

## *AFS Student Subunit Guidelines*

Obtaining a good job in this field often requires establishing professional connections and populating ones CV with notable experiences outside of the classroom. The purpose of the AFS student subunits is to provide these opportunities for students before they go out looking for a job. Being a member of a student subunit gives students access to one of the oldest and largest networking organizations in the aquatic and fisheries fields today. One of the reasons this society has been so successful is its continued adherence to original principles and overall goals. Student subunits are unique in that they have constant officer turnover, often with new members coming in to fill officiating roles. Students serve as officers and committee chairs, which allows them the opportunity to develop leadership and public speaking skills. Because of this frequent turnover of officers, however, the “purpose” of a student subunit isn’t always properly communicated. To continue to provide the aforementioned benefits to students, offered below are guidelines to help maintain a common ground:

### 1. Main focus of student subunits:

- a. To find and promote opportunities for students to get field, lab, and professional experience; to network with professionals; to become involved with community
  - i. Reach out to local professionals regarding volunteer opportunities; propose having them as a guest lecturer at a meeting.
    1. Allowing students to communicate with these folks helps them to network and build relationships with possible future employers.
  - ii. Start own projects/restoration group
    1. Contact university extension specialists, local grade school teachers, local environmental groups, etc. Many student subunits have a local project that they engage in on a regular basis.
  - iii. Find ways to get involved within the community
    1. There are often many ongoing projects (Trout Unlimited, Sea Grant programs, local preservation foundations) – contact organizers and get involved.
  - iv. Consider becoming a student organization through the university/college
    1. Student organizations have opportunities to apply for funding, promote organization at campus outreach events, gain access to campus buildings, and recruit members through numerous outlets.
    2. Keep in mind that student organizations are strictly associated with the university/college, while the AFS student subunit is a branch of the Society, but housed at the university/college.
- b. Plan and organize regular meetings for subunit members. Purpose of meetings is to communicate new information, get feedback from members, update members on

Society business, etc. Meetings can be monthly or bimonthly, just as long as members are being informed at the appropriate times.

- i. Communicate information in a timely manner to all members. Relay meeting minutes to members after each meeting.
  - ii. Within this communication, summarize a list of *Action Items* to establish expectations for starting and/or completing projects.
2. Student subunit membership dues: Subunits should collect membership dues, either annually or biannually. Suggested dues: \$5 - \$10 per academic year.
3. Levels of membership: AFS is split into different geographic-based levels - Divisions, Chapters, and Student Subunits. The Society also contains Sections, which are formed based on different subject areas and expertise. Individuals can become a member of any of these units. The four Divisions – North Central, Northeastern, Southern and Western – serve member needs across a large geographic area and coordinate activities among federal, provincial and state-level agencies and organizations. Divisions are partitioned into 48 Chapters that connect different aspects of fisheries. Student subunits, typically based at universities or colleges, are then organized under Chapters.
  - a. Officers should inform members of the benefits of becoming an AFS member. Make sure members know that Chapter or student subunit membership alone does not confer Society membership.
4. Budget: Student subunits raise money in numerous ways, most often through fundraising, membership dues, and/or through sales of student subunit apparel.
  - a. Allocated funds are used to pay for/fund various things:
    - i. Rent for meeting room
    - ii. Travel expenses (conferences, field trips, volunteering, etc.)
    - iii. Travel awards; scholarships for members
      1. A large portion of the raised money often goes towards travel awards/scholarships. Travel awards help students who want to attend/present at Chapter, Division, or Society meetings.
    - iv. Subunit promotion
    - v. Social events
      1. Though these are a great way to build relationships among members, time and funding used for social activities should not take precedence over more educational/professional experiences.
5. Bylaws and constitution: Each student subunit will create their own bylaws and constitution. These often go unchanged, but can be altered with approval of the AFS Management Committee. These rules of order need to be read and understood by all incoming officers. Examples of bylaws and a constitution for student subunits can be easily obtained and your subunit's documents should be reviewed by the AFS Constitutional Consultant (free of charge) before voting to adopt them.
  - a. Bylaws, constitution, and other necessary documentation should be stored in a virtual folder so that information can be easily passed down to incoming officers.
6. Advisor: Student subunits must have a faculty advisor serving the subunit.

- a. It is suggested that the advisor:
    - i. Is active in AFS and be aware of the principles/goals of AFS
    - ii. Is well-connected in the fisheries community and knowledgeable on current issues
    - iii. Regularly attends student subunit meetings and helps students find resources and establish connections to prepare them professionally.
  - b. The faculty advisor needs to have their name on the subunit bank account so they can maintain continued access and control over funds.
7. Officer Turnover: Outgoing and incoming officers need to hold a formal meeting to properly turn over roles and relay duties and expectations of new officers.
- a. All information needed to access email accounts, bank accounts, subunit websites, etc., needs to be given to incoming officers.
  - b. Incoming president and treasurer need to add their name to the bank account to gain access. They will need to go to the bank with outgoing president and treasurer to turnover account. Subunit advisor will likely need to be present to allow access transfer.
  - c. Use a gmail (or similar) account to store bylaws, constitution, and other necessary documentation in virtual folders. This is a much easier way to organize materials and make sure they are not lost. Passwords for this account should be changed during turnover process.
  - d. The new student subunit president needs to pass along new officer contact information to Chapter and Division presidents. Maintain contact with these officials on a regular basis.