ASSOCIATION & FOUNDATION
U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

ALUMNI AFFINITY GROUP GUIDELINES

Oct. 27, 2026

I. PURPOSE OF ALUMNI AFFINITY GROUPS

Alumni affinity groups are communities of USAFA alumni that actively communicate and share a mutual interest or bond with the goal of promoting their purpose in alignment with the United States Air Force Academy and the United States Air Force Academy Association & Foundation. Alumni affinity groups generally fall into three categories:

- Academy experience-based, e.g., band/music, sports/athletics, academic discipline
- Shared background or experience-based
- Interest- or career-based, e.g., aviation, engineering, small business ownership, health and entrepreneurship

Any graduate can join any affinity group, based on one's desire for community around a shared experience, background or interest. Affinity groups are not geographically structured.

II. AFFINITY GROUP QUALIFICATION

Alumni groups must apply for affinity group status with the Association & Foundation, and must be wholly in line with the mission, goals, policies and objectives of USAFA and the Association & Foundation. Alumni groups cannot compete with any other group of a similar nature. To be recognized as an official affinity group, the group must meet the criteria in the affinity group application and submit said application to the Association & Foundation for approval. Affinity groups are not formally federated under the Association & Foundation. Each is autonomous and structured in a way that best suits the purpose and activities of its membership.

III. STEPS TO ATTAIN OFFICIAL AFFINITY GROUP STATUS

To achieve affinity group state, you should:

1. Determine your proposed group's purpose and mission.
2. Establish a core group that wants to contribute to creating an affinity group.
3. Choose a leadership structure as outlined in Section 3.
4. Contact Alumni Relations at affinitygroup.support@usafa.org to discuss gaining official affinity group status. The team will assist the prospective affinity group in putting together an application packet for approval by the president and CEO.
5. Create an online presence.
    a. Contact us for website creation/support,
    b. Consider setting up a generic email using the affinity group name to field requests from interested members and to use for email blasts (i.e., affinitygroupname@gmail.com).

If approved, the affinity group's contact information will be listed on the Association & Foundation's website as an officially recognized entity and be eligible for support for the remainder of the calendar year.

MAINTAINING AFFINITY GROUP STATUS

Maintaining status as an officially recognized affinity group requires an annual resubmission of the application with required attachments prior to Nov. 30 of each year, ensuring any changes or amendments to the affinity group charter or membership list are updated.

IV. SUGGESTED STRUCTURE FOR AFFINITY GROUPS INCLUDES:

a. **Executive board**. Composed of officers to preside over the administrative needs of the group with a fiduciary responsibility.
b. **Leadership team with chairs or co-chairs with multiple responsibilities**. This structure allows for more flexibility and a larger or smaller leadership group.
c. **Graduate members**. USAFA graduates may join any number of affinity groups. It is the responsibility of the affinity group to maintain an active

list of current members, including their graduating year, state of residence and email if available. This roster must be on file with the Association & Foundation and updated annually, or whenever there is a change in affinity group leadership.

d. Affiliate members. Non-graduates may join affinity groups as affiliate members, provided the membership of the group is made up of 75% USAFA graduate members. Affiliate members within affinity groups may will be added to our database as an affiliate member with a tag for the affinity group(s) of which they are a part.

V. FINANCIAL SETUP

a. General Finances. The affinity group is responsible for managing its own budget and banking. This is best tasked through a specific role in the organization, such as a treasurer within the executive board structure or one of the chairs in the leadership team.

b. 501(c)3 or 501(c)19 Status. An affinity group may wish to apply to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for designation as an entity exempt from federal taxation under the provisions of §501(c)(3) or (19) of the IRS Code. There is no federal requirement that organizations applying for federal tax-exempt status be incorporated under state law; however, state laws may vary as to the requirement. Certain advantages may accrue from an IRS determination that an affinity group is tax-exempt. The affinity group will generally be exempt from federal income tax. In most states, the affinity group may also be exempt from state sales tax. Members and others who donate to the affinity group may deduct the amount of their contributions in whole or in part from their gross income when computing their personal income tax liability. Those affinity groups whose annual gross receipts exceed $5,000 and who seek tax-exempt status must apply to the IRS for a determination letter and must pay a one-time "user fee." The IRS generally waives the determination letter and user fee for those affinity groups whose annual receipts are less than $5,000. In that case, the affinity group may simply declare its tax-exempt status without formal application. In either case, an affinity group applying for or declaring tax-exempt status must apply for an Employer Identification Number (even if

there are no employees). An affinity group should weigh the advantages of tax-exempt status against the user fee requirement. Affinity groups must pay a fee based on their average gross receipts indicated on Form 1023 with the application.

c. Donating to Academy Support. The Association & Foundation is equipped to set up a donation for specific cadet needs or cadet clubs. It is especially beneficial if the graduate affinity group has a corresponding cadet club at USAFA. The Association & Foundation can assist in fundraising for cadet clubs or other direct Academy benefits that the affinity group wishes to support. However, the Association & Foundation cannot solicit gifts on behalf of an affinity group outside of our core mission of "Together, we support the Academy, serve our graduates and preserve the heritage of the institution." Questions regarding whether specific fundraising efforts apply directly to this mission should be directed by the chief financial officer of the Association & Foundation through an inquiry with the Alumni Relations office.

d. Endowments. Should an affinity group wish to fundraise for an endowed purpose, the fund's principal will be invested according to the Association & Foundation's investment policy. Twelve months after cumulative gifts to or the value of the fund reaches $100,000, the Association & Foundation will begin making distributions from the principal according to its spending policy. The distribution will be a maximum of 4.5% of the fund balance or the difference between the fund balance and the principal of $100,000, whichever is lower. Distributions from the fund shall be used to support the focused cause of the fund. In accordance with the Association & Foundation guidelines, 10% of all gifts and investment gains are allocated for unrestricted use, to be used to fund one or more of the following purposes: cadet programs; other USAFA-affiliated foundations; and Association & Foundation operations. Contributions to the fund shall be invested according to the Association & Foundation's investment policy and shall be used for only qualified charitable purposes consistent with the laws of the state of Colorado and section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. Current and future gifts to this fund may be co-invested with other investment assets of the Association & Foundation. If the total value of

the fund is less than $10,000 at the end of any calendar year and there are no outstanding pledges to the fund, the entire amount of the fund may be distributed for the purposes indicated. The Association & Foundation will steward and invest funds not yet disbursed in furtherance of the purpose and intent of the fund.

VI. SUPPORT FOR AFFINITY GROUPS

The Association & Foundation reserves the right to promote an affinity group and its events through official channels.

a. **Newsletters.** Twice per year (typically January and July), the Association & Foundation may survey graduates through existing communications to gauge interest in joining or learning more about affinity groups. Affinity groups may also request promotion of events in the Association & Foundation's e-newsletter, requiring at least a 2-weeks' notice and approval of staff.
b. **Event support.** The Association & Foundation offers event planning assistance through software platforms that can gather registrations and, if needed, collect ticket payments.
c. **Speaker requests.** The Association & Foundation will assist in speaker requests for affinity group events. Requested speakers can be from Association & Foundation staff as well as USAFA staff and faculty. A speaker request must be placed at least three months prior to the event and is not guaranteed.

For questions about alumni affinity groups, please contact:

Alumni Relations
U.S. Air Force Academy Association & Foundation
affinitygroup.support@usafa.org
719-472-0300