

Alternative Breaks

Staff and Faculty Learning Partner Expectations and FAQs

During fall and spring break, Alternative Breaks provides the opportunity for students to engage in meaningful service projects in local and global communities. Although each Alternative Break is planned and led by student coordinators, faculty/staff learning partners are an essential component of the program.

Faculty/staff participation enables holistic student learning by connecting co-curricular and curricular aspects of the experience. Learning partners assist student leaders with pre-departure preparations and participate in the service work with other team members. Throughout the process, learning partners continually challenge coordinators and participants to reflect on their experiences and the decisions that are being made.

All Elon Alternative Break Faculty/Staff Learning Partners agree to do the following:

- Communicate with coordinators during the planning and execution of programs.
- Serve as a resource to coordinators by providing advice and/or support.
- Uphold and assist in enforcing all policies of Alternative Breaks and Elon University.

Pre-departure:

- Meet with coordinators to offer support as they prepare, allowing opportunities for leadership development as much as possible
- Make an effort to attend all participant pre-departure meetings or activities as possible, understanding that in order to accommodate everyone's schedules it is often necessary for groups to meet after normal business hours
- Complete all necessary risk management paperwork
- Attend learning partner training session(s) – 1 for fall and 2 for spring learning partners

During the experience:

- Be prepared to drive a 12-passenger van as needed
- Travel to and from the site with the group and be housed at the same location as the group
- Fully participate in service activities
- Handle financial aspects (i.e. managing cash, using purchase card, gas card, tracking receipts)
- Work closely with coordinators around issues (i.e. conflict between participants) that may arise, being mindful of group dynamics
- Step into a leadership role in the unlikely event of an emergency or if you have the opportunity to prevent such an emergency from taking place
- Abide by and enforce the alcohol and other risk management policies determined by the Alternative Breaks Program
- Attend/participate in reflections

Post-experience:

- Contribute to the group re-orientation, such as a local service project or group debrief
- Turn in receipts to Alternative Break advisor
- Complete post-experience electronic evaluation

Alternative Breaks

Staff and Faculty Learning Partner Expectations and FAQs

Who is eligible?

Any Elon employee (faculty or staff) may serve as a learning partner, as long as they have approval from their supervisor to participate. Alternative Breaks enjoys having learning partners from a wide range of departments and backgrounds.

Will I need to take vacation days to advise? This should be determined at the time you are requesting approval from your supervisor for the time off to volunteer. Serving as a learning partner is a wonderful professional and personal development opportunity and supervisors commonly allow learning partners to travel without needing to take vacation days.

What happens once I apply? Once you apply, the alternative break advisor will confirm receiving your application. From there, our student coordinators will select a few individuals they are interested in chatting with further. If you apply to be a spring learning partner, you may get invited to our learning partner interview session in early October, where you may have the opportunity to speak with multiple coordinators at once so they can get to know you and your interest in participating. They may also setup an additional time to meet with you if they want to chat further after this session. At most, one coordinator pair will then invite you to join them, and at that point you can accept or decline. We hope to have all fall break learning partners selected by mid-September, and spring break learning partners selected by late-October/early-November. If our coordinators do not select you to participate, the alternative break advisor will notify you via email in early November at the latest. Typically, we have a large pool of interested staff/faculty and unfortunately cannot guarantee you will be selected if you apply.

How much does it cost a learning partner to attend an Alternative Break? Learning partners attend at no charge to themselves, with the exception of incidentals and souvenirs.

Can my partner and/or children attend with me? Unfortunately, no. We ask that learning partners participate fully in an experience and remain focused on the group.

Will learning partners share a room with students? In some cases yes, as Alternative Breaks travel very economically. We usually stay at churches, retreat center, or hostels with shared room accommodations. Exact accommodations vary. The alternative break advisor can answer questions about accommodations specific to each program.

Do I need any experience to serve as a learning partner? You do not need prior experience, although an interest in service-learning and student development is helpful. If you have an expertise in program issue area that is helpful, but also not required.

What benefits will I gain through advising an Alternative Break? Serving as a learning partner is a wonderful professional and personal development opportunity. Learning partners have the opportunity to get to know students outside of the classroom/office context and share their personal expertise or research interests with students in a real-life setting.