



Information for Alumni Ambassadors

Thank you for your interest in serving as an Alumni Ambassador for the Stevenson Center! We appreciate your help in recruiting talented students to join our graduate programs. The purpose of this document is to provide you with relevant details.

Alumni Ambassadors are available to answer questions from prospective students. Alumni Ambassadors graduated from the Stevenson Center recently (within approximately three to five years). We plan to add other volunteer opportunities for alumni who have been in the field longer, such as a mentorship program with current students and/or an advisory board. Your service as an Alumni Ambassador can help prepare you for those roles.

The ideal cohort is nine volunteers to fully cover our three programs (Peace Corps Fellows, ACED Fellows, and Peace Corps Master's International) and original three degrees (applied economics, political science, and sociology). In other words, we seek a Peace Corps Fellows from each degree program, an ACED Fellow from each degree program, and a Peace Corps Master's International student from each degree program.

Please share any questions or suggestions so that we can improve this program!

Goals and Benefits:

Our primary goal is to streamline access to alumni for prospective students. YOU are a critical source of information about the Stevenson Center, and we hope that this direct access will better and more efficiently serve prospective students. We also hope that you will find this role meaningful and that you will benefit from sharing your experiences and staying in touch with us. As an Alumni Ambassador, you can:

- Continue to demonstrate your commitment to service and develop your résumé
- Share your expertise, to the benefit of those who wish to follow in your footsteps
- Network with each other, as well as future community and economic development professionals who are researching the Stevenson Center

Commitment:

- Serve for one year, September to August. NOTE that you may be more active between October and March. Since this is a new program, we do not have an estimate of the average time commitment. We expect there will be some months with only one or two contacts and some with many more. Our goal is a manageable time commitment, and we can adjust the program as needed to meet that goal.
- Provide biographical information, a career-appropriate photo, and e-mail address to be posted on the Stevenson Center website. Staff will send a form requesting the required information.

- Completely review:
 - [Stevenson Center website](#)
 - Program-specific PDF portfolio (to be e-mailed to you)
 - Latest [Facebook](#) postings
 - Any other updates from the Stevenson Center sent by e-mail
- Respond to queries from prospective students within 48 hours. Let staff know immediately if that is not possible. We can't over-emphasize how important it is to respond promptly. Research by the Council of Graduate Schools indicates that response speed influences attendance decisions. If you don't have time to fully answer the questions, at least acknowledge the message and let the prospective student know when she/he will hear from you in the near future. Follow through!
- Prepare to field questions by e-mail or by phone, as the applicant prefers. Only your e-mail address will be posted on the website. Depending on the number and type of questions an applicant has, she/he may request or you may suggest a phone call.
- Support and assist each other as needed.
- Respond to:
 - A very short survey every month to document: number of queries, contact method, estimated time spent, any recommendations/issues.
 - A final survey regarding your experience as an Alumni Ambassador, in terms of training/support, interactions, value, strengths, areas for improvement, etc.
 - Any requests from staff, our graduate assistants or AmeriCorps members, or our interns.

IMPORTANT Guidelines for Communicating with Prospective Students:

- Emphasize (more than once) that your perspective is your own. What you experienced in the program may or may not hold true for the prospective student. Programs and people continue to evolve over time. Also, what the prospective student brings to the Stevenson Center is not what you brought to the Stevenson Center. We value this variety!
- When initiating a phone conversation, start by asking about and affirming the potential student's current occupation or education. This exchange can help prospective students feel comfortable, while allowing you to better direct the rest of the conversation. The goal is a dialogue, rather than a one-sided lecture.
- Be ready to talk about:
 - Your overall experience
 - The curriculum, including specific classes
 - Your graduate assistantship
 - What life was like as part of the Stevenson Center at Illinois State
 - What it was like to live in Normal-Bloomington, including transportation, housing, and recreation
 - Your professional practice, whether your internship as a Fellow or your Peace Corps service as a Master's International student
 - Your capstone project or thesis
 - Advisors, professors, and staff
 - What you valued about your program and education, and what you would change
 - Your job search, current position, and future career goals
 - And more!

- Remain conscious of your audience. The prospective student may take to heart an offhand comment about the rigors of graduate school and decide never to apply, even though she/he would be perfectly capable. Your status as an alum gives you authority—please use it with care, for the good of the prospective student and the Stevenson Center. Be thoughtful about what you are communicating.
- Keep the focus on your experiences. If prospective students have questions about the current details of the programs, explain that they need to get in touch with staff. Program requirements continue to change in ways that may surprise you.
- Know that we are so, so grateful for your time and support! Thank you!