SOCIETY FOR ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION
STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Students from the University of Lagos (Nigeria) Student Association

STUDENT ASSOCIATION INFORMATION HANDBOOK

Cultivating the next generation of ecological restoration professionals and leaders

Student Association Information

What is the SER Student Association program?

The Society for Ecological Restoration's (SER) Student Association Program provides an opportunity for students interested in ecological restoration and related fields to become involved in our 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 like minded 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. While Student Associations may be regionally focused, they differ from SER Chapters in that they are not separate legal entities which is why they do not use "Chapter in their name.

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.

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 annual membership dues to SER to receive a variety of benefits (detailed below). Student associations may also apply for a reduced cost need-based equity rate. Current dues can be viewed on the website here: https://www.ser.org/page/BusinessMembership

Note: A complimentary 1 year membership is available to Student Associations who would like to participate in the SER Community but are unable to pay through our Open Doors Initiative. Email membership@ser.org to learn more about this program.

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.

Certified Ecological Restoration Practitioner-in-Training (CERPIT) Program:

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. Academic Alignment requires a formal MOU with SER and includes annual payment from the University for initial curriculum review for integration with tCertified Ecological Restoration Practitioner in Training (CERPIT) Program and maintenance of the program each year.

Universities can also opt to cover fees for recent graduates and further streamline the process with an Academic and Professional Partnership that includes: 1) the student association (all benefits as outlined below), 2) an initial degree program curriculum alignment, 3) student and emerging professional membership fee waivers for up to 20 recent graduates per year, and 4) CERPIT application fee waivers for up to 20 qualified recent graduates per year. Full details on Academic Alignment options can be found at: https://www.ser.org/general/custom.asp?page=academic-partnerships Contact certification@ser.org for more information on fees for this project.

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 SER. 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 Connect, 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 nominating students to run for emerging professional seats on the chapter Board of Directors. Contact your Regional Chapter to become involved.

Inaugural Event from Grand Valley State University Student Association

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).

Students from Yale University Student Association

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
- SER Membership benefits for all student association members
- A listing on SER's Student Associations webpage
- Permission to use the SER student association name & SER Student Association logo
- Ability to submit articles and updates for consideration in 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 for CERP/CERPIT application and maintenance fees
- Network with other student leaders through our student association discussion group on SER Connect

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.

- Access to SERConnect and a dedicated group for Student Associations, on SER's members' only community for collaboration, knowledge sharing and networking
- Subscription to SER's quarterly e-magazine, SERNews
- Subscription to the journal Restoration Ecology
- Access to SER's online Job Board, 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 Practise of Ecological Restoration"

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. Below are the 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:

- 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
- Student associations must be registered as an official student group at their home academic institution and be in compliance with their institution's rules
- The student association must designate three leaders annually (leaders can serve more than one year)
- Participating students must be enrolled as a student in a degree-seeking program at the academic institution affiliated with the student association
- 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
- 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
- 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 an annual 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. 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 enrolment 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 and Marketing 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
1630 Connecticut Ave NW, Suite 300
Washington, D.C.
20009
USA

Contact SER's Membership Department with any questions or concerns you might have at membership@ser.org or call (202) 299-9518 from 9-5 Eastern Standard Time.

Students from Niagara College Student Association