Cultivating the next generation of ecological restoration professionals and leaders
What is the SER Student Association program?

SER’s Student Association Program provides an opportunity for students interested in ecological restoration and related fields to become involved in SER’s global network, participate in SER conferences and events, and take advantage of SER resources. Organized and run entirely by the students themselves, student associations can be formed at any accredited academic institution, and provide a means for those students interested in pursuing a career in some facet of ecological restoration to come together in a likeminded group. The program was established in 2007 and can be formed by a motivated student group in collaboration with faculty and with support from their host institution.

Involvement in SER provides students with a number of valuable resources and opportunities. At SER’s biennial World Conference, students are able to share their knowledge and experiences, interact with other student associations, and network with restoration experts from around the world. Wherever possible, student associations are affiliated with SER regional chapters, which provide students with access to experts in their region and opportunities to participate in chapter conferences, leadership, and activities. Engaging with a student association is also a great way to build leadership skills. In addition to developing those skills specifically through your work with the student association, many SER chapters have dedicated emerging professional positions within their leadership structure, as does SER Global.

Not only do student associations connect budding restoration professionals with SER’s global community, they also provide a means for students to organize hands-on activities in their own communities and pursue professional development opportunities as a collective. Existing SER student associations have organized a variety of activities, including: volunteer and social events, native plant sales, restoration projects, workshops, roundtable discussions, presentations from expert restorationists, career fairs, and fundraising activities, among others. SER is also working to create opportunities for student associations to develop partnerships for long-term restoration monitoring and research with nearby land/water managers who are implementing restoration projects.

Fee Structure and Basic Requirements:

Student associations are officially recognized within SER but operate under the rules that govern student organizations at their academic institutions. Each student association pays a base US$260 annual membership fee to SER to receive a variety of benefits (detailed below). Student associations may also apply for a reduced need-based equity rate of US$120.
The annual base fee covers the cost of membership for the student association’s faculty advisor and membership for all participating students. These individuals must create a profile under the Student Association group account on the SER.org platform to receive benefits and be recognized as active members of SER/SER Student Association. The student association should identify at least three student leaders (e.g. President, Vice President, and Secretary) upon joining or renewing the association’s membership. When the student leader leaves, the association must appoint a new leader to take their place and inform SER of the change.

CERPIT

Universities with relevant ecological or ecosystem restoration degree programs also have the option to enter into a paired agreement with SER to enable graduates of the degree program to receive Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner-in-Training (CERPIT) status with application fees waived. This partnership requires a formal MOU with SER and includes annual payment from the University for: 1) the student association (all benefits as outlined below), 2) annual degree program curriculum alignment, 3) student and emerging professional membership fee waivers for up to 40 recent graduates per year, and 4) CERPIT application fee waivers for up to 40 qualified recent graduates per year. The fee for this five-year program is US$10,000 for year 1 and US$4,000 per year for years 2-5. Universities may also request a need-based equity rate. Contact certification@ser.org for more information on developing an academic partnership.

Expectations of SER for its Student Associations:

SER expects each of its student associations to organize a structured leadership, hold regular association meetings and activities, and participate in the international and regional activities of the Society. Each student association is encouraged to create bylaws and guiding documents upon formation. As a network of students interested in beginning their career in ecological restoration, SER encourages the leaders of its student associations to connect with new and existing SER student associations through the tools provided by SER, such as discussion forums and groups on ser.org, or join the Students and Emerging Professionals Committee.

Every 2 years SER holds a membership election to determine the SER Board of Directors (the leadership of SER). SER encourages every member of the association to vote in the election, including all Student Association members. Additionally, individual members or student associations can nominate any student of SER for consideration as the Emerging Professional Representative on the SER Board of Directors. The Emerging Professional Representative participates as an official SER Board member for a 2-year term and would represent the interests of all emerging professionals, including SER student associations and student members. The Emerging Professional Representative also guides the SER Student and Emerging Professionals (SEP) committee. Student associations and individual student association members are encouraged to get involved and partner with their local
chapter, including, as appropriate, nominating students to run for emerging professional seats on the chapter Board of Directors.

Contact your Regional Chapter to become involved.

**Expectations of SER for Faculty Advisors to the Student Association**

As part of the Student Association fee, the Faculty Advisor receives full membership in SER. SER expects the faculty advisor and/or sponsoring academic department to provide support and advice to the student association leadership, including helping create continuity from year to year for the student association chapter as student leadership changes. The faculty advisor and sponsoring academic department are also encouraged to facilitate hands-on engagement in restoration practice and research for student association members, and to assist with any university-specific requirements for student organizations, and assist with payment of annual SER membership dues.

In addition, SER encourages faculty advisors to provide mentorship to students in the context of high quality ecological restoration and restoration research, including restoration consistent with the **SER International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration**. SER also encourages faculty advisors to, for example, support students with submission of papers and posters to SER chapter and regional conferences, help identify funding for students to participate in conferences, and help identify potential one-time capstone projects for students and long-term research partnerships that both the faculty advisor and a succession of students can participate in over the life of the project. If the university is also participating with SER in any CERPIT program as described above, the faculty advisor or their designee would also fulfill all necessary obligations (e.g., submitting restoration program requirements for annual review, submitting list of all graduating students successfully completing requirements for CERPIT).

