



130 Years of Serving the Harvard Community of Northern California

# The Harvard Club of San Francisco

## **HCSF Activities Guide**

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## **About the Harvard Club of San Francisco**

The Harvard Club of San Francisco (HCSF) has three core missions: community service, interviewing candidates for admission to Harvard College, and organizing social and educational events. We serve all alumni of Harvard University regardless of school or degree, and our board is composed of graduates from almost every school at Harvard including the Law School, Business School, School of Education, Divinity School, Kennedy School, GSAS, and College. Our membership also includes former Harvard instructors, current students, and parents of current and past students.

Founded in 1874, The Harvard Club of San Francisco is the fourth oldest Harvard Club in the world. Unlike Boston and New York, however, we do not have a physical location. Instead, we leverage venues all around the city for our events and charge a very modest membership fee of only \$60 per year (\$30 for recent graduates). We are a registered non-profit 501(c3) organization and an entirely volunteer-run organization with two paid part-time staff members. We support ourselves entirely from membership dues and events revenue.

While most of our events are held in San Francisco, we are also active in the greater Bay Area. The Harvard Club of San Francisco organizes approximately 100 events each year serving over 13,000 local Harvard alumni.

### **Activities Overview**

As a volunteer-driven organization, the Harvard Club of San Francisco relies primarily on the efforts of grassroots volunteers to organize and fill an activities calendar of over 100 events/year. These events are extremely important to HCSF as they fulfill the following purposes:

- Provide our members with opportunities to socialize and interact with one another
- Build a community for recent graduates and alumni new to the Bay Area
- Form the venue through which new members are first recruited to join HCSF
- Contribute a key revenue source to HCSF's annual operating budget

Volunteers are encouraged to organize events around their particular hobbies, passions, and areas of interest. With an incredibly diverse body of Harvard alumni, there is a strong chance that a particular hobby or interest will also be shared by other Bay Area alumni. As such, organizing events is a great way to meet other Harvard alumni with similar interests. In the past, activities have spanned a wide spectrum of topics, including but not limited to:

- Career Development – leadership development workshops, entrepreneurship panels
- Community Service – Crissy Field clean-ups, work with Boys and Girls Clubs of SF
- Outdoor Activities – sailing classes in the Berkeley bay, hiking trips to Mt. Tam
- Music and Cultural – SF Ballet outings, chamber music performances
- Social Events – Ivy League mixers, SF Giants baseball game outings
- Educational Events – talks by professors, industry leaders, and interesting alumni

To nurture these events, HCSF hosts an Activities Committee which meets every other month to bring together volunteer organizers and club officers. These meetings allow volunteers to propose event ideas and to receive input and suggestions from the committee. In addition, volunteers with similar interests can team up to work together on planning an event. The Activities Committees meetings are moderated by the VP of Activities.

## What HCSF Has to Offer Event Organizers

The Harvard Club offers a variety of resources to support event organizers. In addition to the Activities Committee and the assistance of the VP of Activities, HCSF also provides:

### 1. **Kirsten Pickford**

- Kirsten is the Harvard Club's executive manager and a paid staff-member whom event attendees can call with questions. Kirsten answers the Harvard Club's e-mail account and phone line, and is often the first point of interaction that attendees will have with the HCSF when registering for an event.
- Kirsten maintains the HCSF calendar and is the person whom event organizers speak with in order to book or hold a date on the calendar.
- As a long-time HCSF veteran, Kirsten is an encyclopedia on event best practices and a terrific resource on recommended venues and logistics.

