

# Inbox

From Das's desk

**A**N OLD ADAGE ABOUT VOLUNTEERS CITES THE VALUE THEY BRING TO organizations as including “wealth, work, and wisdom.” These “three Ws” define the dedicated alumni body here at HBS. Although being a donor is certainly critical to sustaining the economic model of the School, in this column I want to address the other two Ws—work and wisdom—and an evolving vision of alumni engagement.

By raising your hand as a volunteer, you are strengthening the HBS brand by embodying the pay-it-forward spirit—whether to current and future students or to fellow alumni.

You might be thinking “I don’t have time to mentor students” or “I feel awkward asking classmates for donations.” That’s fine; tell us how you *would* like to get involved. In the last few years we’ve added a number of new volunteer roles that have expanded our spectrum of engagement but don’t necessarily require a heavy lift. Give us a day, or even a few hours. Host a dinner at your home for recent graduates or current students. (We’ll even provide the food!) Put your name on the list of MBA Career Advisors, who make an hour available to a student who wants to know what it took to get your job. Get involved in a new category of programs we’re calling “HBS enabled/alumni owned,” such as our Alumnae Circles, where we work with you to get an effort off the ground, and you take it from there. Or join an alumni club, where leaders organize events that strengthen alumni-to-alumni and alumni-to-HBS connections on the regional level, with opportunities that include judging the New Venture Competition and working on a Community Partners team.

Any of these roles is proof that you see the importance of maintaining your connection with the School and the value of paying back and paying forward the benefits you received here. You become part of a virtuous circle of alumni engagement.

Another way to contribute work and wisdom is to think about how your experiences as an alumnus are shared by your fellow graduates, and then explore ways to meet that need. After attending his 25th Reunion last year, for example, an alumnus was inspired to ask if the School could do more for alumni like him to guide them into the next stage of their



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career and life purpose. His question dovetailed with our own thinking about increasing lifelong learning opportunities, and that led to development of a pilot, three-day program of introspection and peer interaction called The Reflective Leader.

In External Relations, our task is to make ourselves and the School more relevant in your lives. We can achieve this goal most completely when you join us. Across the arc of your career and life, there will be ever-changing ways to engage and re-engage. The question today is, how can you—and the School—benefit from your work and wisdom?

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