

Central European University Alumni Volunteer Engagement Strategy

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Background

Alumni volunteers make a substantial contribution to the life and future of CEU by donating their time and talent. In AY 2020-21, 323 alumni volunteers supported the university's recruitment efforts, served as local chapter leader/contact person, helped students' and alumni career development, spoke at events organized by CEU, and volunteered in advisory roles such as Thesis Buddies. Historically, over 600 volunteers have donated their time and skills to CEU so far.

In addition to volunteering, another important way of engaging with the university is through donating to CEU fundraising campaigns. CEU has some of the most engaged, loyal alumni in the world. Since 2001 thousands have supported the future of their University via the Alumni Campaign. [The Alumni Donor Societies](#) were created to celebrate their leadership and pave the way to better recognize their contributions.

Realizing the need for similar stewardship and recognition of alumni volunteers, the Alumni Volunteer Engagement Strategy aims to optimize the engagement of alumni talent and skills in supporting the university priorities, including student recruitment, career support, community engagement, and fundraising.

The Alumni Relations Office (ARO) coordinates the alumni volunteer engagement efforts together with Career Services (CSO) and Student Recruitment (STRO) offices and has designed the Alumni Volunteer Engagement Strategy in consultation with those offices. The strategy is aligned with institutional priorities, especially the OneCEU concept, which aims to strengthen community ties across the university.

The strategy aims to:

- Consolidate and streamline alumni volunteer engagement by creating a **clear structure of roles and responsibilities**.
- Define a **framework for efficient recruitment, engagement, stewardship and recognition** of volunteers across CEU, assuring that alumni have a meaningful and rewarding experience supporting their alma mater.
- **Elevate the visibility and status of volunteers** within the CEU community by communicating more clearly the value of the time and talent that alumni volunteers contribute to CEU, as well as highlight the benefits of volunteering and the skills alumni can gain through the experience.

The Alumni Volunteer Engagement Strategy was publicly rolled out and shared with the CEU community in the fall of 2019, following consultations and focus group discussions with the alumni community.

Volunteer Roles

There are plenty of ways to stay involved with CEU and its dynamic, global community. Alumni volunteers engage with CEU in three main areas: local alumni groups, career development, and student recruitment.

ALUMNI CHAPTER VOLUNTEERS

CEU has more than 90 [alumni chapters](#) on five continents. Chapters are a great way to stay connected with classmates and friends through special events, reunions, recruitment activities and more. Chapters play a crucial role in engaging their local alumni through social meetups, fundraisers, recruitment activities, networking events and more.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Alumni volunteers are crucial in assisting the career development of CEU students and alumni. Volunteers make a real difference by sharing fellowship or job vacancies, developing internship opportunities, giving career talks or holding employer information sessions for students. Dozens of alumni from around the world helped the CEU Careers team online and in person last year alone.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT

Alumni are CEU's best ambassadors to help recruit talented students from around the world. Volunteers can get involved at any time, by speaking to prospective students, participating in social media campaigns, representing CEU at one of the many student recruitment fairs held around the world, or organizing Pre-Departure Orientations for incoming students.

In addition to these opportunities, starting in spring 2020 and throughout AY2020-21, the following new volunteer roles were identified in response to the changing needs of the CEU community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ALUMNI ADVISORS

In response to the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, CEU has launched a new initiative called Thesis Buddies to allow alumni to assist students with thesis writing. In addition to helping students, alumni also advise CEU's case for support for its capital campaign, and serve on the advisory board of the new EMBA program.

ALUMNI IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Alumni also share relevant and interesting information with the community through webinars and departmental events, speak at the Alumni Leadership Forum, and get profiled for their achievements and contributions to the community.

ALUMNI AMBASSADORS

Alumni help organize class reunions, celebrate important milestones and anniversaries in CEU's history, and fundraise for the annual campaign.

Each available volunteer role has a detailed job description that is posted on [Volunteer Hub](#).

Volunteer Recognition

In order to facilitate volunteer recognition, a two-tier system that recognizes levels and frequency of engagement has been introduced. This is similar to donor society levels and meant to create clear and objective metrics of alumni engagement to properly recognize and reward volunteers.

Engagement	CSO	STRO	ARO	Other
Level 1: Volunteer Pro	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares at least 3 vacancies with the staff or on social media • Organizes one career workshop or info-session, invited by CSO • Participates as panel speaker invited by CSO • Introduces own employer and career opportunities to students by organizing a presentation on- or off-campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers min. 2 external partners to CEU/AY • Actively engages with prospective students in the UniBuddy project • Participates in min. 1 social media campaign/AY • Shares recruitment materials about CEU and its programs min. 3 times/AY 	Active as a chapter contact throughout the AY: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posts on social media at least 3 times/AY • Addresses at least 3 queries from students or alumni/AY • (Co)organizes one alumni gathering /AY 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers as Alumni Advisor (e.g. Thesis Buddy, EMBA Advisory Board, fundraising FGDs) • Volunteers as Alumni in the Spotlight (e.g. event speaker, alumni profile) • Volunteers as Alumni Ambassador (e.g. class reunion, anniversary ambassador)

