

## Advocacy

ASDA's mission statement expresses the organization's role as an advocate for dental students. To fulfill this role at the national level, the ASDA House of Delegates develops policy statements. The association then notifies dental school deans, other dental associations (such as the ADA) and state dental licensing boards of our policies. Each ASDA chapter is responsible for fulfilling the advocacy role at the local level.

### ***Identify Student Advocacy Needs***

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If your chapter has not traditionally been active in its role as an advocate, you should begin by identifying which local organizations do address student issues and then determine where your chapter fits in. For example:

*If your chapter is also student government, then your advocacy role is multi-faceted. The chapter may deal with many concerns: student body issues, school policy, representation within organized dentistry, and national and state legislative issues.*

*If your chapter is within or under student government, then ASDA leaders' advocacy role may be limited to educating members about national ASDA activities and programs, soliciting member concerns for representation in the ASDA House of Delegates and representing school-wide legislative concerns.*

*If your chapter is separate from student government, then you should determine what functions this body and other organizations are unable to fulfill. For example, ASDA chapters are often more readily prepared to provide political education and advocacy than other student organizations.*

You can also review ASDA's policies to evaluate whether the environment at your dental school is in line with these policies. Remember that the national association is behind you and is ready to provide advice and support.

### ***Positioning the Chapter as an Advocate***

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#### **Stay Informed of Current Issues**

Chapter leaders must stay informed of what is going on at school beyond their own academic requirements. Your leadership team should always be aware of school policies and news affecting students. Here are some suggestions for staying informed:

- Attend student council meetings
- Read school and alumni publications.
- Designate at least one chapter representative to attend all alumni functions.
- Stay informed of news from each department. Each leader can be assigned to cover one department.
- Listen to the concerns of students, discuss them among the chapter leadership and be prepared to take action, if necessary.

### **Appoint Faculty as your Chapter Advisor**

Your faculty can be an invaluable source of information and support for your chapter. The advisor can help leaders develop a relationship with the school's administration, articulate chapter member concerns to appropriate administrative bodies and alert ASDA leaders to potential changes (such as school policy, grading procedures or graduation requirements) that might affect students.

### **Develop an Ongoing Relationship with the Administration**

Strong chapters enjoy a positive relationship with the dental school dean and faculty. Many chapters have regularly scheduled meetings with the dean to exchange information.

At some schools, an ASDA representative sits on faculty committees that allow student representation, including the curriculum committee and the dean selection committee. As the voice of dental students at your school, your ASDA chapter should seek representation on school committees that affect students.

### ***Offer Informational Sessions on Clinical Licensure***

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Preparing for clinical licensure exams can be a very difficult time for dental students. One way your chapter can fulfill its role as an advocate and help relieve the stress associated with clinical licensure exams is to invite a representative from your state or regional testing agency to visit your campus. This gives fourth-year candidates a chance to ask questions regarding exam protocol and procedures in a non-threatening environment, well in advance of the licensure exam. Setting up an examiner visit is easy.

- Write a letter to the appropriate state or regional examination agency and request a visit to your campus.
- Explain the purpose of the visit and identify potential topics for discussion.
- If possible, submit a list of candidate questions to the examiner in advance.
- Advertise the meeting to your fourth years and exam candidates four to six weeks prior to the event.

A list of testing agencies can be found on ASDA's website at [www.ASDAnet.org/licensure.aspx](http://www.ASDAnet.org/licensure.aspx).