

Virtual events provide an opportunity for University of Rochester alumni, students, parents, and friends to come together across geographical bounds to build community and show their Meliora spirit. If you're a member of our University community interested in hosting a virtual event, we're here to help! Contact alumni@rochester.edu for more information and assistance, and we'll get you connected with [your staff partner](#) in the Office of Alumni Relations and Constituent Engagement.

What types of virtual events could I host?

- **Social events:** Happy hours or trivia games can be fun virtual meet-ups.
- **'How Tos' or tutorials:** Do you have a special skill? Share tips, tricks, and instructions in a virtual event, or interview an expert! Consider kicking things up a notch with a full-on class. For instance, yoga instructors and chefs can share exercise and cooking classes online.
- **Interviews or performances:** TED-style talks, intimate interviews, stand-up comedy shows, and musical performances all make for great virtual events.
- **Behind the scenes access:** Provide alumni and friends with a behind-the-scenes look at places like museums, galleries, theatres, parks, and more. Show viewers what it's like to visit or work somewhere.

Have something else in mind? Contact alumni@rochester.edu with your ideas!

Are there certain parameters and best practices I should keep in mind?

Virtual events should further connections between alumni, parents, families, and students to each other as well as with the University and local alumni communities. Ideally, all programs and events should do one or more of the following:

- Promote the University community, networking, and inclusivity.
- Be uniquely tailored to the needs of the University community and/or a specific group.
- Connect alumni, parents, families, students, and/or friends with the University.

Keep in mind that our University community is diverse, so consider different geographical locations and interests based on age, background, and University affiliation.

Please note: Events cannot be used to fundraise for other organizations or institutions (including other non-profits), nor can they be used to promote or advance the business or profit of one constituent. However, events such as an alumni book reading where book sales occur, or other events led by alumni industry leaders or trainers/consultants, are allowed on a case-by-case basis. If you are unsure about whether your event falls in line with the policy on these matters, please contact the Office of Alumni Relations.

Which virtual platform should I use to host my event? What can Alumni Relations provide?

[Zoom](#) is a popular option. Your staff partner in the Office of Alumni Relations will set this up for you.

Take into consideration the type of virtual event you will host. Depending on the scope and purpose, you can either host a meeting or a webinar.

- If you expect attendees to primarily just listen, consider hosting a [Zoom Video Webinar](#).
- When you want more interaction between attendees, a [Zoom Meeting](#) is the better option.

Still not sure? Here are some helpful resources to help you decide whether to host your online event as a webinar or a meeting:

- [Meeting and Webinar Comparison](#)
- [Best Practices for Hosting a Digital Event](#)

When should I host my event?

Consider the day of the week, time, and audience: Do they span time zones? Avoid major holidays and keep in mind that as the volunteer event host, you need to be available to staff and manage your event. Your Alumni Relations staff partner can also suggest potential dates to avoid conflicts with existing University events.

Who will be invited to my event?

Think about who you are hoping to connect with! Is the event for alumni and families in your regional network? Are you looking to connect across geography, identity, industry, or interest? Alumni Relations staff will work with you to help develop a custom invitation list depending on the type of virtual event you are hosting.

How can I publicize and promote my event?

Alumni Relations can assist with promoting your event through a variety of outlets, *if* provided with all final details **4 or more weeks in advance of your event**. We will also ensure that all communications are in alignment with the University's graphic standards and identity guidelines.

Event hosts are **always** encouraged to publicize and promote their events by:

- Sending peer-to-peer email communications using customizable email templates and contact lists provided by Alumni Relations.
- Utilizing and posting on social media platforms. For example, creating and sharing a Facebook event, posting in your UR alumni network Facebook group and your respective class Facebook group (if applicable), and to your personal Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts.

How can attendees register for my event?

Alumni Relations can create an event page to assist with collecting online registrations *if* provided with final details **4 or more weeks in advance of your event**.

What are the expectations and responsibilities of a volunteer event host?

As a volunteer event host, you are expected to:

- Serve as primary point of contact throughout the planning process and be online as event manager for the duration of your event.
- Promote and publicize your event in a variety of ways.
- Serve as an ambassador of the University.
- Maintain open and consistent communication with fellow volunteers and your Alumni Relations partner.
- Provide post-event feedback, including (but not limited to) what went well, number of attendees, and notable takeaways.

As a volunteer event host, what can I expect from my Alumni Relations staff liaison?

- Assistance with programmatic, promotional, and logistical details.
- Open and consistent communication.
- Advice on best practices, feedback, and collaboration.

