

ANIMAL LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

STUDENT CHAPTERS

Best Practices for SALDF Chapter Leadership

Best Practices for SALDF Chapter Leadership

Table of Contents

Preamble and Purpose 2

Mission Alignment and Core Values 3

Executive Board Roles & Responsibilities 3

Suggested Officer Roles and Basic Duties 3

Chapter Membership 5

Suggested Meeting Cadence and Attendance Requirements 5

Meeting Cadence 5

Attendance and Absences 6

Conduct and Ethics Standards 6

Professionalism and Representation 6

Ethics and Integrity 7

Social Media and Digital Communications 7

Suggested Best Practices for Elections and Board Transitions 7

Spring Elections 7

Timeline and Eligibility 7

Campaigning and Voting Procedures 8

Board Transitions 8

Communication and Reporting to and from the ALDF 9

Preamble and Purpose

Thank you for serving as an elected Student Animal Legal Defense Fund (SALDF) Chapter Officer. SALDF Chapters are critical for the continued growth and advancement of animal law as a field of study, a career pathway, and as a tool for advocacy.

As leaders within the law school and valuable participants in furthering ALDF's mission to advance animal law and animal protection, SALDF Chapter Officers hold a position of trust and responsibility in the animal legal community. The **Best Practices for SALDF Chapter Leadership** lays out suggested practices to help a SALDF Chapter run smoothly, and establishes the standards of integrity, respect, accountability, and ethical behavior expected of Officers.

By accepting a leadership role, Officers can foster an inclusive and professional environment in their SALDF chapter, upholding institutional and organizational standards, and helping to advance the mission of protecting the lives and interests of animals through the legal system.

Please review the following. For any questions, reach out to your ALDF representative:

Priscilla Rader Culp
Senior Law School Programs Attorney
prader@aldf.org

Mission Alignment and Core Values

SALDF Chapters are dedicated to protecting the lives and advancing the interests of animals through the legal system, including legal education, advocacy, and professional development. *Officers are expected to embody and advance this mission in all Chapter activities.*

- **Animal-Centric Mission:** Chapter activities, including events and initiatives, must align with the goal of advancing animal legal protection first and foremost.
- **Non-Animal Derived Products & Services:** In alignment with the ALDF's Anti-Cruelty and Environmental Policy, all food and beverages served at SALDF events must be strictly plant-based (vegan). Non-food or beverage products and services used as part of SALDF action must not be animal derived nor engage in animal exploitation (e.g. no leather or fur).
- **Inclusive Advocacy**: SALDF Chapters welcome students of all backgrounds, legal interests, and perspectives. Officers must maintain an inclusive, non-discriminatory environment that encourages open dialogue on animal law, policy, and ethics. The ALDF Core Values are Justice, Compassion, Commitment, Integrity, Innovation, and Balance. Chapters are encouraged to adopt these Core Values as part of their model.

Executive Board Roles & Responsibilities

SALDF Chapters are welcome to customize roles and responsibilities based on the Chapter's unique needs.

All SALDF Chapters are encouraged to have the equivalent to a President, Vice President, and Treasurer. Additional roles may include Secretary, Event Coordinator, Pro Bono Coordinator, Public Relations/Social Media Chair, 1L/2L/3L Reps, 4Le/LL.M. Reps, and any other role that the Chapter deems appropriate for the successful completion of goals.

A Chapter may combine roles if presented with limited Members or to share workload. We strongly encourage chapters with this model work to grow membership and to fill individual roles, as needed.

Chapters should have a faculty advisor listed (this does not need to be someone involved in animal law but rather someone who is able to assist with University-specific conduct and questions).

All Chapter Officers are strongly encouraged to sign up for the monthly ALDF Student eNews to stay up-to-date with important communications.

Suggested Officer Roles and Basic Duties

As above, SALDF Chapters are welcome to customize roles and responsibilities based on the Chapter's unique needs, but the following are provided as suggestions to keep the chapters running smoothly.

