



Alumni Chapter
Handbook

For Further Information contact:

Florida Institute of Technology Alumni Association

Office of Alumni Affairs

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WELCOME!

Developing successful chapters is a key ingredient in building a strong Florida Tech Alumni Association. The responsibility for chapter development resides with the Office of Alumni Affairs, the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association and with the local alumni volunteers who provide their time, talent and resources. We appreciate your willingness to help in this important endeavor.

Chapters provide an organizational framework and leadership for alumni in specific locations or constituencies so that interesting and relevant programs and activities can be held which contribute to both Florida Tech and Association goals.

Chapter programs and activities are designed to continue the professional and social interactions begun while alumni were students at Florida Tech.

The purpose of this Chapter Handbook is to assist alumni volunteers in developing viable chapters. This handbook should answer most of your questions and provide you with information needed to ensure your chapter's success. We welcome your suggestions and look forward to working with you and your chapter in support of Florida Tech.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of Alumni Affairs toll free at (866) FLA-TECH or email gopanthers@fit.edu.

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MISSION STATEMENT AND PURPOSES

The mission of the Florida Tech Alumni Association is to develop, promote and retain a lifelong sentiment of highest regard for each member of the Association and Florida Tech, to provide an enduring allegiance to Florida Institute of Technology and to strengthen and enhance Florida Tech as a world class university.

To fulfill the mission and purpose of this organization, it's objectives are to:

- Strengthen the ties and contacts between the university and the alumni
- Increase fellowship among the members of the Association as fellow alumni with common interests
- Promote mutually beneficial contacts between students and alumni
- Support student activities to supplement and diversify the educational experiences available at the university
- Promote the identity and recognition of the university both nationally and internationally
- Support the quality of education and well being of the university
- Assist the university in obtaining human and financial resources necessary to fulfill its mission

CHAPTER PURPOSES

Florida Tech Chapters are established to achieve the following:

- Assist and support Florida Tech in its overall mission
- Help promote Florida Tech in each chapter's community,
- Help the Alumni Association achieve its mission through activities such as student recruitment, career assistance, community relations and student assistance programs
- Promote fellowship among the chapter's members.

CHAPTER SERVICES

Florida Institute of Technology and the Florida Tech Alumni Association provide a number of services to chapters including:

- **Recognition:** Formal recognition is given to the Chapter by the Florida Tech Alumni Association
- **Advice and assistance:** Advice and assistance is provided for organizing and implementing alumni programs and activities
- **Mailings:** The Office of Alumni Affairs will provide advice and support in the
- **Speakers for Chapters:** The Office of Alumni Affairs can assist chapters in arranging alumni get together with Florida Tech faculty and staff for speeches on substantive subjects and/or updates on Florida Tech. A special publication, "Techxperts" provides information on faculty and staff who are willing to speak on specific topics. Generally at least 8 weeks advance notice to the Office of Alumni Affairs is required to make these arrangements.

STARTING NEW CHAPTERS

- Inform the Office of Alumni Affairs of your interest in forming a Chapter. The Office of Alumni Affairs will provide advice and assistance in forming your Chapter. We will also send you a list of alumni in your area.
- Read your Chapter Handbook carefully so you have a thorough understanding of it. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Alumni Affairs.
- Determine geographical or constituency bounds for the Chapter. Most Chapters represent a metropolitan area, state or county depending on the size of the area and the number of alumni in the vicinity. Also a constituency chapter can be formed if sufficient interested alumni are associated with a particular constituency (e.g. company, government agency, campus, school, college, special interest groups, etc.).
- All Chapters are appropriately recognized by the Alumni Association and the Office of Alumni Affairs.
- Identify several other local alumni who are willing to work with you in organizing a Chapter. Send this information to the Office of Alumni Affairs.

