caroline Fisher JD '04**, who can be reached via email at hskennealy@yahoo.com and fishercarolina@yahoo.com. The RAG Committee assists in the formation of alumni groups in various geographic regions.

Objectives for Regional / Affinity Groups

1. To create a networking community for alumni to interact and share information with each other to further professional and personal development.
2. To perpetuate and promote the bonds of loyalty and friendship among alumni.
3. To initiate and promote activities furthering the welfare and best interests of VLS and contribute to alumni as individuals.
4. To foster communications about the changing nature of the VLS experience and provide for the exchange of ideas and information.
5. To encourage prospective students to select VLS as a graduate school.
6. To establish and maintain relationships with students so they will identify closely with the group and continue as active members of the Alumni Association after graduation.
7. To provide support for enrollment activities, Career Service activities and other VLS activities in the area so that all alumni activities are strengthened.
8. To serve the local community by providing opportunities for voluntary participation in public service projects benefiting the local community.
9. To represent VLS through programs and public relations that help enhance the reputation of VLS.

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Starting a New Group

Any group of alumni interested in starting a regional / affinity group is asked to first contact the Office of Alumni Relations. The Office of Alumni Relations will evaluate the need, desire and interest from each request to determine if a regional group in a particular area has the potential for success. Once determined that a regional group could be formed, the RAG Committee and the Office of Alumni Relations will help by providing regional alumni lists and other support and advice to help in formalizing the group leadership. Group organizers must eventually petition the Vermont Law School Alumni Association (VLSAA) if they wish to be formally recognized as an approved VLS regional alumni group. Official recognition can be requested by sending a letter to the President of the VLSAA Board which describes the alumni interest in establishing a regional group, its membership in the area generally and the leadership wanting to form the group. One representative from the group will serve as a regional representative on the national VLSAA Board. Each regional alumni group has the responsibility to update the VLSAA President annually on its group's leadership prior to the VLSAA fall board meeting, and no later than September 30 of each year.

Leadership

The structure of regional group leadership is largely left at the discretion of the organizers. Suggested leadership positions are the President, Vice President, and Secretary, but may also include Social Chairs or other roles. All groups are required to designate a Representative to the national VLSAA Board. These positions generally comprise the Board of Directors, which establishes policy and provides direction for all group activities.

The process for selecting group officers can vary, according to the group's size and customs. Smaller groups may wish to forgo a formal election process instead choosing to appoint officers. Larger groups may wish to carry out a formal nomination process complete with elections. Officer terms generally are staggered and can be determined by the Board.

Elections are typically held at a group's Annual Meeting, which can be held in conjunction with a social reception.

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Suggested Activities

When planning an event, set a budget that is reasonable. If the group is funding the event, charge a fee that will cover food and drink and any cost for the room. Most alumni do not mind paying a modest fee for an event. If you have special guests whom you do not want to charge, include their costs in your budget. The following are a list of suggested activities:

Events

- Social events or receptions
- Regular breakfast, luncheon (brown bag) or dinner meetings with a program (e.g., a representative from the law school or a local speaker)

- Holiday receptions, held during school breaks, that include prospective, admitted or current students
- Continuing education classes
- Events focused on local resources (e.g., museums, hiking)
- Happy hour at a local pub, bar or restaurant
- Picnic, barbeque or potluck at a local recreation center
- Sporting events
- Volunteer at a community event
- VLS Annual Fund phonathons
- Recruiting events for VLS
- Career panel / fair

Alumni Relations Office

A regional group can help VLS tremendously by coordinating local alumni volunteer efforts. Many alumni are eager to help VLS recruit new students and place graduates.

Conversely, our office can support your group in many ways. With adequate notice, we can provide you with:

- A list of alumni in the region
- Mailing services such as designing invitations, announcements, letters and emails, and printing and mailing them OR the group can design the mailing and we can execute the mailing process
- Blank VLS name tags
- VLS materials



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- Catalogs and other promotional materials
- Recent issues of *Loquitur*
- Brochures on new programs
- Any other materials requested
- Financial support whenever possible and appropriate

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Guidelines for Officially Recognized Groups

Hello and congratulations on becoming an officially recognized regional group!

Below is some information that will help guide and structure your regional group. Each region is unique in its resources, level of energy, and logistics. These guidelines are intended to help alumni who have officially recognized their regional group with the Vermont Law School Alumni Association (VLSAA).

The Office for Institutional Advancement will help you in the process of building and sustaining your regional group. Specifically, Alumni Affairs Director Melissa Schlobohm (Mschlobohm@vermontlaw.edu / 802.831.1339) will be your point of contact. Another resource is the VLSAA Regional Groups committee of the VLSAA. The Co-Chairs are Heather Spurlock Kennealy JD/MSEL'02 (hskennealy@yahoo.com) and Caroline Fisher JD'04 (fishercarolina@yahoo.com).

