



# CLARE COLLEGE

C A M B R I D G E

## Alumni Relations Strategy

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## Alumni Relations Strategy

**Note:** Upon matriculation to the College, individuals become members of Clare for life. The term 'alumni' refers to members who are no longer in residence.

### 1. Context

#### A. History

##### (i) Clare Association

The College's efforts to engage and keep in touch with its alumni on a systematic basis can be traced back to 1923 and the establishment of the Clare Association. A self-governing body with its own rules, committee and subscription, the Association published the *Clare Association Annual* as well as a periodic directory of members. On the events side, it organised an annual gathering, to complement the Reunion Dinners provided by the College. In 2005, membership of the Association was made free and automatic to all alumni.

##### (ii) The Development Office

Clare was one of the first Cambridge colleges to establish a professional Development Office, in 1995, to enhance and coordinate fund-raising and alumni relations activities. New alumni events, communications and programmes were developed, notably the annual Members' Open Day, *Clare News*, the website and a system of Year Group Representatives; the Clare Association continued to organise an annual gathering and produce the *Clare Association Annual*. Since 2004, Clare's alumni relations programme has expanded in breadth and depth, and is now recognised as the most comprehensive in any Cambridge college.

##### (iii) The Alumni Council

In order to achieve a more seamless and coordinated programme of alumni relations, steps were taken in 2004 to integrate the alumni relations activities of the Development Office (including the system of Year Group Representatives) with those of the Clare Association.

To this end, at its AGM in June 2005, the Clare Association voted to change its constitution and reform itself as a more representative body by replacing its Committee and AGM with an Alumni Council, comprising Year Group Representatives and representatives of the Boat Club, the Friends of Clare Choir, the UCS and the MCR.

The Master is *ex officio* Chair and an appointed deputy is Vice-Chair. Under a recently proposed constitutional amendment, the Secretary of the Clare Association is also Secretary of the Alumni Council, and the Head of Alumni Relations has reporting responsibilities to the Alumni Council.

The Alumni Council decided at its meeting in December 2008 to establish two sub-committees, to look in more detail and provide guidance on two areas of alumni-related activity, namely the events programme and the Annual Fund. Further subcommittees may be established in due course.

## **B. Clare's Development Strategy**

The remit of the Development Office is 'to foster a mutually beneficial relationship between the College, its alumni and other interested parties, and to promote the work of the College to this end'. The specific goals of Clare's development strategy are:

'To establish, build and maintain positive relationships, internally and externally, in order to generate good will, enhance the College's reputation, and encourage all alumni to give in whatever way they can (time, money or skills); thereby assuring the future financial and academic well-being of Clare, enabling it to continue delivering excellent standards of education, and allowing individuals to fulfil their potential for the benefit of themselves and of society.'

In pursuance of these goals, the activities of the Development Office fall under three main headings: fund-raising, alumni relations and communications.

## **C. The Objectives of Alumni Relations**

The College's alumni relations programme is an integral and essential part of its overall Development Strategy. The Alumni Relations Strategy seeks

'To establish, build and maintain positive relationships between alumni and the College, and within the alumni body, in order to generate good will, enhance the College's reputation, and encourage all alumni to give in whatever way they can to strengthen the future wellbeing of Clare.'

Although alumni are warmly encouraged to support the College financially, it is a central principle of Clare's development and alumni relations strategies that 'every member of Clare is welcome to visit the College and enjoy the benefits of the Clare community, at all times'.

### (i) What alumni want from Clare

Surveys of the Clare alumni body (in person, at events and through questionnaires) and comparative research in other Cambridge colleges and more widely in the UK university sector suggest that alumni want different things from their alma mater at different stages of their lives/careers. In very broad terms, these are:

- networking opportunities and career-related events (especially important for alumni in their 20s and 30s)
- opportunities to have continued access to the intellectual life of the College, notably the latest research (especially popular with alumni in their 40s and 50s)
- opportunities to meet up with old friends and renew their bonds with the College (especially important for alumni in their 60s, 70s and 80s)

### (ii) What Clare wants from alumni

In engaging with its alumni, the College seeks to cultivate well-informed and committed

- ambassadors, to promote Clare to prospective students and their parents, fellow alumni, opinion-formers and potential supporters
- advisers, to assist current students and recent graduates (with careers), the Development Office (with potential sources of funding), and the College itself (with its investments, good governance, legal and audit, etc.)
- donors, to help assure the future financial wellbeing of the College

### (iii) Constituencies

Through its alumni relations activities, Clare seeks to engage with a diverse range of constituencies, all of whom have an important role to play in the life of the College:

- the alumni themselves (i.e. non-resident members)
- current students (undergraduate and graduate)
- family and friends (parents, well-wishers)

- Fellows
- College staff

## 2. Alumni Relations Activities

### A. Scope and Resources

To deliver its alumni relations strategy, Clare has established a comprehensive programme of activities under three headings: networks, events and communications. Individually and collectively, these different strands of the programme seek to meet the needs and wishes of the different constituencies and age-groups, in the UK and overseas.