ORGANIZING A SUCCESSFUL CHAPTER

The keyword for ensuring a successful chapter is good **LEADERSHIP!**

The key criteria for leadership selection are **ENTHUSIASM and COMMITMENT**, combined with **ORGANIZATIONAL and PEOPLE SKILLS!**

Common problems for chapters include:

- Lack of enthusiastic and committed board members
- Failure to delegate tasks and responsibilities among board members and committees
- The leader accepts the position for personal prestige, does little or nothing, and never volunteers to step down
- Taking on more responsibilities than can reasonably be handled by a volunteer board

INFORMAL CHAPTERS

Most Chapters begin in an informal fashion by bringing together a group of interested alumni who are willing to share the responsibilities of building a chapter. This informal approach is often the most appropriate way to get a chapter started. The Office of Alumni Affairs and the Alumni Association are happy to support all chapters, whether they are informal or more formally organized.

After a new chapter has organized some successful events and identified leaders for the Chapter, the leaders may prefer to consider organizing the chapter in a more formal way. The following guidelines can generally apply to both informal and formal Chapters.

FORMAL CHAPTERS

CHAPTER BOARD: The ideal Board should be composed of six or more alumni. More board members mean more interest and greater opportunity to share the work load. All key constituencies—age, year, gender, professional interest and geographic location— should be represented , if feasible. Recruit Board members for specific functions that are important to your chapter.

TERMS OF OFFICE FOR BOARD: In order to retain the experience of a leader and at the same time prevent burn-out, a three year term is suggested for Board members. A specific length of service will establish a definite period of commitment and allow leaders to serve without fear of a “for life” reign. Staggered terms will allow for adequate continuity within the Board.

BOARD ELECTIONS: One of the most important committees for your board is the Nominating Committee. This committee is responsible for identifying the best possible candidates for your board election. This committee is also responsible for providing information about the responsibilities of board members to prospective board candidate, so new board members will not be “surprised” when they find out what they are expected to do on the board.

Remember, the success or failure of your board rests with its leadership. So make sure that the Nominating Committee takes its job seriously and does it well.

All Chapter elections should be uniform, occurring at about the same time each year. Transfers or other moves by board members may require temporary appointments by the Board until the next regular election.

OFFICERS: Although the chapter size and scope of its activities will determine the size of its Board and the number of officers, the typical Chapter should at least include a President, Vice President, and Secretary/Treasurer who are elected by the Board on an annual basis. It is generally a good idea to limit an individual to two years in the same officer’s position. Rotation of Board members and officers prevents “burn-out” and offers opportunities for “fresh blood” and new ideas. This arrangement should be stated in the By-Laws for the Chapter when they are adopted.

OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

President: an obviously interested and committed leader; highly regarded by the members and with time and energy available to serve in this important position. The President of the Chapter should be a good organizer and keenly interested in Florida Tech and the success of the Chapter. The President serves as an ex-officio member of committees; presides at all Chapter meetings and meetings of the Board; and assumes overall responsibility for the success of each activity and project undertaken by the Chapter.

Vice President and Program Chair: successor to the President; coordinates Chapter programs by working with committee chairs. The Vice President should assist the President in the performance of his/her duties and should preside at all meetings in the absence of the President. He/she should work with the program committee to assure that chapter programs are interesting and well planned.

Secretary: coordinates correspondence for the Chapter, and reports on all events and issues to the Office of Alumni Affairs and the Alumni Association. He/she is responsible for publicizing upcoming chapter events. The secretary should take minutes of all Chapter meetings and meetings of the Board. He/she should provide timely and complete information regarding Chapter functions to the Office of Alumni Affairs. The secretary should forward to the Office of Alumni Affairs, news of Chapter activities and individuals in the Chapter area for inclusion in the university newsletter or magazine.

Treasurer: The treasurer handles the Chapter funds, pays obligations of the Chapter, and keeps a record of all financial transactions. The treasurer should work with the President in formulating the chapter's budget. The Chapter should work out arrangements with the Office of Alumni Affairs to keep funds in a special university restricted account. This arrangement will avoid potential liability problems for board members, tax problems for the Chapter, and the difficulty in finding bank accounts which will hold small amounts of funds with our charging monthly fees. For further advice on how to handle your Chapter's funds, contact the Office of Alumni Affairs.