- President
    - **Primary Oversight:** Serves as the lead Chapter Officer. Suggested key duties may include but are not limited to:

        - Facilitates all Board and General Body meetings, unless otherwise assigned.
        - Ensures compliance with student organization policies and requirements.
        - Oversees strategic planning, setting goals, and reaching key milestones.
        - Acts as a liaison between the Chapter at-large and the ALDF, as needed, including securing grants, coordinating resources, and participating in opportunities.
        - Manages the school's unique SALDF Chapter website, including updating materials and adding events.
        - Establishes and/or manages a unique Chapter email that is passed down.
            - Check with your University to establish a .edu email. Otherwise, a Gmail or other free account is permissible.
        - Coordinates succession planning through leadership transition and Officer elections hosted in the spring.
        - Submits the annual Student Chapter Officer Update Form prior to the end of spring semester.
            - Submits all Board changes via the Form in a timely fashion.
- Vice President
    - **Primary Oversight:** Manages internal operations, supports the President, and oversees committee leads and special initiatives. Suggested key duties may include but are not limited to:
        - Presides over meetings and Chapter functions in the absence of the President.
        - Directs Chapter projects, including assigning leadership roles, managing timelines, and ensuring successful completion of the activity.
        - Manages the historical record keeping of Chapter activities, including but not limited to Board Member names (position, year), events, fundraisers, grant awards, photos, Member testimonials and quotes, any written or recorded materials, and security data.
        - Assists in monitoring Board Member accountability and compliance with established Chapter guidelines.
        - As needed, coordinates room reservations, campus permits, and co-sponsorship with other student organizations.
- Treasurer
    - **Primary Oversight:** Manages all Chapter financial affairs, budgeting, grant procurement, and reimbursements. Suggested key duties may include but are not limited to:
        - Prepares and maintains the Chapter operating budget.
        - Submits timely applications for SALDF Project Grants and University student funding allocations.
        - Tracks all expenses and fundraising, maintains physical and digital receipts, and submits financial reports, including reimbursement requests and event summaries, to the Board, University, and the ALDF as required.

- Ensures all products and services purchased comply with the Non-Animal Derived Products and Services Policy.
- Sends all Membership and grant data, event summaries, and any other materials that the Treasurer might receive to the Vice President for record keeping.

Chapter Membership

Every Chapter's continued success relies heavily on the growth and maintenance of its student members. Students are considered members of their Chapter if they are a law student in good academic standing who attends or works on at least one Chapter event or project per semester, or in accordance with the individual Chapter bylaws.

- **Member Roster:** The Vice President, or other designated Officer, is strongly encouraged to establish and maintain a secure list of Chapter members, including name, school year, and email address for each academic year.
    - **Reporting:** The Vice President, or other designated Officer, is strongly encouraged to email the Membership list to the ALDF representative prior to the end of fall and spring semesters.
- **Confidentiality:** Chapters should never distribute member information to any external third-party without consent from the individual member whose information is being shared.

Suggested Meeting Cadence and Attendance Requirements

Regular communication and campus presence are vital to promote Chapter growth, maintain momentum, and ensure operational efficiency for events and activities. It is suggested that Chapter Board Officers design and stick with a schedule for the academic year.

Meeting Cadence

- **Executive Board Meetings:** The Board should meet as a group once per month, with additional communication occurring via email or other methods. Attendance is suggested to be mandatory for all Officers, unless they have an excused reason for the absence.
- **General Body Meetings:** The Board should plan at least one introductory general body meeting for Members at the start of each semester. In addition, the Board is strongly encouraged to plan at least one meeting for Members each month except for December and the topic or purpose can be decided by the Board. Officers should make their best effort to attend at least most semester events in total.
- **SALDF Leadership Training:** At least one Officer from each Board is expected to attend the fall semester SALDF Leadership Training presented by ALDF.
- **National ALDF Events and Opportunities:** Officers are strongly encouraged to attend and participate in all ALDF-sponsored SALDF Chapter events and opportunities. The Board should ideally attend or participate in at least one ALDF-sponsored SALDF Chapter event per semester, including but not limited to Speak Out for Farmed Animals Month in October, monthly My Life as an Animal Lawyer webinars, the ALDF Student Convention,

National Justice for Animals Week in February, the ALDF Virtual Symposium, or through participation in the SALDF Book Club.

