

"Alumnae clubs thrive for a variety of reasons, from providing a way to give back to the College, to the social opportunities they provide, to the community service they perform. But they all succeed because of the lasting power of the Saint Mary's experience -- an experience that brings women of all ages and backgrounds together." "To Each Her Own," *Courier*, Fall 1992.

The Alumnae Club

The Heart of the Alumnae Association

The mission of the Alumnae Association today remains linked to that of the early days: ***to support and advance the mission of Saint Mary's College.*** The Alumnae Association is potentially the most powerful constituency of Saint Mary's College. It is a group of women with a wealth of talent, experience, know-how, and access to innumerable resources, and it can do much to perpetuate the legacy of Saint Mary's College.

The Association exists to serve both the College and alumnae in a variety of ways -- it offers alumnae access to the workings of the institution so they can participate in the shaping of the future of their alma mater, and it offers its members much that is of value and that can contribute directly to the quality of their lives.

The heart of the Alumnae Association is the alumnae club. As a representative body of Saint Mary's, the alumnae club is of importance to both alumnae and the College. Just as Reunions bring alumnae back to campus, alumnae clubs bring an opportunity to alumnae to actively participate in the life of Saint Mary's. They create communities of College support and spirit and provide opportunities for social, spiritual, intellectual and professional enrichment. Further, alumnae clubs can be a tremendous vehicle for student recruitment and also provide publicity and goodwill for the College in the local community.

Saint Mary's alumnae clubs depend totally on the initiative and enthusiasm of alumnae. Without exception, alumnae clubs are formed because at

least one person in a particular location feels the need to renew her ties to Saint Mary's, to return the gifts Saint Mary's gave her, and to help the Saint Mary's tradition live on. The fact that there are now more than 57 alumnae clubs and contact areas in the Saint Mary's alumnae club network, is proof that maintaining close ties among alumnae and with the College, is of utmost importance.

The Purpose of Alumnae Clubs

The purpose of an alumnae club is, quite simply, two-fold: ***to serve the needs of the College and to serve the needs of alumnae.*** How the club will fulfill this purpose will vary from club to club.

Traditionally, the local club has provided the stimulus for camaraderie among alumnae. Although this task is still a very important one, women's lives and interests have changed over the last 20 years, and the perception of the club as a social unit is, generally, no longer strong enough to make alumnae club involvement a high priority. Therefore, to insure the continued growth and success of the club, each club must derive its own identity and focus from a careful evaluation of the attitudes, needs and concerns of local alumnae. **(SEE SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE, APPENDIX.)**

Further, the club leadership should articulate in writing and communicate to club members the specific purpose and focus of the local alumnae club, as expressed by the membership at large.

The following suggestions are offered as a guide to club leaders in determining the specific focus of their alumnae club:

1. To maintain ties with other alumnae and with the College through the organization of club events and activities that offer social, spiritual, and/or intellectual enrichment for alumnae;
 2. To promote Saint Mary's College as an outstanding Catholic women's college by serving as a center of public relations for the College in the local community;
 3. To influence young women to select Saint Mary's for an undergraduate education;
 4. To financially support the needs of Saint Mary's College through the establishment of a club scholarship, contributions to the Alumnae Memorial Scholarship fund, and/or regular contributions to The Annual Fund;
 5. To provide opportunities for personal and professional networking;
 6. To foster a continuing relationship with Saint Mary's students;
 7. To represent Saint Mary's in service to the local community.
3. Survey local alumnae by mail or e-mail to determine interest, verify correct information on the address list and solicit volunteers.
 4. Identify potential leaders. Elect/appoint at least two officers (i.e. president** and treasurer).
 5. Submit in writing to the Assistant Director of Alumnae Relations and Alumnae Board, a request for club status. Final approval is subject to a vote by the Board of Directors.
 6. Adopt a code of bylaws which articulates the purpose of your club and provides a structure for the organization.
 7. Create a calendar of events. A club in good standing must have at least one meeting per year. (**SEE SECTION 3 FOR PROGRAM IDEAS and the APPENDIX FOR SAMPLES OF NEWSLETTERS.**)
 8. Establish a dues schedule and set up a club checking and/or savings account. (The alumnae office will cover initial organizational expenses, but the club should become self-sufficient as soon as possible.)
 9. Comply with the Alumnae Association's "Standards for Alumnae Clubs."

TO FORM (OR REVITALIZE) AN ALUMNAE CLUB

The Alumnae Relations Office depends on the voluntary initiative of Saint Mary's alumnae to form an alumnae club in their area. The success of the club, in turn, depends on the contagious enthusiasm and loyal leadership of the organizers, plus a solid organizational framework. The following guidelines will assist you in either organizing a new club or revitalizing an old one.