SUGGESTED TASKS

Depending on the size, informality and activity level of a chapter, these tasks can be performed by committees or by individual members of the board.

Nominations: This is one of the most important tasks for your board. As noted previously, good leadership is essential for ensuring the success of your Chapter. This individual or committee is responsible for identifying the best possible candidates for your board and officers' elections. It is also responsible for providing information about the responsibilities of board members to prospective board candidates, so new board members will be knowledgeable of their obligations.

The outgoing President of the Chapter may chair this committee and it should have several members including some who are not currently on the board.

It prepares a slate of officers and board members for election at a general chapter meeting. Note that "self-selected nominees" are not always the candidates you may want for your board. Nominations may also be accepted from the floor. Board members normally serve three-year terms. Officers normally serve one or two year terms.

Program: To ensure that educational and social programs are organized which contribute to the professional development of Chapter members, offer opportunities for good fellowship, increase the profile of the Alumni Association and Florida Tech and address relevant local or constituent issues.

To arrange co-sponsorship with other local organizations (government, business, education, non-profit, etc.) willing to support the program through in-kind support, joint publicity, and/or participation in the planning, organizing and implementation of the program. Joint sponsorship ensures a larger turnout for the event and provides support in handling the various tasks needed to plan and organize the event.

Recruiting and Career Mentoring: To assist Florida Tech with student related issues including coordinating alumni recruiting efforts to encourage students of high academic and personal promise to matriculate at Florida Tech and providing career guidance and support to students who are looking for job opportunities when they graduate.

Membership and Communications: To ensure good communication among board members and the general Chapter membership in order to increase active membership in the area. Specific responsibilities include ensuring that Chapter board members are informed with regard to upcoming board meetings and other matters relevant to the board; ensure that minutes of meetings are promptly distributed; and ensure that members are kept informed of Chapter activities through a chapter newsletter, regular mailings to members and phone trees. Maintains up-to-date records of Chapter members and may produce local Chapter directory of members in the area.

This person/committee is also responsible for maximizing publicity about Chapter activities throughout the local community in order to increase membership as well as the profile of Florida Tech and the Association in the area. Find out what your members are interested in. Perhaps caravans to athletic events, Sunday brunch at a hotel or country club, golf tournaments or tennis matches, or a night at a dinner theatre.

Development

To work closely with the Florida Institute of Technology Office of Advancement in increasing and diversifying Florida Tech's funding support. Specific responsibilities include providing advice to the Florida Tech Advancement Office.

Find the best opportunities for receiving funding support, facilitating contacts with relevant individuals and organizations, and endorsing the requests for Florida Tech funding support based on the impact Florida Tech has had on alumni and organizations in your area. Also works closely with the University Relations Committee of the Florida Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors.

CHAPTER MEETINGS

Here are some suggestions for ensuring successful chapter meetings.

Prospective Student Receptions: Inviting prospective students and parents to an alumni chapter gathering is a marvelous way to get alumni involved and also support our student recruitment efforts. Many Chapters have found these events to be rewarding and satisfying.

Social or Dinner Programs: This can be used in the following situations:

- Where a chapter has only one or two big meetings a year
- Where there is a desire to have a somewhat more formal meeting
- Where there is a major speaker (s) to provide the focal point for the program.

Informal Cocktail Parties: This can be used in the following situations:

- Reception for university faculty or staff member with the intent of acquainting him/her to the alumni in the community.
- As a kickoff or follow-up for another event such as:
 - Athletic events
 - Community sponsored events
- An initial activity in areas of large numbers of alumni. (This helps to identify alumni who will help get the Chapter started.)
- Variations on the above theme include Cookouts and Social Hours.

Chapter Picnics: This type of activity is appropriate for the following:

- A summer or spring activity
- An event the entire family can enjoy
- An excellent opportunity to introduce young alumni and new students to the Florida Tech family.

