

Alumni Leader Best Practices

Goal Setting

Leading a WVU alumni chapter is about more than just organizing watch parties; it's about building a sustainable "Mountaineer home" in your local area. To do this effectively, goals should be ambitious enough to inspire but grounded enough to achieve.

The Foundation: SMART Goals

The SMART framework ensures your goals aren't just "good ideas" but actionable plans. Without these details, it's hard to measure if your chapter is growing or just spinning its wheels.

Specific: Instead of "Get more alumni involved", use "Increase attendance at the Backyard Brawl watch party."

Measurable: Have 25 alumni check in at the event and collect 15 new email addresses.

Achievable: If you usually have 5 people, don't aim for 100. Aim for 12-15.

Relevant: Does this help the WVU Alumni Association's mission of connection?

Time-Bound: "Complete this by the end of the fall football season."

Start Small: The "Easy Win" Strategy

One of the fastest ways to burn out a volunteer board is to set "insane" goals—like trying to fund a full scholarship in your first six months. High-performing chapters focus on process goals over outcome goals to keep morale high. For example, rather than stressing over a \$10,000 fundraising target, make it a goal to hold one small, consistent "Happy Hour" every month. Small wins build the momentum needed for those larger projects down the road. It is always better to have three successful, small events than one massive, poorly attended gala that drains your chapter's energy and bank account.

The "No One-Size-Fits-All" Rule

Your chapter's goals will look drastically different depending on your location and resources. Several factors will dictate what "success" looks like for you:

Alumni Density: If you are in a "hotbed" like Charlotte or Pittsburgh, focus on market penetration—reaching a higher percentage of the thousands of alumni nearby. If you are in a smaller region, focus on retention and deepening the bond with the core group you already have.

Financial Situation: If your chapter has no budget, your goal should be revenue-neutral events, such as meetups at a local park or a bar where everyone pays their own way. As you grow, you can transition to ticketed events or sponsorships.

Life Stages: A chapter in a city with many young alumni should consider focusing on career networking and social hours. A chapter in a retirement-heavy area might find more success with brunch meetings or community service projects.

Measuring Success Beyond the Dollar

Not all goals should be financial. For a healthy WVU chapter, success is often measured by the strength of three core connections: alumni to alumni, alumni to students, and alumni to the community.

Alumni to Alumni: Are you creating meaningful opportunities for Mountaineers to connect, build relationships, and strengthen their bond with one another?

Alumni to Students: Are you helping bridge the gap between current students and alumni through mentorship, networking, or scholarship?

Alumni to the Community: Is your chapter making a positive impact locally while proudly representing WVU?

Using a "Three-Year Planning" model is often best: Year 1 is for stabilizing your schedule, Year 2 is for growing your numbers, and Year 3 is for creating major impact through scholarships or large-scale service.