### 2. **Marketing**

- The Harvard Club can provide assistance in marketing an event to Harvard alumni in the Bay Area. We have several marketing channels:
- The HCSF website including homepage event placement and promotion
- A weekly e-mail blast sent to all HCSF members listing upcoming activities
- An HAA (Harvard Alumni Association) e-newsletter sent to over 13,000 Harvard alumni in Northern California
- A quarterly hard-copy newsletter sent to all HCSF members
- Relationships with other Ivy clubs for occasional cross-listing of events
- These marketing channels regularly lead to sold out events

### 3. **Venue Relationships**

- The Harvard Club has relationships with many terrific sites in San Francisco and the Bay Area that can be leveraged to host HCSF events
- The most well-known site is the University Club of San Francisco (800 Powell St) where we hold our popular Ivy League mixers. Rooms of various sizes can be booked at the UC for HCSF events via Kirsten Pickford.
- Another site is the Gladstone Institute, which has a large auditorium with state-of-the-art equipment that is ideal for movies or digital media presentations
- The HCSF has special rates with the Ritz Carlton
- Other sites have included large rooms in law/financial firms in San Francisco as well as the homes of generous Harvard alumni

### 4. **Payment Processing**

- HCSF can accept all major credit cards online via our website or by phone
- Checks and cash payments can be mailed directly to Kirsten Pickford
- For some events, payments can be made on-site to an HCSF

### 5. **The Harvard Brand**

- Event organizers can leverage the Harvard brand and audience in their negotiations with vendors to achieve better pricing and terms
- Many businesses will offer educational discounts and/or group pricing
- The HCSF is the official Harvard Alumni Association club in San Francisco. Having won the 2009 HAA Club Award, the HCSF has an excellent reputation for high quality events

## Responsibilities of Event Organizers

As representatives of the Harvard Club of San Francisco, organizers have a responsibility to produce high-quality events that reflect well on the HCSF. Event Organizers should treat every event as as if it were an attendee's first exposure to the HCSF. While every event is different, the following provides a list of action items that holds true for most activities.

1. **Obtain event approval**
  - Propose event at an Activities Committee or reach out to VP Activities
  - To obtain approval, event must meet certain guidelines (on next page)
2. **Reserve a date on the HCSF calendar**
  - Speak with Kirsten Pickford to reserve a date for the event
3. **Provide event form and marketing write-up**
  - Fill out the Event Details Form provided at the end of this guide. (A Word version is also available on our website.)
  - Write a descriptive event blurb that can be used for marketing purposes (our website, e-mail blasts, newsletter). Make the event sound exciting/fun.
4. **Act as venue liaison**
  - Obtain venue for the event, with help from HCSF and Kirsten as appropriate
  - Coordinate logistics – agree in advance upon any necessary food/drinks, A/V equipment, seating and room lay-out, etc
5. **Send reminder e-mail to attendees**
  - Send attendees a reminder of all event details by e-mail at least one day prior
  - Venue address, directions, what to bring/wear, etc
6. **Coordinate event on day-of**
  - Make clearly-marked signs for the event, as appropriate
  - Guide attendees to the right place
  - Register attendees or arrange for someone to do so
  - Make welcome remarks at the beginning or arrange for someone to do so
  - At the end, thank attendees for coming.
  - Perform any clean-up needed or arrange for someone to do so

All necessary forms and contact information are provided in this guide. While seemingly complex, the process is fairly straight-forward and there are many resources available to help an organizer accomplish each of these steps. If stuck or in doubt, reach out to the VP of Activities or Kirsten Pickford!

Put yourself in the shoes of an attendee. Would you be excited by the event write-up? From the event write-up, would you know what to expect from the event? Are the time and exact location clear? When someone gets to the event location, are there signs to guide them to the correct room? Will appetizers be provided if the event overlaps with dinner time? If the crowd is large, will the speaker need a microphone? If it's an outdoor event, do people need to bring certain equipment such as sunglasses, walking shoes, etc.? Is the mixer portion of the event located conveniently close to where the speech will be given? In short, analyze the situation, and consider the details that will make this a good experience for the attendees.

