

## NSPE Student Chapter Handbook

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide for NSPE Student Chapters. The material in this handbook contains suggestions for organizational structure and activities for student chapters. Student chapters may adapt information to their specific needs.

The overall purpose of NSPE chapter programs is to stimulate continued interest in and understanding of the professional dimensions of engineering and to guide graduating seniors in the steps required to reach professional status through licensure as a professional engineer. NSPE is a nontechnical professional society, so a student chapter's programs will be devoted mainly to nontechnical subjects. The generic nature of the meetings allows for participation by technical societies on campus as well. The NSPE Student Chapter is meant to complement student technical society activities, not compete with them.

For assistance from NSPE, contact Student Services by e-mail at [students@nspe.org](mailto:students@nspe.org), or by mail at Student Services, NSPE, 1420 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-2794.

### Student Chapter Formation

#### Requirements of Student Chapter

New student chapters are required to have a minimum of 10 active NSPE student members. The student chapter must comply with all rules and regulations for student organizations of the academic institution. Any conflicts of these with NSPE guidelines will be handled by NSPE on an individual basis. The NSPE student chapter must originate:

**A** - In a college of engineering having at least one curriculum of at least four years' duration accredited by the Accreditation Board for Engineering Technology (ABET-EAC or ABET-TAC).

**B** - In a school, college, or junior college having a curriculum of at least two years' duration designated as being preparatory for entrance into an ABET-EAC or ABET-TAC accredited engineering program.

To promote year-to-year continuity and to provide professional representation to the student chapter, the student chapter should have a minimum three-member Board of Sponsors. The Board of Sponsors should be comprised of one faculty member, preferably a licensed professional engineer, who will serve as faculty advisor of the student chapter; a non-faculty member from the local parent chapter who will serve as a "contact" to the student chapter; and one non-faculty member from the state society who will serve as a contact to the student chapter. In some cases, it may not be possible for the student chapter to obtain all three of the above members of the Board of Sponsors. In that case, any other interested and active state society member may be substituted for the missing member or members, subject to the approval of NSPE Student Services.

Formation of the Board of Sponsors need not be done independent of NSPE. Students wishing to form a student chapter are encouraged to contact their state society or NSPE directly for assistance with this matter. It is important for the student chapter to focus its professional support as locally as possible, beginning with a faculty advisor. Similarly, obtaining local chapter membership on the Board of Sponsors should take precedence over state society support.

#### Getting Started

The NSPE Board of Directors has established the following procedure for petitioning to participate in the NSPE Student Chapter program. The Petition to Charter should be prepared by an officer

and the faculty advisor of the applying student chapter. It is then sent to the state society office for review and approval. In the case that an unsuccessful attempt has been made to establish the Board of Sponsors, NSPE Student Services or should be contacted for assistance. NSPE will take an active part in soliciting state or local support for a student chapter.

If NSPE judges sufficient effort has been expended in establishing a Board of Sponsors, but with no success, a temporary Board of Sponsors will be appointed, the requirement for endorsement by the State Society or at least a local chapter will be temporarily waived, and the annual renewal of Student Chapter status will be dependent upon resolving these issues and obtaining the necessary endorsements as soon as possible. NSPE recognizes that it may not always be possible to obtain state or local support, despite effort expended. In such cases, NSPE will continue to sponsor membership. Under these conditions, the application will be forwarded to NSPE Student Services for consideration by NSPE.

For all Student Chapter applications, the petition should contain:

Information indicating that requirements A or B above are met.  
Names of the active NSPE student members (minimum of 10 required).  
Roster of the Board of Sponsors.

The petition should also include endorsements from:

1. The Dean of Engineering or, if there is none, the Head of the Engineering Department indicating that conditions at the school are favorable for the successful operation of an NSPE student chapter.
2. The president of a local parent chapter indicating support and willingness to sponsor and promote the student chapter.
3. The president of the state society indicating support and willingness to sponsor and promote the student chapter.

When the state society agrees to officially support the student chapter, the petition is completed and forwarded to National for final approval. If the student chapter meets the NSPE standards for chartering, a charter is drawn up and forwarded to the state society. The state society president and secretary will sign the charter and present it to the student chapter officers and members. It is suggested that the charter be presented at a student chapter meeting or at some state function that will add to the prestige of the newly formed chapter.

