

ACHS Task Force Report Guidelines for Chartering Honor Society Chapters

Definition: Chartering is the process of starting a new honor society chapter on a campus. Campus officials petition for a chapter after receiving an honor society prospectus, and the national/international organization approves the charter based upon criteria stated in the organization's constitution, bylaws, and/or official policies.

Criteria for chartering chapters shall be for the purpose of upholding the high standards of the membership, creating a cadre of scholars and leaders within each discipline or profession, and, when desired, maintaining an organization committed to serving its membership through a variety of means.

Criteria for approving chapters shall be made explicit and applied equitably across institutions and programs.

Overview: The charge of the Task Force was to create an awareness of the need for consistency to avoid anti-trust litigation. Honor societies must ensure that their bylaws and policies are clear regarding chartering decisions. Decisions based upon institution type or unwritten criteria may invite legal challenges. ACHS realizes that each honor society is unique, with a history that often dictates how new chapters are established. Although tradition is important, it is recommended that each society review its criteria every three to five years to update and revise guidelines that may no longer be necessary or relevant.

The process for establishment of collegiate chapters must include

- formal chartering of each chapter by institution and college/department petition
- approval by official action of the governing body of the national/international organization
- jointly defined relationship between the institution and the college honor society that must be formalized, documented, and disseminated
- candidate selection by the campus chapter
- membership invitation by the campus chapter

Basic guidelines for establishing criteria for chartering chapters

The following guidelines and benchmarks are proposed for the consideration of ACHS member societies for the purpose of reviewing policies and procedures for chartering chapters, achieving the society's mission, and maintaining excellence.

1. Societies must expect institutional support for establishing a chapter including the means required to sustain service to all chapter members so that they benefit from all the rights, privileges, and opportunities afforded through membership in the society.
2. Societies may require, prior to chapter chartering, that institutional faculty demonstrate an effective means of interaction, mentoring, and service for all members of the chapter including alumni members when relevant to the nature of the society. It may be appropriate to initiate a probation period to determine this feasibility.
3. Societies may specify chartering requirements such as specialty accreditation, program quality, and faculty qualifications to serve as a chapter faculty advisor as a condition of ensuring at least minimal standards of preparation and mentoring in one's discipline. This is particularly relevant in the applied professions where client welfare could be at risk without appropriate preparation.
4. Societies may require that all members have readily available access to their chapter faculty advisor and to the regular activities of their chapters, including opportunities for mentoring, participation in chapter service projects, nomination for offices, awards, grants, fellowships, and so forth.

5. Societies may revoke or suspend chapter privileges for non-compliance with society bylaws and practices, and/or policies inconsistent with good business, and/or lack of service to the chapter's membership consistent with society expectations.

Chapter Benchmarks - The following elements contribute to chapter excellence:

Institutional Support Benchmarks

- Student Affairs commitment to registered student groups
- Institutional commitment to a support system and recognition of chapter advisers
- Academic unit commitment to staffing of qualified advisers for honor societies
- Structure for chapter advising transition
- A centralized system for maintaining records and supplies
- A financial system for banking and paying bills

Chapter Development Benchmarks

- Registration with appropriate institutional office
- Participation in institutional training for student groups
- Procedures for election of officers
- A plan for officer training
- Structure for selection and initiation of members
- Procedure for verifying the eligibility of individuals for membership
- Procedure for protecting confidentiality of student academic records
- Structure for member input into setting goals for chapter activities
- Structure for interaction among members and members' participation in chapter activities
- Process for planning annual activities to respond to goals
- Participation in national/international society conference

Learning Benchmarks

- Co-curricular activities that enhance academic goals
- Educational activities that respond to shared goals
- Participation in national/international program initiatives

Faculty Support Benchmarks

- Value for the role of honor societies
- Professional/technical support for honor societies
- Participation in chapter activities

National/International Support Benchmarks

- Technical assistance for operational procedures
- Guidelines for maintaining chapter excellence
- Effective distribution of orders and supplies
- Awards and recognition for excellence
- Minimum standards for quality
- Standards for chapters in good standing
- Program resources
- Officer training
- Adviser training
- Training for chapter development
- Legal structure for protecting the rights of members

Evaluation Benchmarks

- Yearly evaluation of chapter activities
- Plan for improving chapter based on evaluation

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