



Starting A New Chapter How-To Guide



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INTRODUCTION TO ASDA

Welcome to the American Student Dental Association (ASDA)! We realize that it can be overwhelming to start a new ASDA chapter and to know where to begin. Therefore, we created this start-up guide to help you get started in building a strong ASDA chapter.

We wish you much success with your chapter this year! If you have any questions along the way, please contact Danielle Bauer, Chapter Relations Manager, at Danielle@asdanet.org.

Introduction: ASDA Structure

ASDA is the largest student-run organization for dental students. It is the only national association entirely devoted to dental student concerns and the student viewpoint on professional issues in dentistry. ASDA currently has over 17,000 predoctoral members at each of the 61 U.S. dental school chapters.

ASDA's mission statement is "*The American Student Dental Association (ASDA) 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.*"

ASDA is broken down into eleven geographic districts and all 61 chapters fall within one of the eleven defined districts. Each district elects a Trustee at ASDA's Annual Session to serve as a voting member of the Board of Trustees and to oversee the chapters within their district.

ASDA's Annual Session is held in different locations each spring. At this meeting, the House of Delegates (HOD) meets to vote on resolutions that determine the association's policies and strategic direction for the year. The HOD also elects the President, two Vice Presidents and the Speaker of the House. The HOD is comprised of two voting delegates from each chapter.

The Board of Trustees includes the eleven Trustees, President, two Vice Presidents, an appointed Editor-In-Chief, the Speaker of the House of Delegates, the Immediate Past President and the Executive Director. The President, two Vice Presidents, and the Executive Director comprise the Executive Committee.

ASDA employs twelve staff to manage the association and implement strategic plan objectives and policies adopted by the House of Delegates. The ASDA central office is located in the American Dental Association building in downtown Chicago. ASDA operates on a budget supported by student membership dues, product sales, sponsorships and affinity program royalties.

When students join ASDA, they automatically become student members of the American Dental Association (ADA). ASDA and the ADA are two independent organizations that maintain a close working relationship. ASDA retains its own governing structure and leadership apart from the ADA. This allows the organization to direct resources to the issues of greatest importance to students, and enables the association to express opinions and take positions that may be different from those of the ADA.

Role of the Chapter

The chapter is a very important component in ASDA's national organizational structure. Each chapter elects a first and second delegate, who typically serves as the president and president-elect or vice president. The delegates serve the dual role of representing their constituents in the House of Delegates and managing their local chapter. They also serve a pivotal role in the two-way flow of information between the national association and their local chapter.

Chapter membership consists of the active members of each dental school. The purpose of the chapter is to:

- promote the mission of the association to local dental students
- recruit, inform and involve local members in the activities of the association at all levels
- provide local members with representation by sending two delegates to the association's House of Delegates
- may function as a form of local student government

Resources

The three key communication vehicles that ASDA utilizes to keep chapters informed include: the monthly e-newsletter *The Leader*; the chapter leader listserv; and the chapter leadership resources webpage.

The Leader is a monthly e-newsletter emailed to all chapter delegates, national leaders and deans on the third Tuesday of each month and contains important information on upcoming deadlines and events, new programs and resources for our chapters, member benefits, and much more. It is important that you take a few minutes to read *The Leader* each month, and pass on important information to your chapter.

The *chapter leader listserv* is used to communicate reminders, new programs and event information to chapter leaders, national leaders, and central office staff. It is also used to communicate deadlines, new incentives, membership information and other information chapter leaders need to effectively run their chapters. The listserv is administered through a service called DiscussThis.com and the delegates will be sent an invitation to join. If you would like additional leaders of your chapter to be added, email Danielle@ASDAnet.org.

The *chapter leadership resources website* resides under the "District and Chapters" tab at www.asdanet.org/chapterleadershipresources.aspx. This web page includes much of the information listed below and more. New resources are added regularly.

Organizational Tools

Chapter Handbook – This handbook was developed for chapter leaders to provide information on ASDA's structure, organizing a chapter, membership and communication strategies, leadership roles and descriptions, fundraising and activities, advocacy, and working with state dental societies. The handbook is mailed to 1st and 2nd delegates in the fall.

How-To Guides – These guides provide the steps involved in organizing an event and project ideas from other ASDA chapters. Guides are available for the following topics:

- Community Service
- Fundraising
- Vendor Fairs and Dental Conferences
- Predental Recruitment
- Transitioning to ADA Membership for Seniors

Legislative How-To's – Guidelines for planning legislative activities, such as an ADPAC drive, a state lobby day, and meet and greets.