In those cases where state society support has not yet been obtained, no charter is issued, but the student chapter is accorded the same benefits of chartered student chapters on an annually renewable basis until state society support and a local Board of Sponsors is established, whereupon the previously prepared application may be forwarded to the state society, along with an addendum detailing any changes in status and briefly documenting the reason for submittal of an older application. In cases of applications that are more than three years old, preparation of a new application may be necessary.

## **Student Chapter Administration**

### **Officers**

The student chapter's organizational structure will be determined by its size and specific needs. However, three officer positions (President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer) are necessary for every chapter, regardless of size. Most student chapters should feature four officers, following

the format suggested below. A Secretary/Treasurer would perform the duties of both positions noted below, with the exception that the vice president should handle publicizing meetings and other chapter activities.

The duration of service and time of election of these officers may be decided by the student chapters on an individual basis, although the duration of service should not be less than one semester or two quarters under normal circumstances. The typical student chapter will have one set of officers for a single academic year. In that case, the officers are usually elected in the spring of the academic year, prior to leaving campus for the summer. Some student chapters find it more convenient to have a change in officers between the fall and spring semesters, which is also considered acceptable.

Regardless of the designated time for a change in officers, the student chapter should follow an election structure that features nominations in the meeting prior to election, followed by a posting of nominations, and holding an election before the completion of the current semester or quarter. Upon election of officers, the faculty advisor should inform the local chapter and state society of the names, and NSPE of the new officers and their duration of service. Provided below are suggestions for the duties of student chapter officers. These are only suggestions; assign responsibilities as is best for the size and nature of your particular chapter.

**President** - Leader and manager of student chapter affairs. He or she presides at each chapter meeting and follows a prepared agenda, appoints committee chairpersons, gives final approval of chapter expenditures, and represents the chapter at all non-chapter functions. The president coordinates the work of chapter committees, convening periodic meetings with all committee chairpersons to review the status of projects and performances.

**Vice President** - Performs the duties of the president in his/her absence or at his/her request. Coordinates arrangements for meetings and special programs, including reserving rooms and equipment, booking speakers, and ordering refreshments. Attends committee meetings as a representative of the chapter officers.

**Secretary** - Keeps records on each chapter activity, including the names of participants, tasks performed, time and date, and samples of publicity used. Takes minutes at chapter meetings and reads minutes at the following meeting for approval by members. Requests needed materials from the national office. Holds primary responsibility for the completion and filing of the chapter's Annual Report.

**Treasurer** - Maintains a complete and up-to-date account of chapter income and expenditures. Prepares an operating budget for chapter programs so that activities may be planned accordingly. Reports current balance at each chapter business meeting.

### **Accounting and Bookkeeping**

The financial year of NSPE runs from July 1 through June 30. All records should be kept for whatever fiscal period is adopted by the student chapter. A simple bookkeeping system consists of:

**Receipt Book** - Receipts are written in ink and in duplicate for each amount of money received, and the duplicate is posted to the cash receipts section (in ink) of the account book (cash receipts and disbursements should be supported by a bill, or evidence of payment marked with the date it was paid and the check number).

**Account Book** (Cash receipts and disbursement journal) - All receipts and disbursements should be recorded in this book. All pages should be totaled and balanced before you begin a new page.

Total each column down and balance the columns across the page. All receipts should be deposited in the bank as promptly as possible. All disbursements should be supported by a bill or evidence of payment marked with the date it was paid and the check number.

**Bank Accounts** - The authorization to open a bank account should appear in the student chapter minutes. One signature is sufficient to sign checks, but at least two persons should be authorized to sign (president and treasurer) in case one is absent. The faculty advisor should also be authorized to sign in order to guarantee access to funds from year-to-year. If the student chapter has funds it will not be using for several months (such as proceeds from a fund-raising project), place these funds in an interest-bearing account or investment. They will usually earn more interest than an interest-bearing checking account.

**Reports of the Treasurer** - It may not be necessary to give a detailed report at each meeting, but the treasurer should report the number of dues paid, the total income and expenditures at each Board meeting, and also be able to give each officer or committee chairperson the status of the budget. An annual written financial report should be prepared. Sometimes the financial report is printed in the student chapter newsletter, while some student chapters include the financial report for the previous year in the annual report.

**Assistance from National Headquarters** - Student Chapters desiring assistance with budgeting procedures and formats and financial accounting and reporting are encouraged to contact the office of the Director of Finance and Controller at the national headquarters (NSPE), 703/684-2818.

