

Utilizing SIFE Alumni Best Practice Guide

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Introduction

As you continue to develop your SIFE team, Alumni Relations is an area with huge potential that is often overlooked. SIFE Alumni can be a tremendous asset to any team. This guide will provide you with great information on how to track your alumni then engage them in your program so you can continue to utilize their knowledge and experience. In order to capture information, it is important to begin this process during a student's final semester or year.

Whether you are an established SIFE team or one who is just starting out it is important that you begin to think about ways to track your SIFE students as they graduate. Hopefully your SIFE team members had a positive SIFE experience while in college, and they will want to stay connected with the team.

Staying in touch with your alumni can have great benefits. First, Alumni have great knowledge about SIFE that they can provide to current team members about challenges and successes they experienced. In addition, as they begin their careers they will start to have new experiences and ideas that could help your team while also building their network of contacts. Finally, many SIFE alumni still feel a sense of service and desire to give back. Engaging them in your team allows them to still feel connected to an organization they were so actively involved with during college.

Act Before They Graduate

As team members are getting ready to graduate make sure they log into their online account at www.sife.org and change their status from "student" to "alumni." This step is important as this will also help your faculty track your alumni through the new online faculty tool section of the SIFE website. In addition, your alumni will now be connected to the SIFE Alumni Network and will continue to receive important information including job postings, event information, announcements the Alumni E-Newsletter and much more.

Be proactive in promoting the opportunities for your current team members to stay involved after graduation. By planting the seed while they are still in school it will help them see and understand the importance of staying involved after they graduate.

To show appreciation of graduating team members who have given many hours of service to your team plan a end of year banquet or picnic. This event or milestone allows you an opportunity to celebrate with all your members while recognizing your seniors for their hard work and dedication. You

could also invite your alumni to attend this event to join in the celebration. In addition, this would be a great time to present awards to current members and alumni.

Steps to Changing Your Status

1. Log into your account at www.sife.org
 2. Select "Account" on the left hand menu
 3. Select "Edit My Information" at the top of the screen
 4. Click "Select" under "Education Information"
 5. Change status from "student: to "alumni"
 6. Finally click "Save Student Changes"
- Note: Email sifealumni@sife.org if you forgot your username and/or password

How to stay connected to your SIFE Alumni

The first step in staying in touch with your alumni is to develop a tracking system. This will help your team to be able to better communicate with your alumni to keep them up-to-date about your SIFE team and activities that are taking place.

You may also consider working with your school's Alumni Office. Many schools track this information so it would be a good place to start to locate past SIFE alumni as you develop your list.

Tracking System

As students graduate many of them will change addresses, phone numbers and even email addresses. It is important to collect permanent contact information before they graduate and you lose contact with them forever. Please keep in mind many universities turn off students email addresses within a few months after they graduate, which is why you need to make sure you have a permanent email address for each graduating team member.

Developing a tracking system could be as easy as keeping a spreadsheet with a tab for each year. Basic information to track would include name, company, title, preferred address, phone number and email address. Included at the end of this document you will find a sample spreadsheet to get you started.

In addition to developing a tracking system, you should also consider a way for alumni to update their information on a regular base. People are constantly changing jobs and addresses. You will want to make it easy for them update their information. For example, you might assign a team

member to serve as your Alumni Relations Director. Their role could be to manage all communication and information related to your alumni including keeping track of current contact information.

Your faculty advisor can also utilize the faculty tools available online which gives them access to all the student and alumni records for your SIFE team. This is a great place to start building your contact list, especially if you have an established team and are trying to locate members who graduated a while ago.

Communication

Once you know who your alumni are and how to reach them then you will need to develop a communications plan. Communicating with your alumni regularly will keep them up-to-date about your team and provide them an opportunity to stay involved.

You might think about developing a monthly newsletter. The newsletter could include current and future projects, team leader and member information, updates about your college/university, special events like a fundraiser you are doing, and how you did at competition. This newsletter would also be a great way to communicate with your Business Advisory Board members.

Another option is to include an update about your SIFE team in your college/universities newsletter that goes out to all alumni. Check with your communications department for more information. Providing a SIFE update in your school's newsletter enables you to reach more people and you might even find non-SIFE alumni that want to get involved with your team.

