SEA GULL ALUMNI ALLIANCE
LEADER HANDBOOK

Salisbury University Alumni Engagement

salisbury.edu/alumni

SU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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INTRODUCTION

A Salisbury University Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group is made up of SU alumni who share common interests. A Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group can be based on interest, campus organization, geographical region, culture or shared identity. All Sea Gull Alumni Alliance events and membership in a group must be open to all graduates and non-degreed SU alumni regardless of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national or ethnic origin, age, or level of able-ness. A non-degreed alumnus/a is defined as a student who attended Salisbury University for at least two semesters but did not receive a degree and has contacted the Office of Alumni Engagement requesting associate membership.

Purpose Of Sea Gull Alumni Alliance

The purpose of Sea Gull Alumni Alliance is to connect alumni with one another and their Alma Mater through programming that is geared to a specific population of alumni with a common interest while encouraging engagement and philanthropic giving to Salisbury University.

Benefits To Alumni

Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups enable alumni to stay connected to the university through:

- social relationships
- professional connections
- relationships from alumni activities and interests
- access to the SU community through enjoyable and meaningful activities
- an enjoyable central hub as a source of pride and a place of welcome

LEADER EXPECTATIONS

Each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group will use the following guiding principles to establish engaging and beneficial relationships within their alumni communities:

Each group is a volunteer-driven operation led by SU alumni leaders. These leaders manage their own activities and events aligned with the mission of the SU Alumni Association and Salisbury University. The Office of Alumni Engagement will provide essential marketing, operational support and long-term strategic direction.

Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group leaders represent SU to the broader community, embodying and conveying the mission of the university and the SU Alumni Association. Generally, the public does not draw a distinction between our alumni-led groups and the university. Therefore, it is imperative that our volunteers act responsibly and conduct themselves in a way that upholds the reputation of the SU Alumni Association and Salisbury University.

Our Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups provide an important role in maintaining connections between thousands of alumni and their Alma Mater, including current matriculating students. Therefore, activities of the groups should be mission driven and work hand in hand with the Office of Alumni Engagement.

SEA GULL ALUMNI ALLIANCE GROUP STANDARDS

Starting A New Sea Gull Alumni Alliance Group

Visit the SU Sea Gull Alumni Alliance webpage to see what alliances currently exist. If you want to create a new group that is not listed online, you can propose one! We encourage alumni to create new groups, and we'll support your efforts by posting communications on the SU alumni website and social media channels to gauge interest. All Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups are non-dues based, and the primary leader must be an alumnus/a of Salisbury University. When naming your group, please include **Salisbury University Alumni** or **SU Alumni** in the name and make it clear and specific to the interest group you are targeting. Email seagullalliance@salisbury.edu to learn more or fill out the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance form on our website.

You can join a pre-existing group by visiting salisbury.edu/alumni/alliance.aspx.

Group Requirements:

- Have the primary leader sign the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance Agreement Form.
- Have at least one group leader participate in virtual meetings to receive program updates.
- Actively recruit members to join their group.
- Hold at least two virtual or in-person meetings each year to keep members of the leadership team informed and engaged.
- Coordinate all activities with staff in the Office of Alumni Engagement.
- Stay informed of university activities in their area.
- Plan at least one program or event per calendar year and complete a post-event report for each event that was awarded funding. Create engaging discussion posts and actively communicate with alliance members through the   alliance's Facebook page.
- Allow the Office of Alumni Engagement to join the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group Facebook page. Failure to comply with these rules will jeopardize your alliance status.
- Your group status may be revoked at any time by not complying with Salisbury University policies.

LEADER EXPECTATIONS

Each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group is unique because of the community it serves. As a result, each has different organizational and leadership needs. The following outlines basic steps for establishing and operating a group and provides some best practices for maintaining successful operations.

Recruit volunteer leaders (see information that follows)

- Identify, recruit and help train new volunteer leaders within the alliance for long-term success.
- Recruit alumni in the community to support short-term projects/initiatives that promote the mission of the SU Alumni Association and Salisbury University.
- Host group leader meetings throughout the year.