The alumni relations programme is devised by the Development Office, responding to alumni suggestions and feedback, and is authorised by the College's Development Committee.

The alumni relations team at Clare comprises two members of staff:

- the Head of Alumni Relations (Alice Worth - 3 days per week), responsible for strategy, the Alumni Council, Year Group Representatives, the Clare Ambassadors, and the Family & Friends Programme
- the Development Associate (Nancy Childerhouse - full-time), responsible for the organisation of all events

In addition, the Secretary of the Clare Association as Secretary of the Alumni Council is a complementary resource in support of the alumni relations team.

### B. Networks

#### (i) Year Group Representatives

The system of Year Group Representatives, with one (or occasionally two) designated representatives for each matriculation year, lies at the heart of Clare's alumni networks.

The YGR scheme is managed by the Head of Alumni Relations, who is the point of contact for all YGRs; Clare is committed to providing the necessary information and resources to promote networking.

The purpose of the YGRs is to:

- encourage greater communication and interaction among members, and between members and their College
- promote the exchange of ideas, advice and support
- ensure that Clare provides services relevant to its members, and that members continue to have an important part in the future of Clare.

#### (ii) Alumni Council

The Alumni Council comprises the YGRs, one from each matriculation year; they are joined by representatives of special-interest organisations (the Boat Club and the Friends of Clare Choir), a current undergraduate and a graduate student, and up to four co-opted members to ensure that the Council accurately reflects the interests of the whole Clare alumni community. It is chaired by the Master or his elected deputy, and under a recently proposed constitutional amendment, the Secretary of the Clare Association also acts as Secretary of the Alumni Council. All nominated Council members serve for a period of three years, with the possibility of re-nomination.

The Alumni Council's remit is to:

- represent the interests of alumni in the affairs of the College
- give advice on recent and planned alumni activities
- publish an annual report to all Clare members in the *Clare Association Annual*.

#### (iii) Alumni groups

Various alumni groups have been established with a business, special interest or geographical focus.

The Clare City Network, founded in 2004, is the group for Clare alumni who work in London, especially in the City or related sectors (finance, law, accountancy, consultancy). Alumni who have joined the network receive advance e-mail notice of City events and other news of interest, and opportunities to follow up contacts off-line.

As a result of alumni gatherings and dinners, a number of informal Clare alumni groups have come into being in the UK regions and overseas (e.g. Yorkshire, Oxford, New York, Hong Kong). They are supported by the Development Office with, for example, updated lists of names and addresses, and administrative assistance in organising events.

#### (iv) Clare Ambassadors

Established in 2006, the Clare Ambassadors is a group of students at Clare who

- represent the student body at events for alumni and well-wishers
- act as a channel of communication between the student body and the College's development programme
- support undergraduates who wish to take unpaid work experience through awards from the Clare Ambassadors' Fund.

Throughout the year Ambassadors attend alumni occasions and other College-run events such as lectures and dinners as part of their role as student representatives. Each spring, there is a Benefit Lunch to raise money for the Ambassadors' Fund. The Ambassadors' committee is made up of second- and third-year undergraduates, but all students are encouraged to get involved with the Ambassadors, and as such the group extends beyond the central committee.

#### (v) Family and Friends Programme

Established in 2005 as the first of its kind in Cambridge, the programme is advertised to the parents and relatives of incoming Clare students, who join on an opt-in basis. Members of the programme receive an annual newsletter, invitations to alumni events, the option to contribute to the Family Book Fund, and access to the popular 'Love From Home' service (sending a cake with a personalised message to their son/daughter).

#### (vi) Online groups

A principal feature of the new alumni website, launched in March 2009, is the ability to create online groups to facilitate networking between Clare alumni who share a common interest (e.g. year group, geographical location, club or society affiliation). With connectivity to Facebook and LinkedIn, this should provide a powerful tool for connecting and reconnecting alumni with each other and with the College.

