

## Obligations of NHS or NJHS Membership

**Q:** What are the member obligations for all chapter members based on the national guidelines?

**A:** The National Constitution delineates seven (7) formal obligations of membership.

The first is as much a duty of the chapter as it is a member obligation. **Article VIII, Section 4** indicates that all members must be inducted at a special ceremony to become active members of the chapter. A student remains in the condition of being a 'successfully selected candidate' until this ceremony is undertaken.

The following list outlines those obligations delineated in the National Constitution:

- **Dues (Article IV, Section 3):** Members may be asked to pay annual chapter dues. The constitution limits this amount to \$20 per member per year. For this amount and any other obligatory expenses bestowed upon members, school should be able to provide alternative sources of funding for those students who may be incapable of paying. The authentic inability of a member or his/her family to pay such financial obligations should not be the reason for discipline or dismissal of any member.
- **Maintaining standards (Article VIII, Section 1).** Once selected, all members are expected to maintain the standards by which they were selected. The implication here is that members are well informed concerning what those selection standards were as published in the description of the local selection process.
- **Meetings (Article XIII, Section 1):** Chapters hold meetings and may *require* members to attend. The schedule of these meetings should be well publicized. In addition, chapter officers should work closely with the adviser to see that the agenda for all meetings is well thought out and planned for.
- **Chapter Service Project(s) (Article XIV, Sections 1 & 2):** All chapters are required to sponsor a chapter service project and all members are required to participate (Section 2), assuming that the project meets the criteria as outlined in the constitution (Section 3).
- **Individual Service Projects(s) (Article XIV, Section 4):** In addition to the chapter service project noted above, members are to engage in additional service according to their own talents and interests. The quantity of this service and the degree to which the chapter monitors this activity should be defined in the chapter bylaws.
- **Additional Obligations (Article XVI, Section 2):** If additional obligations exist for members of the chapter, such obligations should be spelled out in the Chapter Bylaws for all members to see. It is recommended that a set of these bylaws be presented to each member yearly as a reminder of these and all member obligations.

Publication of member obligations is a responsibility of the chapter. It is recommended that in addition to the publishing of the chapter bylaws for each member, chapters include a list of member obligations in the general chapter description that appears in the student handbook, faculty handbook, parent newsletters or any other official publication or Web site of the school or school system. Helping potential candidates (and their parents) understand what will be expected of them if they are selected may assist an individual candidate to determine if he/she has sufficient time to put into this honor.

It is also beneficial for parents to understand the commitment of time and energy that is necessary once their student becomes a member of the chapter. Many chapters will outline all member obligations and include such a list either in the candidate's packet of information or in a new member packet and then request (or require) that the student and parent/guardian sign the form affirming their understanding of the nature of all member obligations. Having such a document on file will assist in supporting the school's position should a student be called up for disciplinary action when it is apparent that he/she is not meeting some or all of the member obligations.

© 2013 NASSP