

# Institutional Support Best Practice Guide

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## Introduction

Obtaining the support of your college or university is essential to the success and sustainability of your SIFE program. Without institutional support, what you do on your campus and in your community would not be possible.

However, we realize that not everyone on your campus may be familiar or supportive of SIFE. If that is true of your team, it is very important for you to continually seek new support from the faculty and administration on your campus.

To help you in this task, we have created this guide to assist you in making presentations to the faculty and administration at your institution. Inside you will find talking points to use when encouraging faculty and administrators to become involved with your team, invitations to events and thank you notes. All of these tools are meant to be tailored to the specific needs you have on your campus. **Additional information on obtaining institutional support is also available in the SIFE Team Handbook.**

## Getting Other Faculty Involved

Remember faculty members are pressed for time every year, but that doesn't mean they cannot help your team by recruiting for you, endorsing your projects or serving on your Business Advisory Board (BAB). When pitching SIFE to faculty, there are four points to make. Remember, you can tailor this to the specific needs of your institution and faculty by researching your audience members to find out their backgrounds and interests.

1. **They will have an opportunity to enhance their teaching experience by working with the team as they conduct educational outreach projects in the community.** Faculty members often look for ways to connect with students outside the classroom. SIFE gives the perfect opportunity to do just that. The role that a faculty member can play on the team can be that of a mentor, a colleague and even a friend.
2. **They will have the opportunity to network with other like-minded individuals at SIFE events.** Depending on the type of institution, faculty members have different requirements they must fulfill. Faculty members at research schools are more focused on research and publishing. Meeting other faculty from other institutions may help. Attending a SIFE USA event is the ideal place for them to meet others that may have the same need as they do.

3. **They will have the opportunity to network with hundreds of SIFE Partner Companies at events like the SIFE USA Regional Competitions and SIFE USA National Exposition.** Attending the SIFE USA Competitions will provide an opportunity to meet hundreds of donor companies that support SIFE.
4. **They will have the opportunity to receive professional recognition and advancement as a result of the activities of the SIFE team.** SIFE teams are constantly being recognized in the local media and throughout the campus for the exceptional educational outreach projects they conduct in the community. As a supporter and member of the SIFE team, faculty will be able to add their involvement to their list of accomplishments. Faculty members who are officially recognized by SIFE Headquarters as an advisor will also receive the Sam M. Walton Free Enterprise Fellowship the first time they lead their team to a SIFE USA Regional Competition. Sam M. Walton Fellows are also eligible to be nominated by their team for the Jack Kahl Entrepreneurial Leadership Award for the Sam M. Walton Free Enterprise Fellows of the Year award. Recipients of this award receive a plaque and fully paid trip to the SIFE World Cup for the current academic year. For more information call 1-800-677-7433.

## Getting Administrators (Deans, Department Chairs, Presidents) Involved

While having faculty support is very important, having the support of the administration is also important. Obtaining their support will make conducting your educational outreach projects much easier. They will also be a great advocate for you to other faculty on campus.

There are four key points to highlight when meeting with administrators:

1. **Having a SIFE team on campus will provide them with the opportunity to receive positive community recognition as a result of the projects the SIFE team conducts.** A big concern for all administrators is finding funding for the school. Positive events happening on their campus tends to result in more funding coming to the school whether it be from alumni, new donors or an increase from current donors. Helping the administrator see the positive impact your team has on the community will give

him/her something to highlight as they meet with top university officials.

2. **Having a SIFE team on campus will provide them with the opportunity to network with local, national and corporate business leaders at SIFE USA events.** SIFE has a network of more than 1,500 college and universities and more than 250 corporations, entrepreneurs, individuals and foundations that financially support SIFE. Each year, the SIFE team will have the opportunity to showcase their projects to a group of judges that represent SIFE partner companies. As teams advance through the rounds of competition, they are exposing their institution to a higher caliber of judges. Administrators will have the chance to network with the partner companies one-on-one during the numerous breaks and events held at the competitions. At any time they will be able to meet and talk to some of today's most influential business leaders.
3. **Having a SIFE team on campus will provide a valuable learning experience to the students.** Diversity is one of the best characteristics about SIFE; it is open to every student regardless of their major. SIFE provides university students with the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to their communities while also discovering their potential to achieve an even greater impact as the business leaders of tomorrow. By using business concepts they are learning in the classroom to help others, SIFE students develop stronger business and leadership skills, as well as a sense of service and responsibility to the community and world around them.
4. **SIFE helps students get jobs.** In addition to the community aspect of the program, SIFE's leadership and career initiatives are designed to create meaningful opportunities for learning and exchange as well as the networking of students and alumni with companies in search of talent. SIFE students are emerging as leaders who understand the opportunity for business to make a positive economic, social and environmental impact. It's the reason so many top companies have identified SIFE as a leading source of socially responsible business talent. By working for a SIFE Partner Company upon graduation, SIFE students have chosen a path that allows them to be part of the inside track. SIFE Partner Companies value the SIFE experience and fully support students as they continue their involvement with their former teams and local area teams.