Establish an annual plan to engage SU alumni who are a part of the group

- Make an annual calendar and map out yearly goals.
- Establish activities for social engagement, philanthropy and Sea Gull pride.
- Utilize the valuable resources from the Office of Alumni Engagement listed in this handbook.
- Be prepared but flexible.

Promote the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group through marketing and social media outlets
Utilize tools provided by the Office of Alumni Engagement for reaching alumni throughout the group community.

- Provide consistent and relevant communication with the group's social media pages. Post frequently, using the pages to market events and other activities.
- Engage your members by sharing pictures, SU news and information about upcoming events.
- Encourage and promote group member participation.

Building The Right Volunteer Leader Team

Teamwork is vital in building and maintaining a successful Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group. Group leaders who have a strong core leadership team with clear responsibilities will pave the way for effective programming and connections. We recommend building a leadership team that best suits your group's needs. At a minimum, each group should have a primary and secondary leader with defined responsibilities.

The leadership team may be comprised of the following positions*:

Primary Leader

- Serves as primary liaison to the Office of Alumni Engagement.
- Ensures a strategic plan, including a semi-annual calendar of programs and completes funding request forms.
- Appoints and recruits' alumni volunteers as needed.

Event/Program Leader

- Coordinates logistics for the social, educational and philanthropic programs or events.
- Ensures all activities comply with the SU Alumni Association guidelines.

Communications Leader

- Develops communications/marketing plan for each event in coordination with the Office of Alumni Engagement.
- Maintains and monitors social media.
- Provides content and event information for invites and registration page.
- Coordinates personal outreach efforts.

*Additional positions may be created as the group develops its own strategy and continues to grow.

Creating A Volunteer Pipeline

- Securing volunteers for short-term and long-term projects will build your pipeline for volunteer leaders.
- Always be on the lookout for alumni who consistently attend your events and seek ways to involve new faces.
- Keep track of volunteers and special interests.
- Promote teamwork so all volunteers feel supported.
- Say a public thank you at your event and electronically after the event.

STARTING A NEW SEA GULL ALUMNI ALLIANCE GROUP

Gaining Members

Once you let Alumni Engagement know you're interested in starting a Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group, they will review the request and, if approved, will create a group. All groups begin as units, and at that time an email will be sent to all alumni in that geographic or shared demographic audience to gauge interest and invite them to join your page. If there is a response of at least 30 Salisbury University graduates, the Office of Alumni Engagement will change your status to an official Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group and will work with you to begin planning a kickoff event. Once you are an official group, you will be eligible to submit a funding request form. Non-degreed alumni and non-degreed faculty and staff may join your group but will not count toward your 30-person membership minimum.

A Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group is an officially sanctioned cluster of alumni that is managed by SU alumni volunteer(s) who have agreed to the terms and policies included in the handbook. By agreeing to these conditions, groups are eligible to receive staff support from the Office of Alumni Engagement, funding for engagement efforts and marketing/communications assistance. Units are more casual and do not need to meet the requirements of the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance handbook. Units are not eligible for funding from the Office of Alumni Engagement.

Maintaining Membership

In order to request funding, the Office of Alumni Engagement requires each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group to maintain at least 30 SU alumni as members. If your group drops below 30 active members, the Office of Alumni Engagement will help you recruit members by sending electronic communication through Alumni Engagement channels. If you cannot meet the membership minimum, your group will not be eligible to submit a funding request that term. If it remains below the minimum for over two years, your group status will be deemed inactive.

Ongoing Requirements

While each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group has unique characteristics reflecting different cultures and social interests, some guidelines apply to all groups to ensure the best possible experience for everyone involved.

All alliances must:

- Have the primary leader sign the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance Agreement Form.
- Have at least one group leader participate in biannual meetings to receive program updates.
- Actively recruit members to join their group.
- Hold at least two regular meetings each year to keep members of the leadership team informed and engaged.
- Coordinate all activities with staff in the Office of Alumni Engagement.
- Stay informed of university activities in their area.
- Plan at least one program or event per calendar year and complete a post-event report for each event funding is received for.
- Create engaging discussion posts and actively communicate with group members through their Facebook page.
- Allow the Office of Alumni Engagement to join their Sea Gull Alumni Alliance Facebook group page.