Chapter Constitution and Bylaws – All chapters are required to have updated constitution and bylaws. ASDA has a template that chapters can use to create theirs. All updated versions should be sent to our central office for file.

Chapter Waiver – When holding chapter events that hold high risk, such as skiing outings, chapters should have participants sign a waiver to prevent liability against the ASDA chapter or national ASDA. We have a template that chapters can use for this purpose.

Presentations and Videos

“The Value of ASDA Membership” Presentation – A PowerPoint presentation on ASDA’s mission, organizational structure, interaction with state dental societies and the ADA, key issues and accomplishments, list of benefits and meetings, and contacts for ASDA.

Member Benefits Presentation – A brief presentation on the tangible benefits of ASDA, such as free life and disability insurance, health insurance, debt management services, and more. This can be shown during first year orientation and recruitment events.

Predental ASDA Presentation – A PowerPoint presentation on the benefits of joining ASDA as a predental member has been created, including notes to use during the presentation. This presentation can be used by any student who is giving a presentation to predental students or a predental club.

Chapter Communications Presentation – A PowerPoint presentation on the various publications that ASDA produces, opportunities to write, tips on creating newsletters, and the ASDA website.

Issue-Based Presentations – PowerPoint presentations and videos on various dental student issues, including barriers to care, dental insurance, grassroots advocacy, Dental Discover Day, and amalgam.

History of ASDA Video – Downloadable video that provides an overview of ASDA from its beginning until present day.

Membership and Communication Resources

Chapter Newsletters – Samples of various award-winning chapter newsletters are available for chapters to use as a reference when developing their newsletter. We also have editorial guidelines and tips for creating a chapter newsletter.

Chapter Communications Tips – A list of unique ideas gathered from our chapters on various chapter communications, including newsletter topics and authors, website content and design, social media, and traditional means such as posters and PowerPoint slides.

Membership Reports – Members can download a monthly membership report broken down by chapter to see where their chapter is at throughout the year.

Membership Directory – Chapters can use this directory to view all of their current members. They can export the list of members into a spreadsheet, which contains the members name, ADA number and graduation date.

Membership Brochures – We have stock of brochures on ASDA membership for predoctoral and predoctoral members to use as a recruitment tool.

Member Benefit Flyers – Flyers have been created for predoctoral and predoctoral students listing the benefits of ASDA membership. We have these flyers in PDF format for chapters to use to recruit new members and inform current members of their benefits.

ASDA Banner – We have a template that chapters can use to print a banner for chapter events. Chapters can send us their chapter name and chapter logo, if available, and we will send a file that can be sent to a local printer to print a banner.

First-Year Welcome Letter – Personalize this sample letter (Word) to incoming first years and mail to their home addresses to introduce them to ASDA.

Automatic Enrollment FAQs – If your chapter is considering converting to automatic enrollment, this document will answer the most frequently asked questions from your administration.

Financial Resources

Chapter Exemption – In order to assist chapters in filing taxes with the IRS, we provide the opportunity for chapters to obtain tax-exempt status. Chapters need to submit required paperwork to the central office by August 30 to be included in the group exemption.

Budget Spreadsheets – Templates to assist you in setting an annual budget for your chapter and tracking revenues and expenses.

Key Contacts

The ASDA central office employs full-time staff who specialize in specific aspects of association management. The contact information for the central office is below.

American Student Dental Association
211 E. Chicago Ave., Ste. 700
Chicago, IL 60611-2687
800-621-8099, ext. 2795
Membership@ASDAnet.org
www.ASDAnet.org

Our Chapter Relations Manager, Danielle Bauer, can be used as a resource and can be reached during office hours at Danielle@ASDAnet.org or (800) 621-8099, ext. 2826.

Every district has a trustee who will be your bridge between national and local ASDA as well as help you in the development of your new chapter. Your district will contain anywhere between four to seven schools. As a new chapter, you may feel as though you are the new kid on the block, but the national leaders and staff are willing to reach out a helping hand if you need it. To find your trustee's contact information, go to the National Leadership Directory at www.asdanet.org/trustees.aspx.

GETTING STARTED

Taking the First Steps

The first steps are often the hardest to take. Accomplishing the following four objectives will ensure that you are moving in the right direction when starting the ASDA chapter at your school.

1. *Talk with your dean and administrators*

The administration at your school most likely must approve all student organizations. Prepare to speak with your dean/administration by (1) having a core team lined up, (2) knowing who your faculty advisor will be and (3) being prepared to explain why your institution needs an ASDA chapter. Hopefully your administration already understands and appreciates the importance of organized dentistry. If they don't understand (and even if they do), a well-prepared explanation of why you want to start ASDA at your school will go a long way.

