

APA Alumni Network seeks to preserve cultural alliance for graduates

By Ashley E. Nolan
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As the notes of Pomp and Circumstance fade and cap and gown sets begin to collect dust, Asian Pacific American alumni may find themselves looking for a way to reconnect with the university after graduation.

Enter, the Asian Pacific American Alumni Network (APAAN). APAAN is an organization geared toward university alumni who identify with the APA community, said Bobby Truong, a 2008 graduate of the Robert H. Smith School of Business and former president of the Asian American Student Union.

"I wanted to help out after I graduated, because alumni involvement was the main area we needed to focus on," he said.

Truong cited busy professional schedules as the main obstacle to reviving the network, previously known as the APA Alumni Club from 2005 to 2006. Founded in 2000, the club's name was changed to better reflect the communal values that are integral to APAAN's mission.

APAAN is designed to preserve a sense of cultural alliance post-graduation, and facilitate professional discussion among APA students. The association hosts regular events including local happy hours, holiday parties, and

alumni support. It's a fun venue to get to know more people and build our base," Truong said. APAAN's

"We have no official roles as of yet for our [executive] board, so we all share the leadership in some

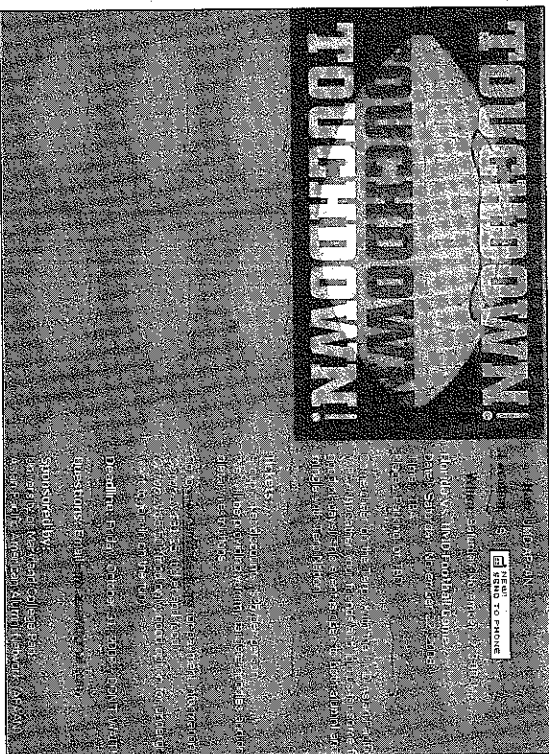


PHOTO COURTESY OF APAAN
APAAN invitation for November football tailgate to attract alumni.

first tailgate is scheduled for Nov. 22.

In past years, the AASU has sponsored a community holiday party, but APAAN will likely assume the role in the near future, said Truong.

"We'd like to make the social gatherings as intimate as possible to really activate the student body," he said. "Taking ownership of this type of potluck event will allow us to get to know students on a more personal level."

Collaborative leadership has emboldened group members to get

aspect." Serving as a unique support system to the community, APAAN members are also offered the opportunity to partake in networking events and meet fellow alumni.

"To get support in the APA community, we participated in Freshmen Welcome, Stamp [Student Union] All Niter and the All People as One Show," said 2007 graduate Alan Lan.

"During APA Awareness month, there were also a lot of other social events to get people connected and excited

Lau, AASU's vice president for programming from 2006 to 2007, now serves in the U.S. Marines Corps.

The network is gaining traction among APA students, said Dharma Naik, APA coordinator for student involvement and advocacy. Naik graduated from the university in 2000 with a degree in sociology.

"The alumni network is a vehicle to formally help students keep in touch post-graduation," she said. "Mobilizing APA students to get involved in this venture has proven very attractive for current students and graduates."

"Building membership has been a challenge over the years, but we are laying the groundwork for a very worthwhile mission," Naik said.

APAAN's primary goal is to unite the APA community and become a university recognized alumni entity, said Naik.

"Speaking to APA interests while giving back to the university would be ideal," she said.

Despite APAAN's accomplishments, Truong and Naik said their mission is not yet fulfilled.

"We have room to grow and continue to take it one step at a time with each event that we have," Truong said.

"The network is focusing more on building our own events and re-