## How to Prepare for a Meeting with Administrators

In setting up a meeting, keep the following in mind:

1. It may be difficult to set up a meeting, so schedule meetings in advance for best results.
2. Once you have the date in mind, contact the office of the person you want to meet with (dean, department chair, president). Make sure you know how long your meeting will take and what times you have available so you can work around their schedule.
3. Remember to be courteous to the individual you set up the meeting with. This is the person that schedules all of the administrator's appointments. If you are polite and straight to the point, it will be much easier.
4. Put together an agenda for what will be discussed during the meeting. Remember to think about how much you can accomplish in the amount of time that you have scheduled, and what the most important things are to cover.
5. Ask the assistant if it's permissible to invite other faculty and staff members to join the meeting (if your team is ready to expand the audience).
6. Have in mind a quick summary of what you want to meet about. The assistant may ask what is on your agenda so he/she can relay that to the administrator.

Once you have the date set, there are a few things you should do to prepare yourself for the meeting:

- Research the person you will be meeting with. It is important to know your audience!
- Arrange for any needed materials/equipment – TV/VCR/DVD player, etc.
- Know facts about SIFE – be ready to answer questions (bring a SIFE Fact Sheet available online at [www.sife.org](http://www.sife.org)).
- Create an outline with what you want to accomplish during the meeting. Some key ideas include:
  - Informing the audience about SIFE
  - Asking each participant how they feel the SIFE team is beneficial to the college/university
  - Asking for support – Make sure you know what you are asking for. It could be office space, financial support, for them to serve on your BAB, for recognition on campus etc.
  - Asking if the participants have any questions
- Solicit advice from your SIFE Program Manager.

- Invite your SIFE Program Manager to the meeting. If they are unable to attend, make sure to send them a recap afterwards.

When meeting with administrators, a helpful tool for you to have is a packet of information about SIFE they can keep. Consider including the following:

- SIFE Fact Sheet (available at [www.sife.org](http://www.sife.org))
- Your previous year's annual report or list of projects you would like to implement in the upcoming year
- Team's financial report
- Team's BAB list
- Student roster
- Ask your SIFE Program Manager for additional materials.

## Getting Other Colleges/Departments Involved

The key to building a quality and sustainable SIFE program is having the support of the faculty and administration on campus. The first place to start is always with the college of business or the college where the SIFE team is housed. Once you have that accomplished, it is important to branch out to others on campus to gain support.

Remember every SIFE team is a part of two communities: their on-campus community and their off-campus community. Involving the department heads of other colleges can lead to creating a more diverse member base and increase the sustainability of your program.

Below are some key points about how you can work to gain the support of other colleges on campus.

- Set up a meeting with the faculty, dean and other key individuals in the college.
  - Explain what SIFE is and how it can benefit every student on campus.
  - Be ready to give specific examples of how other majors fit into SIFE and how the team can appeal to and benefit students with diverse majors. Consider presenting a specific project that would have an appeal to your audience and the students in that department.
  - Show the SIFE DVD.
  - Offer a snapshot of your SIFE program and be prepared to answer questions about your team projects.
  - Leave the team's contact information with everyone at the meeting.
  - Send thank you notes to all of the participants for their time and willingness to meet with you.
  - Contact your SIFE Program Manager – They may be able to come to your campus for the meeting.
- Talk with your dean or department chair about sending an email out to his/her colleagues in the other colleges about giving support to the SIFE team.
- Create a monthly newsletter to send the faculty, deans and department heads of every college on campus to update them on team activities that are taking place that month.
- Present your SIFE team's presentation at a faculty meeting or at a campus wide assembly/event.
- Ask your faculty advisor to speak at faculty meetings about your SIFE team's activities and achievements.