## General Event Policies

To be approved as an HCSF event, an event must meet the following criteria:

- 1. Event must provide a clear and valuable benefit to HCSF members beyond awareness of the event itself.**
  - e.g. significantly discounted pricing, access not available to general public, a Harvard-affiliated speaker (faculty or alumni), a predominantly Harvard alumni audience, etc.
- 2. Event must provide an opportunity for HCSF members to socialize and interact with other Harvard people.**
  - Every event must incorporate a social component such as a mixer, reception, drinks, or lunch/dinner – not just tickets to a show
- 3. Event must not be solely commercial in purpose.**
  - i.e. not designed only to sell products or services to the HCSF membership
- 4. Event must not support or endorse a cause or charity that is not directly affiliated with Harvard University or the HCSF.**
  - HCSF frequently receives requests to endorse external charities or causes and cannot accommodate these requests.
  - We get so many requests that we can't be in the business of choosing between them. All of these requests are from good causes but our members did not sign up to get spam about non-Harvard events.
  - Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis by the HCSF executive board and are only granted if the charity in question is proposing a unique opportunity for HCSF members as part of the charity event or if it would bring a Harvard-only group together to serve the community together.
  - Through the Community Service Committee, the HCSF organizes opportunities for Harvard alumni to serve the community together
- 5. Event must pay for itself or show a clear path to breaking-even.**
  - HCSF does not provide funding for events (no honorariums, travel funds, etc)
  - HCSF can provide credit for purchasing tickets or seats in advance of an event, but only if a clear plan is laid out showing demand for those tickets and reasonable certainty that the event will break-even
  - How to price an event? Divide the event cost by a conservative estimate of the number of attendees. Add \$10 per ticket to cover HCSF overhead (our overhead includes website costs, credit card processing fees, and the salaries of our 2part-time staff members). This is the member price. Then add \$15 or \$20(depending on the cost of the event) to determine the non-member price. The difference between the member price and non-member price should be significant enough to encourage non-members to join the HCSF. For a lecture with no-host bar mixer, the member price might be \$9 and the non-member price \$24.
  - All events cost the HCSF money because they take up the time of our paid staff, who are paid by the hour and must answer calls/e-mails about the event. Thus, a nominal fee is encouraged even for low cost events. This also improves attendance as attendees who have paid \$9 are more likely to show up.

All events are held at the discretion of the executive board of HCSF. These criteria are in place to protect the reputation and brand of the Club, to ensure a uniformly high standard of quality across all Club events, and to provide accountability among individual organizers.

Events which do not meet the criteria specified above may still be listed on the "Community Events" section of the Club website, at the sole discretion of the Club's officers.

## **Organizer Check-list**

### **1-2 months prior to the event:**

- Attend HCSF Activities Committee (recommended but optional)
- Get your event approved with the VP Activities
- Introduce yourself to Kirsten Pickford
- Hold a date on the HCSF calendar for the event
- Fill out event form (next page), marketing write-up
- Start marketing the event to your friends and networks!
- Check in with Kirsten periodically to gauge attendee registration count and tailor event accordingly (not enough registrations and need heavier marketing? or selling out and need more space at the venue?)

### **Week prior to the event:**

- Obtain the final list of registrants from Kirsten
- E-mail registrants with a reminder of the event date, time, and location
- Provide your cell number for attendees to contact you with questions on the day of the event (optional but very helpful for outdoor events and non-standard events)

### **Day of the event:**

- Get to site at least 30 minutes before start of event
- Prepare signs as needed to guide attendees to the right location
- Check A/V equipment, food delivery, etc.
- Bring registration list & check off attendees as they arrive
- For bigger events (50 or more), prepare a check-in stand and/or secure volunteers (friends or family) for general event management
- Clean-up after event as needed

## Directory of Key Contacts

Kirsten Pickford  
HCSF Executive Director  
[kirsten@harvardclubsf.org](mailto:kirsten@harvardclubsf.org)  
Tel: 415-472-1005

HCSF VP of Activities  
[vp.activities@harvardclubsf.org](mailto:vp.activities@harvardclubsf.org)

HCSF VP of Community Service  
[community@harvardclubsf.org](mailto:community@harvardclubsf.org)

HCSF President  
[president@harvardclubsf.org](mailto:president@harvardclubsf.org)

HCSF Board  
<http://www.harvardclubsf.org/board.html>