### **C. Events**

#### (i) Reunion Dinners

Reunion dinners for alumni are a long-standing tradition at Clare, dating back to the early twentieth century, if not before. The College holds five reunion dinners every two years (three one year, alternating with two the following year), each of which is for two consecutive year groups. In this way, each year group receives an invitation to a dinner once every decade. In contrast to many Cambridge colleges, Clare continues to provide reunion dinners and the associated overnight accommodation in College free of charge, as the foundation stone of its alumni relations programme. Demand for places at reunion dinners at Clare has grown markedly in recent years, with the result that most dinners now fill up very quickly.

Responding to alumni demand, the College has introduced an additional 'Decade Reunion Dinner' each year, to which all alumni from a particular decade are invited. Subject to spaces being available, alumni may bring guests to a Decade Reunion. Decade Reunions are self-financing, with alumni paying cost price for their dinner and overnight accommodation. The addition of the Decade Reunions means that alumni now have the chance to return to College for a dinner at least once every five years.

In addition to these year group or decade dinners, the College also co-organises an annual Mellon Fellows' Dinner in New York, and provides assistance for alumni wishing to arrange their own, 'extraordinary' reunion events.

#### (ii) Alumni Day

Established in 2000 as the Members' Open Day, this is the College's flagship alumni event, held each year on the Saturday after graduation. It provides members and their guests an opportunity to listen to a range of expert talks by Clare Fellows and alumni, enjoy tours of the College and its gardens, and take part in a concert for scratch Choir. Speakers in recent years have included Sir David Attenborough, The Rt Revd Mark Santer, and John Rutter.

#### (iii) Regional and international gatherings

Regular alumni gatherings and dinners are organised outside Cambridge, in the regions of the UK and overseas. Some (such as the Yorkshire dinner, Cheshire lunch, and New York drinks reception) have become annual or periodic events; others are arranged on an ad hoc basis around the travel schedules of the Master and senior Fellows and/or responding to local alumni interest (e.g. the recent Australia gatherings and the Edinburgh and Oxford dinners). The College is keen to facilitate regional and international gatherings and welcomes members' suggestions and offers to host.

#### (iv) City Network events

In addition to an annual City Dinner, held each autumn, breakfast-time and evening briefings by guest speakers are held during the course of the year under the banner of the Clare City Network. These focus on topical business or current affairs issues; recent briefings have included 'UK–Middle Eastern relations', 'Reputation' and 'Medical ethics'.

#### (v) Alumni Careers Evenings

Run in conjunction with the Clare Ambassadors, these evenings bring a group of Clare alumni working in a specific sector (or a group of closely related sectors) to College to share their experiences and advice with current students interested in pursuing a similar career. Recent evenings have included law for non-lawyers, journalism and the media, psychology, performing arts, and financial services.

#### (vi) Parents' Dinner

An annual dinner for parents of first-year undergraduates who have opted to join the Family and Friends programme. The students themselves dine free of charge. Hosted by the Senior Tutor, the dinner gives families of Clare students an opportunity to learn more about the College and become members of the wider Clare community.

#### (vii) Ambassadors' Benefit Lunch

Organised jointly by the Clare Ambassadors and the Development Office, the annual lunch raises money for the Ambassadors' Fund and acts as a showcase for its work.

#### (viii) Fellows' Lecture Series

A series of termly lectures, open to all alumni, showcases the cutting-edge research being carried out by Clare Fellows. Lectures are pitched at a general audience and are often based around a recently published book or celebrate an academic award. Recent lectures have focussed on subjects as diverse as 'Darwin and philosophy', 'The English constitution', 'Russian music and nationalism', and 'Sun spots and star spots'.

#### (ix) Clare Distinguished Lecture in Economics and Public Policy

Established in 2006, the annual Clare Distinguished Lecture aims to raise the profile of Clare in particular and Cambridge in general in the fields of Economics and Public Policy. The lecture is

open to all students and alumni, and is followed by a dinner in Hall. The speakers to date have included two Nobel laureates and the President of the Asian Development Bank. The President of the European Central Bank has accepted the invitation to deliver the 2009 Lecture.

#### (x) Benefactors' Events

Although restricted to current donors and legators, the annual events for College donors (Benefactors' Dinner, 1326 Society event and Samuel Blythe Society Lunch) form an important component of the overall events programme.

