Student Chapter Handbook

(Last Updated July 27, 2023)

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

Thank you for your time and enthusiasm for ACS.

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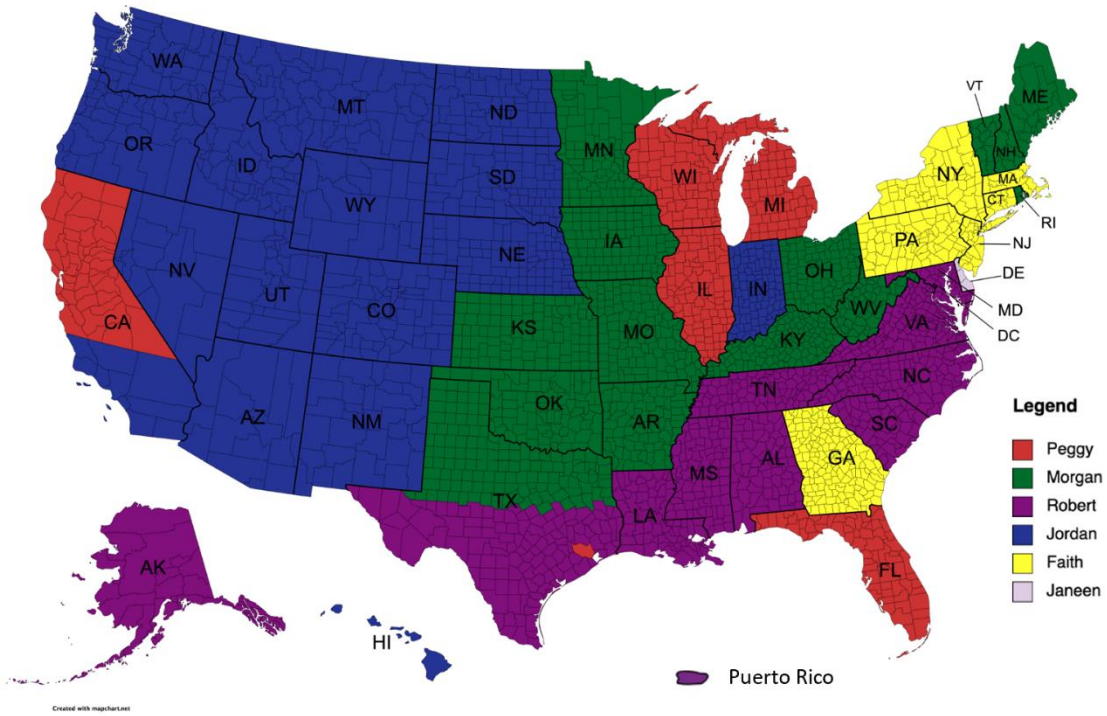

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I. INTRODUCTION: THE AMERICAN CONSTITUTION SOCIETY

Our Mission. The American Constitution Society for Law and Policy (ACS) is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan legal organization. Through a diverse nationwide network of progressive lawyers, law students, judges, scholars, advocates, and many others, our mission is to support and advocate for laws and legal systems that strengthen our democratic legitimacy, uphold the rule of law, and redress the founding failures of our Constitution and enduring inequities in our laws in pursuit of realized equality.

Vision. Our vision is of a multi-racial, representative democracy that includes:

- A judiciary that reflects the diversity of the public it serves, interprets the U.S. Constitution through the backdrop of history and through the lens of lived experience, and protects democratic guardrails, upholds the rule of law, and vindicates fundamental rights;
- Democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law, guard against the abuse of power, and promote laws and policies that advance realized equality; and
- A robust and diverse legal civil society that actively promotes progressive legal transformation and redress of the founding failures of our Constitution and of our laws and legal systems.

Shaping Debate. Through our public programs (over 1,100 debates, conferences and press briefings across America each year), 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.

Building Networks. The engine that drives the organization's work is its rapidly growing nationwide network of student and lawyer chapters in 48 states and almost every law school.

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.

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.

ACS chapters also generally do not engage in lobbying. ACS members and event attendees cannot be encouraged to call their representatives to lobby for a specific vote. Attendees also cannot be encouraged to vote a specific way on ballot initiatives.

Views expressed by the speakers and attendees reflect their individual opinions and should not be attributed to ACS. 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.

A. ACS Organization

ACS and its Student Chapters. The American Constitution Society is the nation's leading progressive legal organization, with nearly 200 student and lawyer chapters in almost every state and law school around the country. Our student chapters elect their own boards and operate semi-autonomously under ACS guidance set forth in this handbook. They manage their own on-campus programming and events, communications, and other activities, with more substantial ACS staff input provided upon request.

ACS supports its chapters' right to sponsor, promote, or participate in demonstrations, counter-programming, boycotts, and other events protesting policies and events with which they disagree. ACS expects its chapters to remain peaceful and to undertake protests constructively and respectfully, while not diminishing their ability to speak out and draw attention to policies and events with which they disagree.