- **Succession Planning Meeting:** After elections for the following year are completed, the current Board should plan and meet with the incoming Board for leadership transition. This meeting should include pass-down information including rules and expectations, planning documents, attendance and reports, transfer of email and social media passwords, and any other materials and information necessary for a successful transition. See Elections and Board Transitions.

Attendance and Absences

- **Notification of Absence:** If an Officer cannot attend a meeting or event, they should try to notify the President, or equivalent role, in writing at least 24 hours in advance.
- **Unexcused Absences:** The Board is encouraged to set expectations for attendance, and practices around absences, and it is suggested to set a limit on unexcused absences for Officers to ensure they are engaged. For example, setting two (2) unexcused absences from Executive Board Meetings per semester as grounds for review by the rest of the Board and potential removal of the Officer from office.
- **Member Attendance Tracking:** For meetings and events, Officers are strongly encouraged to take attendance or request that attendees sign-in via a sheet or other method.
    - Regular Member attendance tracking is useful for Member Roster tracking and reporting. Refer to Chapter Membership.

Conduct and Ethics Standards

The ALDF is committed to providing law students with leadership opportunities, educational resources, and a platform to advocate for the legal protection of animals. SALDF Chapter Officers are expected to maintain high standards of integrity, professionalism, and mission alignment.

Professionalism and Representation

- **Brand and Mission Alignment:** Officers must represent the Chapter and its mission positively and accurately in all public forums, social media, campus events, and advocacy settings. SALDF Chapter Officers should never speak on behalf of the ALDF, whether implicitly or explicitly, or hold themselves out as representatives of the ALDF.
- **Respectful Communication**: Officers should engage respectfully with faculty, administration, guest speakers, fellow students, and the public, regardless of differing opinions on legal or philosophical matters.
- **Reliability and Accountability:** Officers are expected to fulfill their role-specific duties, attend meetings, communicate proactively regarding conflicts or concerns, and meet deadlines agreed upon.

Ethics and Integrity

- **Compliance with Laws and Rules.** Officers must adhere to all local, state, and federal laws, as well as University policies, student conduct codes, and ALDF national guidelines when serving as a Chapter Officer.
- **Financial Honesty:** Any Officer handling Chapter funds must maintain transparent and accurate financial records and use funds solely for authorized Chapter activities and goals.
- **Nondiscrimination and Inclusion:** Officers must not discriminate, harass, or exclude individuals based on race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, age, or veteran status.

Social Media and Digital Communications

SALDF Chapters are encouraged to utilize the SALDF Chapter website made available by ALDF, as well as to create a social media presence.

- **Confidentiality:** Officers should respect the privacy of speakers, Chapter members, and internal organizational discussions. Do not disclose confidential information without authorization.
- **Email**: Chapters are strongly encouraged to create and manage a Chapter-specific email that can carry on with the Chapter. This email should be used to handle all Chapter-related communications, planning, and document storage. Refer to the President Role and Suggested Minimum Duties.
- **Social Media Policy:** Chapters are strongly encouraged to create and manage an Instagram profile for the Chapter. If created, the Chapter must follow the @AnimalLegalDefenseFund and @ALDFStudentChapters accounts. Note that SALDF social media posts or comments should never speak on behalf of the ALDF, whether implicitly or explicitly, or hold themselves out as representatives of the ALDF.
- **Logos:** Chapters should use the SALDF logo that is provided by the ALDF. Usage of the ALDF logo is not permitted.

Suggested Best Practices for Elections and Board Transitions

Spring Elections

The Executive Board is strongly encouraged to hold elections during the spring semester. This helps to ensure fair and consistent elections, along with seamless leadership transitions that preserve institutional knowledge and the Chapter's continuation. The following are suggested minimum standards, but Chapters may create a process that works for their needs.