Other Activities: There are many other activities that the Chapter can consider such as: lectures or seminars on issues of relevance to your members. Topics can include local community issues, practical issues (e.g. tax planning, stress management, parenting, etc.) or national and international issues.

Planning the Program: (See *Planning Checklist in Appendix*)

The following suggestions will help you in planning your program:

Distance traveled: select a centrally located site relative to where the alumni are located.

Accommodations: Provide enough space for the type of program planned. Buffets should have ample serving lines to avoid long delays.

Resource Needs: Certain resources or equipment will be needed. Consider such things as chairs, tables, a lectern, microphone, speakers, registration table, name tags, registration sign in list, electrical outlets and extension cords, projectors, viewing screens, etc.

- Parking arrangements
- Reputation of food and service of the establishment
- Liquor license
- Other government licenses that may be required
- Costs of meal and other services

Costs of the Program: Each Chapter program should be financially independent. In many cases, a nominal fee may be added to the cost of each drink or meal. This can be used to defray expenses such as complimentary meals and other costs related to the event.

Where a meal is planned, the cost factor should be carefully considered and a price established that won't discourage younger alumni. Also, we encourage spouses and guests to attend Chapter meetings, so some members will be paying for two. Reasonable cost is essential to good attendance.

Have program announcements mailed out on time: The Office of Alumni Affairs will assist in the mailing out Chapter announcements. All you need to do is provide the office with the information about the meeting including the date, time, location, program, etc. To avoid errors in communication, please submit this information by email, fax or US mail.

The key to getting announcements out on time is having the necessary information into the Office of Alumni Affairs six weeks before your meeting. Announcements can typically be mailed within two weeks of that time. Chapter

members then receive announcements at least three weeks in advance of the meeting.

Maximize Attendance: Good attendance is essential to a good Chapter program. It is the Chapter leader's responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure maximum attendance.

Tips to increase attendance include:

- Plan a quality, well-organized program

- Get the written announcement out on time

- Set up a phone committee. Mailings do not ensure maximum attendance. A phone call can always help remind someone of the upcoming event and help you personally touch each member.

Ask members to call 10-20 alumni and you will have a much better response to your event.

Have a meeting agenda and keep to the schedule. Nothing will detract more from attendance than a meeting that runs too long.

OTHER TIPS TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS

Delegate: Spread the workload by assigning responsibilities for planning and organizing the program to different members. Don't let one member accept all the responsibility for your meeting.

Variety of Programs: Develop interesting and varied programs to touch as many interest groups as possible.

Reasonable Number of Events: Conduct at least two events annually, but don't take on more programs than you can handle. Volunteers don't have a lot of extra time and if you over program, attendance may be disappointing and volunteers may burn out.

Local Interests: Respond to the special needs and demographics of your members.

Action Plan and Schedule: Create an action plan and activities schedule planned and announced to the membership early in the year. Choose dates carefully to avoid conflicts with other group's meetings, holidays, or locally important occasions.

Establish Linkages: Consolidate resources and tap into expertise and experience of other organizations by holding jointly sponsored programs with other organizations with similar interests. This will ensure larger attendance at your meeting and reduce the workload on your members in planning and organizing the event.

Be Friendly: Make sure everyone who attends an event is greeted personally by a board member. Make them want to return.

Evaluate: Evaluate each event immediately. Identify reasons for success or lack of success. Good, accurate records not only reduce last-minute uncertainties and problems, but also provide valuable information for the chairperson of the next event. Get your committee together for a post-event evaluation, and discuss what worked, what didn't work, and what you might do differently the next time around. Good, consistent planning and evaluation will result in top-quality, successful events time and time again!

Quality, Not Quantity: Don't judge the success of your program purely on the number of alumni attending one event. It's the whole program that counts. If you attract ten alumni to your event, they will spread the word among their friends, and you will have 15 or 20 at your next event. Building membership and involvement takes time, patience, and persistence.