Remember these are just a few suggestions for you to try. SIFE USA realizes that every team and every campus is unique. Find what works for you and your campus.

# Personal Invitations

Below are personal invitations you can send your administration inviting them to the different events you will have throughout the year. Feel free to customize this invitation to the specific needs of your team.

## Inviting Administrators to a BAB Meeting

Dear [Name]:

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team cordially invites you to attend our [Event name] on [date] at [name of location] from [timeframe].

Our team will be embarking on a brand new year of identifying and implementing educational outreach projects that create economic opportunities for individuals in our community [*“and around the globe”, if this applies to your team*]. We are very proud of our previous accomplishments and excited about reaching greater heights in the upcoming year!

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team relies on the valuable feedback of our Business Advisory Board members and the support we receive from campus administration. Realizing how valuable your time is, it would mean so much to us if you could attend this meeting and share your endorsement of the SIFE program with respected members of the community that serve on our BAB.

[Name of college/university] SIFE Team is proud to have your support and we look forward to seeing you at this meeting!

RSVP by [date] if you can attend.

Sincerely,

[Signature & name of SIFE Team President and/or Sam Walton Fellow]  
[Name of college/university] SIFE Team

[SIFE team contact information]

## Inviting Administrators to Participate in Project

Dear [name]:

Your [name of college/university] SIFE Team is launching a new project that will greatly impact the lives of individuals in our community and positively represent our college [or university]!

We cordially invite you to participate in our project, “[name of project]”.

[Give brief description of project – mention the target audience, the need, the anticipated outcome, and names of any community partners/supporters – also clearly and briefly describe what the administrator’s role would be in this particular project]

[Name of college/university] SIFE Team is proud to have your support and we look forward to having you participate in this project!

RSVP by [date] if you can attend.

Sincerely,

[Signature & name of SIFE Team President and/or Sam Walton Fellow]  
[Name of college/university] SIFE Team  
[SIFE team contact information]

**Invitation for Administrators to Attend SIFE Training Events**

Dear [name]:

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team is preparing to launch another eventful year, filled with projects that aim to create economic opportunity for members of our community and beyond.

We will be attending the Walgreens' SIFE Team Training Conference in [location] on [date] to learn more about the SIFE program and network with teams from throughout [name of state/region]. This is a very important event for us, especially as we prepare to develop more quality and sustainable projects, thus further nurturing the positive image of [name of college/university].

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team cordially invites you to attend this one-day event. We would be honored to showcase your presence and support. This would also allow you an opportunity to meet faculty, administrators, and students that participate in SIFE and learn more about a program that means a great deal to your own students and faculty.

We are currently in the process of registering our team for this event. Should you be able to attend, please let us know by [date].

Our SIFE team greatly values your support and hope that you can join us at this event!

Sincerely,

[Signature & name of SIFE Team President and/or Sam Walton Fellow]  
[Name of college/university] SIFE Team  
[SIFE team contact information]

**Invitation for Administrators to Attend a Regional Competition**

Dear [name]:

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team is gearing up for a very important event, the SIFE USA Regional Competition in [name of regional location] on [date]. Our team continues to strive for excellence and is very excited about representing [name of college/university] at this prestigious event. This opportunity will showcase the meaningful projects we have implemented throughout our community in front of a distinguished panel of judges who represent some of the most influential companies in the world.

We are in the process of registering our team members, faculty and administrators for the event and would be honored to add your name to the list of attendees. Teams from across the country will be competing for the title of Regional Champion and many use this event as an opportunity to meet other members of the network and learn more about SIFE.

We greatly value your support of the [name of college/university] SIFE Team and hope that you can join us at this event!

RSVP by [date] to [name of team president] if you can attend.

Sincerely,

[Signature & name of SIFE Team President and/or Sam Walton Fellow]  
[Name of college/university] SIFE Team  
[SIFE team contact information]

## Invitation for Administrators to Attend SIFE USA National Exposition

Dear [name]:

The [name of college/university] SIFE Team is gearing up for another very important event, the SIFE USA National Exposition in [name of exposition location] on [date]. Our team was recently named a Regional Champion at the SIFE USA Regional Competition in [name of regional location] on [date]. We continue to strive for excellence and are very excited about representing [name of college/university] at this prestigious event. This will be our opportunity to showcase the meaningful projects we have implemented through the community in front of a distinguished panel of judges who represent some of the most influential companies in the world.

