



Student Chapter Handbook

Thank you for your interest in ACS's Student Chapters. This handbook is intended as a resource for those interested in organizing new chapters and experienced chapter leaders alike. If you have additional questions or suggestions for future editions, please contact us.

Thank you for your time and enthusiasm for ACS.

The ACS Lawyer Chapters Team

LCEmails@acslaw.org

Meghan Paulas, Senior Director of Chapters

mpaulas@acslaw.org

Peggy Li, Director of Chapters

pli@acslaw.org

Michelle Herd, Assistant Director of Chapters

mherd@acslaw.org

Jordan Blisk, Assistant Director of Chapters

jblisk@acslaw.org

Christopher Lin, Assistant Director of Chapters

clin@acslaw.org

Princess Jefferson, Chapters Fellow

pjefferson@acslaw.org

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION SOCIETY

Our Mission. ACS believes that the Constitution is “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” We interpret the Constitution based on its text and against the backdrop of history and lived experience. Through a diverse nationwide network of progressive lawyers, law students, judges, scholars and many others, we work to uphold the Constitution in the 21st Century by ensuring that law is a force for protecting our democracy and the public interest and for improving people’s lives.

Shaping Debate. The American Constitution Society brings together many of the country’s best legal minds to articulate a progressive vision of our Constitution and laws. Through its public programs, publications, and active on-line presence, ACS generates “intellectual capital” for ready use by progressive allies and shapes debates on key legal and public policy issues. This includes over 1,200 live programs, debates, conferences and press briefings across America each year.

The American Constitution Society is also debunking conservative buzzwords such as “originalism” and “strict construction” that use neutral-sounding language, but all too often lead to conservative policy outcomes. Using both traditional and new media to communicate with policymakers, judges, lawyers and the public at large, ACS presents a compelling vision of core constitutional values such as genuine equality, liberty, justice and the rule of law.

Building Networks. One of the American Constitution Society’s principal missions is nurturing the next generation of progressive lawyers, judges, policy experts, legislators and academics.

The ACS network is the organization’s heart and soul and its unique asset in helping to build a progressive legal community. It is a source of ideas, innovation, energy, and talent, all focused on achieving a fairer and more just Nation. ACS currently has student chapters at almost every law school in the country, over 40 Lawyer Chapters in both large and small cities across the country, and more than 16,000 paying members and thousands of other supporters.

ACS chapters offer platforms for debate and discussion about both enduring principles and the issues of the day, while providing opportunities for networking, mentoring, and organizing around matters of local and national significance.

Making a Difference. The strength of ACS’s ideas and the scope of its nationwide network enable it to make a difference in legal and public policy debates and ensure that law is a force to improve the lives of all people. Recent examples of ACS initiatives and programs having an impact include in 2016, the ACS Northwestern Pritzker School of Law Student Chapter advocated for their school to become the first law school in the nation to cancel classes on Election Day and establish a Day of Civic Service. Other schools quickly took notice. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln launched its class cancellation effort after hearing about it from the ACS Northwestern Law Student Chapter leaders. And although the university fell short of fully canceling classes, it nonetheless encouraged professors to excuse absences on Election Day and hosted training sessions for student volunteers to serve as poll watchers and election judges in the state’s capital.

Note: ACS is a non-partisan, non-profit educational organization. We do not, as an organization, lobby, litigate or take positions on candidates or political parties. We do encourage our members to express their views and make their voices heard.

A. ACS Organization

Student Chapters. Student chapters are at the heart of the American Constitution Society. We take ideas seriously and are committed to rigorous debate and discussion of legal theory and doctrine. Given their central role in the formation and transmission of legal ideas, and in the shaping of young lawyers, law schools are a natural place for us to start. ACS began with a chapter organized by law students at Georgetown University. We now have almost 200 chapters at law schools around the country. A complete list of ACS student chapters can be found [here](#). The latest information about our student chapter resources and activities is located [here](#).

Through our student chapters, law students gain a greater understanding of the legitimacy of a vision of the law that gives human values a central place. As new students begin the process of learning to “think like lawyers,” we believe the activities of these chapters – through speaker programs, debates, symposia and student meetings – demonstrate to them that rigorous legal thinking does not require the abandonment of such values. Finally, our student chapters create a community for like-minded students, and introduce them to faculty, practitioners, former and current government officials, judges, and public interest advocates who share their values.

Our student chapters govern themselves within the guidelines and policies of ACS. Our national organization is available to assist with administrative issues, suggest potential speakers, and help with the costs of some chapter programs.

Lawyer Chapters. In addition to student chapters, ACS has chapters for practicing lawyers in major legal markets around the country. These chapters provide speaker programs and a forum for discussion and debate of legal ideas outside the law school context, as well as an opportunity for recent law graduates and more senior lawyers to meet and work together. Our lawyer chapters also often work with and support local student chapters. For instance, lawyers in our lawyer chapters often agree to speak about especially interesting cases or otherwise share their expertise at student sponsored or co-sponsored programs. See our list of lawyer chapters [here](#). If there is no lawyer chapter in your post-graduation area, and you wish to start one, email us at LCEmails@acslaw.org.