OIA'S SUPPORT OF REGIONAL GROUPS:

1. Setting Goals

- a. At the start of each board term the Alumni Affairs director will work with each Regional Group on setting goals for the year. Goals will help drive the focus and productivity of the group and will be re-evaluated each year
 - i. Ex of a goal: Within the year, hold 3 social happy hour events and welcome one VLS professor for a lecture
 - ii. Build regional group membership by 3%
 - iii. Finalize regional group webpage and create two social networking platforms (Ex-twitter, facebook, Instagram, vine, etc.

2. General Support

- a. Conference Calls
 - i. Work with alumni affairs director on finding availability through all members. A conference line will be offered as long

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as it is not in prior use and a meeting request will be set up and sent out by OIA

- b. We can send swag for your events, name tags, and publicize about your group on our various communication platforms with enough lead time (2-3 weeks)
- c. Support you in building membership
- d. Serve as liaison between you and the school, updating you on current news and events on campus, connecting you with students or faculty, etc.

3. Events

- a. Notify us at least 4 weeks prior to your event of the event date, time, and location.
 - i. Meeting this timeline makes it so your event is included in the Biweekly, on our alumni calendar, and so we may notify faculty and staff in a timely manner
- b. We can set up and take in registrations on vlsConnect
- c. We can help with finding a venue and setting up catering if needed
- d. We will also notify you when we know faculty or staff are traveling.

4. Publicity/Social Media

- a. Include your event in our biweekly email sent to all alumni, faculty, and staff (Set for Aug. 6th, Aug. 20th)
- b. Include your event on our social media platforms (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)
- c. Add a webpage for your regional group on our all alumni website vlsConnect. An example can be found here:
<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/alumni-networks/washington-dc-regional-group>
- d. Help build membership making a call on our communication platforms. Each group has the opportunity to provide a brief summary update on their group for the alumni magazine loquitur. Summaries should be submitted a week prior to the class notes deadline.

5. Listserv

- a. VLS Listserv for your group: To subscribe or unsubscribe members will email us at alumni@vermontlaw.edu. Once the list serv is created members of the list serv can email that domain and it will reach everyone who is on the listserv.
- b. GOOGLE Listserv: You can create your own google list serv by following these steps:
 - i. Go to: <http://groups.google.com/>

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- ii. Click Create Group
- iii. Log in to a Gmail account or create an account
- iv. Follow the prompts to create a group.
 - v. Once in your group, click "manage"
 - vi. Click "Direct add members"
 - vii. Add the member's email addresses
 - viii. Add a welcome message
 - ix. Click "Add"
 - x. Confirm the Captcha
 - xi. Email will be sent to members adding them to the group.

6. Budget

- a. Our office will support you how we can regarding budget. Usually we provide \$5-\$10 per person towards food, space rentals, etc.. This budget **does not cover alcohol**.
- b. Depending on whether a faculty member is attending your event or the format of the event we might be able to assist more

TIPS FOR STRUCTURING YOUR REGIONAL GROUP:

The structure and representation of your regional group will vary from others and will be driven by your region and your membership. The type of events you throw, frequency of events, timing, etc. will all depend on what works best for your membership. Though we understand most groups will operate in an organic facet we would encourage you to consider practicing the following –

1. Write By-Laws : HOW TO ADD EXAMPLE OF BYLAWS? Ask Hannah...

Bylaws are the written rules that control the internal affairs of an organization. They'll define things like the group's official name, purpose, requirements for membership, officer's titles and responsibilities, etc. They also govern the way the group must function and are essential in helping drive and provide a purpose for the group. Regardless of size, they are helpful and keep a group focused. Our office will be happy to assist you with developing your bylaws.

2. Set a Purpose/Mission/Charge

A written description of what is expected of the regional group will help guide the elected officials and general membership. A widely distributed statement of mission and purpose should clearly express the organizations goals, means, and primary constituents served. It should serve as a guide to organization planning, board decision making, volunteer initiatives, and setting priorities.

3. Establish Officers

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Each group is required to elect a regional group representative to sit on the VLSAA board. Furthermore, to be an officially recognized group a board roster must be supplied that breaks out the specific roles of each board member. It's important to create a governing structure that outlines the specific duties of each board member so that the work of the group is spread evenly and no task is too burdensome of one individual. Examples of officer titles and roles are

- a. Officer Titles: President / Vice President / Secretary / Treasurer / Board of Governors / VLSAA Representative / Event Chair / Social Chair / Communication Chair
- b. A board of directors could consist of officers of the association, members of the board of governors, and the appointed representative to the VLSAA.

4. Hold Regular Meetings

Hold meetings with your board as well as regular open meetings with your board and the general membership. Provide an opportunity for agenda items to be submitted and discussed. Hold one general membership meeting of the association at least once a year.

5. Establish Board Terms

Set terms for your board of governors. Term limits broaden thinking, expand constituency, ensure appropriate skills, and signal openness. (Ex. Have all officers and board of governors serve two year terms. VLSAA representative should serve a three year term.)

6. Hold Board Elections

In every organization, the process of nominating and electing officers and board members is very important and the bylaws should clearly state the procedure. Annual elections are suggested and OIA can help with managing the election process and procedure.

