HOW TO GROW AN ALUMNI BASE AS A CHAPTER

ARIZONA DECA

WHY BOTHER?

Membership Campaign due December 1

Recruit 20 alumni members (or grow student membership by 20, or recruit 20 professional members) by December 1 and your chapter hits Achievement Level: a pennant and certificate. Hit two of those three goals and you reach Thrive Level, which adds a plaque, flag, and allocations to the Thrive Academy at ICDC. Alumni recruits count whether or not they were ever in your chapter, so ask around for DECA alumni from other schools too.

*Alumni membership isn't free: it carries the same DECA Inc. dues plus chartered association dues that student members pay (check DECA's current dues schedule for exact amounts). Decide early whether your chapter budget covers alumni dues as a thank-you for their help, or whether alumni are expected to pay their own way. Either works, just settle it before you start asking people to sign up.

And beyond the campaign, alumni are worth building:

- Free, credible judges and roleplay evaluators every competition season
- Career and college advice members trust more coming from a recent grad than an adult in the building
- Mentors and internship or job leads once members graduate themselves
- A ready base of sponsors and donors once your chapter needs to fundraise
- Living proof to parents, admin, and future members that DECA pays off long-term

20 alumni members

20 student members

20 professional members

Achievement Level
a pennant and certificate

Thrive Level
a plaque, flag, and allocations to the Thrive Academy at ICDC

Ideas that find and register alumni

Senior send-off sign-up

At your last spring meeting, hand every graduating senior a card: personal email, phone, LinkedIn, and a checkbox to register as an alumni member on the spot.

Sibling and legacy search

Poll current members for parents or siblings who were ever in DECA, anywhere. They already count toward your alumni number.

Ask the advisor's old rosters

Advisors often have years of rosters, competition programs, or yearbooks sitting in a drawer. Ten minutes with them can surface a decade of names.

LinkedIn sweep

Search your school's name on LinkedIn and filter by people who list DECA. An officer can build a real list in one sitting.

"Bring a grad back" referral

Ask current alumni you've already reached to tag or refer one more person from their year. Referrals beat cold outreach every time.

Register them, don't just list them

A name on a spreadsheet isn't a Membership Campaign point. Make sure alumni actually get entered as alumni members in the DECA system before December 1.

What to actually track on each alum

Name, grad year, personal contact	Personal email/phone and a LinkedIn URL, since school email stops working within a year
Officer role held, if any	Past officers are usually your highest-value volunteers
Willing to: judge / speak / mentor / donate	Simple yes/no columns turn a contact list into an action list
Last contacted	Keeps you from going silent, or from over-asking the same few people

Only collect contact info people are comfortable giving you, and check with your advisor on what your school allows you to store and how it should be shared between officers.

Ideas that keep the list alive

One officer owns the list, every year

Assign it to a role (VP of Alumni Relations, Secretary, Historian) rather than a person, so it survives graduation.

Keep it in a shared account

A Google Sheet on the chapter's or advisor's shared drive, never a personal laptop only one officer can open.

30-minute handoff meeting

Before the year ends, the outgoing officer walks the incoming one through the list and what worked. Put it on the calendar now.

Private alumni group chat or group

A LinkedIn or Facebook group lets alumni update their own info as jobs change, with no upkeep. Get opt-in first.

Ideas that bring alumni back, and what to ask them for

Alumni night

One evening, food, a slideshow of the chapter's wins, and open time for alumni and current members to mingle. Run it in October or early November and bring alumni membership sign-up cards, so it doubles as your biggest push toward the December 1 campaign goal.

Judges

Recruit alumni to judge roleplays, a mock competition, your District Competition, or your State Career Development Conference. Low time ask, alumni like feeling useful again, and it's free expert judging.

Career and college panel

Invite 3 to 4 alumni back for one evening to talk about their college or career path. Members get advice they can't get from adults in the building.

1:1 mentor pairing

Match a member with an alum in their target field. It takes more effort to set up, but it builds the deepest relationship and the strongest long-term loyalty.

Recruiting presentations

Bring an alum back to speak at your recruitment meeting or a feeder class. Hearing "this got me into my school and my job" from a near-peer sells DECA better than any officer pitch.

Donors and sponsors

Alumni who are now working professionals are a natural first ask for competition fees, travel costs, or in-kind sponsorship, especially once they've already judged or spoken for you.

Chaperones

College-age alumni who've been through your competitions can chaperone travel or overnight conferences, easing the load on your advisor and parent volunteers. Check school and DECA chaperone rules first.

Alumni spotlight

Feature one alum's story per newsletter, meeting, or social post. Recognition costs nothing and pulls in referrals.

"We're back" fall note

A short, no-ask email each September with one recent win and no request attached. It keeps you top of mind before you ever need something.

Alumni advisory input

A few of your most engaged alumni can give feedback on officer decisions, events, or fundraising ideas from outside the room, without adding to your meeting agenda.

> Rule of thumb: give before you ask. Most alumni assume any message from their old organization is a fundraising ask, so let three "here's something good" touches happen before the one time you actually need judges, a sponsorship, or a favor.



Two scripts you can copy

Judge ask: Hi [Name], we're running [event] on [date] and could really use a judge who's been through DECA. It's about [length], no prep needed. Any chance you could join, in person or over video? Happy to work around your schedule. [Officer name], [Chapter]

Alumni night invite: Hi [Name], [Chapter] DECA is hosting an alumni night on [date] at [time/place]. Food's on us, no obligation, just a chance to catch up and meet the current team. Bring anyone else from your year. Hope to see you there!

A year of ideas, roughly in order

Think of this as a starting menu, not a checklist. Grab whichever ideas fit your chapter's calendar and swap in your own.

Month	A few things you could do
September	Send a "we're back" note to last year's grads. Start a LinkedIn sweep and a sibling/legacy search to build toward your 20-alumni goal. Pick a date for alumni night.
October	Host alumni night and bring sign-up cards. Line up alumni judges for fall competitions. Start an alumni spotlight in your newsletter or socials.
November	Follow up with anyone who hasn't signed up yet. Confirm alumni are actually entered in the DECA system, not just on your spreadsheet. Recruit alumni judges for your District Competition.
December 1	Membership Campaign submission deadline. Double-check your numbers before you submit.
January	Send a thank-you and recap to everyone who signed up or judged this fall. Recruit alumni judges for your State Career Development Conference. Consider a small mentor pairing pilot with a few willing alumni.
February	Share alumni success stories for CTE Month. Good moment for a social media feature or two.
March/April	Run a career and college panel. Pair members with mentors for the rest of the year.
May	Run the senior send-off sign-up at your last meeting. Capture next year's alumni before they scatter.
Before you graduate	Hold a 30-minute handoff meeting. Pass the list and account access to next year's officer.

BOTTOM LINE

Capture contacts before people leave, keep the list in a shared place one officer role owns every year, and give alumni something before you ask them for something. Use them for judging, speaking, mentoring, and recruiting long before you ever ask for money, and register them properly so their support also counts toward your December 1 Membership Campaign goal.

Sources: DECA Inc. Chapter Campaigns and Membership Campaign guidelines (deca.org/campaigns), DECA Direct Online alumni and advancement articles, VAESE/Alumni Access Alumni Relations Benchmarking Survey, CASE Insights on Alumni Engagement.