National Programs. ACS sponsors national conferences, symposia, Hill briefings, and press briefings that bring together ACS members for sustained discussion of particular legal topics. Student chapters play an important role in the planning of these events when they take place on law school campuses. The proceedings of these events are also published and made available as academic resources for students.

Communications. ACS shapes debate by promoting our national and chapter programming. Our Communications team works from every communication angle, including our web site, social media and traditional media.

B. Membership

ACS student chapter speaker programs – and most lawyer chapter events – generally are open to all interested participants, and membership in the national American Constitution Society is not a prerequisite for participation in a student chapter. However, members of ACS National will receive special invitations, scholarships and other discounts to national and lawyer chapter events, regular updates on our activities, access to our job bank and our weekly bulletin. We strongly encourage students to join ACS as a first step in a career-long engagement in the ACS network. We expect each student chapter to host bi-annual national membership drives and to supply membership forms at each meeting or event. Students can join [here](#).

All chapter officers and other interested students should join the national organization. Most announcements, emails and opportunities are sent only to national members of the organization. You best serve your chapter when you are informed about ACS.

The minimum contribution required for membership in the national ACS is \$10 per year for students and recent graduates, \$25 per year for public interest lawyers, and \$50 per year for lawyers in private practice and others. Additional contributions are also encouraged. We are recognized by the IRS as a non-profit 501(c) (3) educational organization.

Students can [join online](#) or mail-in their form with payment directly to the national office (no cash). If a student is paying by credit card, then the credit card authorization may be given on their form. If a student is paying by check, then the check should be attached to their corresponding form. Please note that ACS cannot accept one consolidated check payment for multiple student memberships.

Upon receiving your membership payment, ACS will mail a complimentary water bottle to each individual new student member or several water bottles to a designee.

The promotional flyer, a one-pager on ACS and a membership form, maybe downloaded on the student chapter webpage [here](#). If you would like other promotional materials, please email campus@acslaw.org.

II. FOR NEW AND REORGANIZING CHAPTERS

Once you have decided you would like to organize an ACS student chapter on your campus, you should contact our national office by emailing us at campus@acslaw.org or calling (202) 393-6181. We may be able to put you in touch with other students or professors at your school who have also contacted us to express their interest so that you can work together to establish a chapter. It will always be easier to start a chapter if you are not doing it alone. Even if the national office does not have the names of other students or professors from your school, it makes sense to find a group of like-minded students – friends, acquaintances, classmates – with whom you can work to build your chapter. Additionally, we are always ready to provide advice.

The second contact you make should be your Dean's office, or whichever office at your school oversees student organizations. Each school has its own policies with respect to student groups, and you need to know what your school's policies are at the outset. Find out exactly what you need to do to start and formally register a new student organization at your school, and what benefits (i.e., funding, office space, mailbox, telephone, stationery) may be available once you do. You'll find that having a telephone and some stationery will make running the chapter a lot easier. Be sure to ask about funding: What kind of general operating, speaker travel and/or event funds are available to student groups, and what are the eligibility requirements?

The third contact you make should be faculty members who can serve as your chapter's Faculty Advisor(s). All chapters are required to have a faculty advisor. In many cases, we have found it helpful for chapters to have two Co-Faculty Advisors. See page 5 for more details on Faculty Advisors.

A. Chapter Structure

Chapter Constitution. Many schools require that student organizations submit formal constitutions. Even if yours does not, the national ACS office asks that you prepare a constitution for your chapter. It should contain a mission statement that is consistent with the mission and goals of ACS. Committing the mission statement and general operating procedures to writing is a valuable exercise and may help to avoid – or settle – disputes in the future. See this [template constitution](#), which is based on constitutions of some of our chapters. You should feel free to borrow from it liberally, even entirely, or to use it for ideas.

Leadership Positions. The way you organize your chapter and define leadership roles is up to you. However, we strongly recommend these formal leadership positions:

- **President (or Co-Presidents)**
- **Vice President**
- **Treasurer** This person is responsible for managing funds obtained from your school and other sources.

- **Secretary** This person is responsible for keeping records of all meetings and activities and posting events to the ACS national calendar.
- **Career Chair**
- **Historian:** This person is responsible for maintaining an institutional memory in the face of constant membership turnover; good records will allow you to pass on the contacts and expertise you accumulate so that each year's chapter does not have to start from scratch.
- **Liaison to Lawyer Chapter**
- **Liaison to Other Student Chapters**
- **Programming Chair**
- **Membership Chair**
- **Social Media & Publicity Chair**
- **1L Representative(s), 2L Representative(s) and 3L Representative(s)**
- **Diversity and Inclusion Chair:** This person helps to ensure that programming is inclusive and holistic, that programming includes diverse speakers, that membership is diverse, and that your chapter regularly collaborates, communicates, and partners with diverse bar associations and other organizations.
- **Community Engagement Chair:** This position will broaden ACS's base and name recognition and promote a progressive vision of the Constitution outside of the law school. The leader serving in the position will develop local pre-law pipeline contacts, identify and develop community contacts for collaboration and outreach, and connect with students at the undergrad campus or other graduate school programs.