Thank you for your interest in planning an event for your University of Rochester community. Contact us at alumni@rochester.edu to get started!

Virtual Event Host Overview

We invite members of the University of Rochester community to host and facilitate virtual programs that provide an opportunity for alumni, students, parents, and friends to come together from wherever they are to build community and show their Meliora spirit. Below are helpful guidelines, best practices, and FAQs regarding hosting a virtual event.

Virtual Event Host Guidelines

- Serve as an ambassador of the University by sharing news, points of pride, and opportunities to get involved.
- Maintain open and consistent communication with fellow volunteers and your Alumni Relations staff partner.

Pre-Event:

- Serve as primary point of contact throughout the planning process and be online as event manager for the duration of your event.
- Promote the event by leveraging personal and University networks to encourage other alumni and parents to attend.
- Familiarize yourself with the Zoom platform. Here are some great resources:
 - [Getting Started on Windows and Mac](#)
 - [Zoom Video Tutorials](#)
 - Join [Zoom's Live Training Webinars](#)
- Review **best practices** (next page) for successfully facilitating a virtual event.
- Work with your Alumni Relations staff partner to set up the Zoom meeting or webinar and appropriate settings.

Hosting the virtual event:

- Introduce yourself and any other panelists or facilitators.
- Share your story, enthusiasm, and examples of your involvement.
- Share University news, points of pride, and future events to register for. Your Alumni Relations staff partner will work with you to develop these.
- Review housekeeping items with attendees, which may include:
 - Reminding them to mute their microphones when others are presenting or speaking.
 - Letting attendees know how they can get your attention during the event.
 - Will you be checking the chat window?
 - Should they unmute themselves to speak up or use the 'Raise Hand' function?
- Provide concluding remarks, thanking any additional panelists or facilitators, as well as the attendees for participating.

Post Event:

- Provide post-event feedback and any follow up needed to your Alumni Relations staff partner.
- As appropriate, send personal notes to attendees who you connected with.
 - Include information and resources about other ways to stay engaged. Your Alumni Relations staff partner can assist with sharing these.

Support and Resources

- Outreach lists and sample emails for driving attendance
- Post-event list of attendees and sample email text with additional engagement opportunities
- Communication and support from staff partner in Alumni Relations
- Best practices for facilitating virtual events (see next page)

Best Practices for Virtual Events:

Thank you for facilitating a virtual event for the University of Rochester community! Because the format of these events may vary, below are general guidelines and resources that may be helpful as you prepare for your virtual event. There are many resources available online. Please work with your Alumni Relations staff partner on any questions or concerns you may have.

- Familiarize yourself with the Zoom platform. Here are some great resources:
 - [Zoom Meeting vs. Webinar](#): What's the difference?
 - [Getting Started on Windows and Mac](#)
 - [Zoom Video Tutorials](#)
 - Join [Zoom's Live Training Webinars](#)

- Audio & video:
 - Test your audio and video by visiting zoom.us/test.
 - If you'll be speaking, be sure to turn off notifications from messaging and other apps on your computer or device before the event begins.

- Host controls & functionality:
 - [Review your host controls](#) and settings ahead of time.
 - For Zoom meeting functionality, use "Gallery View" to see all of your attendees.
 - You can hide your own video tile (it can be so distracting!) by clicking on the ellipses (...) on your tile and selecting 'Hide Myself.'
 - Utilize the 'Share Screen' function if you are presenting to make the experience more dynamic and engaging.
 - If there are multiple panelists or facilitators, consider a practice run.

- Looking your best:
 - Lighting should come from in front of you or from the side to best light your face.
 - Pay attention to hair and clothing; people can still see you 😊. Wear your UR gear if appropriate!
 - Think about your background—make it interesting, but not distracting.
 - *Consider using a University background:* <https://www.rochester.edu/creativeservices/zoom-backgrounds/>
 - Put your camera at eye level or higher; experiment for the best angles.
 - Locate yourself in a place that is as free of distractions as possible. As a host, it will be very important that the event has your undivided attention.

- Eye contact & mannerisms:
 - Look at the camera! This takes a bit of getting used to because you will be tempted to look at the other participants' faces, but try to look at the camera when you're talking. This tactic will mimic the in-person feeling of eye contact. It's important to gauge reactions by looking at the screen, but alternating that with looking at the camera makes the audience feel like you're really talking to them.
 - Use the gestures and mannerisms that you would typically use in person.