## **Budget**

Every student chapter should give careful consideration to their chapter budget each year. Careful planning of the budget is necessary for those chapters that incur significant expenditures and sponsor numerous fund-raising activities. Even those chapters without significant expenses must have some plan in place for the annual budget. The amount of effort placed on developing the budget each year will depend on the level of chapter activity. This section provides a recommendation for detailed budget development.

The budget should be prepared as soon as possible after the slate of officers has been constituted. It is helpful to have it prepared by a finance or budget committee, including members familiar with plans for the coming year, such as the president, programs chairperson, treasurer, and membership chairperson. Those preparing the budget should determine the chapter priorities and discuss programs and travel plans (to conferences, workshops, and conventions) with the president and committee chairpersons so all items of expense can be included in the budget. Estimates of income and expense should be as accurate as possible. Check over the records of the past two or three years for items of income and expense to be sure all that are likely to come up in the next year are included in the budget. Budgets are the financial plan to support the chapter's program and project plans for the year. Therefore, budgets should be prepared in conjunction with annual program/project plans.

The budget should be adopted at an early meeting of the chapter officers and/or by the membership. (Bylaws usually specify whether the membership is to adopt the budget.) It may be revised at any time during the year by the same procedure if unexpected changes in income or expenditures occur. The treasurer or finance chairperson is responsible for seeing that the Student Chapter operates on a sound financial basis and that officers and chairpersons stay within their budgeted allotment. Receipts should be requested for all expenditures of funds. The treasurer must account for all funds, and in order to do so, must keep good records.

## Committees

Committees provide an opportunity for additional members to become involved in chapter activities, and are an essential tool for sharing responsibility of chapter operation. Chairpersons for committees are appointed by the president, upon majority approval of the officers. Each chairperson is responsible for selecting members to serve on their committee. Some possible committees include:

**Publicity**—Works together with all other committees to publicize activities campus wide. Gives a sample of all publicity used (posters, flyers, etc.) to secretary for chapter files. After an event, forward to the state society magazine and *Engineering Times* material on any event that is particularly newsworthy, for consideration for publication.

**Membership**—Carries out a membership campaign in the fall. NSPE provides membership brochures and applications.

**Special Projects**—Organizes and executes any special events or projects, sometimes working closely with the local parent chapter.

**Programs and Meetings**—Plans and organizes meeting programs designed to meet the professional and social needs of student members.

## Meetings

Meetings fall into one of three categories: general, officer, and committee. Don't underestimate the value of each of these, particularly officer and committee meetings. The officer and committee meetings are critical for planning activities held during general meetings and at other times. As with any engineering activity, planning is crucial.

**Officer's meetings**, attended by chapter officers and committee chairpersons, are held just prior to the general member meetings so that officers will be informed about what will be covered at the general meeting and what progress or changes have been made to plans and upcoming activities. The president presides. All officer meetings should be attended by the faculty advisor.

**Committee meetings** are held by the committee chairperson so that committee members can discuss the event they are planning and/or work on the project. These should occur as often as necessary to plan the committee activities. In addition to the committee members, the vice president should also attend these meetings. If unable, another chapter officer should attend instead.

It is recommended that meetings of the general membership be scheduled monthly, except when special program preparations require greater frequency. They are open to all members and are presided over by the president. They are held so that past events can be reviewed, new events can be organized, and future events can be discussed. Routine items of business such as finances or membership should also appear on the agenda. The local chapter representative and faculty advisor must be informed of the date and time of the general meetings at least several days in advance.

## Planning for Meetings

For many chapter officers, chapter meetings represent their first encounter with a business meeting. The first thing to remember is to get off to a good start at the beginning of the year with the speedy appointment of all chairpersons. Provide direction for the chairpersons and encourage them to involve as many members as possible in their projects. The following are some suggestions from other student chapters on how best to plan and conduct chapter meetings:

**Plan early;** The most successful meetings are those which are planned well in advance. Preparations such as reserving a room, notifying guest speakers or faculty advisors, and purchasing refreshments should be completed well ahead of time.

**Publicize;** Effective announcements and advertisements of meetings are critical to attracting current and new members to the meetings. Use posters, handouts, ads in the school paper, e-mail lists, the campus radio station, and word of mouth, especially announcements made in engineering classes.

**Provide incentives;** Students are more likely to attend meetings that include refreshments (soft drinks, chips, pizza, etc.), guest speakers, and some audiovisual display to add interest.