Think seriously about creating an executive board with positions tailored to your needs as an ACS chapter. We strongly urge you to find formal leadership positions for any student who wants or is being asked to do significant work – planning a formal speaker's program, taking charge of the brown bag lunch series, etc. Whatever the title, students are more likely to commit substantial time to a project if they are formally identified with it – and once they do commit substantial time and effort, they deserve the recognition that a formal title brings. Your goal should be to keep anyone who is interested in being involved active in the work of the group.

In filling your positions, try to avoid relying exclusively on third-year students. It is important to have students coming up through the ranks who will be ready to assume key leadership roles when the current leaders graduate. The best way to nurture a second line of leaders – and to give them the institutional knowledge they will need – is to involve first- and second-year students in very substantive capacities as board members and as planners of key events and activities.

Once your board has been determined, please update ACS national by sending an email to our campus@acslaw.org account.

Registering with the National Organization. All student chapters of ACS **MUST** register with the national ACS office. You need to be in touch with us so that we can explain our policies and legal obligations and the terms under which student chapters may use the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy name, and so we can help advance your chapter's efforts. To apply

for registration of your chapter with the national American Constitution Society, you should send a cover letter and a copy of your constitution to us – by email to campus@acslaw.org or snail mail to: The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy, 1333 H St., 11th Floor, Attn. Student Chapters, Washington, DC 20005. Include contact information for one of your leaders and for your faculty advisor. When your application is approved, we will send you a letter of registration, which you must sign and then return the last page. Once you are registered, we can provide you with assistance and put you in touch with other student and lawyer chapters.

Faculty Advisor. ACS requires that each chapter have a faculty advisor. They can provide ideas for program topics, introductions to potential speakers, and suggestions on chapter activities and agenda more generally. In the unlikely event that you have any difficulty in dealing with your school’s administration, your faculty advisor also can help you navigate the bureaucracy. Even at the earliest stage, it will be valuable to have their guidance as you determine what you need to do to become an official student organization and as you seek to qualify for the resources and assistance your school provides to student groups. Finally, our faculty advisors around the country do important work to advance the goals of ACS; by regularly involving a faculty member at your school in your chapter’s work, you will be aiding the work of the national organization in building an active and vital network of faculty leaders.

As a rule, you should look for faculty advisors who share the principles of ACS, who are well respected among students, and who seem to have the energy and practical skills to make a real contribution to your chapter. Don’t overlook newer members of the faculty, who may be as or more helpful than their more established counterparts. Newer professors may have more recent government, public interest or private practice experience, which can be very helpful. And your chapter is not limited to one faculty advisor. Many chapters have found it helpful to have two Co-Faculty Advisors.

Relationship with Other Chapters. We strongly encourage all chapters to build a strong relationship with other student and lawyer chapters in their area. This is beneficial from a networking and programming perspective. For example, if your chapter is planning an event and is inviting a speaker from out-of-town, send an email to other student or lawyer chapter leaders in your area advising them of the same. Perhaps you can co-sponsor the event or the other chapter can invite that speaker to participate at another event at its school. Click [here](#) to find contact information for other student and lawyer chapter leaders in your area. In addition, you will notice that the national office will share such information with chapter leaders in an effort to facilitate this. Also, each chapter should have the following positions on its board: Liaison to Lawyer Chapter and Liaison to Other Student Chapters.

III. OFFICER TRANSITION

Elections. Consider holding elections at the beginning of the spring semester so that the new board can learn from the outgoing board members and be prepared to take over at the end of the spring semester. Make sure the incoming officers have the following items:

- A copy of the ACS Student Chapter Handbook
- The chapter's constitution
- The chapter's ACS Banner
- Access to the chapter's locker storage, if applicable
- Member and officer contact information
- Instructions to post events to the ACS national calendar
- Financial records
- Records from the outgoing Historian
- Past meeting minutes, agendas and event calendars

In addition, the new officers should meet individually with their predecessors to discuss the responsibilities of the position, identify key resources and contacts, and field questions. The outgoing board should also be sure to review the following topics with the incoming board:

- ACS's mission
- Membership and attendance goals
- Event ideas and/or ongoing programming for the upcoming semester
- Advertising strategies

IV. STUDENT CHAPTER ACTIVITIES

While ACS gives broad discretion to chapters, all activities must be consistent with ACS's mission, policies and legal obligations. What chapters choose to do within these constraints is a function of student ingenuity, energy, and interest. The best way to see the diversity of programming offered by student chapters is to view the ACS [online calendar](#), where all chapters **MUST** post their events.

