

Chapter Organization and Leadership

Every chapter needs a solid foundation upon which it can grow and develop into a strong ASDA chapter. This section provides suggestions on effective chapter management strategies.

Developing a Chapter Constitution & Bylaws

A constitution & bylaws provides the direction, leadership and cohesiveness to achieve chapter goals. All chapters must have a current, electronic version of their constitution & bylaws on file at the central office, as well as copies of the constitution declaration form and affiliation agreement signed by two chapter officers.

A template for chapter constitution & bylaws, constitution declaration and affiliation agreement is available on the website or through the central office (Membership@ASDAnet.org) and contains sections of ASDA's national bylaws that are mandatory for all chapters. The remainder of the document includes suggested procedures based on the operations of ASDA's most successful chapters. Below is a listing of the required elements:

ASDA's Mission Statement:

The American Student Dental Association is a national student-run organization that protects and advances the rights, interests, and welfare of dental students. It introduces students to lifelong involvement in organized dentistry and provides services, information, education, representation and advocacy.

(Include your chapter's mission statement here, if there is one)

Membership statement that explains that membership is open to all students:

Membership is open to all predoctoral dental students enrolled in (school name here), without regard to race, religion, color, gender, national origin, creed or political belief.

National and local dues structure explanation:

National dues shall be set by the national ASDA organization.

Local dues are set by the (name of your chapter)-ASDA.

Membership runs on a calendar year from January 1 through December 31. Dues received after September 1 are applied to the following year's membership. If dues are not processed by December 31, membership is forfeited until dues are paid.

Payment of national and local dues provides membership in ASDA, student membership in the ADA and (your school's initials)-ASDA.

A statement reflecting the election and term of office for delegates:

Example: One delegate is elected each year and serves for a two-year term of office.

Establishing your Local Leadership Team

Whether you are in the first stages of structuring your chapter or are simply looking for new ideas on revitalizing your leadership team, a sound structure can ensure your chapter will meet its goals while giving more members an opportunity to get more involved. Your chapter should continually strive for a leadership structure that enables it to carry out its business in an efficient manner while providing for continuity of leadership.

The leadership positions in *Appendix E* are in place at many of ASDA's most successful chapters. Many chapters have had success by creating committees for various programs. This helps to get new members involved early and helps spread out the work so the delegates aren't doing everything. Attendance at national meetings is of key importance, as these meetings provide training on chapter management and ASDA's structure.

Chapter Leadership Position Requirements

Although each position is different, all chapter leaders must meet the following requirements:

1. Must be a current ASDA member at the time of application and throughout the term of office.
2. Must demonstrate dedication to ASDA goals and objectives and be willing to effectively execute the duties and responsibilities of the position.
3. Must be able to attend all required meetings.
4. Must submit a complete application for the position by the established deadline as defined in the (name) chapter constitution & bylaws.
5. Must be able to function effectively in a team environment, and to accomplish assignments by working cooperatively with others.

Selection of Officers

Officer Election and Appointment Procedures

Because chapter organizational structures differ, there are a variety of election/appointment procedures in use at chapters. Your chapter's constitution & bylaws should document how and when leaders will be elected or appointed to ensure truth in voting procedures and to establish continuity from year to year. Please note that delegates must be elected. If you are thinking about revamping the way officers are selected at your chapter, here are few things to keep in mind.

Election vs. Appointment: There are advantages to either method. Appointing officers allows the current leadership team to select candidates best suited for the positions available. A drawback to this method is that people have a tendency to choose candidates whose personalities and temperament are similar to their own. This can limit the variety and vitality that a diverse leadership team can bring to a chapter. Many chapters elect first, second and alternate delegates as well as class representatives. In many cases, the first and second delegates appoint individuals to leadership positions other than class representatives. Typically, the alternate delegate progresses to second delegate and the second delegate automatically progresses to first delegate.

The use of a nominating committee consisting of current and former officers may assist in the process of selecting a leadership team. The responsibilities of this committee would include seeking out qualified candidates for each position, discussing the position requirements with the prospective candidates and nominating them for office. This will ensure that qualified and interested candidates are selected for each position.

Timing: Choose the best time of year for leadership turnover. Some chapters hold elections in the fall, with new officers moving into their positions in January. The former first delegate may also be available as a consultant, if needed. Some chapters hold elections in the spring to coincide with ASDA's national elections at the annual session. By holding elections in the spring, there is still overlap before the officers take over at the beginning of the summer or fall term. Be sure to inform the central office when leaders turn over. This is essential to keeping your chapter informed of important information from the national level.