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 approximately 200 student and lawyer chapters in almost every state and law school. 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. More information on these guidelines and policies are listed below. Our national organization is available to assist with administrative issues, provide feedback and support, 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, we invite you to join our At-Large Chapter (learn more here). If you'd like to start a lawyer chapter in your region, 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, and 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. Become a member here. Current law students who become a member today ($25) will have their membership extended until December 31 of their graduation year.

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.

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.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. We are here to support you and provide guidance as you work to grow your chapter.

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. 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. More details on Faculty Advisors below.

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/or approved by ACS.
- **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. Check with your ACS National Liaison for your chapter's Historian Document.
- **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 campus@acslaw.org (include Names, Email Addresses, Titles, and Grad Years).

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. Include contact information for one of your leaders and for your faculty advisor. 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 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 at least 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. 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 ofthe 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 on how to post events to the ACS national calendar
- Instructions on how to request funding from ACS national and the law school
- 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
- Contact information for your ACS National Liaison

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, sponsored, or co-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.

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**.

Recommended Dos and Don'ts for On-Campus Activity

- *When planning an event or activity for your ACS Chapter:*
  - **DO post all of your events** to the ACS website using the instructions **here**.
  - **DO reach out to your ACS Chapter Liaison** if you need guidance or support with your programs, want feedback on events you may want to cosponsor or support as an ally organization, or plan on engaging in peaceful protest or responsive programming.
  - **DO** organize creative programs featuring persuasive and inspiring speakers.
  - **DO** 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** check in regarding recording. If you would like to record your in-person or virtual programs, please get approval from your venue (school, law firm, etc.) and your speaker(s). If you, your venue, or your speakers do not want the event recorded by attendees, please make that preference known to your attendees. As a chapter, you can decide how to store and share your recordings. Some chapters upload their recordings to YouTube or social media.

- *When considering a request from another organization on campus or in your community to co-sponsor, co-host, publicize, or otherwise support an activity or event:*
  - **DO** be a good ally to other organizations and affiliations that share ACS's values.
  - **DO** be thoughtful regarding the events/activities in which you might consider participating, cosponsoring, or otherwise engaging. It is okay to decline an invitation to cosponsor an event or host a speaker.
  - **DO** partner with diverse organizations to facilitate discussions, debates, and forums.
  - **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.
  - **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.
  - ACS members and event attendees **CANNOT** be encouraged to call their representatives to lobby for a specific vote. Attendees also **CANNOT** be encouraged to vote a specific way on ballot initiatives.

- *If you identify a troubling situation, speaker, or program happening on campus or in your community:*
  - **DO** engage the ACS faculty advisor and/or university administration (including meeting in-person with your Dean of Students) to raise concerns in advance and reach out to your ACS National Liaison.
  - **DO** consider your options as a chapter, which could include counter programming, silent protests, and peacefully discouraging ACS members and allies from attending the event.

- **DO NOT** engage in heckling.
- **DO NOT** directly or physically interfere with a speaker or prevent them from speaking.

- *If there is an incident on campus that involves an ACS chapter or its allies:*
  - **DO** immediately contact your ACS Chapter Liaison and Faculty Advisor to inform them of the situation.

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. Media Engagement

When an event draws press attention:

- Consult with ACS national before providing comments, open letters, or other written or verbal communication to the press.
- ACS is happy to provide you with guidance if you anticipate press attending your program.
- While you may be asked to provide commentary, remember that not all press coverage is good and that not all media outlets are alike. Your comments can be taken out of context and result in feeding a negative storyline.
- Any public comments that you make as an ACS Chapter Leader not only reflect on your ACS chapter, but on ACS as a national organization.

C. 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.

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.

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.

D. 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, etc.) or speaker travel costs (such as coach 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 posted the event to ACS 's online events calendar. Please read the reimbursement policy and submit your receipts with the online reimbursement form. 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 $25 donation 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 Chapters team to discuss the situation and your options. Also, if you become aware of a development opportunity, please contact the ACS 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.

E. 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 allowed, are not considered substantive events.

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 or impact litigation. 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. ACS is also happy to provide guidance and feedback on your invitation letter. Where appropriate, ACS may be able to help you elevate your invitation.

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 constitutional interpretation, and the subject area in the most recent ACS Program Guide, ACS podcast, or ACS blog. 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 LGBTQ+ persons, reproductive rights and women's equality, labor and workers' rights, 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, panel presentations with a group of speakers can be incredibly engaging and allow for multiple perspectives on a topic.

Co-Sponsorships. We encourage our ACS chapters to co-sponsor programs with other student groups on your campus. You may also want to co-sponsor 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, pool speaker contacts, increase camaraderie,

increase attendance, and strengthen your legal network. The result can be an especially successful and high-profile event, attractive to the most prominent speakers.

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. Reserve your room 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 and include 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 the program.