<p>Level 2: Volunteer Champion</p>	<p>Engages in at least two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly shares vacancies with the staff or on social media • Organizes career workshops or info-sessions, invited by CSO • Participates as panel speaker invited by CSO • Introduces own employer and career opportunities to students by organizing a presentation on- or off-campus • Engages as career mentor, actively assisting at least one student or fellow alum • Connects CSO with own employer to partner on CEU-specific or CEU-preferred internship or job opportunities 	<p>Engages in at least two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participates in min. 1 education fair/AY • Organizes min. 1 presentation in their home country/AY • Hosts a PDO/AY 	<p>Active as a chapter leader throughout the AY (at least two of the following):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly engages on social media • Organizes at least two alumni gatherings/AY • Solicits donations for CEU in-person or online • Helps select ASRs if applicable • Attends ALF 	<p>Active as an Advisor or Spotlight throughout the AY:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises at least two students as a Thesis Buddy • Engages as a speaker in at least two events • Engages as a speaker and gets profiled <p>OR engages in at least two of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alumni Advisor • Alumni in the Spotlight • Alumni Ambassador
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A Volunteer Pro volunteer fulfills at least one Level 1 criterion for one team. A Volunteer Champion either fulfills at least two Level 2 criteria for one team or fulfills multiple criteria (at any level) across teams. For example, an active chapter contact who also volunteers as a Career Link at any level is eligible to become Volunteer Champion for that academic year. A Thesis Buddy who also speaks at a department event also becomes a Champion.

To maintain a level status, a volunteer has to remain active and fulfill the criteria for that particular level during an academic year. Volunteer Champions get a one-year grace period.

Tracking and Recording Volunteer Engagement

CEU staff is responsible for accurately and timely recording all volunteer engagement.

Realizing that very often volunteering happens organically, without involvement of CEU staff, volunteers are encouraged to come forward and share such instances with CEU. ARO also works closely with departments to identify any alumni volunteers that they engage.

Outreach & Recruitment

Alumni volunteering opportunities are promoted through the following channels:

- **Volunteer Hub on the ARO website** – all available volunteering opportunities, detailed volunteer Terms of References with links to application forms and other resources.
- **STRO and CSO websites** – specific calls for recruitment/careers support opportunities.
- **E-News** – regular calls for volunteers, sharing specific volunteering opportunities.
- **Social media** - main and local FB groups, LI, Twitter.
- **Online info sessions** – host online info sessions twice a year, synchronized with E- News call for volunteers.
- **Events** – use events to promote volunteering and recruit volunteers.
- **Volunteer testimonials** – video testimonials from existing volunteers.
- **Personal contacts** – reach out to alumni who have shown interest in volunteering.

Special emphasis is put on engaging former Alumni Scholarship Recipients (ASR) in volunteering. ASRs are invited to special Alumni Leadership Forum (ALF) sessions where they can meet current volunteers and learn more about their involvement.

Stewardship & Recognition

The Alumni Leadership Forum is the main annual stewardship event which brings volunteers together on CEU campus for two days of workshops and training sessions. The program has been expanded in 2017, with more interactive elements (e.g. panels) and encouraged active

participation of various stakeholders, including alumni, ASRs and relevant staff.

Alumni volunteers not only benefit directly through their personal engagement, but also receive the following perks and recognition:

All volunteers receive:

- E-badges, updated each Academic Year, available to all volunteers
- Access to a closed Facebook group for volunteers
- Electronic holiday cards

Volunteer Pros receive:

- Honor Roll on the ARO website
- Volunteer spotlight article on the ARO website and in e-news
- Exclusive events, similar to donor and society member receptions
- Certificates for helping students develop professionally for career volunteers
- Handwritten holiday cards
- CEU promo items to alumni speakers at career events, accompanied by 'Thank you' cards/messages

Volunteer Champions receive:

- Honor Roll on the ARO website
- Discounted/free tickets to the Reunion Gala
- Invitation to President's Reception during Reunion Weekend
- Invitation to ALF, public recognition during ALF
- Shortlisting for the Alumni Impact Awards (Community Category)
- Recommendations on LinkedIn profiles
- Access to select workshops and trainings for own professional development or for increasing alumni volunteer potential

Promoting Volunteering, Strengthening the Community

Many CEU alumni are involved with the work of NGOs and charities on community projects. To capitalize on that and promote volunteering CEU plans to introduce a **Global Day/Week of Volunteering**: a series of activities happening simultaneously around the globe in which local alumni chapters choose a community project to support. This will serve multiple purposes. Firstly, it is meant to bring together the chapter around a good cause, give visibility to CEU alumni and promote volunteer spirit. Furthermore, the event can be used as a recruitment tool,

inviting prospective students to join and experience firsthand the CEU community spirit. This project may be initiated in cooperation with the Community Engagement Office at CEU.

To better promote the culture and understanding of volunteering among CEU alumni, the Global Day of Volunteering will also be used as a platform to educate and raise awareness about volunteering and celebrate CEU's 30th anniversary.

The Role of CEU

ARO has the overall responsibility for alumni volunteer engagement but works closely with appointed alumni volunteer liaison from Recruitment and Careers on specific program elements. Alumni volunteer support includes:

- General CEU Alumni Volunteers Orientation for new recruits (recorded webinar available online)
- Area specific trainings (local chapters, recruitment, careers, Thesis Buddies) provided by relevant teams
- Alumni Leadership Forum – series of trainings, including for ASRs

Resources

- [Alumni Volunteer Hub](#) – dedicated webpage for all alumni volunteer resources, including this strategy, volunteer TORs and Alumni Volunteer Toolkit