



Princeton in Africa's New Alumni Network

The Backstory

2015 marks 16 years since the Princeton in Africa program first sent a summer class of two Fellows to Rwanda to work with the International Rescue Committee. Since that time, the program has expanded in size and scope, today offering 51 fellowships with 31 organizations in 15 countries. As the program has grown, so too has its alumni community, which now comprises nearly 400 passionate and adventurous alumni from 77 colleges and universities who live across the world.

Fortifying and formalizing this strong alumni community makes sense, whether as a recruiting tool, a way to increase financial contributions, or an outlet to advance the organization's mission by helping alumni remain engaged with Africa. *Service for a Year. Commitment for a Lifetime.*

In recognition of the potential role the alumni community can play in strengthening and supporting the organization's mission, while also actively contributing to the experience of future Fellows, Princeton in Africa has set out to build a world class alumni network.

The goal of this network is to foster a more purposeful and approachable PiAf Alumni community by developing thoughtful, innovative, and accessible initiatives to support personal leadership, community engagement, and alumni longstanding commitment to Africa.

The network build is occurring in three phases. In phase I, we created a new alumni website and alumni directory, and conducted an alumni survey. The website and directory is the anchor around which we're building phase II: specific and sustained engagement opportunities for alumni to engage with each other. Finally, in phase III, we'll develop sustained connection points between alumni and current Fellows.

Overseeing the design and implementation of the new network is a dedicated group of more than 15 alumni volunteers, of both recent and more experienced alumni, known informally as the Alumni Working Group. These volunteers have been involved in all key aspects of the Alumni Network planning and implementation thus far, working alongside the PiAf staff to dovetail the organization's long-term alumni goals with fresh ideas from participants.

What Our Alumni Told Us

A robust alumni community is vital to the long term success of PiAf. When it came to designing the network, it was critically important that the Alumni Working Group respond to direct feedback from alumni how they envision this renewed community. Through informal conversations and an alumni survey, the organization polled their feedback. Here's a sampling of what we heard:

- 98% of alumni are "very interested" or "interested" in engaging with the new Alumni Network
- 93% are "very interested" or "interested" in connecting with other PiAf alumni
- 68% want improved alumni-to-alumni communications and connections
- 56% support an alumni-focused website/alumni directory
- Alumni are interested in social and professional events and Africa-related events by city, alumni-to-alumni mentoring and training; volunteer activities; and more.

Phase I: (Complete)

- Alumni Website – (www.piafalumni.org)
 - Features include news, job postings, and archived email communications
- Online Alumni Database – (Password-protected within the alumni website)
 - Functionality includes search by name fellowship year, industry, and company/org
- Alumni Survey



Phase II: (In progress)

Phase II will offer specific, sustained engagement opportunities for alumni to connect with one another. Each vertical will be chaired by an alumnus. These include:

Professional Development

- PiAf-sponsored External Trainings for Alumni
- Alumni-led skill building sessions (Google Hangout)
- Speaker Series and Panel Events with industry elite

Social and Cultural Events (w/ city co-chairs)

- Food & Drink Events
- Concerts, Theater, Festivals, Exhibits
- Quirky Outings

Diaspora Engagement & Service

- Engage with African Diaspora in your city!

Phase III: (Planning stage)

Phase III will offer more touchpoints for current Fellows and Alumni to interact directly. These relationships can be critical for personal and professional support during the fellowship year, but expectations of Alumni (and staff) bandwidth must be managed. Early ideas for this phase include:

- Alumni night (panel + social) at PiAf orientation
- Buddy System w/alumni (start, mid, end touchpoint)
- Quarterly Fellows webinar by Alumni (fun + help)
- Opt-in Alumni Braintrust for Fellows' email Qs
- Formal welcome into Alumni Community at end of Fellowship (+ connections to ppl in field of interest and/or next city)

Finally, as a further signal of the organization's ongoing support to Alumni initiatives, PiAf has graciously agreed to sponsor a modest *Alumni Leadership Fund* to support ongoing leadership skill-building. Alumni will be encouraged to apply for small grants to support specific leadership goals through trainings and events. Only limited opportunities will be available to start, but there is potential for growth.

Welcome to the new PiAf Alumni Network!