Term of Office: Establish terms of office for each position. According to the template constitution & bylaws, the second delegate is elected each year and serves for a two-year term of office (the second year serving as first delegate). Other members of the executive council serve for one year. Candidates must submit a letter of intent and should be elected no later than the end of sophomore year to be able to serve a full term. However, it is up to your chapter if you want to structure the delegates' terms in this way. Other than delegates, local leadership positions are usually limited to a one-year term.

Election Procedures: Your constitution & bylaws should answer the following questions: Who has the authority to appoint leaders? How will votes be counted and what type of majority will be required? How will ballots be distributed to ensure that non-members do not vote? What are candidates required to submit to apply for positions? Will there be candidate interviews or speeches? How will candidates be notified of the election results?

Elected leaders are generally chosen via secret ballot. Some chapters require a letter of intent and an oral presentation from all candidates.

Your constitution & bylaws should also have procedures for removing non-performing leaders from office and filling vacancies. Examples of procedures to remove a leader from office include a letter of petition or a two-thirds vote by the membership.

Creating Job Descriptions

After your chapter's structure has been determined, formal written descriptions for each position should be implemented. The best place to start is by asking last year's leadership to document their duties and the required time commitment in an end of the year report. Written position descriptions will cut down on confusion, ensure that all duties will be completed and establish accountability. Refer to the sample position descriptions in *Appendix E*. Position descriptions and election procedures should be reviewed annually to ensure that they are current.

Find a Chapter Advisor

Each chapter is required to select a chapter advisor and to submit the advisor's name to the central office. Inviting a faculty member to serve as your chapter's advisor is one way to gain an inside track with administration. Faculty members can serve as an excellent resource when it comes time to make difficult chapter decisions or to carry out the policies set in the constitution & bylaws. This person can also help improve your chapter's relationship with the dean and with state/local dental societies. We suggest that you select someone who is an ADA member or involved in organized dentistry. Select an individual who understands students and is active in the state or local dental society.

Setting Chapter Goals

Your leadership team can determine what accomplishments you would like to achieve this year by setting chapter and position goals. During the year, you can monitor your progress and reward leaders for their success. Share these goals with your district trustee so they can assist in keeping you on track.

All goals must be measurable. For example, do not write a goal that states, "Increase membership this year." A well-written goal will explain *how much* of an increase your chapter is working toward. It should read, "Increase membership by 20 percent." That way, it will be easy for you to measure your success.

When listing your chapter goals, you should determine which category the goal falls into: membership & communication, organization & leadership, fundraising, organized dentistry, chapter activities, or advocacy. Set a definite deadline for each goal and assign someone in your chapter to be responsible for overseeing the accomplishment of this goal.

Planning Bi-monthly Leadership Meetings

Your chapter's constitution & bylaws should specify the frequency of chapter business meetings. Bimonthly meetings should allow enough time to communicate important national ASDA issues, hear reports from each officer, discuss new business and review upcoming chapter activities.

The first delegate should preside over the meeting. The meetings should begin with review and approval of the minutes or notes from the last meeting. Then, each officer should give a brief report. Discuss any other timely issues, national news and any new business.

Prior to the meeting, make a list of things to do and consider logistics, such as the number of people attending, the size of the room, audio-visual needs and agenda.

Meeting planning tips:

- Set a regular meeting time and location.
- Always have a written agenda.
- Distribute a schedule of events and meetings to your local leaders.
- Always keep your leaders informed of any changes to this schedule.

- Every local leader should attend your meetings and give a report. (All absences should be excused prior to the meeting with the absentee submitting a written report to the chapter secretary before the meeting.)
- Show your leaders that you appreciate their hard work and participation.
- Make the meetings fun!

In addition to bi-monthly leadership meetings, your chapter should also run monthly membership meetings. Membership meetings are informative, educational and serve as an essential communication vehicle for all ASDA members and interested faculty at your school. Meeting topics can include membership benefits, ASDA's legislative agenda, opportunities for national positions, resolutions and more.

Leadership Training Agenda

Expectations should ideally be outlined early by thoroughly training officers. It is also a key component to ensuring continuity, carrying out the work of the chapter and serving members. Elements of a thorough training program include:

- Formal presentation about the association
- Responsibilities of each position
- Goal setting session
- Training period during which new leaders assume increasing responsibilities under the supervision of the appropriate outgoing leader

Many chapters have used this handbook as a training tool for their officers, and have reviewed each section of this handbook during a training session. For a sample agenda of a leadership training meeting, see *Appendix I*.