A. Programming Policies

Prohibition on Partisan Activity. ACS is a non-partisan, non-profit 501(c)(3) educational organization. As a 501(c)(3) organization, ACS and all ACS chapters are prohibited from directly or indirectly participating in, or intervening in, any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office, party or other political organization. **This is an absolute prohibition** – under the federal tax code, participation in a political campaign is grounds for revocation of an organization's tax exemption even if it does not form a substantial part of the organization's activities.

While speakers at ACS-sponsored events are free to promote or criticize ideas or policies, we cannot permit statements or activities that constitute endorsements of candidates or political parties. These restrictions apply to all events or publications hosted or sponsored by ACS. Thus, chapters sponsoring events must ensure that speakers do not express any views that could be reasonably interpreted as endorsing any candidate or party in an election.¹

ACS chapters can and should host discussions, debates and forums on a wide variety of topics, including those that touch on current legal and public policy controversies and the political process. **However, it is imperative that your ACS chapter does not engage in or appear to engage in political activity, and that your chapter does not endorse or appear to endorse candidates for public office at any level.**

Some Basic Do's and Don'ts:

- **Do** organize creative programs featuring persuasive and inspiring speakers.
- **Do** notify the national office of programs by posting your events on the online calendar.
- **Do** partner with diverse organizations to facilitate discussions, debates and forums.

¹ ACS chapters should provide all speakers, especially those speaking on topics that might raise issues under this policy, a copy of our [speaker release form](#) for their signature in advance of their respective program. This form reminds speakers of ACS's policy and the applicable legal requirements and requests their permission to record and distribute footage and/or transcripts of the program (if applicable). The form is available in the "Event Logistics" section of the [Student Resources Page](#).

- **Do not** co-sponsor rallies, demonstrations or fundraisers for individuals or groups engaged in promoting or opposing candidates or political parties.
- **Do not** make or solicit, as a chapter or in your capacity as an ACS leader or member, a contribution to the political campaign of a candidate, party or other political organization. An ACS chapter may co-sponsor an event with a political organization (e.g., the Law School Democrats), but if the political organization engages in any of the abovementioned activity for a particular event, ACS leaders or members may only participate in their individual capacities, not in their capacity as ACS leaders or members.
- **Do not**, as a chapter, lend employees and/or persons in their official capacity as ACS members to work on a candidate's or party's political campaign.
- **Do not**, as a chapter or in your capacity as an ACS leader or member, email, publish or distribute written or printed statements, or make oral statements, on behalf of, or in opposition to, a candidate, party or political organization.
- **Do not**, as a chapter, formally endorse a political candidate.
- **Do not**, as a chapter, sponsor or organize voter registration drives, unless the effort is being led and organized by a 501(c)(3) organization trained to conduct such drives, such as Election Protection, League of Women Voters and Rock the Vote.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other matter, please contact Student Chapters, at (202) 393-6181 or via email at campus@acslaw.org.

B. Annual Organizational Meeting

An annual organizational meeting, held early in the academic year, should be included in every chapter's schedule. This is a prime opportunity to introduce your chapter to new students, to recruit new members, to organize your programs for the year and to promote our lawyer chapters around the country.

Advertising the Organizational Meeting. If your law school permits, advertise your organizational meeting by participating in an orientation program or club fair for new students. You may be able to include information about the group in an orientation packet about various school groups and activities that will be given to incoming students. The one-page flyer about ACS is available [here](#). Distributing copies of this document is a good way to introduce others to ACS and recruit national student members.

Student chapters should consider sponsoring an introductory social event for all interested students at the beginning of the academic year, at which the organizational meeting and any planned events should be advertised. At this event, and at all ACS events, you should provide the ACS one-pager and a sign-in sheet (both documents can be found [here](#)) for interested

students, on which they can provide their names and email addresses. One of the most effective ways of making new members committed to your chapter is to solicit and obtain their help.

ACS Logo. All approved student chapters may use the official ACS logo in conjunction with the words (Name of Law School) Student Chapter. Chapter leaders may email us at campus@acslaw.org to request the logo.

The Organizational Meeting. Your organizational meeting should accomplish two things: it should make new students feel welcome and excited about the prospect of working with your chapter, and it should generate momentum. You should invite your faculty advisor to attend and say a few words of welcome. As for the second, it is best to have at least one activity, formal or informal, finalized and ready to announce at your organizational meeting and another in the planning stages and ready for volunteers. Nothing dissipates enthusiasm and momentum like an organizational meeting with nothing to announce and nothing to organize.