### **D. Communications**

#### (i) Clare Association Annual

The *Annual* was launched in 1924, in the aftermath of WWI. At that time, and for many decades afterwards, it was the only means of contact between the College and its alumni. The format and content of the *Annual* have remained essentially the same since 1947. It comprises a report by the Master; a list of Fellows; news of Fellows, staff and students; reports on the Chapel Choir, College clubs and societies; reports on donations and benefactions; obituaries; essays by Fellows or alumni; and alumni news. The primary remit of the *Annual* is to be the magazine of record for the College, not least to serve the interests of future historians. Since 2007, the *Annual* has been published online, both in downloadable pdf format and as a browsable web document. Printed copies are available on request.

#### (ii) Clare News

*Clare News* was launched in 1996, initially annually, then twice a year from autumn 1997. Its contents have evolved over time: the magazine currently comprises sections on Members' News, College News, Development News, Fellows' News, and Students' News, with occasional features on aspects of College and/or University life. The remit of *Clare News* remains to be 'an informal publication... to keep Clare Members informed about the College and each other'. Originally in black-and-white, the magazine became full-colour in 2002; it has undergone design changes in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2009. *Clare News* is distributed in printed form to all alumni, current students and their parents, Fellows and staff. It is also available to browse or download as a pdf document from the alumni website.

#### (iii) Annual Report

The Annual Report was launched in 2004 – the first such report by a Cambridge college. It comprises an introduction by the Master; statistics on admissions, examination results, and a list of PhD theses submitted by Clare graduate students; a list of selected publications by Clare Fellows; summary reports on College extra-curricular activities; a report on College finances; a report on the development programme, including fund-raising; and a report on the College's access and outreach activities. The remit of the Annual Report is to make available the essential facts and figures about the College and its activities in a concise and transparent format. The Annual Report is distributed in printed form to all alumni, parents of current students, Fellows and staff Heads of Department. It is also available to browse or download as a pdf document from the alumni website.

#### (iv) e-newsletters

Since January 2007, the College has sent a regular e-newsletter to all alumni for whom the Development Office holds email addresses (currently 5,500). Initially once a term, e-newsletters are now sent to alumni five times a year. They highlight news stories, provide details of forthcoming events, and give general information about the alumni relations programme. The launch of the new alumni website will facilitate more professionally designed e-newsletters. The remit of the e-newsletter is to provide up-to-date, timely information about College news and alumni events in a concise and convenient form.

(v) [clarealumni.com](http://clarealumni.com)

The new alumni website was launched in March 2009. It will facilitate improved and more flexible communication between alumni and the College. Connectivity with existing networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn allows seamless integration with these established online resources. In conjunction with regular e-newsletters, the 'News' and 'Events' sections of the website provide an up-to-date resource of College news (with the option of RSS feeds) and an easier method of registering and paying for events. After events have taken place, the Development Office and alumni will be able to share photos, audio clips and videos with other attendees or the alumni body as a whole. A comprehensive 'Alumni Directory' allows alumni to search for and contact their peers. Current students will also be able to use this facility to search for and contact alumni who work in their sector of interest, and gain valuable careers advice. As the website is a more interactive method of communicating with the College, we are confident that alumni will use it to update their details more regularly than is currently the case, enabling the College to keep more accurate records (the website links directly with the Development Office database) and stay in touch with as wide a range of alumni as possible.

### **3. Future Directions**

#### **A. Immediate developments**

As a result of its ongoing dialogue with alumni, individually and through the YGRs and Alumni Council, the College is constantly striving to enhance its alumni relations strategy. Responding to alumni demand, two major new projects were launched in 2009:

- the new alumni website, [clarealumni.com](http://clarealumni.com)
- the first two committees of the Alumni Council, focussing on events and the Annual Fund

The website should facilitate greater interaction between and among alumni, current students, families and friends of Clare, taking alumni relations to a new level. It is hoped that the Events Committee will help to shape the alumni events programme and offer a resource of experience and expertise to alumni groups wishing to organise their own events, in Cambridge or elsewhere. It is hoped that the Annual Fund Committee will help to shape and maximise the effectiveness of the Clare Annual Fund, and will help to foster a culture of regular giving among Clare alumni.

#### **B. Future possibilities**

In due course, it may be desirable to establish further subcommittees of the Alumni Council, for example one to focus on [clarealumni.com](http://clarealumni.com) and suggest future improvements to the site. As the Alumni Council continues to mature, it may wish to refine its structure and procedures. For example, in order to facilitate more effective decision-making, it might decide to establish an executive committee, perhaps comprising one YGR from each decade.

Working with modest resources, Clare's dedicated alumni relations team already provides the most diverse and comprehensive alumni relations programme of any Cambridge college. But we recognise that there is much more that could be done; harnessing the good will, time and energy of alumni themselves will be an essential part of future plans.