**Use written agenda;** Always establish a meeting agenda, with a beginning and ending time, and make copies available to each attendee. The agenda does not have to be rigidly followed, but will provide a basis for an orderly and timely meeting. The business part of the meeting should move quickly, and all reports should be crisp and to the point. The agenda is developed by the president and tightly controlled to avoid giving the impression that the meeting is unorganized. It should include a scheduled time for each of the officers to report. Scheduling time for general comments or new business is important.

**Follow up;** As questions or items of discussion arise at meetings, decide the action to be taken on each. Assign a member to take that action and to report on it at the next meeting.

**Discuss future meetings;** Let members know what's up for discussion at the next meeting and ask them for their agenda suggestions. Briefly stress the highlights of any special program coming up to pique the members' interest and encourage them to invite others.

Most importantly, get all members of the meeting actively involved. Active involvement makes them feel more welcome, needed, and more likely to continue to participate.

### **Minimum Chapter Responsibilities**

It is important to establish and maintain the organizational integrity of your student chapter. This is achieved partly through maintenance of a Student Chapter Yearbook. Chapter Yearbooks should be kept for each year of chapter activity. The Chapter Yearbook should include:

#### **Chapter Calendar**

This consists of a one-page summary of the planned activities for the reporting year. It is recognized that this may change, and changes should be noted on the calendar throughout the year. Preparation of a chapter calendar by the president with the assistance of the Board of Sponsors and other student chapter officers assures a good start to the year's activities.

#### **Compiling a Roster of Members**

Student members may join NSPE without informing their local student chapter. While NSPE makes every effort to inform the local chapters of their student members, mistakes can occur due to confusion about whether the student member provided their campus address or permanent address in applying for membership. To assure a list of active members is obtained each year, a student chapter call-out is recommended at the beginning of each semester or quarter to acquire new members and to update the list of current members. The student chapters are also encouraged to perform a membership check with NSPE and their local chapter to assure a complete membership list. Collection of attendance records (see below) will assist in this activity. It is recommended that the membership list include the student's name, emphasis area, grade level, phone number, and e-mail address. Student chapters will find it useful to maintain an e-mail

mailing list for all members to keep the membership apprised of developments.

### **Minutes**

The purpose of taking minutes (a description of a meeting as it happens) is to record business that was discussed, ideas that were suggested, and items that were reviewed at officer meetings and organizational gatherings. It is recommended that the secretary keep an informal record of meetings. These minutes should then be typed into a formal format, and placed in a loose-leaf notebook as a formal record of chapter meetings. A copy of the minutes should also be posted or distributed to the membership and sent to the parent chapter contact and faculty advisor. The secretary is responsible for these duties.

### **Attendance Records**

Attendance should be taken at every meeting and function to show the amount of involvement and interest for various events. For the purpose of updating, it may be beneficial to have everyone give their current address, phone number, their reason for attendance (how they heard about meeting), and their membership status. It is not uncommon for non-NSPE members to attend meetings, particularly if the meeting includes incentives like pizza or snacks. The student chapter may adopt its own policy on whether these students are welcome. These non-paying members of the student chapter can often be a good resource for additional paying student members if the officers make a concerted effort to make them official members. Attendance records can be kept by having people sign a bound log book, to be kept on file, or by circulating a sign-up sheet and placing a typed version in a binder. The date and title of the activity should be indicated for each entry. These records will aid in maintaining the current membership roster. They can also serve as a mailing list for notices, provide information for annual reports, and indicate the level of activity of the club. Evidence of community involvement may be noted in these documents, which will enable future contacts outside the college and cooperation between the club and the public on upcoming projects.

### **Record of Activities**

Special activities of the student chapter go beyond information that is obtained in the minutes. A record of these activities will assist future officers in conducting activities, avoiding making the same mistakes, and encourages improvements over past activities, so student chapters are encouraged to keep a Record of Activities for inclusion in the Annual Report. The secretary should keep a formal record of activities in a separate loose-leaf binder or in a section of the binder used for the minutes. The actual report may be prepared by the secretary, or by the committee chairperson overseeing that activity. Important information such as a general description of the project, the resources needed to complete the assignment (students, finances, publicity) and an evaluation of the success of the activity should be included. If possible, a list of those in attendance for the particular activity should be included with this material. Also, copies of any promotional items associated with the activity such as letters, fliers, or other publicity items should be included in this section. This record will provide a solid reference book for future officers in their planning of chapter activities.

### **President's Report**

This is optional, but it is strongly recommended that each outgoing student chapter president prepare a brief report and provide copies to his/her successor and include it in the Annual Report.