C. Funding

Be sure to apply to your campus's student organizations office to request funds for your activities. Executive board members (especially the Treasurer) should become familiar with the budget process deadlines for this office on your campus. In addition to funding from your schools, the national ACS office directs a portion of our national budget to help pay for student chapter events. These funds may cover event costs (such as food, drinks, publicity, etc.) or speaker travel costs (such as airfare, taxi, mileage, or one night's hotel stay). **Please note that the national ACS office and its affiliates, including student and lawyer chapters, are prohibited from paying honoraria or fees to any speaker.**

Requesting Funds. To access ACS national funds, you must receive pre-approval from the national office for specific expenditures. Requests for funding should be received two weeks in advance of the event at the latest. Funding and reimbursement instructions can be found [here](#). The national office will notify your chapter of what amount it has been approved to spend.

So that we can meet the funding needs for almost 200 chapters, ACS asks that you take a reasonable approach to your event planning. ACS cannot approve unnecessarily expensive funding requests. Any expenses covering the guest's overnight hotel stay should not exceed \$200 without compelling reason. Additionally, we will reimburse only reasonable coach fare for airplane and train travel.

Reimbursement Policies. Please review all of the [Funding Steps](#) regarding funding and reimbursement from ACS National. In order to receive reimbursement for an event, the student chapter must have submitted that event for publication on the online events calendar located on the national ACS website (the handbook later will outline the instructions for posting events). Please read the [reimbursement policy](#) and submit your receipts with the reimbursement form. **All reimbursements must be submitted within 30 days of an event to**

accountspayable@acslaw.org. Expenditures that are not pre-approved are not eligible for reimbursement.

Fundraising. Please note that money from the national ACS office and your student organizations office should be sufficient to cover all of your chapter activities. **Your chapter may not engage in traditional fundraising nor solicit donations from sources other than your student organizational office and the national ACS office. Additionally, you may not solicit “chapter dues” from your members** (these dues are not the same as the \$10 donations for ACS National membership). Should you find that your student organizations office and the ACS national office do not sufficiently meet your chapter’s needs, please contact the ACS Student Chapters office to discuss the situation and your options. Also, if you become aware of a development opportunity, please contact the ACS Student Chapters office at campus@acslaw.org immediately.

Checking Accounts. As a result of IRS regulations, ACS chapters may not have accounts of any kind bearing the name of the American Constitution Society for Law and Policy or otherwise on behalf of the American Constitution Society at any banking institution. This includes banking accounts for your [School] Chapter of the American Constitution Society. However, this does not include student organization accounts held at your law school.

D. Programs

Student Chapters Must Sponsor Or Co-Sponsor At Least Five Substantive Programs Each Academic Year. Substantive programs include any events that address a legal or public policy issue or provide professional development. Social events, such as stand-alone happy hours, while encouraged, are not considered substantive events. Our overarching goal is to change the terms of the current legal debate, and, to do that, our chapters need to engage in several discussions of legal ideas and policies.

Speakers. Due to their breadth of experience and prestige, judges from your area, federal and state, should be at the top of your list of ideal speakers. Also high on the list should be government officials, both elected – a member of Congress or state legislative leader – and appointed – a current or former division head from the Department of Justice. Don’t overlook state and local officials! Depending on your location, a state attorney general may be a star attraction, and state or city solicitors, district attorneys, public defenders, and others like them may be excellent speakers. Other possibilities include scholars, especially those with special expertise in a topic of interest; members of advocacy groups or think tanks; and prominent local practitioners, especially those involved in public policy. There are many excellent and thoughtful advocates of jurisprudence rooted in the value of human dignity and an understanding of the real-world consequences of the law on real people. Your chapter should consult with your faculty advisor, other faculty members, members of local lawyer chapters, and the ACS staff regarding possible speakers.

Speaker invitations are extended by student chapters directly, without involvement of the national office. Students will have their own ideas about whom they would like to speak at their

events, as well as their own personal contacts with potential speakers. Faculty advisors, too, should be able to offer ideas for speakers, and possibly introductions to those speakers. Student chapters should contact these people on their own, writing or calling – a letter or email followed by a call is usually a good approach – to invite them to speak. The letter and phone call are critical: You want to be professional, knowledgeable and respectful. A sample invitation letter is [here](#).

Topics. In some cases, choosing a speaker will make it unnecessary to choose a topic. Some speakers – judges, for instance, or some government officials – may be invited to speak on the topic of their choice and will have their own ideas about what they would like to say. It is especially important in these cases – though it should be a part of every invitation – to describe for the speaker both the general principles of ACS and any particular goals of your chapter so that the speaker can plan remarks accordingly. In other cases, a speaker’s interests will guide the choice of a topic; judges or scholars, for example, who have written or spoken frequently on a few topics, may be asked to address one of their special areas of interest.

We envision programs on a diverse range of timely issues with real practical import. And the underlying theme of most topics should always be constitutional interpretation. A few general topics that a chapter should cover during an academic year include the subject area in the most recent ACS Program Guide, constitutional interpretation, and ACS [issue briefs](#). Other topics for chapters to consider include: federalism and the nature of state sovereignty, methods of constitutional interpretation, racial justice, income inequality, voting rights, affirmative action and equality, access to courts, privacy, the rights of LGBT persons, reproductive rights and women’s equality, and environmental and consumer protection, to name just a few. Apart from consistency with the broad mission and policies of ACS, the interest and imagination of student chapters are the only limits on potential topics.

