

Stand for Campus Freedom

Alumni Organizing Guide

A toolkit for organizing alumni to protect the autonomy, accessibility, and excellence of our colleges and universities.

The federal government's effort to dictate what colleges and universities teach, who they admit, and how they operate is a direct threat to academic freedom—and to American democracy itself. But across the country, alumni are rising up to defend core principles: freedom of speech, open inquiry, institutional self-governance, and access to higher education. These values empower colleges and universities to serve their communities, pursue truth, expand rather than restrict access, and strengthen democratic society.

As lifelong stakeholders, alumni have the power—and the responsibility—to act.

How to Take Action

(1) Form a Core Team

Start with just 2–3 motivated alumni. Use this initial team to map out how alumni are currently organized: What alumni affinity groups exist and have any of them spoken out? Who are influential alumni who might join the effort and bring others? Once you have a core team, ask people to meet weekly to build support among alumni.

(2) Listen

Build your list, engage more people, and develop priorities specific to your college or university by asking people to share their concerns, ideas, and questions. You can do this through surveys (e.g. google form), small group meetings, one-to-one conversations and larger Zoom meetings where you break people into groups.

(3) Draft a Statement or Sign-On Letter

Draw on what you hear from listening and learn from mapping power in your college or university to draft a statement that large numbers of people can join. Use principled, nonpartisan language tailored to your school's mission. Keep it values-based and action-oriented (see our [sample template](#)). Our goal is for alumni from hundreds of campuses to express support for common principles and include priorities specific to their institutions.

Examples:

[Harvard Alumni: Call to Defend the University's Freedom and Integrity](#)

[Brown University Public Sign On](#)

[Columbia Alumni for Academic Freedom](#)

[Northwestern Alumni Letter to Trustees](#)

[Yale Public Letter](#)

[Dartmouth Faculty Sign-On Letter](#)

(4) Collect Signatures

Use our [ControlShift petition platform](#) or a similar platform to gather names, emails, class years, zip code, school affiliations, and optional cell phone. ***Note: we do not recommend [change.org](#) because the platform will not give you access to email addresses.** Include a text box for people to add comments about their interest, expertise, stories, or offers of help. Include an opt-in option to channel signatories and grow your email list, using [Mailchimp](#) or another service.

More advanced: **Set up a website** to publish your letter and track press and other communications. [Stand for Campus Freedom can connect you to our friends at Winnable to set up a microsite for your alumni group.](#) Or you can use Squarespace, Wix.

Your aim is to garner majority support for the agenda. This won't be easy, but keeping it as a north star will help in recruiting new people and building the power of your campaign. It is easy for any group to settle into talking to itself and not continue reaching out to more and more people. Getting to majority support requires persuading people who are respected but may be hesitant to speak out. This mapping and persuasion of influential people within the constituency is critical.

(5) Give It a Name and Build Your Coalition

Choose a name for your effort that reflects your values. Once you have a group organized, form subcommittees for classes and schools. Contact class secretaries, affinity groups, and notable alumni. Use the power of small groups that are responsible for building majority support within their constituency. If you have a large meeting, break people up into groups by constituency and put them to work engaging people they know. Use reunions, alumni weekends, and other key moments for visibility and recruiting. Partner with alumni at similar institutions to broaden impact.

Technology is not a substitute for personal connections, but can support your organizing and outreach efforts. Reach out via text, email, and alumni groups on Facebook or LinkedIn. Consider leveraging Zoom webinars or YouTube streams for engagement and profile elevation.

More advanced: Use a relational organizing tool such as [Rally by Relentless](#), [Impactive](#), or [Empower](#), to easily enable organizers to text fellow alumni to sign on to an open letter or join the campaign.

(6) Create Shareable Digital Content

Develop a simple media toolkit with quotes, graphics ([Canva](#) is a great tool), and messaging for social media. Make it easy for others to amplify.

(7) Directly engage with decision-makers

Request meetings with university leadership and elected officials who represent your institution. Work your way up the ladder of influence. Start with university government relations staff and congressional staff responsible for higher education. Work up to administrators, trustees, and major donors and Members of Congress. Start by asking how they see the threat and what steps they are taking. Later meetings can move toward clear demands and accountability. **Consider adapting [these talking points](#) organized by Stand Up for Yale.**

(8) Consider whether engaging with news media is right for your effort

Highly organized efforts may benefit from media outreach, but these strategies require experience, capacity, and structure to be effective. We encourage new groups to speak with us before beginning media outreach.

Experienced groups may consider developing a **media kit** that includes the petition, organizer quotes, 3–5 key messages, links to articles and supporting information. Include information for a few alumni who are willing to speak with press. Build a list for press outreach and proactively pitch campus, local, and national media. Encourage op-eds by high-profile alumni to campus media, local or national media. Aim to shape the narrative.

(9) Establish your presence and apply public pressure

Host alumni panels, webinars, or zooms. Consider high profile in person events, including reunions, homecoming, sporting events, commencement, etc. Publicly engage university leadership, trustees, and elected officials. Issue statements, write letters, support and speak at events organized by students and faculty. Develop a campaign arc with phases. Public pressure is most effective when it escalates. Begin by inviting dialogue; escalate if institutions refuse to engage or take action. Track responses—and silence—and share them widely.

If you are organizing alumni communities, or interested in standing up a new effort at your alma mater, we want to hear from you!

Fill out this Alumni Organizing Interest Form: bit.ly/AlumniOrganizing2025

Or reach out to us at: info@standforcampusfreedom.org

***Stand for Campus Freedom** is a nonpartisan project uniting alumni across generations, geographies, and viewpoints to defend academic freedom and democracy. Together, we are building a national movement that holds universities accountable to their highest ideals, resists political coercion, and strengthens America's leadership on the world stage.*