### **Annual Report**

The Student Chapter Annual Report, filed in May, is the only report a student chapter submits to

NSPE. The information provided is vital to improve future NSPE Student Programs activities. It is necessary to file an annual report to maintain active status of the student chapter. Failure to file a report by December of the year in which it was due will move a student chapter to inactive status. If no report is filed by the following May, the student chapter may be removed from NSPE's student chapter list. Six weeks' notice will be given to the members of the Board of Sponsors and the state society president before transfer to inactive status and removal from the list of student chapters.

Annual Reports are used to determine "active/inactive" status of a chapter; justify the allocation of funds to the Student Programs Task Force during the NSPE budget process; evaluate NSPE products and services to student members; exchange detailed information with other chapters about successful programs; provide data on incoming officers and faculty advisors; and maintain continuity from year to year within a chapter by providing a record of the chapter's activities.

The minimum requirements for filing an annual report are simple to meet. An example Annual Report along with a standard Annual Report form can be obtained by contacting Student Services at [students@nspe.org](mailto:students@nspe.org). Officers should review the format of the report early in their terms so that they may plan ahead and stay current with the documentation needed from the student chapter.

## Building a Strong Chapter

### Leadership of the Chapter

Every officer and committee chair will need good leadership skills to keep the chapter alive and running. Key among the many skills you'll be using are the ability to motivate and delegate.

**Motivating People to Join:** To motivate people to become members, stress the following points:

1. There is a free upgrade to NSPE Associate Member upon graduation if you are already a student member.
2. Through chapter functions, a member comes in contact with professional engineers already in the work force, and can establish networking opportunities for future jobs.
3. Membership demonstrates social interaction with PE's and peers, which is an item prospective employers view positively.
4. Contact with students from all engineering disciplines.
5. Opportunity to develop professional skills needed in the workplace.

**Motivating Participation:** In order to motivate members to attend meetings, three things must be considered:

1. **Be organized:** The usual proceedings of a meeting often dictate whether members attend or not. Therefore, have a planned agenda of important issues and do not allow discussion to drag or stray from the subject being discussed. A concise, functional meeting is much better than a lengthy unorganized one.
2. **Make it interesting:** Try to make the meetings as enjoyable as possible by having interesting guest speakers and offering interesting programs such as videos and tours. The key word here is interesting.
3. **Provide incentives:** Incentives for attendance could include serving food at the meeting, have door prizes, and ask faculty to give some sort of credit for attendance.

**Motivating to Raise Funds:** There are two basic methods for raising money, direct requests to local firms and raffle-like competitions. Motivating students to assist in fund raising can be the most difficult and the most important task an officer may face. Many times students are not

comfortable going up to someone and asking for donations. Unless there is some sort of incentive it may be very difficult to get your members to help in your fund raising efforts.

1. Reward students that assist in your efforts and make sure they know in advance that they will be rewarded.
2. For the raffle type of fund-raising give cash or prizes for the students who raise the most.
3. Give recognition to everyone who helps in your fund-raising efforts.
4. Stress that the funds are to be used for specific functions that the student members will be participating in, such as BBQs, dances, field trips, etc.

## **Discovering and Utilizing Resources**

### **Assign Duties**

1. Identify tasks with goals in mind.
2. Set priorities.
3. Delegate tasks according to members' interests, if possible, and their authority to complete the task(s).
4. Allocate any necessary resources.
5. Set clear deadlines for task completion.
6. Listen to group members and constructively channel their enthusiasm.
7. Make certain each person understands which goals are expected of them and set firm commitments for accountability purposes.
8. For large projects (open house, etc.), an organizational chart might prove useful.
9. Sense what members need to know to complete their tasks.

### **Follow Up and Track Progress**

1. Offer encouragement.
2. Ask if additional information help is needed. Do not over manage.
3. There is a narrow band of adequate supervision. Too much supervision stifles initiative, breeds resentment, and lowers morale and motivation. Inadequate supervision can lead to miscommunication.
4. Evaluate feedback from members for indications that the plans need to be modified or policies need to be revised.
5. Allow flexibility at the task-completion level.
6. Use a checklist to organize and prioritize tasks.

### **Wrap-Up and Final Presentation**

1. Strive to include efforts from all participants.
2. Present results in a positive light (e.g., increase in sales over last year versus shortfall of goal).
3. Thank each member for participating, no matter how small their contribution.
4. Letters of appreciation should be provided for larger tasks (open house chairperson, Engineers week coordinator, etc.)