TIPS FOR BUILDING AND SUSTAINING YOUR MEMBERSHIP:

Utilize the vlsConnect website

Each regional group has the opportunity to have a regional group webpage on the alumni website, vlsConnect. This page can serve as a base where alumni can visit to find out who are the leaders of the group, what networking resources exist (linkedin, facebook, etc.) and how to get further involved.

Create a Facebook page

The alumni website vlsConnect is not an interactive platform. To continue the

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momentum of your group we recommend creating a social networking platform for alumni to interact on. You can utilize the page as a discussion board, individuals can see other members profiles, see who is attending events, and members will feel more empowered and a part of the group.

Create a Welcome Guide

A welcome guide is a great resource for anyone who is new to the area. Washington DC and Boston both have created welcome guides that OIA can share. The guide can highlight good restaurants, venues around town, various routes of transportation for people to use, and resources that you might find helpful.

Check in with OIA to find out about faculty travel or student travel

OIA has been working to obtain faculty and staff travel information in order to coordinate alumni events around the same time. Before deciding on an event date, please check in with OIA to see if any faculty or staff are traveling to your region soon.

Hold different and creative events

It's important to hold many different kinds of events in your region whenever possible so you engage as many alumni as you can. Though happy hours tend to be easy, after work gatherings, other events to throw include:

- Bowling
- Hiking
- Service Projects
- Wine Tasting/Scotch Tasting
- Faculty Lecture /Brown Bag

TIPS FOR HOSTING SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

The following is a set of guidelines to assist you in planning and hosting successful events. You should always discuss your event ideas with the Office for Institutional Advancement and collaborate with the Office during the planning process.

Where Do You Begin? The beginning stages of the planning process is often the most difficult to navigate. To make it easier, keep these questions in mind:

- What type of event would you like to hold? What is the purpose of the event, and what would you like the members and leaders to take away from the event?
- How many alumni do you expect to attend?

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- What is the group's available budget? This will have an influence on the size and scope of your event.
- Are there any holidays or local events that may conflict with the timing of your event?
- What type of facility would be best suited for your event type and the expected number of attendees?
- When should you hold your event? Ensure that you have ample time to advertise.

How Do You Pay for the Event? Your available budget will have the greatest influence on the type of event you can hold. However, the Office can often provide financial support. Beware of these hidden fees:

- Food and beverage minimums
- Room rental fees
- Other rental fees such as DJ, audio visuals, bartending, etc.
- Per person cost for food and/or beverage
- Non-refundable deposits. If we have to cancel, will we lose money?
- Insurance form?

How Do You Publicize Your Event? All alumni groups are encouraged to use the Alumni Association website vlsConnect, in addition to other marketing methods the group may choose. Planning is important and a minimum of 6 weeks is necessary to effectively promote your event.

Should Attendees Register for the Event? Yes! Registration will help to provide an estimate of how many people plan to attend and will help with generating enthusiasm for the event prior to. Consult with the Alumni Affairs director to determine the most effective way to manage registrations.

What Are Some Last Steps to Consider Prior to the Event?

- **One week prior**
 - Reconfirm all the details with your contact at the event location. Don't forget to provide a final count!
- **One day prior**
 - Send a reminder e-mail to all alumni who plan to attend.
- **Day of Event**
 - Arrive to the event site approximately 45 minutes – 1 hour before the event start time to set-up. Check-in alumni and capture their most up-to-date information using a sign-in sheet. Mingle, make friends and recruit members for your group!



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RESOURCES:

Social Media ~

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/vtlawalumni>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/Vermont-Law-School-Alumni-99294>

Instagram: http://instagram.com/vtlaw_alumni / @vtlaw_alumni

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/VTLawSchool>

VLS Hashtags (to use on Twitter, Instagram, and FB)

#vtlawalumni

#supportVLS (during campaigns/appeals/etc.)

#powerofthelaw

#fightingswans

#vtlaw

#vermontlaw

Alumni Website ~

The VLS all alumni website is vlsConnect: <https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/>

On connect you can access the alumni job board and alumni directory, read Loquitur, share your professional news and accomplishments, register for events, and much more! Please encourage your classmates to register and use vlsConnect as a resource. It's a great way for your classmates to quickly update their information. Additionally, the website is an ever evolving thing and we love constructive feedback. The more people who use it, the more we'll know what our alumni are looking for and how to make improvements.

vlsConnect webpages to know:

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/resources>

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/careers/jobboard>

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/directory>

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/events>

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/networks>

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/give>

Loquitur ~



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Loquitur is the alumni magazine. We run two issues- one in the fall and one in the spring. Loquitur includes information on the VLS departments, clinics, faculty, alumni, and students. There are alumni spotlights, articles, and a big class notes section. We appreciate any recommendations for alumni spotlights, and take class notes/updates all year round. Please encourage your classmates to submit their news to alumni@vermontlaw.edu or here:

<https://connect.vermontlaw.edu/news/classnotes> and provide us their notes before the deadline. Additionally it's important that we have updated address information so that Loquitur reaches everyone. We'll send out a directory list a month or so before loquitur is set to mail for updates. As a suggestion, some class agents have created gmail accounts such as Classof2005@gmail.com to communicate with their classmates. Alumni will send their updated news to the account and class officers use it to distribute information.