

# WHY JOIN UP?

**University alumni associations are sometimes seen as fundraising cash machines, although such groups usually tout themselves as professional and personal networking forums. There are dozens of local alumni clubs in Luxembourg. But what are the real benefits?**

Once a Spartan, always a Spartan. Spartans, in this particular case, are current and former students of Michigan State University in America's mid-west. This term the 160 year old institution reports having 50,000 students and "approximately 532,000" living graduates worldwide, with roughly 65,000 of them paid up members of its official alumni association.

The US is widely considered (at least by *The Economist*) to have the most developed network of alumni clubs, mainly because private funding is key to many American university finances. US universities raised \$37.45 billion last year, reports the Council for Aid to Education. UK institutions received "an all-time high of £660 million in 2012-13," according to last year's Ross-CASE survey. Universities in Continental Europe, less reliant on private donations, have plenty of alumni groups too, albeit with different priorities.

## JOB MARKET

Money is certainly not the only reason most universities make such a big deal out of alumni groups. "When you join the MSU Alumni Association you join a worldwide network of Spartans helping Spartans," its website declares. "Whether you go around the corner or across the globe, Spartans are there to help you launch a career, get settled, save money, learn something new, reinvent yourself, retire or find a friend." Alas, its nearest clubs are located in Brussels and Paris. So what about here?

"For the university, the employability of our students is a key issue," says Jenny Hällen Hedberg, head of the international relations department at the University of Luxembourg. It "works very closely" with local companies and European institutions, whose employees make up many of the school's part-time lecturers. In turn these staffers are exposed to the university's bright minds even before the students start searching for a job. "We are very spoiled that we have these connections," she says. "But of course we want to improve it all the time."

Hällen Hedberg and her small team were already in charge of the institution's student exchange programmes when late last year they were given the task of building its network among graduates. "We have regrouped the alumni [function] into the international relations office because we think a lot of our alumni will not stay in Luxembourg, but they will go abroad and work in other countries and it could be very interesting for them [if we can] arrange meetings in London or New York or Beijing with university alumni."

Later on, it will consider fundraising possibilities. But that is definitely for the future, when the institution, which only got started in 2003, has a bigger base of ex-students. "I visited the [602 year old] University of St. Andrews. They have 56 people working with alumni and they raise really a lot of money," she says. "Of course we are not there yet."

Indeed, St. Andrew's alumni network has raised £54.1m over the past seven

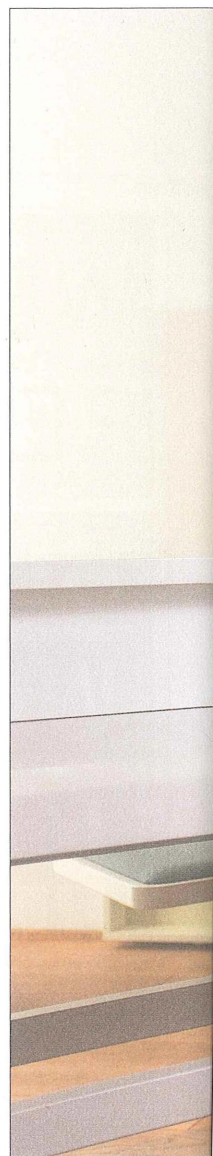
years, and has local clubs in international cities from Barcelona to Washington, according to its website. But despite the Scottish institution's global alumni juggernaut, it has no branch running in the Grand Duchy.

## LOCAL CHALLENGE

"Several years ago a friend who also studied at St. Andrews tried establishing an alumni society, but it never really took off," says Cordula Schnuer, a journalist who graduated with a master's in English and film studies. "I think one of the main challenges is finding the alumni and getting in touch with them. I know of around a dozen fellow

St. Andrews graduates in Luxembourg, but I haven't met more than three. Luxembourg can be a bit like a train station, with a lot of coming and going. It's difficult to keep track of people and find enough members to get something permanent going."

Nevertheless Schnuer has signed on to revive the chapter. "It would be nice to have an alumni society. Unlike bigger clubs in cities such as London or New York, I'm not sure we could do serious fundraising." The main advantages, in her view, are more personal, since a club "would give alumni the chance to connect," she says. "I graduated barely four years ago, but there's already quite a bit of nostalgia."







## "I MISS THOSE LIVELY DEBATES ABOUT POLITICS... I MISS THAT CAMARADERIE"

> JESSICA WHYTEHORN

She is not the only one with that feeling. "I miss those lively debates about politics, social situations, inquiring minds, and I would go further, I miss that camaraderie," says Jessica Whytehorn, who completed her MBA from the University of Warwick in 2008 and for the past four years has worked as a training advisor at a well

known consultancy in Luxembourg. "Surrounded by French speakers," she realised that "my sense of humour is British and I would like to share that kind of socialising that I had in the UK" sometimes. The nearest Warwick chapters were in Brussels and Frankfurt, too far away to be practical, "so I thought I'd start my

### JESSICA WHYTEHORN

*Behind a new alumni association in Luxembourg for former Warwick students, debuting with a mid-April after-work mixer*

own." In her "purely selfish mind I just wanted to have more friends," Whytehorn adds with a laugh.

Although her main motivation is personal, she does not discount the networking opportunities. Lots of high powered professionals went to her school, Whytehorn notes, including some potential clients and big brass at her own firm.

### MELTING POT

There definitely is "both a social and professional" element to the Sacred Heart University Luxembourg Alumni Association too, reckons one of its board members, Gérald Vinter. He earned his MBA in 2013 and presently >



is head of middle office at Banque Privée Edmond de Rothschild Europe. The club hosts informal get-togethers, usually on the last Tuesday of the month. In a way, it is a continuation of one of things Vinter appreciated most about his SHU course. He studied with 13 different nationalities, who came from fields as diverse as engineering, finance and law, and he benefitted from "the melting pot of different backgrounds, different cultures, different experiences."