Failure to comply with these rules will jeopardize your status. Additionally, your group status may be revoked at any time by not complying with Salisbury University policies. You can find a list of policies that may directly affect your Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group, such as discrimination, tailgating, parking, smoking, etc. under the Salisbury University general administration policies on the main university website.

SEA GULL ALUMNI ALLIANCE BENEFITS AND SUPPORT

Financial Support Overview

Each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group can request a maximum of $300 annually. In order to request funding, the group leaders will need to fill out the Funding Request Form. For more information see the Financial Support section. The annual allotment of funding for groups is limited and competitive. Requesting funds does not guarantee your group will receive the total requested amount.

Advertising and Marketing

Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups are encouraged to take advantage of additional marketing opportunities available to them. These include the website, email communication and social media promotion. For any engagement efforts where funding is awarded, alliances must host a registration page on the SU Alumni Engagements registration website. Groups must also send out at least one official email through the Office of Alumni Engagement related to the event. See Planning Events with Funding from the Office of Alumni Engagement for additional information. The Office of Alumni Engagement reserves the right to restrict marketing of events that do not follow SU policies and standards.

Event Collaboration

The Office of Alumni Engagement coordinates numerous events throughout the year, including Homecoming, campus events and regional activities that are wonderful opportunities for collaboration.

Homecoming: Groups can host an event as part of Homecoming weekend and enjoy the benefit of alumni on campus and in the Salisbury area. Because the weekend requires extensive planning, your event ideas should be discussed with the Office of Alumni Engagement staff at least four months prior to Homecoming. In addition, onsite staff support may not be available during Homecoming weekend.

Collaboration on existing events: The Office of Alumni Engagement may reach out to Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups to partner with them for official Alumni Association events that are planned in their area. Involvement may include ways to encourage alumni participation and/or awareness of the group.

Follow-up messaging: The Office of Alumni Engagement can assist with follow-up messages to Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group event attendees. Contact the office for further details.

Event Space

Groups can host personal and networking events in one of the numerous event spaces located on SU's campus. Once you have considered your event details, a group leader should contact the Office of Event and Conference Services (410-543-6172) four to six months prior to your event date. Please note space availability on campus is extremely limited.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group are expected to be self-sufficient and are required to develop and submit budgets for events and activities. **Groups can request a maximum of $300 per calendar year.** There are two funding terms that run January 1-June 30 and July 1-December 31. In order to request funding, group leaders must complete and submit the Funding Request Form provided in this handbook by each term's deadline. **November 1** is the deadline for term 1 (January 1-June 30) and **May 1** is the deadline for term 2 (July 1-December 31).

The annual allotment of funding for groups is limited and competitive. Requesting funding does not guarantee your group will receive the total requested amount and there is a possibility the allotment of funding will be depleted in term 1. The SU Alumni Association Outreach and Development Committee is responsible for approving/denying funding for events. The committee will review all requests and award funds accordingly by the start of the following term.

All funding requests received after the deadline will be held until the next reviewing period unless all funding is depleted in term 1. The funds you are granted must be used by the end of each term and for the engagement initiative that was submitted on the Funding Request Form. Unused funding does not roll over into the next term. Group leaders must submit written communication to the Office of Alumni Engagement with any logistical changes made to an event after the original funding request is submitted and/or approved.

All university funding procedures must be followed. Examples of prohibited university funding items include:

- Alcohol
- Events, programs and marketing in direct conflict or competition with official Salisbury University Office of Alumni Engagement events
- Personal reimbursements. Payment for events will be made directly to vendors from the Office of Alumni Engagement.

PLANNING EVENTS WITH FUNDING FROM THE OFFICE OF ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Plan activities that appeal to the broadest range of alumni and offer opportunities for fellowship, personal enrichment and new opportunities to establish SU connections. Such activities include, but are not limited to:

- Continuing-education events (university speakers, local speakers with SU ties or speakers with unique appeal to local alumni)
- Community service events
- Cultural and arts-related events
- Family-oriented events
- Young alumni events
- Athletic viewing events
- Welcome events for alumni new to the area
- Networking and career-oriented events

Event Planning Tips And Guidance

Create an event plan with your leadership team and event volunteers.

