

Best Practices: Working with School Administration

Introduction

Developing a good relationship with your dental school administration can lead to important benefits for the chapter, including increased member engagement and greater school support.

Consider how your ASDA chapter could benefit by developing its relationship with school administration to support chapter activities and in obtaining approval for attendance at ASDA national/district events.

This guide helps you build your ASDA chapter's brand. The chapter will be able to demonstrate ASDA's value, differentiate ASDA from other dental student groups, highlight ASDA's national presence and how ASDA represents all dental students.

This guide should be used by the Executive Committee of your ASDA chapter.

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1. Create Dialogue, Then Demonstrate Value

- What is the chapter's reputation on campus? Does school administration view chapter members as leaders in the classroom? The school administration needs to view the leaders as professionals to trust and respect the concerns of the chapter.
- As an ASDA chapter leader, you know what ASDA is and the value you gain from ASDA membership, the ASDA chapter and attending ASDA events. The school administration does not know ASDA like you do – help them understand by inviting them to ASDA chapter events, include administration on newsletters, connect through ASDA chapter social media, share information learned at national ASDA meetings, highlight CE opportunities.
- Showcase how ASDA is different than other student groups. Highlight ASDA's emphasis on leadership development, advocacy, community service and wellness at the national and chapter level.

Helpful ASDA Links:

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/dental-student-resources/health-and-wellness>

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/dental-student-resources/Ethics>

<https://www.asdanet.org/utility-navigation/Publications/Print/Contour>



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2. Change Happens

Change is going to happen - new deans are hired, school policy changes, ASDA chapter goals change. Focus on common ground.

- Is there alignment between the school's mission/dean's goals and ASDA policy? Highlight the commonality. The school/dean may not be aware. Use common ground to build trust.
- Remember that change is normal – a policy that changes one school year that is not open to discussion may be open to discussion in two years.
- Create a transition plan to educate new administration on ASDA, ASDA events, and the chapter before outgoing administration leaves – especially if outgoing administration is supportive of the chapter.

Helpful ASDA Links:

<https://www.asdanet.org/utility-navigation/about-asda/leaders-and-governance/current-statements-of-position-or-policy>

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/get-involved/advocate>

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/get-involved/develop-leadership-skills>



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3. Administration Has a Reason

Administration wants the dental school and students to be successful. They have a reason behind their actions.

- Sometimes administration is supportive and sometimes they may seem like a roadblock to your success. Remember that the school and the staff and faculty want you and the school to be successful. If the administration has different priorities than the chapter, it may be because the school has specific goals it's working towards.
- Take the time to understand the school's mission and the dean's goals. Is there a way to support the mission/goals? Highlight a national ASDA initiative, publication or event that supports the shared goal. Invite the dean and the administration to some of the chapter events.
- See it from their perspective to help you understand their view. Highlight when administration and the chapter are working together successfully.

Helpful ASDA Links:

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/programs-events/asda-awards/Gold-Crown-Awards>

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/programs-events/asda-awards/Excellence-and-Advocate-Awards>



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4. Compromise, Collaborate, Consider

- Compromise is a part of life. Listen first to understand where collaboration can occur and consider new ways of doing things to support the school.
- Are there other student groups, notable previous ASDA chapter leaders, faculty, state dental association leaders, the ASDA district trustee, other school administration that the ASDA chapter could collaborate with and learn from?
- Consider that the chapter has to change and recognize that responding to that change can lead to a better relationship with administration, more support and ultimately a stronger chapter.

Helpful ASDA Links:

<https://www.asdanet.org/docs/programs-events/NLC/nlc-18-presentations/mcpherson-pandya--developing-strong-relationships-with-your-state-dental-association>



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5. When One Door Closes, Another Door Opens

Situation: Reduced support to attend ASDA national/district meetings, such as a change in absentee policy, change in chapter's ability to work with sponsors leading to reduced chapter funds, or increased oversight by school administration on who can attend.

- Start a dialogue with the appropriate person to understand why the change has occurred.
- Recognize that change happens. View the change as an opportunity to work collaboratively with administration to find common ground, help the chapter, and enhance your leadership skills.
- Administration may not be familiar with the educational opportunities that are offered. Demonstrate the value of attending ASDA events by showcasing what you learned. Show value by sharing that knowledge with those who did not attend.
- Consider that the chapter may need to make some changes. For example, if the school questions the professionalism of national ASDA events, is that a response to events hosted by the chapter that are seen as unprofessional?

Ideas to Consider:

- Inviting school administration and/or faculty to attend an ASDA national/district meeting to see the meeting first-hand.
- Working with the school to establish guidelines for sponsor relationships and/or sponsor funds.
- Holding sponsored events off-campus.
- Having the ASDA chapter and administration work together on a shared issue for a resolution for Annual Session or an NLC presentation.



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Checklist

- Having a meaningful relationship with school administration takes time and effort. Don't wait until there is an issue to develop this relationship.
- Do your research and understand the administration's objective. Find common interests.
- Be professional – create agendas, wear business attire (when appropriate), use numbers/statistics and your ASDA chapter logo, take notes and be respectful.
- Ask questions – questions will help you understand the goals of the administration so you can see where compromise and collaboration can occur.
- Identify chapter allies to increase your voice. Consider, your chapter advisor, faculty, past alumni, your district trustee and national ASDA.
- Keep your ASDA district trustee and ASDA national office staff current on the successes and the challenges the chapter is facing with school administration.

Helpful ASDA Links:

<https://www.asdanet.org/utility-navigation/about-asda/leaders-and-governance/Board-of-Trustees>

<https://www.asdanet.org/utility-navigation/about-asda/asda-101/staff-and-contact-information>

<https://www.asdanet.org/index/get-involved/chapter-management-resources/Communication-tools-and-logos>