We are in the process of registering our team members, faculty and administrators for the event and would be honored to add your name to the list of attendees. Regional Champion Teams from all over the United States will be competing for the title of SIFE USA National Champion [four-year universities may add this: "and may then have the opportunity to compete for the title of SIFE World Cup Champion in (location of upcoming World Cup)"]. Many use this event as an opportunity to meet other members of the network and learn more about SIFE.

We greatly value your support of the [name of college/university] SIFE Team and hope that you can join us at this event!

RSVP by [date] to [name of team president] if you can attend.

Sincerely,

[Signature & name of SIFE Team President and/or Sam Walton Fellow]  
[Name of college/university] SIFE Team  
[SIFE team contact information]

# Thank You Notes

In today's world of email it seems as though the hand written note is often overlooked. A note written promptly and sincerely is an important ritual of etiquette that is much more effective and appreciated than an electronic message.

Some tips to remember when sending thank you notes:

- ✓ Avoid pre-printed thank you notes. Handwritten notes are more personable and will be much more appreciated.
- ✓ Send your note within one week of the event. If you don't send the note in that time frame it's okay. Remember that a late thank you note is better than no note at all.
- ✓ Keep the message simple and sincere.
- ✓ Send copies of any news articles that are published on your team or project in which the individual was involved in. Also consider sending any thank you notes that are received from the participants.

On the following pages, you will find thank you note templates that can be sent on behalf of your SIFE team to the administration of your college or university.

## **Thank You for Attending a SIFE Team Project**

Dear <Name of Administrator>:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to attend our SIFE Team project, <Name of Project>.

Having you there to show your support for the event and the <Name of School> SIFE Team is very important to us. We know that without your continued support, we would not be able to accomplish half of what we do every year. It is important to the team that you know how much you are appreciated and how much we value your time.

Again, thank you for participating in our project. We look forward to having you at several more of our events and to building a stronger relationship with you.

Sincerely,

<Name of President or Team Leader>  
<Name of School> SIFE team

## **Thank You for Providing Financial Resources**

Dear <Name of Administrator>:

Thank you for providing the <Name of School> SIFE Team with financial resources that enable us to carry out our mission of <State Mission>.

It is because of your continued support of our team that we are able to create life changing projects and have the opportunity to represent our school at the SIFE <Name of Event>.

Again, thank you for your support. We look forward to another great year.

Sincerely,

<Name of President or Team Leader>  
<Name of School> SIFE Team

**Thank You for Attending a SIFE USA Regional Competition, SIFE USA National Exposition, or a SIFE Team Training Conference**

Dear <Name of Administrator>:

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to accompany the <Name of School> SIFE Team to the <Name of Event>.

Without the support of our administration, we would not be able to implement quality projects that significantly impact the members of our community. It's because of your involvement and commitment to our team that we have continued to be so successful.

Again, thank you for your support. We look forward to having you involved in many more of our team events.

Sincerely,

<Name of President or Team Leader>  
<Name of School> SIFE Team

**Thank You for Serving on Your Business Advisory Board**

Dear <Name of Administrator>:

Thank you for serving on the <Name of School> SIFE Team's Business Advisory Board this year. Having you represent the <College/University> has been a tremendous asset and honor to our team.

We truly appreciate all of your support and insight into our projects. It has been a pleasure for us to be able to work with you outside of the normal classroom experience.

We hope that you will consider serving on our board next year. Again, we thank you for your time. We look forward to working more closely with you in the future.

Sincerely,

<Name of President or Team Leader>  
<School Name> SIFE Team

**Thank You for Coming to a SIFE Team Meeting/BAB Meeting**

Dear <Name of Administrator>:

Thank you for coming to the recent meeting of the <Name of School> SIFE Team. I hope that you enjoyed your time with us.

It was a pleasure for us to have you there to learn about all of our exciting projects. We always welcome your feedback and suggestions as we know it will make us even stronger.

Again, thank you for your time. Please feel free to come to our future meetings. We meet every <Day> at <Time> in <Room #>.

Sincerely,

<Name of President or Team Leader>  
<Name of School> SIFE Team