



Tips for Reconnecting with Program Alums



Leveraging Program Records

Program records are the most reliable starting point. Your goal is to extract every piece of identifying information possible before moving to external searches.

- **Cast a Wide Net for Initial Data:** Look beyond the main participant database. Valuable, often unmigrated, data may exist in:
 - **Old physical files/archives:** Look for handwritten forms, participant records, or copies of program event records.
 - **Staff Contact Lists:** Individual staff members may have kept their own up-to-date mailing lists or email contacts.
 - **Event/Reunion Sign-in Sheets:** These often capture current contact details or employment.
 - **Participant Services Archives:** Records like advising forms or graduation lists.
- **Prioritize Unique Identifiers:** Focus on information that differentiates individuals, especially those with common names.
 - **Graduation Year/Major:** Essential for narrowing down search results.
 - **Maiden Name/Name at Graduation:** Crucial, as many people change their surnames.
 - **Last Known Employer/Hometown/State:** Use these as keywords in subsequent internet searches.
 - **Unique Program-Specific Data:** Things like program groups or specific awards can be highly useful as search terms.
- **Standardize and Digitize:** If your records are fragmented, create a single spreadsheet to centralize all known information (Name, Class Year, Program, Last Known Email, Last Known City, etc.). This makes external searching systematic.



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Learn more at: <https://tinyurl.com/RTCRE>



Tapping into Social Networks and Internal Connections

If direct searches on records and public profiles fail, leverage the human network surrounding your program. Warm introductions and existing relationships are often the key to locating difficult-to-find alums.

- **Identify and Engage the "Super-Connector" Alum:**
 - Find former participants who are **highly visible** on LinkedIn, frequently attend program events, or were participant leaders.
 - These individuals often maintain large personal networks and may still have contact information or knowledge about mutual classmates.
 - **Action:** Reach out with a specific, small ask: "We are trying to locate three of your classmates from the Class of [Year]. Would you be willing to forward a brief message to them if you are in touch, or let us know if you know their current employer?"
- **Leverage Long-Tenured Program Staff and Faculty:**
 - Staff members (like administrative assistants, advising staff, or beloved, long-serving program staff) often develop strong, personal relationships with participants that continue long after graduation.
 - These staff members may have kept personal, informal contact lists (e.g., addresses for holiday cards, personal emails) that are separate from official program records.
 - **Action:** Approach them individually and ask if there are specific former participants they've kept in touch with or have received updates from over the years.
- **Utilize Affinity/Participant Group Leaders:**
 - If the alum was part of a specific club, fraternity/sorority, or participant affinity group (e.g., Engineering Society), reach out to the **current or former group leadership**.
 - These specialized groups often have their own informal alum mailing lists or chat groups dedicated to their shared interest.
- **Post Strategic Appeals:**
 - Post a brief, engaging appeal on **official program social media channels** (Facebook, LinkedIn Groups) asking for help locating a specific class or individual.
 - *Example:* "Calling all Class of 2010 graduates! We are trying to find Jane Doe, who was known for her thesis on [Unique Topic]. If you know her whereabouts, please contact [Specific Staff Member]."



Internet Search Strategies

Once you have your core data, use search techniques on the internet, focusing on professional and social networking sites.

- **Professional Networks:** The single most effective tool for finding alums in their current careers.
 - **Use the Organization's Alumni Tool:** Go to your organization's official LinkedIn page and use the "Alumni" tab. This allows you to filter the alum network by:
 - **Year they attended/graduated.**
 - **Current employer/job title.**
 - **Geographic location.**
 - **Search by "Education":** Perform a search on the name and then refine the results using the "Education" filter to your institution and program.
 - **Search for Previous Employers:** If you know their last employer from program records, search that company's page on LinkedIn and look for people who also list your program in their education.
- **Social Media (Facebook/Instagram):** Social platforms are excellent for personal and non-professional connections, but often require more creative searching.
 - **Search Old Group/Class Names:** Search Facebook for groups like "[Program Name] Class of [Year]" or "[Organization Name] Alumni in [City]". These are often created by participants and are unofficial, but highly active.
 - **Use Maiden Names:** When searching for female alums, be sure to include the maiden name from your records, as many profiles may still reference it.
 - **Leverage Mutual Connections:** If you find one alum, check their friends list or connection network for other people from their class.
- **Advanced Search Techniques:** Use **Boolean Operators** and quotation marks to execute precise searches.
 - **Exact Phrases:** Use quotation marks to search for an exact phrase.
 - *Example: "Jane Smith" "Boston"*
 - **Combining Keywords:** Use the **AND** operator (implied by just listing words) or the **+** symbol to require specific terms.
 - *Example: John Doe AND "School" AND 2005*