- What is the goal of the event? What does success look like?
- Who is the target audience? What do they get out of it?
- What is your budget? What is the cost for each guest to attend?
- What program elements do you want, such as food, speakers, etc.?

Choose events that the group leaders are passionate about hosting, as a successful event requires time to plan and implement. Diversify your calendar of events to attract different constituencies.

Choose a date and check campus and other university calendars for SU Athletics, major campus events, SU alumni events, etc., to ensure there are no conflicts with your potential event date. It is also beneficial to check local entertainment and holiday calendars. Secure venue, keynote speakers and any catering services at least three to four months ahead of time.

Make sure you understand the terms of the venue/catering contracts and note when deposits and guarantees are due.

Confirm travel arrangements, topic and other arrangements for keynote speakers.

Decide how you are going to promote your event. Using a save-the-date communication, followed by an RSVP, then a final reminder communication is good practice. All events that have received funding through the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance program are required to host a registration page through SU Office of Alumni Engagement and at least one email sent out through the Office of Alumni Engagement.

All event information must be submitted to the Office of Alumni Engagement **two months** prior to the event date and Alumni Engagement staff will help schedule emails to requested alumni.

To make your communications the most effective, make sure to include the following:

- Name of event
- Description of event
- Time of event
- Location of event
- RSVP deadline
- Cost per person (if applicable)
- Event details, including dinner, cash bar, etc.
- Parking information
- Contact information for questions
- Information on speaker (if applicable)

Provide clear, concise and consistent communication. Make sure all of your communication channels (email, print, website, etc.) have the same and accurate information about the event.

Put yourself in the shoes of an attendee and "walk through" your event, starting with the communications you receive (Do you understand what the event is?), to arriving on site (Is it obvious where to park?), to the enjoyment of the event (Can a person hear in the back of the room?).

Group leaders are to be the point of contact on site for events. This includes setting up a check-in table for attendees putting out any alumni promotional materials. Leaders are required to track all event attendees and gather their contact information. Pictures and videos are encouraged for use in future promotions.

Events focusing on philanthropic fundraising are welcome and need to be coordinated with the Office of Alumni Engagement.

After your event, a group leader must complete a Post-Event Form that includes a list of all attendees with updated contact information and any photos or videos from the event within **two weeks**. Coordinate with Alumni Engagement staff to send a post-event survey to your attendees to assess your event.

What Will Be Provided By The Office of Alumni Engagement For Events?

- Email communication and an event registration page for all funded engagement efforts
- Promotion on SU alumni communication channels (e-newsletter, website, social media) at the discretion of the Office of Alumni Engagement
- Supplies for events will be provided as appropriate (e.g., raffle items or giveaways, nametags, sign-in sheets, printed materials)
- An Office of Alumni Engagement staff member may attend Sea Gull Alumni Alliance events, and a staff member is always available to assist with event ideas, planning, and attendance strategy decisions
- Post-event survey

BRAND MARKS, LOGOS AND COMMUNICATIONS

The university name and associated logos are the university's property and may only be used with the advance consent of the Office of Alumni Engagement and in compliance with applicable university policies. The Office of Alumni Engagement may provide each Sea Gull Alumni Alliance group with a logo to be used for promotional materials, communication and recruitment.

Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups represent SU at all times. They should provide a convenient way for current, as well as prospective, members to communicate with one another. Utilize SU alumni communication channels (e-newsletter and social media) to promote group activities. Information must be provided to the Office of Alumni Engagement two months prior and will be included in communications at the discretion of the Office of Alumni Engagement.

Emails

All mass emails must be coordinated through the Office of Alumni Engagement. This **does not** include emails to your leadership team about planning events and meetings. However, this **does** include any information you would like to go to a large audience. Groups are prohibited from keeping their own member databases and all mass communication should be requested and sent through the Office of Alumni Engagement. The more updated our official university alumni database is, the more successful your group will be. If you are collecting updated group member information, please share it with the Alumni Engagement staff.

Tips For Creating Content On Sea Gull Alumni Alliance Pages

Keep your social media groups current by consistently posting relevant information and news. The Office of Alumni Engagement staff will determine if content posted is consistent with university policies and standards.

