



PI SIGMA ALPHA CHAPTER ADVISOR HANDBOOK

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What does it mean to be a Pi Sigma Alpha chapter advisor? The chapter advisor is the link between the national PSA organization and the student members, as well as between the chapter and the home institution. The advisor is key to the success of the chapter and the level of benefit the students are able to derive from membership in it. As such, it is important that the advisor be a faculty member who is dedicated to the needs of students and has good rapport with them, and is willing to perform the duties of advisor when and as they come up.

We realize that taking on the role of PSA chapter advisor requires additional administrative work and, on behalf of the national office and the PSA Council, we thank you for your service. Pi Sigma Alpha is only successful because of the incredible support shown by its advisors, student officers, and other volunteers. You are the heart of the organization and we appreciate all you do to support your students and your chapter.

We hope that the below will provide the tools you need to be successful. If you have any additional questions, do not hesitate to reach out to the national office (office@pisigmaalpha.org).

CHAPTER ADVISOR DUTIES

The 840+ Pi Sigma Alpha chapters exhibit a wide range of activity levels. Some are very active and visible in their departments, hosting many events, while other chapters focus solely on recruiting and inducting new members. Although the more dynamic a chapter is the more benefit students derive from membership in it, no chapter should be allowed to lapse into oblivion because it cannot sustain as much activity as some other chapters do. Students should at least be given the opportunity for academic recognition provided by membership in Pi Sigma Alpha, even if their connection with the society never goes beyond the initiation ceremony.

With that in mind, the below outlines some of the basic key duties of a chapter advisor; those responsibilities that are the bare minimum of what a Pi Sigma Alpha advisor is expected to fulfill.

Member Recruitment

Various stakeholders may be involved in member recruitment; however, the chapter advisor often plays an important role in these activities, even if only for oversight or advising purposes. It is a good idea to induct new students as soon as they are eligible, as second-semester juniors,

rather than waiting until their senior year. This provides time for members to become more involved in their chapter.

Member Eligibility

The advisor is responsible for verifying membership eligibility prior to creating a member invitation or sending the member candidate names to the national office.

Initiation Ceremony

After members have paid fees and joined the society, the chapter advisor should ensure that the new members are recognized via an official initiation ceremony and receive their membership certificates. The national office is available to provide ideas for such ceremonies, as well as the initiation script. Alternatively, a chapter might consider joining one of the national office's virtual national induction ceremonies, which occur each spring.

Communication & Meetings

- Share relevant communications from the national office with the department administrator and student officers.
- Share all relevant PSA opportunities and deadlines with student members
- Hold at least one annual chapter meeting to discuss chapter business and initiate new members.
- Attend the PSA Biennial Business Meeting (either in-person at the APSA Annual Meeting or virtually). The advisor is the representative for its chapter in all society-wide business and voting matters.

Grants & Awards

- The advisor is responsible for approving a chapter grant submission proposal before submitting.
- The advisor nominates 1 student (each) for any PSA student award or scholarship (graduate school and internship scholarships; best paper and thesis awards).

Finances

Most chapters require a bank account in order to fund activities or pay for student memberships (if the students don't pay PSA directly). If there are no regulations barring it, the simplest model is for the chapter to open its own checking account under the auspices of the chapter advisor.

Alternatively, chapters might handle their cash flow through the university/college accounting system. The mechanics of this process vary from institution to institution.

The advisor has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the chapter, even if student officers take care of the day-to-day details of collecting fees, banking, and paying invoices. The advisor must be aware of how much funds are being collected or spent on behalf of the chapter and for what purposes. If there is a chapter checking account, the advisor should look over and reconcile its records frequently. If the chapter needs to requisition payment from the university/college accounting department, the advisor should shepherd the request through the system in a timely

manner.

Reports and Records

- Ensure that the chapter submits a [Chapter Annual Report](#) every year (even when activities are sparse) by June 30.
- Maintain a department file with all chapter documents to ensure continuity and for chapter auditing purposes. At the minimum, the file should contain chapter bylaws, membership rosters, and bank statements.

MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES

Once the chapter advisor has verified their students' eligibility, there are several ways to move forward with facilitating the payment of dues and membership sign-up process. It is important to remember that no one is a member of Pi Sigma Alpha until they have paid dues and provided all the relevant student information to the national office.

Option #1: Create an online invitation through My Honor Society

The national office provides chapter advisors and designated department administrators access to Pi Sigma Alpha's membership processing portal, [My Honor Society](#). The My Honor Society portal provides a way for students to pay dues and sign up for membership directly via an online membership invitation.

Advisors are able to create their own invitations and import all eligible students' names and email addresses. The national office can provide specific directions for how to create an invitation.

Option #2: Send student information and invitation email to the national office

If advisors prefer, the national office can set up an online membership invitation on behalf of the chapter advisor. To do so, chapter advisors should email national office (office@pisigmaalpha.org) with the following information:

- An Excel spreadsheet with the eligible students' information in the following format: [FIRST NAME][LAST NAME][EMAIL ADDRESS];
- The date of the induction and the invitation deadline (the latter is usually at least 2 weeks prior to the former);
- Any additional information, including whether the chapter is paying for students' dues or collecting local dues.

