

HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2026
— TO —
2031





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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in early 2024, the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA), in partnership with volunteers and staff and under the guidance of new leadership, launched a comprehensive strategic planning effort to develop a clear and actionable guide for the next five years. Recognizing both the scale of the opportunity and the complexity of serving an expanding, diverse, and globally dispersed alumni community, the resulting *HAA Strategic Framework 2026–2031* (“*Framework*”) provides a roadmap for the future.

The *Framework* reflects the input of more than 1,000 alumni survey respondents, nearly 400 focus group participants, and dozens of staff and volunteers. It was informed by a benchmarking analysis of 23 peer institutions and a comprehensive internal review of HAA programs, priorities, and organizational structure.

Rooted in the HAA’s enduring mission—fostering mutually beneficial relationships among Harvard, its alumni, and its students; strengthening the common bond among alumni; and advancing and supporting the University’s mission—the *Framework* organizes the HAA’s work into four Focus Areas:

- › **Strengthening Alumni Community**
- › **Empowering Volunteers**
- › **Elevating Alumni Voices**
- › **Fostering Operational Excellence**

Supported by strategic priorities, core initiatives, and newly adopted core values, the *Framework* provides a unifying vision that will equip the HAA to navigate change with readiness and resilience, make informed decisions, respond effectively to alumni needs, and fulfill its role as a connector, convener, and champion for all Harvard alumni in the years ahead.



CONTEXT AND PROCESS

A Strategic Review Working Group (SRWG) composed of alumni volunteers and staff with varied backgrounds was convened to lead this important effort.

The group undertook a comprehensive review that included an assessment of previous HAA strategic planning and research, an inventory and evaluation of current programs, extensive stakeholder engagement (including an alumni survey and focus groups), and a benchmarking analysis of peer institutions. Grounding their work in what already makes the HAA strong, the SRWG sought to leverage the strength of the volunteer network, the dedication of the alumni community, and the success of current programs. In partnership with the HAA Leadership Team, the group also examined the organization's values, value proposition, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, and identified key strategic imperatives and priorities to inform the new *Framework*.

The breadth and rigor of this process reflect both the complexity and the opportunity of the current moment. The *Framework* aims to enable the HAA to prioritize efforts, make intentional decisions, align stakeholders around shared goals, measure progress, and build lasting trust through transparency, responsiveness, and thoughtful design.



MISSION, VISION, AND CORE VALUES

The Mission, Vision, and Core Values of the HAA serve as a reminder of why the HAA exists, what it aspires to be, and the values that guide its work.

Mission

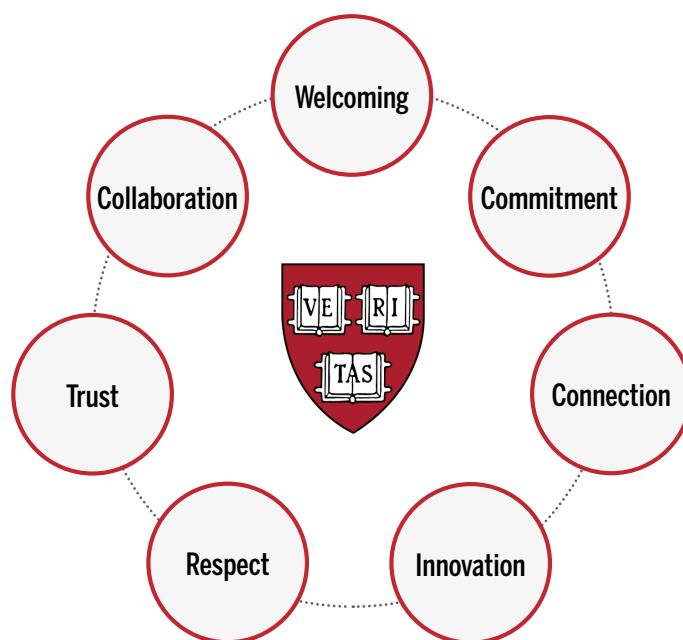
To foster mutually beneficial relationships among Harvard University, its alumni, and students; to strengthen the common bond among Harvard University's alumni; and to advance the endeavors of Harvard University.

Vision

An engaged alumni community supporting Harvard University.

Core Values

The culture of the HAA is defined by seven Core Values that guide how the HAA leads, serves, and connects members of the alumni community to Harvard and to each other.



STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

The strategic planning process was informed by an extensive stakeholder engagement and peer research process designed to surface a wide range of alumni perspectives and to identify best practices in alumni relations.

Nearly 20,000 alumni across all Harvard Schools, class years, geographies, and levels of engagement were invited to share their perspectives through a comprehensive survey, while 35 focus groups engaged almost 400 participants from a variety of backgrounds and levels of involvement. Feedback surfaced shared pride in the alumni experience and aspirations for meaningful connection, tailored engagement, greater inclusion, and stronger alignment between alumni and the University.