Timeline and Eligibility

- **Timing:** Elections should occur annually before April 15.
- **Notice:** The Executive Board should announce election dates and open nominations at least 14 days prior to voting.
- **Voter Eligibility:** Only active SALDF Members may vote. Refer to Chapter Membership.
- **Candidate Eligibility:** Candidates must be in good academic standing.

Campaigning and Voting Procedures

- **Nominations:** SALDF Members may self-nominate or nominate peers via a secured digital form. Nominations should remain open for 7 days before voting, unless for a special election.
- **Statements:** Candidates should submit a statement detailing their reason for applying, plans for the Chapter, and a commitment to animal law. Additional questions may be requested by the Board.
- **Voting:** Voting occurs via a secure digital survey ballot. Voting should remain open for at least 72 hours.
- **Outcome:** Winners are determined by a simple majority vote. In the event of a tie, the current, non-graduating Board Members will break the tie. If there are not at least two qualifying Board Members available to break a tie, the voting process should start again. Otherwise, newly elected Officers may agree to split the position.

Board Transitions

- **Succession Planning Meeting:** After voting closes and election results are confirmed, but before final examinations, the current Board should plan a Succession Planning Meeting. This meeting is encouraged to be mandatory for all current and incoming Board Officers. The faculty advisor should be invited to join, if available. This meeting should include pass-down information that includes:
    - **General Information:** The current Board should present general information on the Chapter, ALDF, and any ongoing projects or tasks that will roll into the next academic year.
    - **Transition Portfolio:** The current Board should update its Chapter's digital portfolio with timelines, notes, contacts, and any changes or additions. This portfolio should be shared with the incoming Board prior to the last day of spring semester.
    - **Account Access:** The current Board should transfer all administrative credentials (passwords, emails, social media accounts, Canva templates, secured documents) to incoming Board Officers, as relevant to individual roles. This transfer should occur prior to the last day of spring semester.
        - Chapter website passwords will be changed via ALDF administration. No action is necessary.
    - **Role Specific Information:** The current Board is strongly encouraged to meet with the incoming Board Officer equivalent to their role to share any role specific information that could be helpful for the transition.
- **Communications:**
    - **ALDF Communications:** The incoming President should submit an updated Chapter Officer Form with the ALDF once the Board transition is completed and prior to the last day of spring semester.
    - **University Communications:** The incoming President must follow any and all University requirements for maintaining a student organization in good standing.

Communication and Reporting to and from the ALDF

Transparency and regular communication are crucial for a successful Chapter to feel supported and to have its best chance for continuation. Chapters are strongly encouraged to stay in communication with the ALDF and the ALDF is committed to ensuring that proper communication and updates are passed down to Chapters. This includes, but is not limited to, sharing information regarding application deadlines for clerkships, scholarships, and grants; ALDF events and projects for Chapters and students to participate in; non-ALDF events and opportunities; and any update or information that may be relevant or useful for Chapter Officers and members.

- **Annual Reports:** The Vice President, or equivalent role, should work with the Board to draft and send a report that summarizes Chapter activities, events, and projects. This report should be sent to the ALDF representative prior to the last day of classes during spring semester. A report template will be shared.
- **Event and Project Updates:** We are proud of all the amazing work that SALDF Chapters do and want to memorialize and highlight it. Chapters are strongly encouraged to inform the ALDF representative of any major event or project success, regardless of funding source. Photos and student quotes are encouraged.
    - Event or project updates may be used for ALDF donor reporting, social media, eNews Chapter highlights, Student Chapter website highlights, and more.
- **Board Changes:** All changes to the Board should be updated via the Student Chapter Officer Update Form as soon as the changes are in effect.
- **ALDF Communications:** The ALDF representative is committed to providing Chapters with up-to-date information regarding Chapter resources, opportunities, policies, and procedures. Officers are strongly encouraged to share information received via the monthly ALDF Student eNews.