Reward: Recognize and reward those who do a good job. The Alumni Affairs Office can provide special recognition certificates to alumni volunteers who provide outstanding services to your Chapter.

COMMUNICATING WITH MEMBERS

Communication is the single most important element in a Chapter's efforts to attract and sustain membership. For alumni to join, they must first be aware of the Chapter's existence and activities. To retain their membership, the Chapter must continue to convey a sense that it is active, interesting, and accomplishing its goals, thus justifying continued support.

General Mailings: It is very important for Chapters, at least once each year, to send out a mailing, with an invitation to join the chapter, to all alumni in its area. The Alumni Affairs Office can assist with this mailing. The general mailing is the simplest way for a Chapter to reach the entire "universe" of its potential members.

If at all possible, make general mailings to all alumni in your area, not just current and past members. The Alumni Affairs Office is prepared to help you send out mailings to your members. When preparing mailings, remember that new alumni coming into the Chapter's area need to be contacted. Sometimes repeated mailings are necessary before an alumnus/a responds.

The general mailing should be made early in the year, (so it can lay the groundwork for additional efforts such as a second mailing or telephone tree), but not before the Chapter's major activities and program have been planned. A description of coming events should be included in the mailing, as well as a clear statement of the Chapter's purposes and activities, to foster interest in seeking or maintaining membership.

Telephone Trees: The telephone is far more effective than mailings in communicating with alumni about Chapter activities and membership. Studies have shown that a general mailing usually generates a 3% - 5% positive response. Personal phone calls usually generate a 20 - 30% positive response. Even where a telephone contact does not produce a new member, the conversation with the alumnus/a about the Chapter may provide valuable feedback as to what the Chapter is doing right and wrong, and how its operations might be restructured to make membership more attractive. As a follow-up to general mailings, telephone membership drives can be extremely effective.

Personal Contacts: The most effective means to attract new members is through personal face-to-face contacts. Studies show that direct contact results in favorable responses over 50% of the time. Of course, personal contacts take up a great deal of time. So try to combine your efforts in increasing membership with other personal or professional contacts you are making on a regular basis.

Publicity: Visibility within a Chapter's area is very important. Alumni are more responsive to membership drives if they are aware of the Chapter's existence and activities before they are contacted. Articles about the Chapter should appear in all of the major newspapers in the Chapter's area as often as possible. There are many occasions to do so: the election of Chapter officers and directors, special awards, and interesting programs.

The appearance of newspaper articles can be timed so as to complement the newsletter and general membership-campaign mailings, thus serving the dual purpose of publicizing the Chapter and of helping to increase attendance at chapter events.

It is often a good idea to review the Chapter's membership roster and area alumni listings to see if any alumni are on the staff of local papers or radio/TV stations who might help publicize events.

Membership Directory: A directory can be useful in attracting and sustaining Chapter membership for two reasons:

It indicates the Chapter's "substantiality" and shows that many other alumni in the area already belong to the chapter.

Alumni, for a variety of personal, business or social reasons, may like to have themselves included in lists of this sort, and hopefully they will feel that an Alumni Association list is one of the best around.

Membership directories may include members' telephone numbers, emails, home and business addresses, professional interests, Florida Tech affiliation as well as information about the Chapter's history, its programs, Chapter by-laws, a list of current officers and directors and current committee assignments.

SUGGESTED BY-LAWS FOR FORMAL FLORIDA TECH CHAPTERS

The following proposed By-Laws are general in nature and should be adapted to meet the needs of each Chapter. After adoption by the Chapter, the final By-Laws should be sent to the Alumni Affairs Office and Alumni Association for review and endorsement purposes.

BY-LAWS OF THE _____ CHAPTER
(area or constituency) FLORIDA TECH ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

We, the undersigned, have associated ourselves under the following By-Laws for the purpose of forming a Chapter of Florida Tech Alumni Association. The submission of these By-Laws serves as a request to be recognized by that organization with the full rights and privileges of membership.

