Guidebook for the Development of Student Chapters
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Introduction

Over the past few years, several SMPS chapters have expressed interest in developing student chapters in their area. Because student chapters are an excellent way of supporting the SMPS mission of advocating for, educating, and connecting (future) leaders in the building industry, SMPS National encourages the development of student chapters and appointed a Student Chapter Task Force (SCTF) to help chapters interested in starting student chapters. The SCTF set out to provide the knowledge, tools, and structure needed to launch and support a successful student chapter.

The purpose of the SCTF is to take a deeper look into the rewards and challenges of developing and supporting a student chapter and to develop a series of guidelines and recommendations that are endorsed by SMPS National. The guidelines are intended to be just that: guidelines.

We hope that you find these guidelines helpful as you explore the possibilities for starting and supporting a student chapter. Please contact Tina Myers, SMPS National Vice President of Membership and Chapter Development, at 800.292.7677, x224, or tina@smps.org with any questions or comments or if you would like to contribute samples for future issues of the guidebook.

The SCTF was made up of a team of outstanding SMPS Leaders. A special thank you goes to the following leaders for their dedication to SMPS and for their passion to help make student chapters successful: Carie Dunn, CPSM; Amanda Bohnert; Paul James, CPSM; Cynthia Gundy; Bill Randolph, CPSM; Donna Jakubowicz, CPSM; and Tina Myers, CAE.

NOTE: Throughout this publication the reference to “professional chapter” is the same as your local SMPS chapter.
Finding a Host College/University

For Consideration

Starting a new chapter of SMPS, even a student chapter, is a great deal of work. Before you begin, here are some things to consider.

- How many colleges/universities are in the area?
- What do you know about the marketing programs at those schools? Do you want your chapter’s name and reputation attached to these programs?
- Do you have a professional member ready to devote the time needed to start the student chapter? Does that member have ties in place to a local school?
- Is the college/university open to having new student organizations on campus?

Note: The student chapter is not a stand-alone SMPS chapter. It is part of your chapter. However, because it is an on-campus student organization, SMPS’s bylaws, policies, and procedures must be merged with those of the college/university’s student government as they apply to on-campus clubs. This will take some work.

Once you have considered these questions, making the decision whether or not to move forward will be much simpler.

What Is in It for the School?

With budget cuts and limited availability of the faculty, the college or university must see a clear benefit to adding an SMPS student chapter to its selection of student organizations. Communicate clearly that a student chapter offers students an opportunity to learn about marketing and careers in an industry of which they might not otherwise be aware. Through an SMPS student chapter, students will have access to leadership development, possible internships, and career orientations.

One or Multiple Student Chapters?

As in all new endeavors, careful thought in decision-making is important. Chapter resources and availability of universities and/or colleges in your area will be a primary consideration before making a decision on developing one or more student chapters.

For most chapters, starting with one college may be best to establish a presence and track record of success. This can then lead to open doors to other colleges and universities in the area.

Once a student chapter has been established, you may then want to consider exploring the development of additional student chapters. Always keep in mind, however, the available chapter resources.

If your chapter is interested in starting out with a multiple college/university approach, consider reaching out to your members to see if anyone is interested in supporting the effort. Give them all the same tools to work with, have them approach their target schools, and the first one with a firm commitment from a school with a faculty advisor committed can become your first student chapter to establish.

Research

Compile a list of colleges and universities within the chapter area that offer marketing, communications, architecture, or construction programs. The students and faculty in these programs will be most open to the possibility of an SMPS student chapter on campus.

Engage the chair of the Department of Marketing in the College of Business of any school your chapter is considering. The department chair can let you know if there are competing student organizations on campus (e.g., American Marketing Association) and how well they are doing. If you have a strong competitor, it will be important to find the right faculty advisor and student champion/leader to identify the niche for the students.

If there is support from the school’s architecture, engineering, and/or construction administration colleges, that also will help with membership recruiting and establishing the student chapter.
Finding a Faculty Advisor

This is the one of the most critical positions in the success of the student chapter. It is the faculty advisor who will lead the effort to gain recognition of the club on campus with the student government and guide the students in the formation of the board of directors, development of their bylaws and guidelines, and programming.

There are two ways to get a faculty advisor. First is to sell the advisor on SMPS and then have them sell their department chair on the need for SMPS. The second is to sell the department chair on SMPS and then have chair solicit (or assign) a faculty volunteer to be the advisor.