Seven consistent themes emerged from these efforts:

- › **Community and networking**
- › **Lifelong intellectual engagement**
- › **Inclusivity and diversity**
- › **Career support and mentorship**
- › **Technology**
- › **Volunteer leadership**
- › **Personal impact**



STRATEGIC LANDSCAPE

To supplement these findings, the HAA conducted a benchmarking analysis of 23 leading peer schools, including Ivy League, Ivy+, and other leading public and private colleges and universities, as well as global research institutions. This work examined strategies—in areas such as online presence, volunteer structures, programming, and communications—and ultimately identified shared priorities, including strengthening alumni identity, expanding access to academic content, building inclusive and global communities, supporting volunteerism, enhancing communications, and leveraging engagement metrics.

Together, these insights helped shape the *Framework*, including the HAA's Core Values, Focus Areas, and Strategic Priorities, ensuring they reflect both the aspirations of Harvard alumni and the highest standards of alumni engagement globally.



20,000 ALUMNI
surveyed



35 FOCUS GROUPS
engaged
400 PARTICIPANTS



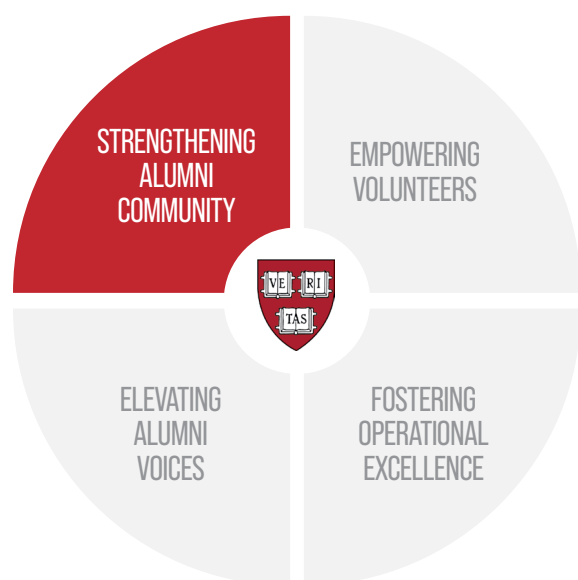
23 LEADING
SCHOOLS
analyzed

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The *Framework* identifies four key Focus Areas that will guide the work of the HAA through 2031, reflecting the most critical dimensions of alumni engagement today and defining where the HAA will invest its attention and resources. Each Focus Area is supported by strategic priorities that serve as long-term directional guides, designed to strengthen the alumni experience in ways that are meaningful, inclusive, and responsive.



FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



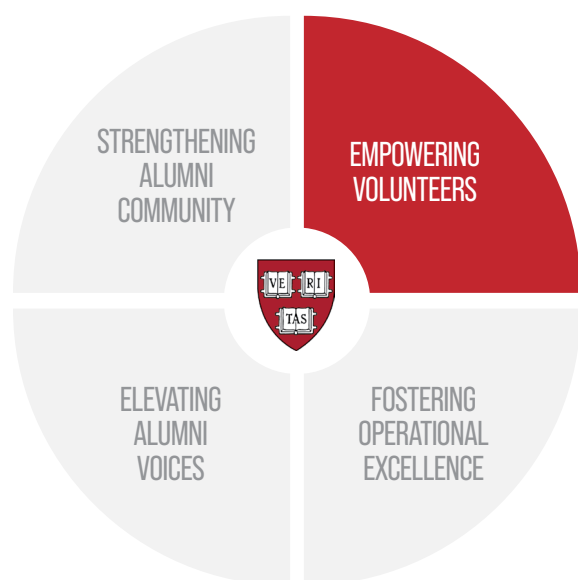
Strengthening Alumni Community

The HAA aims to foster a lifelong sense of belonging, meeting alumni where they are and inspiring them to connect with one another and with the ongoing life of the University through accessible and meaningful communications, programs, resources, and volunteer opportunities.

Strategic Priorities

- › Build and amplify in-person and virtual programming opportunities, including those offered by Clubs, SIGs, and classes
- › Develop segmented strategies for programming and communications across alumni life stages and interests
- › Identify participation barriers and create pathways to address them
- › Highlight opportunities for intellectual growth, engagement, and lifelong learning by informing, promoting, and facilitating connections with academic, cultural, and public offerings across Harvard
- › Nurture the time-honored traditions that remain important to classes, Clubs and SIGs, and alumni in general, and that, in many cases, have existed for hundreds of years

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Empowering Volunteers

The HAA relies on the leadership of volunteers to build community; empowers them with tools, training, mentorship, and information needed for success; and supports their succession planning by engaging and developing the next generation of volunteers and leaders.