Drive traffic to site and encourage members to engage. Provide links to your pages on event signage and in emails and include direct requests for your group members to participate online.

Encourage alumni engagement through posting interesting photos, videos and questions.

Keep posts relatively short – two to three sentences.

Do not post items that have any potential to be offensive, inappropriate or inconsistent with maintaining a positive image of SU, SU alumni or the Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups.

Develop a content strategy and brand voice. What are your goals? What are your audiences' needs? Think about how you want your followers to feel when they engage with the group.

Get topical. Followers are more likely to engage with topics that are already top of mind, such as current events, holidays or news.

Make sure this information is consistent with all other communication pieces.

Ask questions about a shared experience. SU is the common theme that connects your followers, so ask questions about SU. Example: "We all have had people who have touched our lives and influenced who we are today. Who had the largest impact on you during your years at SU?"

Share and collaborate. Slow news week for your page? Share content from fellow SU organizations, groups and schools.

Managing Content

Keep it short. Posts between 100 and 250 characters (less than three lines of text) are often most effective, receiving about 60% more likes, comments and shares than posts that are longer.

Look for timing trends of posts with high engagement (likes, comments, shares). Weekends typically generate more engagement.

Listen. After posting content, check it often for comments, messages and respond to questions.

Avoid inappropriate posts. We welcome your thoughts, comments, suggestions and questions, but when you post, make sure your postings are of general interest to most readers. Any use of profanity, racial or ethnic slurs or disparaging personal remarks will not be tolerated. We also reserve the right to call for the deletion all posts involving political endorsements, unrelated outside links, advertisements and promotions of any sort, or spam. Please flag and notify the Office of Alumni Engagement if there is inappropriate content posted or shared on your Sea Gull Alumni Alliance groups.

PROGRAM PLANNING STEP BY STEP

Finalizing the Dates

When planning events for the year, estimate which events will happen in which months. This will be beneficial when determining how much funding to request for each funding term. Please keep university event dates in mind (Homecoming, Commencement).

8-12 weeks prior

- Finalize the date based on speaker, host or venue availability.
- Inform the Office of Alumni Engagement of the date and event to ensure date does not conflict with other university events
- Provide venue manager and caterer contact information.
- Determine venue and catering payment policy and payment due dates.
- Receive the contract and share it with the Office of Alumni Engagement to review before signing and sending back to vendors or caterers. *Please note that the Alumni Association will NOT sign any contract.
- Begin developing a marketing and communications plan.
- A minimum of eight weeks prior to your program, provide the following to the Office of Alumni Engagement:
  - Event description
  - Date and time
  - Venue location including street address and zip code
  - Parking information and instructions
  - Event fee per person
  - Any special messaging needed

5-7 weeks prior

- The Office of Alumni Engagement will provide e-communications, registration forms, website postings and links.
- Once the e-communications begin (6 weeks prior to event), promote the program or event via social media and personal networks

2-4 weeks prior

- Continue to promote the program via social media and personal networks.
- Review the RSVP report (provided to you).
- To increase responses, emphasize a different "value-added" or selling point in each of these follow-up communications.
- Consult the Office of Alumni Engagement and other group leaders on ideas for market segmentation and communications.

1-2 weeks prior

The SU Alumni Association has the authority to cancel any event, depending on the following, but limited to, reasons:

- Registration numbers
- Vendor requirements
- External influences
- Cost discrepancy
- Change in University or SU Alumni Association policy

3 Days Prior*

- Finalize the attendance number with the Office of Alumni Engagement and inform the venue of the final catering totals.

  * This deadline may be earlier based on the vendor requirements.

- Work with the Office of Alumni Engagement to send an event confirmation email to all registrants.

At the program/event

- Plan to be the first person on site so that you are able to welcome guests as they arrive.

- Track all attendees as they arrive and record no-shows or those who "walk up."

- Collect checks, made payable to SU Foundation, Inc. from all walk-ups and record their names; note alumni names and guests names.

After the Event/Program

- Complete the post-event form within two weeks following the event to include:
  - Attendee photos for posting on your alliance's social media pages
  - A written summary of the event to be shared with alumni unable to attend
  - Final list of attendees and no-shows

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