A great advisor:
- focuses on the students
- has significant student contact (more teaching, less research)
- thinks education comes from more than textbooks
- is energetic
- is enthusiastic
- helps students create success

The faculty advisor needs to be as well versed in SMPS as possible. Because of budgets, most colleges and universities do not have money to pay for advisors’ professional memberships. Each chapter should consider providing the faculty advisor with an SMPS membership paid for by the chapter. The advisor should be invited to all chapter board meetings and programs.

Identify Potential Faculty Advisors

One place to start is the student life offices of the colleges and universities you have targeted. The office of student life (sometimes called student affairs) maintains lists of university-sanctioned student clubs, along with the faculty advisors and student leaders of those clubs. For privacy and security reasons, they probably won’t divulge student names or information, but they may share the e-mail addresses or phone numbers of the faculty advisors.

Another avenue for potential contacts are the heads of the marketing, architecture, and construction departments and course instructors. Names and contact information for these individuals are usually readily available on university Web sites.

Make Contact

Once the contact lists are compiled, call the individuals on the list to discuss starting a student chapter on campus and enlist their support. Be prepared to explain the mission of SMPS and to sell the value of membership and the benefits SMPS can bring to student members.

Finding a Student Champion

The faculty advisors and course instructors can be a great resource for recommending potential student leaders. The faculty advisors are also a means for getting SMPS time to present at club meetings. A student champion is necessary for the success of an SMPS student chapter. Finding that champion can be a challenge. Not only is it necessary to find a student willing to lead a brand-new organization, it also is necessary to find the right student.

The student champion must possess the vision and passion to lead and be willing to invest the time to understand the university’s rules governing student organizations. The bottom line is the first student leader will set the tone for the organization moving forward.


Spread the Word

Schedule time with other student clubs on campus to explain the mission of SMPS and to sell the value of membership and the benefits SMPS can bring to student members. Club meetings offer the opportunity to spread the word to many at once.

Ask for individual meetings with faculty advisors and student leaders. One-on-one interaction is a great way to gauge the students’ interest and passion for starting a student chapter.

Offer free attendance at your chapter programs so interested students can meet professional members and experience the quality of programs provided by the chapter.

SMPS National is a resource for developing a presentation to the students. SMPS chapters with existing student chapters also can provide guidance. The Central Florida Chapter supports a thriving student chapter whose members are willing to assist other chapters.

Appoint the Leader

None of the steps to finding a student champion are easy, but finally selecting the student leaders can be the most challenging piece, and one best not left to chance. Your chapter’s liaison to the student chapter should advise the faculty advisor and appoint the first student chapter president. Example: SMPS Central Florida’s process was semi-democratic. Each of the four students interested in the role of president presented his/her case to the faculty advisor and the chapter liaison. Afterward, the faculty advisor and chapter liaison discussed the candidates and selected the first student chapter president.
president. What distinguished the chosen leader from his peers was his sense of vision for the chapter.

**Provide Support**

Once student leaders are identified and appointed, it is imperative they have a support system for keeping the momentum and growing the student chapter. The local chapter must be clear on the level of support they will provide the students. The key is clear communication between the professional and student chapters.

**Move Forward**

Work with the student leaders to develop a strategic plan for moving forward and growing the chapter. Student buy-in on the plan is important since they will be charged with most of the implementation.

Going through the process of finding and appointing a student leader can be challenging. It took several years to launch the Central Florida student chapter, but after only four years, the chapter was named the University of Central Florida’s Club of the Year.

A thriving student chapter provides the opportunity for professional marketers to “give back” to the profession and also a pipeline for new SMPS members once the students graduate and move into the workplace—two very good reasons for launching a student chapter.

**Support from an SMPS Chapter**

Direct involvement of the professional chapter is essential in creating and sustaining a student chapter. Although both organizations will function as stand-alone groups, the professional chapter possesses the leadership and stability necessary to guide the creation of a student chapter. The hands-on effort eventually will taper off as the student chapter gets established and its board becomes effectively organized. However, the professional chapter has a responsibility to continual guide, nurture, and support the student chapter to ensure its long-term sustainability.

**Student Chapter Sustainability**

The two major differences between the boards at the professional chapter and the student chapter are longevity of service and continuity. In many cases the professional chapter’s board members will have served together for several years. This longevity of service leads to a continuity in decision-making and historical perspective for the chapter.