Option #3: Collect dues and send order form to national office via email

Chapters that do not want to use the online system can fill out an order form with the eligible students' information and email to the national office. Payment can be made via credit card (via

a secure digital platform) or via check. *PSA will only ship out a membership order once payment is received.*

*Please note that all membership certificates are shipped to the chapter advisors for distribution. Orders are shipped in the order they are received and can take up to two business weeks for delivery during the busy season. As such, we recommend that you finalize your order (close your invitation or complete payment for your email order) *at least two weeks prior* to when your certificates or regalia are needed.

Regalia Orders

Many students choose to wear Pi Sigma Alpha regalia to celebrate their academic achievements on graduation day. Similarly, sometimes students' families like to order regalia or other PSA-branded items for students as graduation gifts. Anyone (students, family, faculty) can order PSA regalia and other swag items via the [Pi Sigma Alpha Online Store](#). Regalia and swag items ordered online will be shipped directly to the buyer at the address of their choosing.

Chapter advisors can also order PSA regalia or swag in bulk, either through the Pi Sigma Alpha Online Store (contact the national office for a code for free shipping), or by sending an order form via email to the national office. Please note that all bulk orders placed via email to the national office will be shipped to the chapter for distribution.

Honorary Members

Each chapter is entitled to name two honorary members each year. They should be identified as "honorary" in your order. The membership fee is the same as for regular members. Honorary members can be awarded to guest speakers, department faculty, or others.

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR ENGAGED CHAPTERS

While not all chapters have the resources (in funding or staff capacity) to sponsor events, for those that do, there are several practices a chapter advisor might adopt to encourage more student engagement.

Start early

It can take several months to plan a chapter event, especially if the chapter wants to bring in an outside speaker, book an event space, or plan a trip. As such, the national office recommends holding a chapter meeting early in the fall to begin the planning process.

Delegate to Chapter Officers

While the more active a chapter is, the more will be required of its advisor, it is also true that the most successful chapters give a great deal of administrative responsibility to their student officers, leaving the advisor with mostly oversight duties and final authority in chapter matters.

Collaborate with the department, campus institutes, and/or other clubs

Working with other entities on campus can provide a range of benefits, including the acquisition of additional funds, more event volunteers, increased marketing, and more varied networking opportunities for attendees.

Fundraising

If a chapter requires additional funds to support its programs, there are several options, including campus fundraising activities, seeking additional campus support through the department or elsewhere, applying for a PSA chapter activity grant and other PSA funds, and/or charging additional “local dues” to new members.

Annually on September 1, the national office distributes the call for applications for PSA [Chapter Activity Grants](#). These grants provide up to \$2,000 for a chapter activity. All chapters are highly encouraged to apply.

In addition, those chapters and advisors that submit annual reports are automatically considered for a Best Chapter Award and Best Chapter Advisor Award. The Best Chapter Award comes with a \$500 award for the chapter, and \$200 for the advisor. The Best Chapter Advisor Awards provide an additional \$200 for those chapter advisors of Best Chapters who have gone above and beyond that year.

Consider organizing a wide range of chapter activities

Some examples of chapter activities include,

- Arranging community service projects
- Sponsoring campus-wide events with speakers, debates, or panel discussions
- Sending students to the PSA National Student Research Conference or an annual meeting of a political science association
- Sponsoring a professional development event
- Creating a program to improve undergraduate research
- Organizing Model UN or mock congressional debates
- Hosting a regional conference for PSA members
- Holding a “Get out the Vote” or other civic engagement event
- Organizing a visit to the state capital or other political site
- Conducting a first-year mentoring program
- Publishing a student journal

The possibilities are nearly endless for the kind of activity a chapter might consider sponsoring. Chapter advisors and officers are encouraged to discuss potential options with the broader chapter membership, to encourage broad participation.

IMPORTANT CHAPTER DATES

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| July 1 - December 15 | Fall Fulfillment Season (when new members can join) |
| October 1 | STUDENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Undergraduate Journal of Politics (for Spring issue) |
| October 31 | CHAPTER SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Chapter Activity Grant proposals |
| November 30 | STUDENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: National Student Research Conference |
| November 30 | Notification for chapter activity grants |
| December 1-15 | Chapter activity grant checks mailed |
| December 15 | Conference acceptance/rejection notifications go out |
| January 1 - June 30 | Spring Fulfillment Season (when new members can join) |
| February or March (usually President's Day weekend) | National Student Research Conference |
| February | Notifications go out to chapters about how to join a National Virtual Induction Ceremony |
| February 15 | STUDENT SUBMISSION DEADLINE: Undergraduate Journal of Politics (for Fall issue) |
| March/April | National Virtual Induction Ceremonies |
| May 1 | STUDENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES: Penniman Scholarships for Graduate Study and the McManus Washington Internship Scholarship |
| June 1 | STUDENT SUBMISSION DEADLINES: Best Undergraduate Honors Thesis Award and Best Undergraduate Class Paper Award |
| June 15 | CHAPTER DEADLINE: Submission of chapter activity grant report |
| June 30 | CHAPTER DEADLINE: Submission of chapter annual report |
| July 15 | Notifications go out to scholarship winners |
| August 15 | Notifications go out to Best Paper/Thesis awardees |
| Sept 1 | Best Chapter awards and Best Chapter Advisor awards announced |

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