1. Notify the Alumnae Relations Office of your interest in forming a club. The office will then work with you to determine alumnae interest in your area and to set up an organizational framework.
2. Provide a list of zip codes or a zip code range incorporating a desired geographical area. A computer address list of potential members will be printed based on the zip code range established.

** In the event that no one in the club is willing to take on the role of president, it is acceptable to operate with a "leader" or "point person." However, the club should continually strive to fill the official role of president.

STANDARDS FOR ALUMNAE CLUBS

Organization

1. Formation of a club is contingent upon notice to the Alumnae Relations Office and approval by the Alumnae Board of Directors.
2. Each club will establish at least two officer positions (i.e., president and treasurer). Depending on the size of the club and the number of activities, it is recommended that a board of directors, consisting of officers, committee chairs, and various appointed or elected members, also be established to assist in

- the operation of the club.
3. The Alumnae Relations Office recommends that each club adopts bylaws. They should define its purpose, membership, officers and duties, terms of office/succession, procedures and standing rules. Bylaws must be in accordance with the bylaws of the Alumnae Association. For samples of club bylaws, contact the Alumnae Office.

Finance

- Each club is expected to cover all expenses related to its operation.
- Each club will establish a club treasury and dues structure to sustain the operation of the club. Suggested annual dues are \$20-\$25 (depending on club size).

Club Programs and Activity

- Each club will meet at least once a year. (Suggested club year is June 1 — May 31.)

Communication

- Communicate with all local alumnae at least once a year, via club newsletter, event invitation, e-mail or telephone tree. (**SEE APPENDIX FOR SAMPLE NEWSLETTERS.**)
- Following every activity, each club will complete an “Activity Report” Form and send it to the Alumnae Relations Office. (The form can be downloaded from the alumnae office’s web site at: <http://www3.saintmarys.edu/alumnae-club-resources>. Or contact the Alumnae Relations Office for a hard copy.)
- Each club will complete the “Alumnae Club Annual Report” Form and submit it to the Alumnae Relations Office each August.

[Club presidents will have several opportunities throughout the year to communicate with a member of the Alumnae Board of Directors, who is assigned as the liaison to the club. The Alumnae Board member generally contacts the club president each fall and spring to get updates on club activity, report on the semi-annual Alumnae Board meetings, and to provide an opportunity for the club president to bring alumnae and club-related issues, suggestions, questions or concerns to the attention of the Alumnae Board.]

CONTACT AREAS

There is no minimum number needed to establish a formal alumnae club. However, smaller clubs face greater challenges maintaining an active level of alumnae participation, fulfilling alumnae club standards, and passing on club leadership responsibilities. Thus, contact areas are generally formed in areas where there are only a few alumnae or where a formal alumnae club structure is impractical or difficult to maintain.

Contact areas are an integral and vital part of the alumnae club network. They provide an important link to Saint Mary's for alumnae seeking the treasured Saint Mary's connection.

Although contact areas are not required to maintain the same standards as alumnae clubs, the alumna representative who serves as "area contact" is encouraged to keep in touch with alumnae in the contact/club area and to offer occasional opportunities for alumnae to come together in the name of Saint Mary's.

The name of the area contact is listed on the roster of alumnae club presidents and she serves as a key resource for alumnae and students at the national level. Because we believe that clubs are the logical place to network, area contacts are expected to do their best to assist individuals who may contact them with questions about job opportunities and/or relocation to the contact area.

All contact areas receive the same service from the Alumnae Relations Office as do the clubs: lists and mailing labels for alumnae, students and parents; printing and mailing services; news about the College; news about other clubs; visits from Alumnae Relations Office staff; plus updated editions of the Alumnae Club Handbook.

Standards for Contact Areas

- Serve as the liaison between the College/Alumnae Relations Office and local alumnae.
- Serve as the local Saint Mary's contact for alumnae seeking professional and personal networking assistance.
- Complete the "Contact Area Annual Report" Form and submit it to the Alumnae Relations Office each August.

Suggested, but not required:

- Communicate with all local alumnae at least once a year, via newsletter or telephone.
- Offer occasional activities/programs that will enable area alumnae to maintain their ties with each other and with the College.

THE ALUMNAE CLUB ANNUAL REPORT

The "Annual Report" is a valuable document for both the alumnae club and the Alumnae Relations Office. It is designed to accomplish several things at once:

- It updates Alumnae Relations Office files and enables the Assistant Director to keep abreast of alumnae club activity nationwide.
- It provides the club with a written summary of the year's activity (be sure to keep a copy).
- It serves as a nomination form for the "Club of the Year" Award and broadens the base of clubs considered for the award.