Leadership Training Checklist

Below is a checklist for implementing a training program. You should schedule a meeting as soon as possible after chapter elections/appointments. Such a meeting will ensure your leadership team is solidified and well prepared for the year. Remember, personal training is very effective, so do not simply hand out the information in this handbook, but *explain* the information and encourage group discussion.

Three weeks before the meeting...

- Distribute the *ASDA Chapter Handbook* by hard copy or electronically to each leader and instruct them to familiarize themselves with the content prior to the meeting.
- Set a date, time and location for your training meeting. Schedule this meeting within one month of local chapter elections/appointments.
- Reserve the meeting room.
- Invite all chapter leaders to attend. Explain that the training meeting is mandatory for all new leaders.
- Draft an agenda to help your group stay on task and be more productive. It is important that you tailor this agenda to fit the needs and interests of your chapter.
- Distribute position descriptions for each leader and write the name of the appropriate leader on the description.

- If you are providing food and drinks after the meeting, choose the type of refreshments and the vendor.
- Order any materials you may need from the ASDA central office.

Two weeks before...

- Choose the speakers or presenters for the meeting. Consider asking a faculty member or state society officer to facilitate the leadership training.
- Invite each presenter to speak at your meeting. Tell each presenter what topics they will need to cover. Provide them with the appropriate handouts for the meeting.
- Presenters may either use the handouts as a reference for their presentation or may choose to distribute copies of the handout to each attendee. Encourage speakers to be well versed on their assigned topics.
- Ask presenters if they will need audio-visual equipment for their presentation.
- Order food (if needed).
- Confirm attendance of each presenter in writing.

One week before...

- Make copies or email out all handouts for each leader attending.
- Finalize the agenda to hand out to each leader upon arrival.
- Practice your presentation. Meet with your presenters to get organized and review the final agenda.
- Send a reminder to attendees or call each person the evening before the meeting.

On meeting day...

- Plan to arrive about 20 minutes early to review your notes and check any AV equipment, food and the room setup.
- As leaders arrive, be sure to introduce yourself. This will help to break the ice when you begin speaking.
- Place a copy of the final agenda at each seat. Organize all handouts.
- Be optimistic. For many leaders, this will be their first introduction to ASDA. Show them why it is important to be involved.

After the meeting...

- Send a written thank you note to all presenters and attendees.
- Ask the secretary/alternate delegate to type up a leadership roster, a chapter goal sheet, an activity calendar and revised position descriptions for the next meeting.
- Send a new leadership roster to the central office.

Establishing Relationships with Your School's Administration

Every chapter should work to establish a positive relationship with their dean and faculty. As a leader in organized dentistry, you can help foster a relationship with your dean by:

- Asking the dean to attend recruitment events, such as lunch and learns for first-year students, to show his/her support of the chapter
- Informing the dean of recent accomplishments made at the local and national level

- Asking the dean’s opinion on issues facing your chapter, including membership recruitment and retention
- Communicating with the dean on a regular basis
- Writing a report for the dean after any meetings and events that your chapter attends or inviting them to local chapter events
- Thanking the dean for sending local members to national meetings

Schools with lower market shares are more likely to rate faculty/administration support of organized dentistry as poor. Low market share and poor faculty support are often related, so improving your chapter’s relationship with administration is a worthwhile goal.

Setting Up an Efficient ASDA Office

To be successful, each chapter should have office space, equipment and storage facilities. Obtaining office space designates ASDA as a prominent organization at your school.

Contact your school’s administration to determine if there is office space available for your use. Be prepared when meeting with the administration and communicate exactly why you need the space and what you need it for. If the school is not interested in providing space at that time, start by asking for a filing cabinet and small storage space for chapter materials. When asking for space, cite the following reasons for why your chapter needs an office:

- Chapters need a designated space for maintaining records, preparing and organizing remittances, and storing correspondence and materials to establish continuity among changing leadership.
- The office can serve as a meeting and workplace for leaders as well as a designated location for materials from the central office to be sent.
- The office should have files, a computer and other office equipment to be used to prepare remittances, develop flyers for events, write agendas, letters and reports, and maintain a leadership roster.

Your Chapter and the Student Government

Many ASDA chapters operate independently of the dental school’s student government. Some student councils have complete jurisdiction over the ASDA chapter, including budgets, activity calendars and representation. Others serve as their dental school government. In all cases, ASDA leaders should strive to represent and serve the needs of their local membership. Chapter leaders should also strive to develop a good working relationship with other school councils and governments.