



NEAT Grant Project Final Report

Project Title: Student Alumni Leadership Council

1. **PURPOSE** The Office of Alumni Relations at University of Detroit Mercy has housed two organizations out of our office for nearly 15 years: The Student Alumni Association (SAA) and the Presidential Ambassadors (PA or PAs). The SAA has historically been involved with planning student programming to increase awareness about our Alumni Relations Office, as well as create opportunities for students and alumni to interact. The PA program consists of students nominated by deans and University leadership to attend alumni and donor events, represent the student body at these events, and network with distinguished alumni.

Based on student feedback and our desired outcomes for each of these programs, we decided to merge SAA and PA to create the Student Alumni Leadership Council (SALC). The purpose of the SALC is to (a) represent the student body and the President's Office at various alumni and donor functions in order to further University priorities, (b) educate the Detroit Mercy student body about alumni engagement through programming and philanthropy initiatives, (c) foster a positive relationship between the student body and the Office of University Advancement to create a culture of philanthropy and encourage involvement as alumni, and (d) provide leadership opportunities for members to grow professionally and become successful and engaged alumni.

2. **SCOPE** SALC is a student-lead organization (with staff advisors from the Office of Alumni Relations and the Office of Annual Giving). SALC consists of three committees: the Event Planning Committee, the Philanthropy Committee, and the Alumni Engagement Committee.

The Programming Committee plans, promotes, and executes SALC events aimed at engaging and educating students, furthering philanthropy efforts, connecting students and alumni, instilling University pride, and preparing and celebrating seniors.

The Philanthropy Committee oversees efforts to create a culture of philanthropy among students and demonstrates the importance of alumni philanthropy. This committee also plans and implements the annual Day of Giving event.

The Alumni Engagement Committee's focus is to engage alumni with students and the University. This committee works with the other two committees to determine ways in which alumni can be involved in all SALC initiatives in a meaningful and impactful way.

- 3. PROCESS** Beginning in January 2020, we worked with a merge committee consisting of Alumni Relations staff members, current SAA members, current PAs and other student leaders across campus. The merge committee established a new leadership structure for SALC, established requirements of membership, a comprehensive nomination, recruitment, application, and interview process, and drafted the SALC Constitution and bylaws.

In the spring of 2020, we held a virtual kickoff event to introduce the new organization to current SAA and PA members. Current members had the opportunity to apply or leadership roles and join committees. Then we began planning for the 2020-2021 academic year.

The first year of SALC was full of trial and errors. Not only were we creating a new organization and creating new practices and structures as we went, but we were doing it all virtually through a pandemic. By the middle of the academic year, we reorganized the leadership roles and revised membership requirements to reflect the reality of operating a student org virtually. As we move into the summer and beginning planning for the 2021-2022 academic year, we are prepared to further shift our practices and transition into in-person engagement with students and alumni.

- 4. SUMMARY OF IMPACTS** Overall, the merge of the two organizations and the creation of SALC has been a positive change for all involved. The student members have more opportunities to interact with each other, work together as a team to set goals and make plans to implement their goals. Students have asked for more opportunities to take on leadership roles and develop their skills as leaders as they transition into the work force. SALC allows ambitious students to hold a leadership position and lead their peers. We also provided several professional development opportunities for all students to learn from experience speakers on topics such as mastering public speaking, project management, and delegation.

One of SALC's goals is to educate the current student body about what it means to be a Detroit Mercy alumni. SALC highlights how alumni give back to their university so that students understand that their connection to Detroit Mercy is life-long. Accomplishing this goal will help us to create the next generation of engaged alumni with a strong affinity to their alma mater.