

10 Steps to Starting a Successful AMSA Chapter



These 10 steps have been prepared to help you organize and manage the task of starting a new AMSA chapter at your school. Starting a new and successful AMSA chapter is very rewarding. Be mindful of these various dates so that you aren't late! Again, **remember to have all of the required paperwork in by the petition deadline**, or the reward for your efforts to start a new chapter will have to wait one more year.

The bullets for these steps have been set as check boxes so that you can check off each task as it is completed!

1. Connect with AMSA National

- Join AMSA
- Sign up as the chapter president for the chapter at your school
- Order **FREE** Recruitment Materials to recruit others at your school to join AMSA

2. Familiarize yourself with the AMSA Website and Inspiration Exchange

- Visit the [AMSA Web site](#) and the Member Center pages
- Visit [Inspiration Exchange](#), update your profile and peruse your chapter's community, as well as your regional and other available topic-specific communities. Join all that interest you. Get engaged and keep up-to-date.
- Review information on all of the [AMSA benefits](#) (students will ask you about them, and you'll need to be able to answer their questions)
- Review all of the information in the [Chapter Officer Resource](#) pages, especially the online Chapter Officer Survival Guide.

3. Talk with your advisor

- Get your advisor to support what you are doing. If you ever get to the point where your advisor starts telling other students that they need to join AMSA, then your chapter will be in very good shape for a very long time.
- Show your advisor the AMSA online recruitment video.

4. Contact your school's office of student activities

- Different schools have different rules and regulations with regards to starting a new organization. Be sure to work within your school's guidelines, and use your office of student activities as a resource. They're sure to be able to give you the scoop on how to set up a bank account at your school, how to reserve rooms at your school, what type of activities work well at your school, etc.

5. Recruit your friends or peers to become officers

- There is a lot involved in starting a chapter, and it doesn't hurt to have some help. Contact your advisor and see if he/she knows of any motivated students who may be interested in helping you out. Try to have at least a core group of officers: President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary. Other potential officers include Community Service Chair, Publicity Chair, Special

Projects Chair, Administrative Director, Recruitment Coordinator, Legislative Affairs Representative, Webmaster, National Liaison and more.

6. Plan your first meeting

This meeting should be an organizational and recruitment meeting. At this meeting you should:

- Show the recruitment video
- Pass out applications for local and national membership (Remember all members must join AMSA National to access the benefits! They cannot only join at the local level.)
- Pass out AMSA recruitment materials
- Have your advisor on hand if possible, and have him/her say a few words about why joining your organization is a good idea
- Try to have food at your first meeting to encourage people to attend!

Be sure to widely publicize your 1st meeting!

- Post flyers all over campus (don't forget to put one in your advisor's office!)
- Visit classes where you know there are a lot of students and announce your meeting to the class
- Give meeting announcements on to teachers of classes with lots of students and ask them promote your meeting at the beginning of their classes
- Get a list of all students at your school from your advisor, and send a personal invitation to them in the mail or via email

7. Raise money for your organization

- Select an amount that you want to charge for local dues. This varies from chapter to chapter (from \$0 per year to about \$50 per year). Consider offering the option of joining for 4 years at a discounted price. Offering the 4-year option may help you raise a lot of funds early, and it may help you get money that you might not have received in the future anyway.
- Send letters to anyone you think might be interested in sponsoring your chapter. Many chapters have been successful with local hospitals, local health stores, area restaurants, etc. This is an easy fund raiser to do and can reap huge rewards.
- Visit your school's alumni office and get a list of MDs or DOs that graduated from your school. Send letters to all of them and ask them for a small donation to help those who are following in their footsteps. Even if you only get 5% of the people to respond, you can still make a ton of money! (And while you're at it, ask them if they'd like to volunteer to allow your members to shadow them while at work.)

8. Plan projects to get people involved

People will be most interested in health related projects! (this helps you define a niche for your organization at your school)

- Contact your local Red Cross and United Way...they're certain to help you find good projects that specifically address health issues
- Do special projects at area hospitals: cards for elderly, toy drive for children, etc.
- Download materials from the [AMSA Project Directory](#). This directory is used by all our local chapters to upload and share project ideas and documentation. It provides a wealth of project ideas and makes implementation so much easier.

Premedical Chapters

- Mentorship Program - Contact the national office and get the contact information for the chapter officers at the medical school chapter(s) nearest you. Try to set up a mentorship program

between the premedical students and the medical students...this is NOT hard to do. At most schools, so many medical students are willing to help that some of them need to be turned away. Match up people by some common interest: hometown, undergrad major or medical specialty interest.

9. Plan Meetings

Be sure to have at least one to announce at your big recruitment meeting

☐ Most chapters have meetings once every two-four weeks and they try to focus on a particular issue at each meeting. You can bring in a speaker, have a panel, hold a workshop, etc. Some popular topics are:

- Various aspects of the admissions process
- Paying for medical school
- Going to medical school for free (National Health Service Corps, Military)
- Complementary and Alternative Medicine
- Medical Ethics
- Managed Care
- Primary vs. Specialty Care
- Life in Medical School
- Joint Degree Programs
- Alternate Health Careers
- And much, much more! For more meeting or project ideas, visit AMSA's Web site and read information on AMSA's Action Committees.

10. Attend the AMSA National Convention

☐ If you are successful at only one thing this year, let it be this: get people to go to the [national convention](#). Why? There are three very important reasons:

1. It's a ton of fun! - You will spend four days attending awesome programming sessions, participating in amazing workshops, hearing outstanding speakers, meeting wonderful students and having a great time out on the town. Be sure to keep an eye on the AMSA Web site for details of programming at this year's convention. You don't want to miss it!
2. You'll want to be there when your chapter's petition to charter is reviewed and hopefully approved at the national convention...it's a big moment for your chapter! Also, if any questions arise concerning your chapter and you are not there to answer those questions, your petition may be postponed until the next convention.
3. It will have lasting effects for your chapter. You and your friends will go back to your chapter filled with ideas for making your chapter successful and motivation for getting the job done. For example, one of our largest chapters, Vanderbilt University, was a very weak chapter until they began sending people to convention a few years ago. Now, as a result of sending people to convention every year, they are extremely active and are setting an example for others.