Format. An event with a single speaker has the virtue of being relatively easy to plan, and may be a very successful format when you have an especially high-profile speaker. Make every effort to include a question and answer session at the end of the speaker’s presentation. Our mission is to engage students in a real discussion of legal ideas, and the give-and-take of such sessions is most likely to stimulate the participants. Consider allowing students to submit questions to a moderator in writing as an alternative or supplement to asking questions from the floor; students who would not be comfortable speaking in front of a large group may be happy to participate if given this option. Unless the speaker prefers to keep this role for themselves, which is something you should work out in advance, one student should take the lead in moderating the question and answer period by calling on questioners and then, at the appropriate moment, announcing when the next question will be the last one.

Though they take a little more planning, debates between two speakers (or panel presentations with a group of speakers) have several distinct advantages. First, ACS is committed to a genuine and intellectually honest debate over legal ideas. For this to happen, conservative views have to be represented fairly, and the easiest way to do this is to have a conservative speaker or speakers present that view. Secondly, a debate or panel presentation that includes conservative views may

help draw students who would not otherwise attend and perhaps open their minds to a progressive interpretation of an issue.

Co-Sponsorships. Co-sponsoring programs with other student groups on your campus has many practical advantages. Other groups can be a good source of debate respondents or panel members, and your school may provide more financial assistance when more than one student group is involved. Additionally, our student chapters can add diversity to their events by co-sponsoring events with other student organizations. You may also want to consider co-sponsoring programs with ACS chapters at other local law schools, or with lawyer chapters in your area. This kind of joint program will allow you to pool resources, speaker contacts, and likely attendees. The result can be an especially successful and high profile event, attractive to the most prominent speakers. Planning the program will also provide an excellent networking opportunity.

Administrative Details. Many students already are well versed in the details that go into planning a campus event. Since some of those details vary from school to school, we cannot set out full particulars here, but we do have an [Event Checklist](#) and provide some of the basics of planning a speaker program below.

- Plan ahead. Many speakers – especially those most in demand – will need a few months’ notice to clear their calendars and prepare a talk. Give yourself more than three months to plan if possible. Spring is not too early to begin planning a fall event, and planning for a spring event can begin as soon as you return to campus in the fall.
- Pick a date carefully. To some extent, speaker availability will guide your selection of a date. Additionally, plan around student availability – the weeks before exams and other times when students are heavily committed should be avoided. Also check with whoever keeps the master calendar at your school (often the Dean’s office) to avoid any significant conflicts.
- Pick a room carefully. You can never be sure exactly how many people will attend your event. Err on the low side in picking a room. It usually is better to have too many people in a small room than too few people in a big room: both speakers and audience members should feel that they have been part of a popular and well-attended event. Think about reserving two rooms of different sizes so you can decide which one to use once you see how much buzz your event generates. Reserve your room or rooms well in advance.
- Advertise extensively. Start with your faculty. The kind of event ACS chapters sponsor – an academically serious discussion of important legal ideas – should be of interest to many professors at your school. Provide all professors with invitations – including brief biographies of your speakers – well in advance and follow up with personal visits to professors you know. Ask professors who teach relevant classes to allow a student to announce the event (or, if they will not permit that, to announce the event themselves) a few days beforehand. It is particularly important that you announce your events in the first-year students’ classes – make sure to do it in each section if your school has more

than one. First year students are likely to be very enthusiastic, and it is important to get them involved in ACS from the outset of law school.

- Take Pictures. Please take pictures and share them with us at campus@acslaw.org.

Also, make early contact with other student groups whose members might be interested in your program. Again, ask leaders of those groups to announce your event at their meetings or allow one of your members to attend to make a brief announcement of your own.

Advertising. Make extensive use of posters and fliers to promote your event in the law school and in other promising university gathering spots (i.e. general libraries, political science or public policy departments). At your school, there may be a particular way that students find out about events, especially on the day of the event. Make sure you take full advantage of it. Always stuff student mailboxes with a flyer for the event several days prior to the event; you might also consider stuffing mailboxes with a teaser even further in advance. Click [here](#) for the Student Chapters Resources webpage and reach out to Campus@acslaw.org for further tips and suggestions.

Use email, Facebook and/or Twitter to advertise the event, and to remind people about it a day or two beforehand. Providing information about an event through email is one good way of keeping in touch with everyone who has put his or her name on a signup sheet at any of your events. Publicizing an event is the most important key to making it a success. While it may be a lot of work, the result will be a successful well-attended event.

In addition, put notices in law school and university newspapers. Don't underestimate the effectiveness of word-of-mouth: if you can get students talking about your event, you can fill your room. See the [Student Resources webpage](#) for more information on social media best practices.