2. *Identify your core team*

Your ASDA chapter will only be as strong as the students who head the organization. It's important to find a group of hard working students who are dedicated to starting an ASDA chapter. The success of your chapter depends on the amount of work your student leaders are willing to put in. There's really no ideal number of people to have as your core team. However, your chapter needs at least two delegates to sit in the ASDA House of Delegates and a larger core leadership team should translate to a more capable chapter.

3. *Identify a supporting faculty member*

The ASDA Central Office must have a chapter advisor on file for every chapter. The selection of a faculty advisor is an important one. An ideal advisor should be an ADA member and be active in their state and local dental societies. The advisor should also understand the role of students in organized dentistry and be able to be an advocate for students to the dean and administration. A wise choice for faculty advisor would be someone who has a great relationship with the administration. Finally, the faculty advisor registered with the central office will receive a number of resources that will better equip them to assist your chapter.

4. *Communicate regularly with ASDA central office staff*

The ASDA central office staff will likely be your best resource in starting and managing your chapter. They have resources and expertise to get your chapter through the most difficult stages of getting started. The Chapter Relations Manager is the staff person that you will work most closely with and can be reached at Danielle@ASDAnet.org.

Goals of your Chapter

Each ASDA chapter is different. ASDA fills slightly different roles at different schools. For example, at some schools ASDA serves as the school's student council and at others the student council is completely separate. In order to determine what the role of ASDA will be at your school, you must first assess what roles need to be filled. Does your school need an organization to provide student advocacy? To organize pre-dental events? To set-up lunch and learns? To plan service events? To do all of the above? Your chapter can – and likely will – do a broad number of activities at your school. Take some time to determine what types of activities your chapter needs to do to achieve the ASDA mission. A good place to begin may be reviewing the winning Ideal ASDA applications available on the website (www.asdanet.org/awards.aspx). These applications will give you a better idea of what activities great ASDA chapters do.

Leadership Structure

In addition to the two delegates, it is beneficial to establish an Executive Council (EC) at your chapter. A larger and well-organized EC will allow your chapter to accomplish more during the year and get more students involved in ASDA. The EC can be elected or appointed positions and this should be specified in your constitution & bylaws. Some of the common positions that chapters have include a treasurer to manage chapter finances; a secretary to track chapter paperwork; a membership chair to manage recruitment, collection of dues and keep a membership roster; and a legislative liaison to monitor issues.

There are many more positions that you can create as your chapter develops. 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.

Required Paperwork

If you expected there to be a bit of paperwork associated with starting your ASDA chapter, then you were correct! The required paperwork includes the constitution & bylaws and an affiliation agreement. The constitution & bylaws will provide the direction, leadership and cohesiveness for your chapter to achieve its goals. All chapters must have electronic and hard copies (signed by the two chapter delegates) of their constitution & bylaws on file at the central office. The central office can provide your chapter with a template for your constitution & bylaws to help you get started. They will also send you two forms that you must submit: a constitution declaration form and an affiliation agreement form.

RECRUITING AND INVOLVING MEMBERS

Membership Cycle

Membership in ASDA runs on a calendar year (January 1-December 31). This is important to keep in mind with incoming first years. Although they may join ASDA in the fall when they start school, their membership does not officially start until January 1. However, they will start to receive some of their benefits sooner, such as access to the website and their publications.

When you join ASDA, you automatically become a student member of the ADA and are eligible for their benefits as well. ADA membership runs on the same calendar year as ASDA membership. ADA benefits can be found at www.ada.org/students.

Autobill vs. Recruited Chapters

ASDA chapters are set up one of two ways to collect member dues: automatic billing and recruited. *Automatic billing* is when ASDA dues are automatically paid for by the school, a third-party (such as a state society) or included as part of the student's tuition. *Recruited* chapters require students to apply and pay their ASDA dues individually, either to a representative at their chapter or online.

The biggest difference between auto-bill and recruited chapters is in the number of members. Since auto-bill chapters pay membership dues for all students, they typically have 100% membership in ASDA. Recruited chapters only include membership of those students who choose to join so membership is typically lower.

If your school is not an automatic enrollment school, it is important to have good recruiting methods. One of the primary roles of a chapter is to recruit and involve students in ASDA. Sometimes students view ASDA memberships as pricey, however, it is up to you to promote the benefits that are available.