How to connect with Local SIFE Alumni

To find SIFE alumni in your local area, please contact the Alumni Contact for SIFE USA, Angie Sinclair at asinclair@sife.org

Ways to utilize SIFE Alumni

- Ask to serve on your Business Advisory Board (see BAB Best Practice Guide)
- Volunteer for a project
- Help with a special project (annual fund, homecoming game fundraiser, etc)
- Prepare the team for competition
- Serve as a guest speaker
- Mentor current team members
- Provide team with project ideas

- Offer team members career advice
- Help recruit new team members

How to keep your SIFE Alumni engaged with your SIFE team

Keep in mind that most of your alumni may not be living in the immediate vicinity of your college/university anymore. Therefore, you need to make sure to provide different opportunities to keep both local alumni and long distance alumni engaged. Now, just because an alumnus doesn't live close to your school doesn't mean they cannot stay involved. What it does mean is you will need to utilize technology and other methods to reach those alumni. Think about using technology such as social networking sites and discussion boards to communicate with alumni.

As mentioned above it is very important to communicate with your alumni on a regular basis. This will keep them up-to-date on what is going on especially if they cannot physically be there to attend meetings or events.

Social Events

In addition to asking your alumni to serve on your Business Advisory Board or help with a project you can also keep them engaged by planning social events for them to attend. Alumni like reconnecting with old friends and reminiscing about the good old days. So, arrange a social where your alumni can get together socially to network and catch up.

You might also plan social events around activities already taking place on your campus such as homecoming week or graduation. Since alumni might already be planning to attend these events you could plan a SIFE social to attend while they are in town.

Provide recognition opportunities

As SIFE students you like to be recognized for your efforts. Well, alumni are the same way. They too like to be recognized for doing a good job or for taking their personal time to contribute to a cause. So show your appreciation and provide recognition opportunities.

You could create an award for Most Active Alumni of the Year to be given to the alumnus who has contributed the most to your SIFE team during that academic year. Another idea is to present your alumni with an award/certificate for their continued support and dedication to your team.

SIFE USA also recognizes our alumni who have continued to stay involved and support the SIFE mission. Consider nominating one of your alumni for the SIFE Alumnus/Alumna of the Year Award Sponsored by American Greetings. This award recognizes the achievements of one outstanding Alumnus/Alumna who has used his/her SIFE

experience to excel in life and his/her chosen career and who has continued to make a difference in the lives of others. For more information on this award please refer to the SIFE USA Competition, Awards & Scholarship Guide.

Best Practices from other SIFE teams

- ❖ Plan an Alumni Reunion every couple of years for a day or a weekend which could include activities, a work/community service day, dinners, slide shows from their days on the team
- ❖ Have your Alumni participate in presentation team selection and rehearsals
- ❖ Get Alumni involved in fundraisers
- ❖ Invite Alumni to travel with your team to competition for support
- ❖ Have Alumni events around homecoming or other major events on campus
- ❖ Create an Alumni Facebook group

How to Connect with SIFE USA

There are many ways to stay connected to SIFE USA after your graduate. One of the biggest ways SIFE alumni give back is by judging at SIFE USA Regional Competitions, the SIFE USA National Exposition and/or the SIFE World Cup. Each spring, you will receive an invitation to participate as a judge. Your knowledge of the SIFE program provides valuable insight into the judging process.

Another way to stay connected is to serve as a volunteer at a SIFE event. It takes many people to successfully run the SIFE competitions and we are always looking for volunteers to help. If you are interested in volunteering, contact the SIFE USA Alumni Contact, Angie Sinclair at asinclair@sife.org

Changing your status from “student” to “alumni” and keeping your information current will ensure you receive the most up-to-date information from the SIFE Alumni Network including job postings, event information, special announcements, the SIFE Alumni E-Newsletter and much more.

Finally, SIFE USA is now offering the purchase of a SIFE medallion for graduation (see below). For more information about pricing, shipping and payment, contact Ben April at Crown Trophy at crownball@aol.com.





YOUR INSTITUTION
NAME HERE

**Gratefully acknowledges
and thanks**

**John Smith
SIFE Alumnus
Class of 2000**

*For his time and effort working with
[Insert School Name] SIFE Team*

Jennifer Jackson
[Student Leader's Title]

Sally Smith,
Sam Walton Fellow and Faculty Advisor to [Insert School's Name] SIFE Team

Date



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ABC University Newsletter

September 2009 Edition

Calendar

September

- 1 Kick off meeting
- 7 Cash Wash Fundraiser
- 14—16 Let's Can Hunger
Food Drive
- 25 BAB Meeting

Feature Article

This would be a great place to tell more about an upcoming project(s) the team is working on and how your alumni can help. Be sure to give a project description, dates and a way to contact you if they want to get involved.

Team Member Highlight

Highlight a team member so your alumni have a chance to get to know your current team members. You may start with your leadership team and project managers.

Project Highlight

Highlight a successful project including the audience you worked with, a description of the project and the impact you had. It is always great to highlight successes.

Insert picture from project here

For more information about the ABC SIFE Team, projects or how to get involved contact Bob Smith at bsmith@abcuniversity.edu.