(Printed names and signatures of at least five local alumni should be listed below):

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this organization is the _____ Chapter
of the Florida Tech Alumni Association

ARTICLE II - OBJECTIVES

This organization is formed to bring together in an organized manner the efforts of Florida Institute of Technology alumni to support the goals of Florida Tech. The Chapter cooperates with the Florida Tech Alumni Association Board of Directors and the Alumni Affairs Office in promoting the interest and welfare of Florida Institute of Technology and the Association network, and in encouraging and coordinating activities of these alumni.

ARTICLE III - TERRITORY (OR CONSTITUENCY)

The territory (or constituency) to be served by this chapter shall be

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Regular Membership: Regular membership shall include any person who has graduated; any former undergraduate student who has completed one year and 48 credits (for quarter system) or 30 credits (for semester system); or any graduate student who was a degree candidate and who has enrolled for at least 4 quarters or 2 semesters, achieved 24 credits (for quarter system) or 18 credits (for semester system), and is no longer attending or a candidate for a degree; or any other individual who has completed at least one course and is approved by the Board. Every regular member in good standing shall be entitled to one vote.

Section 2. Honorary Membership: Individuals who have rendered outstanding service to Florida Tech shall be eligible for honorary membership. Eligible candidates may be nominated by any member of the university community, in which case they will be considered by the Membership committee for membership. Honorary members shall not be eligible to vote or hold office in the Association or Chapter.

Section 3. Associate Membership: Parents of Florida Tech students and friends of Florida Tech shall be welcomed to participate in the Chapter as associate members of the Chapter. Associate members shall not be eligible to vote or hold office in the Association or Chapter.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

Section 1: Membership meetings shall be held at least annually and at such more frequent intervals as the board of directors may deem proper. One meeting shall normally be held at the same time each year and shall be designated as an Annual Meeting for the election of officers and board members.

ARTICLE VI - BOARD AND OFFICERS

Section 1: The leaders of this Chapter shall consist of a Board of Directors selected from the general membership. The Board of Directors shall include at least 6 members. The Board shall determine all policies and progress of the Chapter and shall meet upon the call of the President or by request of the Board of Directors of the Alumni Association or the Alumni Director.

Section 2. At the first election of the Board members, one-third of the members shall be elected for the term of one (1) year, one-third of them for the term of two (2) years, and the remaining one-third for the term of three (3) years. At each succeeding annual meeting, one-third of the members shall each be elected for a term of three (3) years to replace the members _____ whose terms are expiring. Each member of the Board of Directors must be a member of Florida Tech Alumni Association (membership is defined in Article IV above).

Section 3. The Board of Directors shall have full power to fill all vacancies between regular elections.

Section 4. The general supervision and management of the Chapter, as well as the direction of the Chapter's activities between membership meetings of the Chapter, shall be vested in the Board of Directors

Section 5. The Board of Directors shall hold a minimum of four (4) meetings per year. Such meetings are to be held at such time and place as shall be determined by the President, with the approval of the Board of Directors. A meeting of the Board of Directors may be called either by the President or by three (3) members of the Board upon written request to the President. Four (4) members (or more if your Board has more than 6 members) of the Board constitute a quorum, and the act of a majority of the directors present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall constitute the action of the Board of Directors.

Section 6. The Board of Directors shall annually elect from its number a President , Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and such other officers as may be deemed appropriate who shall perform the usual duties as may be prescribed in the By-Laws. The term of office of these officers shall be one year. Individuals may be reelected to the same position for a second year. However, the same individual may not serve a third consecutive year in the same position.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

These By-Laws may be amended by a majority vote of those present at the Annual Meeting of this chapter. Notice of a change in the By-Laws shall be reported in writing to the Alumni Affairs Office.

Additional articles can be added to the By-Laws which:

1. Define the duties of each officer.
2. Identify and define the roles of standing committees.
3. Include any other details regarding the organization and operation of the Chapter which are considered important by the Board of Directors

NOTES