Membership Drive

Chapters go about recruitment in many different ways, but most hold some type of membership drive in the fall when new students start school. The membership drive can be as simple as setting up a table during orientation to share ASDA materials with new students. Many chapters schedule a lunch and learn presentation on ASDA during orientation week to provide more in-depth information on the benefits.

No matter what format you choose for the membership drive, ASDA will send materials to support your event. The central office mails out a box of materials, including brochures, applications, benefit flyers and more to distribute during your event. There are presentations on the website on the benefits of membership that you can use for a lunch and learn.

There is also a sample letter to first year students on the website that you can personalize and send to your potential incoming members. This is a great way to catch students early and start building their interest from the ground floor.

Membership Benefits

ASDA provides members with both tangible and intangible benefits. Tangible benefits are discounts on products and services, such as free life and disability insurance. Intangible benefits include having a voice in your profession and the opportunity to meet dentals students from across the country. These benefits serve to recruit members, ensure member satisfaction, and help our members develop into professionals. For a summary of all the benefits ASDA has to offer go to www.asdanet.org/benefits-discounts.aspx.

Fundraising at a New School

Fundraising is a necessary component of an active chapter. Chapters raise money to benefit a community service project, hold a social event, travel to national meetings, or offer other benefits for their members. For your first fundraiser, it may be smart to emulate the structure of a successful fundraiser held at another school. Some common fundraisers include selling Crest Whitestrips, scrubs, sweatshirts or other logo wear; organizing a vendor fair or a golf outing; and

holding a dental ball or other formal event for students and faculty. Reference the fundraising how-to guide available on the chapter leadership resources website for many other great ideas.

Planning your First Events

Your first impression to your school as an ASDA chapter will most likely be perceived through your first events. Whether you are organizing a social event, community service event, or fundraising event, it is important to follow some basic planning guidelines.

1. Be professional in everything you do.
 - a. Make sure your administration approves everything before holding the event.
2. Make the event relevant.
 - a. You would like your first event to represent you as a chapter and organization.
3. Publicize!
 - a. Make sure to get the word out through multiple channels. Don't underestimate emails, flyers, and most of all, word of mouth. Providing food is always a great way to get your members to attend.
4. Invite your administrators and faculty.
 - a. It is always a good idea to reach out to your administration. Especially at a new school, faculty want to mingle with the students and this is a great way to gain administrative support.

PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

Potential Road Blocks

As you are starting to build your chapter, you may come up against issues common to many chapters.

Unsupportive Administrator

Throughout ASDA history, the trend is that administrators can go one of two ways in terms of their relationship with the local chapter. Many chapters have extremely supportive administrators who encourage participation in organized dentistry through ASDA. This can be in the form of financial support (i.e., auto-enrolling students, finding funds to cover a portion of membership dues, sponsoring an event), educational support (i.e., finding speakers, acting as advisors, attending events), or mentorship for students. It makes sense for a school to have students involved in organized dentistry because the school is represented on the national level. If you can build a good relationship with the administration at your dental school, chances are you will build a strong chapter.

The second trend in administrators is indifference. They typically do not stand in the way of the local chapter, do not cause roadblocks when implementing new events and ideas and are more like overseers who do not impose. This can also be a great scenario at some schools, especially those with very strong individual leadership, because they have total independence. Be sure to get a feel for the way your administration begins to trend as you establish your chapter and plan your first events. Having a good idea of where the boundaries are will help in the future.

If you find that you have an unsupportive administration, don't worry. Try to set up a meeting where you can discuss why ASDA is important and why you feel it is critical to have the support

of the administration. Plan as many events as you are allowed and make sure to never cross any lines. The reputation of the local chapter can be made stronger over time and through the implementation of successful events. Also, seek out the advice of other student leaders and your trustee. Chances are you are not the only person feeling the pushback and others may have the words of wisdom that you need to make progress.

Disinterested Classmates

One of the most difficult aspects to work through can be a disinterested or negative classmate. Many students do not understand the benefit of ASDA and organized dentistry. They may see it as just another club they have to join or as a waste of money with no payoff. The best way to approach a student of this nature is through education and by relating the benefits of ASDA directly to them.

Educate them on the accomplishments of ASDA over the past year. Discuss national issues and the advocacy that we are fighting for. Mention the great member benefits and the importance of standing up for our profession. Relate the changes in medicine to dentistry to demonstrate that we are still an independent profession (unlike medicine) and that we are fighting to stay that way for years to come. As hard as it may seem, stay upbeat and excited about the organization. Continue to plan events and even personally invite students that do not seem to be as excited or involved. Chances are that when they see the benefit and good work that ASDA does, they will be likely to jump on board.