Strategic Priorities

- › Equip volunteers with the resources and training needed to lead effectively through onboarding, mentorship, and learning programs
- › Strengthen collaboration between HAA staff and volunteers
- › Celebrate and honor alumni volunteer contributions
- › Identify barriers to entry for potential volunteers and build inclusive leadership pipelines

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



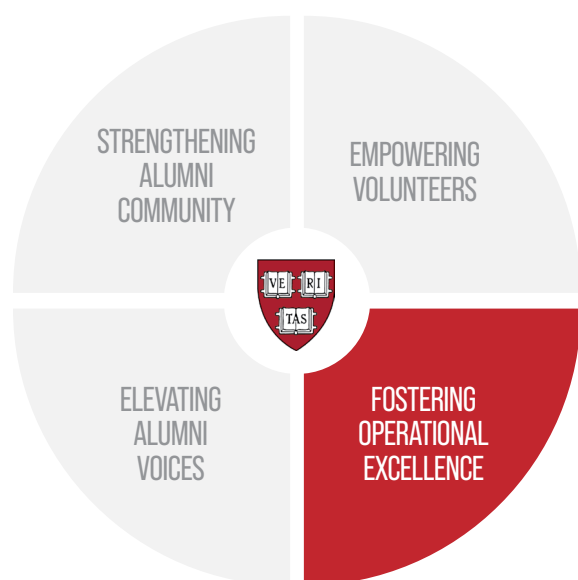
Elevating Alumni Voices

The HAA cultivates a mutually beneficial and trusted relationship between alumni and the University through a strategy of open communication, where alumni voices are heard and where alumni receive the information and context they need to engage effectively as members of the Harvard community.

Strategic Priorities

- › Provide opportunities for alumni to hear from University leadership on information of institutional importance and of interest to alumni, through both regular communication and structured opportunities for dialogue
- › Enhance visibility and awareness of opportunities for alumni to share feedback and to participate in University initiatives and student life
- › Further refine strategies for engaging alumni in the nomination and election processes for Harvard Overseers and HAA Elected Directors
- › Make available timely information and resources to alumni who wish to be informed and educated about matters important to the University, and who may wish to champion or talk knowledgeably about Harvard in their communities and networks

FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Fostering Operational Excellence

The HAA delivers on its strategic Focus Areas, meeting the changing needs of the global alumni community through disciplined and transparent processes, clear goals and metrics, and a culture of experimentation and innovation.

Strategic Priorities

- › Celebrate learning and encourage intelligent risk-taking by capturing lessons and iterating effectively
- › Empower staff by strengthening clarity around roles, responsibilities, and service levels
- › Ensure effective use of existing tools and technologies and consider areas for growth or future investment
- › Utilize historical data and continuous feedback to inform goal setting, initiative prioritization, resource allocation, organizational decision-making, and success metrics

IMPLEMENTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Implementing this *Framework* means focusing collective energy where it has the greatest impact, integrating what already works with newly established priorities. The HAA will achieve this through structured planning, careful alignment of resources, and ongoing program reviews. Regular feedback from alumni and volunteers—along with consistent updates to volunteers, staff, and the broader alumni community—will ensure ongoing improvement, transparency, and lasting alignment with the *Framework*'s goals.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS AND ENABLERS

The successful implementation of the *Framework* relies on strong operational support—internal processes, practices, and relationships that enable day-to-day execution and help the HAA remain focused and effective within current and future resources.

- › A **decision-making tool** will add structure and clarity to how we make choices, helping guide the HAA as it evaluates current work and chooses what else it might pursue, when, and at what level, in alignment with the Focus Areas.
- › **Strategic indicators and high-level metrics** will assess progress on strategic priorities over time.
- › A thorough **risk assessment**, which identified a variety of potential areas of risk, will provide a foundation for the HAA to monitor risks and create mitigation strategies to ensure the organization remains resilient going forward.





CONCLUSION, FUTURE OUTLOOK, AND STRATEGIC ASPIRATIONS

The *HAA Strategic Framework 2026–2031* provides a practical, durable guide to planning, decision-making, and execution across an evolving alumni landscape. Rooted in the belief that alumni play an essential role in Harvard's past, present, and future, the *Framework* advances intentional, inclusive engagement, strong volunteer support, and a relationship built on trust, transparency, and mutual benefit. Its structure enables the HAA to deliver a meaningful and lasting alumni experience—one that fosters lifelong connection, community, and support for the University—while remaining flexible enough to respond to new challenges and opportunities.

If you have any questions or feedback to share about this report, please email sarah_c_karmon@harvard.edu.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this *Framework* was made possible through the thoughtful contributions of many individuals and groups. The HAA gratefully acknowledges the dedication, collaborative spirit, and talents of the HAA staff and volunteers who helped shape this *Framework*; the internal and external research experts who provided essential analysis and benchmarking; and the many alumni and other stakeholders who shared their perspectives through surveys, focus groups, and informal discussions. This *Framework* reflects their commitment to strengthening the alumni experience and Harvard's global community. The HAA is especially grateful to the members of the Strategic Review Working Group who skillfully and thoughtfully led this effort:

- › Jeffrey Bartel AB '88, co-chair
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- › Katie Grissino, HAA staff
- › Alice Hill AB '81, AM '88, PhD '91
- › Sarah Karmon, co-chair and HAA executive director
- › Hannah Park AB '13
- › Corina Santangelo MPA '99