However, the student chapter’s board may experience dramatic leadership changes from year to year. In many cases, students will become members in their junior year, and only a few students will ever serve as a chapter board officer or member. Two short years later, the key leaders will graduate, leaving the chapter in the hands of new board members who may or may not know what decisions were made by the previous administration. This short-term service increases the risk of loss of historical knowledge and perspective. Some students may transfer their membership into the professional chapter, but many more will pursue positions outside of the A/E/C industry.

It is crucial that a concise historical record be created by the student chapter to serve as a guideline for future boards and to minimize re-creation of previously established programs, policies, and procedures.

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**SMPS National Benefits for Student Members**

Student members enjoy the following national membership benefits:

- Access to the SMPS Career Center
- Access to student scholarships and original research funded by the SMPS Foundation
- Networking with SMPS groups on Facebook and LinkedIn
- Discounts on SMPS National educational programs
- Membership in the local chapter to make contacts, develop leadership skills, and build a resume
- Access to the Marketing Resource Center (www.smps.org/mrc) containing information on and resources for professional services marketing
- A subscription to SMPS Connections, the Society’s e-newsletter, to stay abreast of what’s happening nationally in SMPS (“Members on the Move” features members’ career changes, which could help a student get a foot in the door of a dream job.)
- A subscription to Marketer, the Society’s bimonthly journal, which delivers original, knowledge-based content on innovative marketing, management, and leadership strategies; case studies; and lessons learned
Chapter Board Support of the Student Chapter

It is critical that the board of directors of the professional chapter remain involved with the student chapter on a consistent basis. This can be accomplished on many different levels. At a minimum the professional chapter should appoint a board liaison to serve as a mentor to the student chapter president and to be available as a resource to the academic advisor.

Professional chapters creating their first student chapter should consider establishing a Student Chapter Committee. The committee should, at a minimum, be a temporary group tasked with assisting the student chapter to get established.

The Student Chapter Committee will:
- identify a college/university
- contact the dean and pitch the student chapter
- recruit a faculty advisor
- assist the student board in establishing the chapter’s bylaws and incorporation documents
- assist the faculty advisor in recruiting the student chapter board
- educate the advisor and students about SMPS and its mission

It is essential the committee stay integrated in the process for a minimum of a year to assist with the transition of the first student chapter board. Additionally, this is the period to ensure that the faculty advisor is embracing their role in overseeing the chapter and remains committed to assisting the student members.

Once the student chapter is up and running, the committee could transition into a new board position: Student Chapter Liaison. That board position will serve as a primary interface between the professional and student chapters. Their specific charge will be to monitor the student chapter, assist the advisor and student chapter board, and bring forth any concerns or requests from the students to the professional chapter.

Chapter Involvement with the Student Chapter

The purposes for sponsoring a student chapter can vary, but one key purpose is to educate marketing students regarding potential career paths in the A/E/C industry. Introducing students to the industry can happen only through interaction between the professional and the student chapters. This doesn’t mean that both chapters have to contact every event; in fact, the student chapter should be encouraged to develop programs and events to meet the needs of its specific membership.

That said, the professional chapter membership is a valuable resource for and a primary reason why the students will join.

The professional chapter should extend an invitation to the students to attend all professional chapter events. Be aware of the factors that may prevent students from attending the chapter’s programs: distance from the campus to the meeting site, conflicting class schedules, program relevance, and cost. However, it is critical to provide a forum for students to network with professionals.

To encourage student attendance, if the professional chapter budget can manage it, set aside a few free program registrations for students. These free slots can be advertised to the students and offered on a first-come, first-served basis. Additionally, establish a student registration rate for all events and programs. In most cases the rate will need to be substantially less than professionals will pay and may need to be subsidized through the event budget.

To support the student chapter’s programming, the chapter should:
- offer board members to speak at events
- enlist other industry professionals to serve as speakers and mentors
- suggest and make introductions to other professionals in the local community who could speak to the students

Students are looking for advice and guidance as they navigate through their studies, and SMPS professionals are an ideal resource to serve as mentors. An informal or formal mentoring program can be created to link willing professionals with students who are interested in being mentored.

Social programs should be developed where the professionals and students have an opportunity to network and learn from each other. These social events can be programmed around the holidays or in relation to other special events.

