In 2013, the CAA sought to create online tools that would allow our alumni community to connect with each other globally, locally, and around their shared passions and other interests. We chose the NationBuilder platform as a key part of the CAA toolkit.

NationBuilder will roll out to CAA groups in Fall 2013.

**What is NationBuilder?**

NationBuilder is an online community platform that is composed of many features – tools that allow communities and organizers to benefit from grassroots organization. Individuals and groups can better connect, share their message, engage their members, and manage their business due to NationBuilder’s integrated and easy-to-use features.

**What are the key features of NationBuilder?**

NationBuilder provides an online presence for communities – or “nations” (and in Columbia vocabulary, regional clubs and shared interest groups). With NationBuilder, groups can easily set up a website that includes e-mail tools and event management, among other things described below.

**Is NationBuilder easy to use?**

Yes. It’s easier than anything we’ve ever seen before. If you’ve ever tried to use Harris, which the CAA previously provided, or have created your own WordPress site (or even set up a Facebook group), we think you’ll agree.

**What will an alumni ‘nation’ look like?**

The CAA will provide three templates for groups to choose from. Your group will be able to customize your site to reflect your unique qualities, all within a professionally-designed Columbia ‘skin’. Within the site design, you can create different types of pages that are relevant to you (homepage, blogs, calendars, surveys, , and more).

The templates will let all groups reflect the common denominator that ties us together – Columbia - without insisting on conformity. And we can all maintain branding policies of the University at the same time.

**Do I have to start from scratch to get people to join my group?**

The CAA can import data that is in the alumni database into a nation. You can import any lists you might have, too. For example, the CAA can upload all alumni our database has for the Seattle region so you don’t have to build your constituent base from scratch. Different lists can be tagged in different ways, so they can all join your nation but you can still keep track of different membership levels or sub-groups.

**Can I have members-only pages?**

Yes, you can create members-only pages and even enable them automatically when someone becomes a paid member.
How do the events work? Can I accept payment?

You can create an event by filling out a simple form. You can take RSVPs. If you want to sell tickets, you can set different ticket types by category and pricing (e.g. $5 for Young Alumni, $15 for Guests).

NationBuilder does not collect the money directly, but allows any group to easily link to a payment service including PayPal Express Checkout (no merchant account needed), Payflow Pro and Sage Pay (UK/EU).

How does e-mailing my group work?

You can easily send an e-mail blast to your entire group without having to know HTML or navigate complicated systems. You can also send e-mails to different types of people within your group for specific messages, like an invite to a Young Alumni networking event or a members-only announcement.

You can set up auto-responses. For example, when someone becomes a member they can automatically receive your welcome message - or a confirmation when someone RSVPs to an event.

How will I see who my members are?

In your admin dashboard, you can see all the people in your nation. You can go into individual profiles by clicking on a name, and see all the activity they’ve ever taken – which events they’ve signed up for, if they’ve commented on your group’s blog, if they’ve volunteered. You can create lists of different types of members (paid, non-paid, young alumni, sports fans, etc.)

There is no need to download different lists because it is all kept in one place and is always current – you’ll never have to reconcile contradictory files again or get a refresh from the CAA. This also helps the CAA give you all the information you need without violating University privacy policies around alumni contact information.

How do my members update their information?

Whenever someone is in your nation, they can update their profile with a new e-mail address, their Facebook profile, address, preferences, and other fields. This information is shared with the alumni database so both alumni groups and the CAA will be in sync. Also, when the CAA gets a new address or other new information, this will be automatically updated within your nation, so you’ll have the most up-to-date information the University does.

Can NationBuilder help me manage volunteers?

Yes, NationBuilder is a powerful volunteer tool. People can sign up to volunteer, be assigned a point person (a board member or event organizer), you can keep notes, and assign volunteers tasks.

How can NationBuilder help me grow the next generation of leaders for my club?

When someone in your club takes an action – attending an event, taking a survey, commenting on a post, updating their information, or sharing something from the club on Facebook - they will receive a certain amount of points. Leaderboards will show your most active members (those who have the most points), and help you identify future leaders or volunteers, too.

Do I have to manage my nation alone?

No, you can have multiple admins in your nation. And you can set different permissions levels so your admins can do different things. Your young alumni board member might be able to draft an e-mail but the communications chair on your board could be the only one to approve it.
Can I put pictures from events in my nation?

Yes, and it’s as easy as pasting a link. Put the URL of your picture gallery housed in one of these common photo services: Flickr, Picasa, Instagram, Twitter, Pics, Imgur, Picplz, yFrog, or others. NationBuilder has a tool that recognizes your pictures in the URL and automatically embeds the pictures in your page.

How does NationBuilder work with my group’s existing social media?

Facebook and Twitter are deeply integrated with your nation. LinkedIn profiles can be imported or appended to member’s records, you can track Facebook event RSVPs in your nation’s calendar, and even use Meetup to grow your nation.

Who can use NationBuilder?

The CAA’s agreement with NationBuilder gives Columbia virtually unlimited data exchange (so you can have as many members doing as many actions within your club as possible). It is a vast and powerful resource. However, it is not an infinite resource.

Primary users of NationBuilder will be CAA regional clubs and Shared Interest Groups. There is potential for School-based alumni associations or other groups to also use NationBuilder as a platform, pending a strategic review.

There are many ways for this to benefit different alumni groups and offices. For example, academic departments can work with the CAA to create e-mail lists of department alumni. School’s alumni groups abroad might want to have a special page within a larger nation, like the School of the Arts-specific page for alumni filmmakers that lives within the Columbia University Entertainment club’s nation. Such pages, like Members-only pages, could be available only to people with certain tags (like ‘arts’) if you want. There are a lot of possibilities for the CAA’s partners, which we’ll be able to address and explore when we go live in the fall.

For more information on NationBuilder, please visit their FAQS: www.nationbuilder.com/nonprofit_faq

For more information on Columbia alumni organizations using NationBuilder, e-mail caa-marketing@columbia.edu. More information will be forthcoming as we near rolling out the platform in the fall.