Taking on the World

Starting a chapter is no easy task. There is a lot of organization, delegation and leadership that goes into beginning a chapter. It is very easy to get lost in the shuffle and to find yourself doing everything. Remember not to take on the world. Start your first year with a couple of great events that will spark a buzz about ASDA. In between those great events, hold smaller events or do little things to remind the students that ASDA is still around and is working to benefit them. As your chapter becomes more established, add events, consider forming committees and reevaluate your role amongst the other organizations within the school. If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed at any time, take a step back and see who is around you and willing to help. Chances are that if you are excited about ASDA, there are many people that feel the same way.

Learning to Delegate

When you decide to start a local ASDA chapter, find a group of people who are ready and willing to work with you. The first year of development will probably run like a big committee, with people having titles and job descriptions, but for the most part, everyone will be involved in every decision. As time goes on, committee chairs can do most of the day-to-day tasks and report to the executive committee. This may be the best utilization of everyone's time and energy and it is important to learn to trust the people working with you. Give clear expectations and set reasonable deadline. People will surprise you with the quality of work they produce.

We are all dental students and the more time and advanced notice you can give another student leader, the better. Establishing a chapter should be a leadership development opportunity. Everyone involved will have these opportunities if delegation is done well and efficiently.

Finding Balance

We all know that doing well in dental school is no easy task. While establishing an ASDA chapter will certainly add things to your already very busy schedule, be sure to prioritize what is important for you. Many national leaders pick one day during the week that is dedicated to completing all of their ASDA tasks. This way, they can spend the rest of the week doing everything else. Each person has their own views on what it means to be balanced. Determine early on what you want your life balance to be and you will find yourself happier, healthier and much less stressed while accomplishing more than you could have ever imagined.

The Value of Experiencing National Events

One of the toughest aspects to tackle when establishing a chapter is to find the funding to do everything that you want to do. This is why fundraising is critical, as we have already mentioned. Fundraising allows for your members to travel to national meetings. ASDA's national meetings offer an invaluable experience to learn about issues facing the dental profession and provide an opportunity to network with students from other dental schools across the country. All members are invited to attend meetings to learn more about ASDA in order to maximize the benefits of membership to themselves and their chapters.

Every fall, ASDA holds our Regional Meetings to strengthen ASDA's chapters by developing and improving the leadership skills of ASDA leaders. Each trustee organizes an annual district meeting for all chapters within the district. This is a great way to get to know other ASDA members at the schools closest to you. These are great networking opportunities and can make a huge impact on your local chapter. Each spring, National Dental Student Lobby Day is held in Washington, DC and students lobby their representatives on Capitol Hill.

The largest and most influential national meeting is Annual Session which takes place in early spring at various cities around the nation. This meeting brings together students from all chapters to set policy, elect our national officers, make connections with vendors and other students, and provide education beyond dental school. Many students see this as an amazing opportunity to meet great people and to spark what is lovingly referred to as "ASDA Fever."

For details on our national meetings can be found at www.asdanet.org/meetings.aspx.

Learn From Others

The best resource when starting a chapter is to talk to others who have been in your shoes. We recommend that you contact our newest chapters below for guidance in getting started. For contact information on the current chapter leader, email Danielle@ASDAnet.org.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Dental Medicine

Date opened: 2002
Number of students: 319
Membership type: Recruited
Chapter website: <http://unlvasda.com/>

Arizona School of Dentistry and Oral Health

Date opened: 2003
Number of students: 262
Membership type: Automatic enrollment
Chapter website: www.asdohasda.org/

Midwestern University College of Dental Medicine

Date opened: 2008
Number of students: 334 (1st, 2nd and 3rd years only)
Membership type: Recruited
School website: [www.midwestern.edu/Programs and Admission/AZ Dental Medicine.html](http://www.midwestern.edu/Programs_and_Admission/AZ_Dental_Medicine.html)

WesternU College of Dental Medicine

Date opened: 2009
Number of students: 143 (1st and 2nd years only)
Membership type: Automatic enrollment
School website: www.westernu.edu/dentistry-welcome

Celebrate Your Success

It is no easy feat to start a chapter while you are just beginning dental school. Start with the basics, such as establishing a leadership team, setting goals, filling out paperwork and holding one event to expose students to ASDA. If you can accomplish those things in your first year, you are doing great and should celebrate your success.

Remember that there are many people who are here to help so don't be afraid to reach out. Good luck!