Student Chapter Functions

The student chapter should develop its own programming directed to the needs of the student members. The professional chapter board should serve in an advisory capacity when asked, but the chapter should not direct or coordinate the student programs. However, the professional board should be encouraged to attend the student functions. Additionally, the student chapter’s events should be advertised to the entire professional chapter.
Financial/Fundraising Assistance

Because of the lower cost to become a student member, SMPS National does not rebate any portion of the student dues back to the chapter. Therefore, the student chapter will be self-funded for the most part. The student chapter can accomplish this through establishment of a separate chapter dues requirement as well as charging a registration fee for programs and events to raise additional operating capital.

However, there will be times when the professional chapter may need or wish to underwrite activities or provide funds for the student chapter. Each SMPS chapter will need to create its own policy on financial support of its student chapter. Some ideas include committing a percentage of the professional chapter’s annual revenue to the student chapter or holding an annual fundraising event to assist the students. If the professional chapter decides to underwrite the student chapter, a line item should be added to the chapters’ respective annual operating budgets to indicate the amount of support to be provided.

It will be necessary to work with the student chapter initially to create a budget, train the treasurer, and provide guidance on financial decisions. The student chapter will need to:

- open a separate bank account
- request an individual Federal Identification Number (FEIN) to use for IRS purposes
- ensure compliance with any university and student government financial requirements

The professional chapter may consider financial assistance for one or more programs that will create a benefit for the student chapter.

Consideration should be given to assisting the officers of the student chapter with attending the SMPS National Conference. At the conference, students gain a comprehensive understanding of the industry and take this back to share with other students. Attendance at the conference serves as an incentive for students to serve in leadership roles.

Educational scholarships are another benefit the professional chapter may want to create to entice student membership. The professional and student chapters can work together or hold separate events to raise funds earmarked for educational scholarships.
The professional chapter may wish to pay **SMPS membership dues for the faculty advisor**. The faculty advisor is critical to the success of the student chapter, providing front-line support to the student members and continuity year to year for the student chapter.

From time to time, the students may create special events or support community service programs. The professional chapter is encouraged to support these efforts through **sponsorships**. As part of its annual budgeting process, the professional chapter board should allocate funds for these sponsorships. It is essential to know what the student chapter is planning for the upcoming year to ensure adequate funding can be provided.

**Student Chapter Membership Drives**
The student chapter will be recruiting new members constantly, semester by semester, as students graduate. The professional chapter usually will not be integral to the process of recruiting student members, but the chapter does serve as a key ingredient to the process. One of the primary reasons that students join is to meet and network with professional members. To that end, if the student board organizes an event for member recruitment, the professional chapter should encourage board and member participation.

**Support from SMPS National**
SMPS National requires that each student chapter be chartered formally. This qualifies the relationship and the use of the SMPS brand.

Student chapters must provide SMPS National and the sponsoring local chapter with:
- names of and contact information for student chapter leader
- name and contact information for the faculty advisor
- current member rosters
- information on educational programs and special events

SMPS National will seek guidance from local and student chapters in developing special services or addressing any issues that arise.

**Student Chapter Oversight**
All stakeholders play a role in the success of the student chapter.

- **Local Chapter**: The local SMPS chapter should serve as the founder for local student chapters and provide ongoing guidance and motivation. The local chapter can support the student chapters and their goals through programming, speakers, scholarships, etc.

- **Student Chapter**: The student chapter must be sponsored by a local SMPS chapter and serve as that chapter’s local affiliate. The student chapter also must have a sponsoring university or college to support its efforts.

- **Faculty Advisor**: The faculty advisor serves the interests of both the university/college and the student chapter. The advisor may work directly with SMPS National in processing student membership applications. Advisor roles may be determined by the specific needs of a given student chapter.

- **SMPS National Board Liaison and Staff Liaison**: These individuals will ensure fluid communication among SMPS National, professional chapters, and student chapters. They will work with the local SMPS chapter and its student chapter to understand the goals and challenges of a student chapter. National liaisons should build relationships with the student chapter boards and faculty advisors.

**Training/Mentoring from SMPS National**
This is determined on an as-needed basis. SMPS National encourages local chapter and student chapter leaders to schedule meetings with National Board or staff members when they are visiting/speaking in the area.

**Recruiting and Membership Drives**
SMPS National can provide marketing and promotional pieces for the development and growth of student chapters and the student population overall. If a student chapter has special needs, its leaders are encouraged to contact SMPS National. All student chapters will be required to use the approved logo provided by SMPS National.

Student chapters are responsible for their own membership drives. They are encouraged to seek guidance and support from both their local chapter and SMPS National. SMPS National, from time to time, may be able to provide gift certificates, promotional items, and other materials for these purposes.