At the event:

- Consider providing food. For many students, a big draw to an extracurricular event will be food. Obviously, you don't need to provide a full meal at your program; however, some snacks advertised on the flyer may draw a large crowd.
- Be sure to take good care of your speakers. Stay in touch with your speakers as you plan your event: Keep them posted on the details of the event, send them copies of the invitation letter for your faculty, and check on travel arrangements. Offer to pick them up and drop them off at airports or train stations. If they are arriving early at your campus, see if you can offer them an office in case, they want to get some work done. Get a parking permit for them. Additionally, don't forget to follow up with thank you notes and news or copies of any favorable reports of the event. **If they are entitled to a reimbursement, make sure to send the complete reimbursement form and receipts to Accounts Payable immediately.**

E. Informal Speaker Meetings

Student chapters should plan to sponsor several smaller and less formal discussion meetings during the year. Brown bag lunches in which students meet with a speaker at lunchtime is a popular format. The point is to create a relaxed atmosphere in which students feel comfortable engaging in a real discussion with the speaker.

Faculty members make excellent speakers for informal meetings, as do local practitioners involved in work that is of interest to your chapter. Don't overlook adjunct faculty, who are usually practicing in the community; they may be both interesting speakers in their own right and a good source of referrals to outside speakers. Finally, if there is a lawyer chapter in your area, take advantage of it. Lawyer chapter members are often eager to help either by speaking themselves or by identifying other potential speakers.

Speaker choice will often dictate the topic for these informal meetings. A faculty member may speak about a current work in progress or a particular area of interest while a practitioner may wish to speak about a line of work he or she is involved in or a case he or she has litigated. Recent Supreme Court decisions also make good topics for informal discussions and require little advance planning. Within a week or two after a Supreme Court decision, your chapter can host a brown bag lunch for a faculty member or a local practitioner who has worked in the area, or any lawyer with Supreme Court experience.

F. Social Events

As we described above, student chapters should consider sponsoring an introductory or open social event for all interested students at the beginning of the academic year. In addition, each chapter should host one or two smaller social events for chapter members over the course of the year. Part of our mission on campus is to give like-minded students a sense of community, social as well as intellectual. Informal parties or gatherings will give students a chance to turn colleagues into friends.

G. Additional Programming Ideas

Courtesy of our Yale Student Chapter, below are two quick, easy and inexpensive programming ideas for your chapter.

Faculty Lunches with 1Ls. In the fall and/or spring, organize 6-8 brown-bag lunches with 5 first-year students and a progressive professor who isn't teaching 1Ls that semester. It's a way for 1Ls to meet faculty they wouldn't otherwise—especially clinical faculty. Eat somewhere convenient in the law school and have each individual bring his/her own food, so it doesn't cost anything. That's 6-8 more events for \$0!

Faculty Dinners. In the fall and/or spring, organize 6-8 potluck dinners with 6-8 students of any year and a progressive professor. Students should volunteer to host professors in their apartments. The chapter should provide \$25 for the host to make a main course, and ask each of

the student guests to bring a side or dessert. Have students book for the dinner via a Google spreadsheet—and the 6-8 events cost \$150-200 total!

V. DIVERSITY-FRIENDLY PRACTICES FOR STUDENT CHAPTERS

As new people enter law school and join the law student community, many will decide within the first few days or weeks where to put their extracurricular energies. To assist you in recruiting and maintaining a chapter membership rich in diversity, we want to suggest some practices that you may find helpful. Some of these suggestions may seem obvious but taken together they constitute an approach that can make group experiences more welcoming.

A. Aspects of diversity

Diversity means understanding and valuing the characteristics and beliefs and ensuring the participation of people from a wide range of communities, including people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds, gender, physical abilities, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, socio-economic status, religious and spiritual values, and national origin.

Recruiting. Take the time to focus on each person who seems interested in ACS, in what ACS does, and in what ACS has to offer them. Make your ACS chapter a home for any law student who shares a commitment to progressive values.

Planning and Programming. The first program or two that the ACS chapter sponsors during the year will tell new students a great deal about what the chapter is all about. You may want to be more deliberate about producing the first one or two programs on a subject that holds appeal for a diverse audience. You should always strive for diversity among the panel of presenters. Similarly, the program materials should describe the program in a way that appeals to a broad audience.

In terms of planning the year's programs, one dynamic to conscientiously avoid is one in which certain students end up isolated with all of the work to put on a particular program. Ideally, leaders should engage in a process for identifying core teams of students to work together on each program that the chapter agrees to sponsor.

Advertising. Develop materials with an eye toward diversity. Consider what the materials say about ACS, what ACS does, and who is, and should be a member of ACS. We welcome a diverse membership into our network. The materials used to advertise chapter events should convey that message through the images and language used.