Advertising. Make extensive use of 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.

Use email, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, 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 yourroom. See the Student Resources webpage for 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 calendar invites, 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. **If they are entitled to a reimbursement, make sure to send their reimbursement to ACS immediately via the reimbursement form here.**

F. Volunteer Engagement

Through ACS's volunteer efforts, we connect lawyers and law students across the country to opportunities tailored to their interests, skills, and schedule. We are constantly looking for volunteers for ongoing research and pro bono projects. Information on some of our current projects can be found here. Please sign up on our volunteer survey or email us at LCEmails@acslaw.org if you'd like to help or if you know of any volunteer opportunities or trainings where our members could be helpful.

- **Notice and Comment**. Submitting a comment for a federal or state notice of proposed rulemaking is one of the simplest and essential ways for the public to participate in the rulemaking process. ACS's Notice and Comment initiative identifies opportunities to comment on key regulations put forth by federal and state agencies. ACS monitors the federal register for notices of proposed regulatory changes and highlights select opportunities that may be of interest to our members. ACS encourages our members to write and submit comments. For more information, check out our **Notice and Comment**

Webinar. Please email **LCEmails@acslaw.org** with the subject line "Notice and Comment" for more information. Learn more here.

- **Run. Vote. Work**. ACS is committed to protecting the integrity of our elections and the legitimacy of our democracy through our Run.Vote.Work. campaign, which focuses on advocating for voting rights and non-partisan redistricting; mobilizing and educating voters about their rights; raising awareness and increasing engagement on down ballot races (many of which play a role in ensuring election integrity), and connecting our members with opportunities to support voting rights and election integrity. Learn more here.
- **Constitution in the Classroom** gives lawyers and law students the opportunity to teach lessons on various constitutional topics to elementary, middle, and high school students. ACS encourages members to get involved around Constitution Day (September 17) and Law Day (May 1), but you can organize a Constitution in the Classroom event in your community year-round! Learn more and see our lesson plans here.
- **Election Day Class Cancellation.** Democracy does not exist unless we vote, it's that simple. For most of American history, voting was a segregated act. Ensuring that all eligible voters are able to cast their ballot is vital to our country's pursuit of multiracial democracy. In this vein, Election Day should be a national holiday. In the absence of a holiday, ACS encourages law schools to cancel classes and to encourage students to vote and volunteer at the polls. In recent years, several law schools have either canceled classes or allowed for class accommodations on Election Day to encourage law students to engage in the election process. This page provides information and resources on how more schools can join in canceling classes on Election Day to encourage voting and civic activism. To learn more about how your school can engage in our Class Cancellation initiative, email Campus@acslaw.org.

G. 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 they are involved in or a case they have 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.

H. Career Events

Consider hosting career orientated programs including,

- The nuts and bolts of clerkship applications, including selecting courts and judges, cover letters, resumes, and recommendations.
- A Path to the Bench event with local, state court, and federal judges.
- A panel on Careers in Appellate Advocacy.
- A panel on Civil Rights Careers.
- Progressive Careers in Local Government.
- Plaintiff-Side Career Panel.
- Progressive Lawyering in Big Law.
- Careers in Academia.

I. 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 and to help them grow their progressive legal network. Informal gatherings will give students a chance to turn colleagues into friends.

J. Additional Programming Ideas

Faculty Lunches with 1Ls. Organize 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.

Faculty Dinners. Organize potluck dinners with 6-8 students of any year and a progressive professor. Students can volunteer to host and ask student guests to each bring a dish. Have students RSVP for the dinner (and note their dishes) via a Google spreadsheet.

Coffee Chats. Organize informal coffee chats with 6-8 students and a professor or a local lawyer chapter leader. The chapter can purchase coffee and light snacks for the event.

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 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's Constance Baker Motley National Student Writing Competition welcomes all student papers furthering and promoting a progressive vision of the Constitution, law, and public policy. Learn more here.

ACS's Richard D. Cudahy Writing Competition on Regulatory and Administrative Law welcomes submissions focused on American regulatory or administrative law, broadly construed. Learn more here.

VII. ACS CONVENTIONS

ACS hosts two national conventions each year—a Student Convention in the Spring and a National Convention in the Summer. 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 coordinate once-a-semester 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 titles 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 updated board information to campus@acslaw.org. We also require that your chapter update our office on your chapter's activity by posting your events to the online ACS calendar.

IX. YOUR CHAPTER ON ACSLAW.ORG

Each chapter has its own webpage on the ACS website. Your chapter page provides updates on your chapter's board and recent/past events. Please note that it is a requirement for your chapter to post your 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 or Google Drive to store and share files and folders with others online.

d. Host calls, meetings, or webinars using Zoom.

e. Use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn to advertise events and communicate with your chapter members. And don't forget to follow the ACS National Facebook page, the ACS Instagram page, the ACS Twitter page, and the ACS LinkedIn page.

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 or email campus@acslaw.org.