**What are the Benefits of Starting or Joining a Student Association?**

**General Student Association Benefits:**

Universities partner with SER to train the next generation of restoration ecologists. By aligning your institution with SER and providing your students with the opportunity to get involved in the preeminent organization advancing the science, practice, and policy of this field, you are fostering professional networks, providing mentoring, creating opportunities, and setting your students ahead of the pack as they enter the global workforce.

Included in the annual fee, student associations are afforded a number of benefits as a group within the Society. Overall student association benefits include:

- Complimentary individual membership for the faculty advisor (US$89 value)
- SER Membership benefits for all student association members (US$37 value per student)
Official recognition as a student association of SER
Listing in SER’s Academic Directory
A group page on SER’s Website (contact membership@ser.org for details)
Permission to use the SER student association name & official SER logo
Ability to submit articles and association updates for consideration in SER’s quarterly e-magazine, SERNews

Networking and Participation Benefits

SER student associations play a special role in SER’s World Conference on Ecological Restoration as leaders of SER’s student community. Student associations can also connect with their local SER chapter and participate in regional conferences and events. Below is a list of conference and networking benefits for student associations.

- Participate in SER regional and world conferences (all benefits below apply to SER world conferences; regional conference benefits are chapter-specific) including:
  - Attend SER Conferences at a discounted member rate
  - Assist with planning student and emerging professional sessions
  - Participate in SER’s student and emerging professional awards programs
  - Submit abstracts for posters and oral presentations
  - Network at student and emerging professional mixers and student association meetings
  - Apply for travel grant awards
  - Apply to participate as a volunteer at a further reduced or complimentary rate
- Access discounted member rates to other SER conferences and events
- Access discounted member rates for CERP/CERPIT application and maintenance fees
- Network with other student leaders through a student association discussion group

Benefits to Student Members

Each individual student member of the student association, as well as the faculty advisor, receives all the benefits of SER membership.

- Subscription to SER’s quarterly e-magazine, SERNews
- Subscription to the journal Restoration Ecology
- Access to SER’s online Career Center, where students can search job postings, post their resumes for free, sign up for job alerts, and search for internship, volunteer, and training listings
- A 25% discount to ALL Island Press books, including those in SER’s series The Science and Practice of Ecological Restoration
- and much more!
How do I Start a Student Association at my Institution?

Student associations can be started by any group of interested students at any academic institution. There are four steps to becoming a recognized Student Association.

**Step 1:** To get started, your group must be in compliance with the rules and regulations for student associations set out by SER. Each student association must agree to adopt, in principle, SER’s governing documents, mission, and vision. Please read the following rules and regulations thoroughly:

1. Student associations must have a designated faculty advisor who is willing to mentor and sponsor the student association and its members. The chosen faculty advisor's membership is included with the annual association fee
2. Student associations must be registered as an official student group at their home academic institution and be in compliance with their institution's rules
3. The student association must designate three leaders annually (leaders can serve more than one year)
4. Participating students must be matriculating in a degree seeking program at the academic institution affiliated with the student association
5. The student association agrees to provide information to the SER Board of Directors (specifically the SER Student and Emerging Professionals Representative) or SER staff upon request
6. The student association affiliation may be suspended or revoked by the SER Board of Directors at any time if their operations do not adhere to SER’s bylaws, policies, or purposes or for jeopardizing the Society fiscally or legally
7. The student association agrees to the following:
   - To relay any change in the association leadership and general membership to SER
   - To coordinate a master membership list with SER’s Membership Department at least once a year
   - To provide SER with a quarterly update of their activities, status, and any other necessary information
   - Share relevant information from the SER headquarters or regional chapter with their participating students

**Step 2:** Once you have determined you are eligible and have registered as an official student organization within your home academic institution, your faculty advisor will need to sign the Student Association Formation Letter (attached) and submit it to membership@ser.org for approval from SER’s Director of Membership and Strategic Development. Please allow at least 1-2 weeks for your application to be approved.

**Step 3:** Once your formation letter has been countersigned by SER and your faculty advisor, a student leader or faculty advisor will need to complete the Student Association Membership Form online and remit the annual fee. The form will be provided upon approval outlined in step 2.
**Step 4:** Coordinate online enrollment of your association’s membership with SER’s membership department via email to membership@ser.org. Be sure to identify the faculty advisor, three student leaders, and all regular members of your association.

**Payment**

To remit payment, your student leader or faculty advisor should first have contact with SER’s Membership Department (membership@ser.org). Once you have completed steps one and two, SER will send you a link to the online Student Association Membership Form. Using SER’s form you can remit payment by credit card online or request an invoice and send payment via check or bank transfer.

All checks should be made payable to the Society for Ecological Restoration and mailed to our headquarters:

ATTN: Membership  
Society for Ecological Restoration  
1133 15th St NW  
Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005

*Contact SER's Director of Membership and Strategic Development with any questions or concerns you might have at membership@ser.org or call (202) 299-9518 from 9-5 ET.*