Meetings. Two things can often be a problem in the dynamics of group meetings. First, certain people appear to be more welcomed. Second, the ideas and opinions of some students may inadvertently be valued more than others. In order to avoid these issues:

- Hold meetings at different times than other student groups so students are not forced by logistics to choose between groups.
- As the meeting starts, chapter leaders should greet each person who is there, using the informal gathering time to make connections with students that are new or that the leaders do not know well. Although chapter leaders always have a great deal to discuss with each other, be aware that meetings that appear to others to be a “private club” are not as welcoming as those meetings genuinely designed to engage each person.
- Plan the meeting in a way that genuinely includes everyone and solicits input; strike a balance between ongoing work (all of those agenda items continuing from the last meeting) and new ideas.
- Solicit program ideas or input, being careful not to be dismissive during this time period; actively listen and solicit more information about why a student believes their program idea would appeal to other students. In making plans to go forward, try to make certain that each person has a role of their own choosing.

B. Leadership

As ACS chapter leaders, you are the ones that set the tone for the chapter; others will look to you to get their cues about ACS’s commitment to diversity in its work. Good leaders are also visionary “succession planners,” meaning that from the beginning of their role as leaders, they try to identify the next generation of leaders. What works well is for those leaders to identify a diverse range of potential leaders, and nurture them throughout the process, letting their work within the group over time speak for itself as the group moves to select new leaders. In other words, it is helpful to avoid early conclusions about who the next leader(s) should be.

VI. NATIONAL STUDENT WRITING COMPETITIONS

ACS currently sponsors the Constance Baker Motley National Student Writing Competition. The writing competition was founded by the ACS student chapter at the University of Pennsylvania. ACS strongly encourages your chapter and its members to participate in this competition. Please stay tuned for more detailed information about this year's competition. For information about last year's competition, see [here](#).

ACS also sponsors The Richard D. Cudahy Writing Competition on Regulatory and Administrative Law. ACS encourages its student members to take advantage of this great opportunity! Please stay tuned for more detailed information about this year's competition. For information about last year's competition, see [here](#).

VII: ACS STUDENT CONVENTION

ACS will hold its 9th Annual National Student Convention February 26-27, 2021 at the Arizona State University, Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law. Plan to join ACS and nearly 200 other student leaders in Phoenix for two days of progressive programming and training. To help students attend Convention, ACS will award scholarships to selected applicants.

Stay tuned for more details on Convention and Convention scholarships!

VIII. KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE NATIONAL OFFICE

An open line of communication between your chapter and the national office is very important. We regularly send emails and conduct biannual conference calls with our student chapters to update them on the activities of the national organization and other chapters, to make suggestions for programs and connect them with speakers in their areas, to disseminate information from other organizations that might be of interest to our members, and to ask them for help when needed. Toward this end, we ask that you give us the names, email addresses, class years, and phone numbers of your entire board, and that you update us as soon as this information changes. Remember, there should be one student designated as the national contact who regularly checks their email, and who will take responsibility for forwarding communications to all members of your chapter. **You should update your chapter's contact information by emailing ACS National at campus@acslaw.org.** We also require that your chapter update our office on your chapter's activity. The way you formally inform ACS of your events is through the online calendar, viewable [here](#). See information on how to post your events in the next section.

IX. YOUR CHAPTER ON ACSLAW.ORG

Each chapter has its own interactive webpage on the ACS web site. Your chapter page offers contact information, an event calendar and event summaries. **Please note that it is a requirement for your chapter to post your events.**

Everything posted on the site is text-searchable, including the extensive compilation of event and panel transcripts. You may also access video of selected events, [ACS issue briefs](#) and ACS publications, [Keeping Faith with the Constitution](#) and [It Is a Constitution We Are Expounding](#).

A. Log in to Add Chapter Events

To post your events to the ACS National calendar, see instructions [here](#).

X. FREE RESOURCES TO MANAGE YOUR CHAPTER

- a. [Mailchimp](#) is an email–marketing service that makes it easy to design exceptional email campaigns, share them on social networks, integrate with web services you already use, manage subscribers and track your results. It’s free for the chapter size that you would serve.
- b. [Google Groups](#) supports discussion groups.
- c. Use [Dropbox](#) to store and share files and folders with others online.
- d. Host calls using a [Free Conference Call Line](#).
- e. Use [Facebook](#) to advertise events and communicate with your chapter members. And don’t forget to become a fan of the [ACS National Facebook page](#).
- f. Use [Twitter](#) to advertise events and communicate with your chapter members. And of course, follow ACS National (<https://twitter.com/ACSlaw/>) and ACS Student Chapters (<https://twitter.com/ACSstudents/>).
- g. Join us on [LinkedIn](#).

XI. FURTHER INFORMATION

Remember, the national office is here to help in any way we can. For further information, visit our website at www.acslaw.org, email campus@acslaw.org, call our office at (202) 393-6181 or contact us by mail:

The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy
Attn. Student Chapters
1899 L St. NW, 2nd Floor
Washington, DC 20036