"One part of the value of a diploma, that's the networking, the network you will have access to," he says. "If you have a wide network that you can use professionally speaking, it's really valuable. The idea behind every alumni association is to promote the university but also to have access to former students and develop your professional network. It's a win-win situation."

Local alumni groups do also support their mother institutions finances and image. "I think all the Luxembourgers who went to the US came back with a positive experience," says Antoine Scholer, who graduated in 1984 from Miami University, in Ohio. Today he is president of the Luxembourg chapter of the Miami University Alumni Association, in addition to being CEO of Happy Snacks, the company that runs Pizza Hut restaurants in Luxembourg.

The Grand Duchy chapter got started in the 1970s and has a social event every other month or so, but its 140 members also have a serious purpose. Luxembourg state subsidies simply do not cover the cost of attending an American university, an opportunity Scholer does not want local students to miss. The group's previous fundraising drives have helped support Miami University students taking courses at the Luxembourg campus, but "we want to do another fundraiser now for the 50th anniversary of Miami University" in the Grand Duchy that will finance a scholarship to cover full tuition for a semester or half tuition for a year in America.

Another objective, more broadly, is to "get Miami better known. It is difficult to go into business when they all think it's Miami in Florida." <

## UNIVERSITY ALUMNI GROUPS IN LUXEMBOURG

 **BOCCONI UNIVERSITY**  
[arealuxembourg@alumni.bocconi.it](mailto:arealuxembourg@alumni.bocconi.it)

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 **BOOTH SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO)**  
[www.chicagobooth.edu/alumni/clubs/luxembourg](http://www.chicagobooth.edu/alumni/clubs/luxembourg)

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 **UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT DAVIS**  
"Join a network of over 160 UC Davis alumni and friends of the university living in Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg."  
[www.alumni.ucdavis.edu](http://www.alumni.ucdavis.edu)

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 **CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY**  
The Cambridge Society of Luxembourg organises informational and social events throughout the year.  
[www.cambridge.lu](http://www.cambridge.lu)


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 **COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CLUB OF LUXEMBOURG**  
Search for "Columbia University Alumni Club of Luxembourg" on LinkedIn

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 **DUKE LAW SCHOOL**  
Search for "Duke Law Luxembourg Alumni Association" on LinkedIn

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 **COLLEGE OF EUROPE**  
Search for "College of Europe Alumni Luxembourg" on Facebook

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 **EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
[alumni.euruni.edu](http://alumni.euruni.edu)

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 **HAAS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS (UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT BERKELEY)**  
Click on "Alumni" at [haas.berkeley.edu](http://haas.berkeley.edu)

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 **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**  
[hcluxembourg@post.harvard.edu](mailto:hcluxembourg@post.harvard.edu)

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 **HEC MANAGEMENT SCHOOL (UNIVERSITY OF LIÈGE)**  
[www.luxembourgforhec.com](http://www.luxembourgforhec.com)

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 **UNIVERSITY OF HEIDELBERG**  
[www.halu.uni-hd.de](http://www.halu.uni-hd.de)

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 **IESE BUSINESS SCHOOL (UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA)**  
Click on "Alumni" at [www.iese.edu](http://www.iese.edu)

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 **INSEAD**  
[connect.insead.edu](http://connect.insead.edu)

>

 **LONDON BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
[portal.london.edu](http://portal.london.edu)

>

 **LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**  
[alumni.lse.ac.uk](http://alumni.lse.ac.uk)

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 **UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG**  
Alumni of (and students nearing graduation in) the Faculty of Law, Economics and Finance meet up 19 May (Weicker Building in Kirchberg).  
[www.uni.lu/alumni](http://www.uni.lu/alumni)

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 **LUXEMBOURG BUSINESS ACADEMY (UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG)**  
Search for "LBA Alumni" on LinkedIn

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 **LUXEMBOURG SCHOOL OF FINANCE (UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG)**  
[lsfa.uni.lu](http://lsfa.uni.lu)

>

 **MAASTRICHT UNIVERSITY**  
Click on "Alumni" at [www.maastrichtuniversity.nl](http://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl)

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 **MIAMI UNIVERSITY**  
Search for "Miami University Alumni Association Luxembourg" on LinkedIn

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 **MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE**  
[alumnae.mtholyoke.edu](http://alumnae.mtholyoke.edu)

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 **NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
[alumni.northwestern.edu](http://alumni.northwestern.edu)

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 **OXFORD UNIVERSITY**  
The Oxford University Society of Luxembourg hosts debates, fundraisers and networking events.  
[www.oxford.lu](http://www.oxford.lu)

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 **SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY**  
Search for "Sacred Heart University Luxembourg Alumni Association" on Facebook

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 **UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS**  
Search for "University of St Andrews Alumni Society in Luxembourg" on Facebook

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 **EM STRASBOURG BUSINESS SCHOOL**  
Search for "EM Strasbourg Alumni" on Facebook

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 **UNIVERSITY OF TRIER**  
Search for "Alumni International Universität Trier" on Facebook

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**UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK**  
[www.warwick.ac.uk/alumni](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/alumni)

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 **ETH ZURICH**  
[www.gep.lu](http://www.gep.lu)

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 **SOCIETY OF LUXEMBOURG STUDENTS IN BRITAIN**  
Umbrella group for all students from the Grand Duchy attending schools in the UK. Members include Anne Faber, the food writer and TV presenter, who attended City University London.  
[www.slsb.lu](http://www.slsb.lu)