

Organized Dentistry

One of ASDA's objectives is to promote lifelong involvement in organized dentistry. ASDA chapters fulfill this objective by communicating member benefits, organizing activities with local and state dental societies, and representing students' concerns within the House of Delegates of their state dental society.

Initiating Contact with Dental Societies

If your chapter has little or no contact with your state and local dental societies, this section will assist you in approaching these groups to develop a relationship. There are a number of ways to initiate contact with state and local dental societies. You might telephone the society's office and ask to speak to the executive director or staff person responsible for membership or the new dentist committee. Your chapter could write a letter to the society president. Visit the ADA website, www.ada.org/ada/organizations/index.asp to obtain the name of your state dental society president.

Some points to include in your letter:

- Introduce your chapter and explain why your chapter would like to be involved with the society. (*i.e.*, "One of ASDA's organizational objectives is to promote lifelong involvement in organized dentistry. To meet this objective, we would like to increase our student involvement in your society.")
- Explain how your chapter would like to build a relationship with the dental society (*i.e.*, "Possible activities include representation in state society governance, planning a practice management day, speaking events, etc").
- Explain how this can be a mutually beneficial relationship (*i.e.*, "By establishing a presence within the dental student community, state societies can begin to make connections with their future members.")
- Request a meeting to set goals and develop action plans.
- Invite the state society representative to contact you.
- Thank the society for its time and attention to your concerns.

Send a copy of the letter to your dean of student affairs to inform him or her of your efforts.

Building Relationships with State and Local Dental Societies

Appoint State and Local Dental Society Liaisons

The ASDA first delegate or immediate past first delegate should serve as the liaison to the state dental society. The liaison is responsible for attending society meetings, representing the chapter in the House of Delegates and reporting news of interest to chapter members.

Plan Cooperative Events and Programs

There are numerous opportunities for chapters to develop programs with their state and local dental societies, such as state lobby days. See the *Activities* section for details on how to plan organized dentistry events.

Society and Chapter Meetings

Your chapter can increase its visibility within your state and local dental societies by attending their meetings and conferences. Talk to your societies about possible funding to attend conferences and represent dental students at business meetings. Your chapter can also offer to promote the state or local conference at your dental school.

You can also invite leaders from the society to visit your chapter membership meetings and give an interesting presentation. You may want to recommend one of your speakers to present at an ASDA national meeting. Contact your district trustee with your suggestions.

Practice Management Resource Guide

One of the benefits of a strong relationship with your area dental societies is the abundance of resources available. Societies have a wealth of information on running a practice and licensure requirements in your state, as examples.

If your state society publishes a listing of practice management resources, make these materials available to your members. If not, consider working with your state or local dental society to develop various resources that would benefit your members.

Establishing an Extern Program

You can increase student involvement in your state and local society by initiating a summer extern program. Contact the society and ask the executive director for assistance in developing this program. This may require writing a resolution for the society's executive committee, board of trustees, a committee or council and/or the House of Delegates. Be sure to ask about deadline dates for proposals and resolutions.

Establish a formal structure for the program. Consider what a program would include:

- What types of projects would dental student externs be interested in?
- How long will the externship be?
- Will the society provide housing?
- Will there be a stipend? If so, how much will it be?

Offer to put your state society staff in touch with the ASDA central office for information on ASDA's national extern program.

Gaining Representation within your State and Local Dental Societies

Lobbying Strategies

If your chapter has a sound leadership structure, a high membership market share and a strong relationship with your state and local society, you may want to increase the level of student representation within the state society.

The following strategies can be used by chapters to successfully lobby two voting student delegates in the state dental societies:

Do your homework. Be prepared to answer all questions before they are asked. Common questions cover the need for students to vote or gain increased representation at the state level, recruiting student members into the state society and ASDA membership statistics. Be prepared to discuss the advantage of all parties granting increased voting privileges. You may mention that ASDA has five voting seats in the ADA House of Delegates.

Test the water. Contact faculty members who hold leadership positions in the state society to determine how ASDA is perceived and what obstacles the chapter may need to overcome. This will help you determine where to concentrate your efforts. Different approaches may be required for each contact so tailor the presentation to the individual.

Formulate a plan. If there is more than one dental school in your state, try to coordinate your efforts. Decide how you want to allocate votes, who needs to be contacted and why these changes are important. Determine a timetable for the implementation of your plan. Be prepared and portray ASDA as a professional organization.

Institute your plan. Do not become discouraged. There will be individuals you will never persuade. Present your viewpoint, be diplomatic and move on. You are interested in the majority, not the minority.

Obtain feedback. Regular feedback should be obtained from society members and ASDA leaders in the field. Flexibility is the key to success and feedback may stimulate modification of your plan.

Do not give up. You may not succeed initially, but change your strategy and try again.

ASDA vs. Non-ASDA Representation

ASDA is the voice for dental students within organized dentistry and an ASDA chapter leader should serve as the representative from your school. If this is not the case, meet with your school's administration to determine *who* is representing the school at society meetings. Work with appropriate student groups to elect or appoint an ASDA leader to represent your chapter's needs.

Becoming a Component Dental Society

Depending on the bylaws of the individual state society, increasing student representation at the state level may require creating a student component of the state society. A good place to start is a letter to the executive director from your chapter requesting a time to discuss such an option. In the letter, state your purpose for the meeting and discuss how the state society can benefit from a student section. It will also be worth your while to try and gain support of the state society's New Dentist Committee. These committee members remember the challenges of being a dental student. Request to attend one of their committee meetings, explain your proposal and try to enlist their support. If initially the idea is not well-received, do not get discouraged. It may take years to gain support for such a proposal. Each year, continue to enlist support of society members and resubmit the proposal on an annual basis.

Promoting ADA Membership to Fourth-year Students

Delegates should promote ADA membership benefits and procedures for joining the ADA after graduation. For information on the reduced dues program and benefits available to new dentists, visit www.ada.org/goto/newdent.

- Discuss ADA benefits during class announcements and during the membership drive. A few popular benefits include advocacy for the profession, ongoing promotion of oral health, a community of professional peers and the latest dentistry information, including the *Professional Product Review*.
- Promote the ADA Reduced Dues Program. To help new graduates ease into full membership, the ADA offers the reduced dues program below for the national portion of dues. Many state and local dental societies also offer similar reductions.
 - Year 1 - \$0
 - Year 2 - 25% of full national dues
 - Year 3 - 50% of full national dues
 - Year 4 - 75% of full national dues
 - Year 5 and thereafter - 100% of full national dues

Students who go into a graduate program following dental school pay just \$30 in national dues per year and begin the reduced dues program when their graduate education is complete.

- Encourage fourth years to complete and return ADA "Where Are You Going?" postcards, which are mailed in the spring. ADA offers an incentive to chapters for their efforts in collecting contact information and post-graduation plans for their fourth-year students. The chapter incentives are based on the percentage of submissions you receive from your fourth-year students:
100% = \$500; 75% = \$200; 50% = \$100.

For more information on the incentive, contact studentaffairs@ada.org.