The form is due in the Alumnae Office by the end of August, and reflects alumnae club activity from June 1 through May 31 of the previous year. At the fall meeting of the Alumnae Board of Directors, the Alumnae Board Selection and Awards Committee uses the "Annual Report" Form to evaluate all clubs for the "Club of the Year" Award.

Consistent and accurate reporting is vital to the continued success of the alumnae club program. The form is mailed to all club presidents and area contacts every August and is available online from the Alumnae Relations web site at: <http://www3.saintmarys.edu/alumnae-club-resources>.

CLUB ORGANIZATION "AT-A-GLANCE"

I. Purpose and Mission of the Local Club

- Should reflect the mission of the College and the mission and purpose of the Alumnae Association. (See Preface of Club Handbook.)

II. Leadership

- Have structure: board of directors, officers, committee chairs, event chairs.
- Provide job descriptions for club positions. Give titles to jobs.
- Establish bylaws. Spell out terms of office as established in bylaws. Plan for succession in leadership. Officers are not "for life."
- Board officers and committee chairs should be representative of age and geographics.
- Delegate responsibility. Spread the work. Sometimes it's easier to fill chairmanship than officer slots.

III. Planning

- Set goals for the club year: could be fundraising, service, networking, striving for "Club of the Year" award, etc.
- Plan more than one activity at a time. Plan early.
- Re-define what success means to your club. Is your event successful because a lot of people attended the event, or is it successful because the few people who came had a lot of fun and really appreciated the opportunity to get together with other Saint Mary's alumnae?
- Survey membership for needs, talents, skills, leadership potential
- Evaluate organization and programs. Be willing to make changes.

IV. Finances

- Establish a treasury and a dues schedule. \$20 to \$25 seems to be a common amount.
- Collect dues annually.
- Create a budget for the club year and the events
- Have a fund raiser
- Donate to The Annual Fund, the Alumnae Memorial Scholarship, or the Student Emergency Contingency Fund if the club is unable to establish a scholarship fund

V. Communication

- Capitalize on intimacy, personal attention and contact.
- Survey your membership, (but not too often).
- Take advantage of technology (e-mail, social networking, and web) to reduce printing and mailing costs.
- Send out a newsletter at least once a year, giving an overview of plans for the coming club year. Send out a newsletter more frequently, if finances permit.
- Print a club directory. Include all members' names. Offer it free to dues paying members and charge to non-dues paying members.
- Don't forget reports to the *Courier* for the Club News section.

VI. Resources

- Confer with Alumnae Relations Office. Don't be hesitant to ask for assistance.
- Keep in contact with the Alumnae Board liaison to your club
- Use the Alumnae Club Handbook for planning and general reference.
- Work with the alumnae office to schedule speakers from the College –administrators, faculty, even the College president.
- Keep detailed records of events for future reference/future chair persons

ALUMNAE “CLUB OF THE YEAR” AWARD

The Alumnae Association Board of Directors established the “Club of the Year” Award to recognize individual clubs for outstanding effort, solid organizational structure, diversity of club activities, and service to the College and/or local community.

At the fall Alumnae Board meeting, the Alumnae Board Selection and Awards Committee evaluates each club based on the "Annual Report Form" submitted by clubs, as well as nominations from club presidents and Alumnae Board liaisons. Selection of the award winner is subject to approval by the full Board

Evaluation Criteria for “Club of the Year” Award

Diversity of Club Activities

Ideally, a club should strive to provide a variety of social, educational, spiritual, and/or professional networking events. Percentage of alumnae turnout is not necessarily a factor. However, if it has been proven that turnout is greatest only when certain activities are planned, then obviously that should be documented.

- Number and type of events planned between June 1 and May 31.
- Description of each event: Was it successful? Why or why not?

Philanthropic Endeavors

- Does the club contribute financially to the College each year?
- Does the club support key College initiatives?
- Does the club provide a scholarship for a student from the club area?
- Does the club provide support and service to the local community?

Organizational

- Number of years club has been in existence.
- Participation by local club members.
- Does the club have leadership and succession plans?
- Number and type of officers, length of term, and provisions for passing on club leadership.
- Types of successful activities during the club year.
- Does the club publish a newsletter? How often?
- Is there a club directory? How often is it updated?
- Does the club have a website?
- Does the club have a treasury and dues structure to sustain its operation?

