



# Honor Societies and the Purposes of ACHS

An honor society is an organization whose purposes are to recognize and encourage individuals with verified high scholarship and additionally, in some, leadership achievement in some broad or specialized field of study.

Honor societies represent a rich tradition in the history of higher education and exist to recognize and promote excellence in academic accomplishment.

Whether individual societies service multiple academic disciplines or only a single, specific academic major, their overall purpose is to encourage and recognize students who have achieved a high level of academic competence and to promote excellence in the academic community.

## Functions of College Honor Societies

- **Recognition of Achievement:** They confer distinction for high academic achievement, leadership, and excellence in various fields of study.
- **Fostering Excellence:** They promote a culture of excellence by encouraging mental development and a spirit of liberal culture.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Members can connect with like-minded individuals, which can be beneficial for personal and professional growth.
- **Scholarships and Awards:** Many honor societies offer scholarships and awards to support their members' educational and professional endeavors.
- **Leadership Development:** They provide opportunities for students to develop leadership skills through various roles and activities.
- **Community Service:** Honor societies often engage in community service projects, fostering a sense of social responsibility among members.

## Programs and Activities of Honor Societies

Societies fulfill the functions of honor societies through the following programs and activities:

- Awards—students, advisors, alumni
- Recognition Activities—initiation, honors function, graduation regalia
- Scholarships, fellowships, grants

- Program initiatives or themes
- Seminars, workshops, conferences
- Publications—newsletters, journals, trainings, manuals

## Honor Society Standards of Excellence

The following standards are guidelines set forth by ACHS for certifying the quality of member societies. These also provide a set of criteria for judging the credibility and legitimacy of any honor society.

### ACHS Member Societies

To be a certified member society, an organization must:

- Be recognized as a 501(c) charitable organization.
- Establish minimum scholastic criteria for collegiate chapter-invited membership and, for some, additionally on leadership or other achievements.
- Maintain democratic governance and non-discrimination policies.
- Regularly report to ACHS on membership and governance changes.

### Campus Chapters

Certified societies establish collegiate chapters at accredited institutions, maintaining active status based on institutional support and accreditation. They may also create alumni chapters based on various groupings. Chapters represent the honor society on campus through:

- Formal chartering of each campus chapter by institution and college/department petition, approved by official action of the governing body of the national organization.
- Membership invitation by an official chapter.

### Certified Member Society Classifications

- **General Classification:** These societies accept students from any major, provided they meet established academic criteria. Membership eligibility is primarily based on scholarship:
  - Students in the top 20% of their class or with a GPA of at least 3.5 for scholarship-focused memberships.
  - Students in the top 35% or with a GPA of at least 3.3 for those who also demonstrate leadership.
- **Specialized Classification:** These societies focus on specific fields of study and have similar GPA requirements (top 35% or GPA of at least 3.3). Membership categories are the same as in the general classification.

## Benefits of ACHS Membership

The Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) is the organization honor societies join when they want their society **certified by a neutral body**, want to **collaborate with other honor societies to promote best practices in recognizing and promoting excellence in scholarship, leadership, service, and research**, and seek to continually **maintain the highest standards** by providing annual reports and undergoing regular re-certification.

Founded in 1925, **ACHS is the only certifying agency** for college and university honor societies. ACHS **sets the standards** for organizational excellence and scholastic eligibility, as well as assuring member participation in governance so that the interests of individual members are advanced.

The mission of ACHS is to build a visibly cohesive community of national and international honor societies that promotes the values of higher education; fosters excellence in scholarship, leadership, service, and research; and adheres to the standards of honor society excellence.

The Association acts as the coordinating agency for collegiate honor societies; provide facilities for the consideration of matters of mutual interest; defines honor societies of the several types; cooperates with college and university faculties and administrative officers in developing and maintaining high standards and useful functions; and collects and distributes information and data to members.

The Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) certification is more than a prestigious accolade; it's a commitment to the highest standards of academic and professional integrity. Becoming an ACHS-certified Honor Society can be a transformative experience for your honor society.

## Elevate Your Credibility

ACHS certification represents a rigorous validation of your honor society's commitment to academic excellence and ethical standards. This certification:

- Enhances your reputation as a distinguished organization.
- Attracts top-tier students and professionals who value academic distinction.
- Sets your society apart in a competitive landscape, demonstrating your society's adherence to recognized standards.

## Enhance Member Experience

ACHS certification can significantly enrich the experience of your members:

- **Scholarship Eligibility:** Members of ACHS-certified honor societies are eligible to receive scholarships for programs and internships provided by our partners.
- **Acknowledgment of Merit:** Membership in an ACHS member society carries with it a tangible acknowledgment of merit for Federal employment. As long as the applicant meets the requirements as described in the job announcement, honor society membership may fulfill one of the requirements for entrance at the GS-7 level in numerous professional and technical occupations in the Federal Service.

- **Ensured participation in governance:** ACHS sets the standards for organizational excellence and scholastic eligibility, as well as assuring member participation in governance so that the interests of individual members are advanced.

## Ensure Quality and Integrity

Certification through ACHS ensures that your Honor Society meets and maintains the highest standards:

- **Rigorous Standards:** Achieve and uphold stringent criteria for membership, governance, and operations.
- **Ethical Practices:** Commit to ethical guidelines that promote integrity, fairness, and transparency
- **Continuous Improvement:** Engage in ongoing evaluation and improvement processes to maintain excellence.

## Gain Visibility and Recognition

Certified societies benefit from increased visibility and recognition:

- **Public Endorsement:** Showcase your certification status through official ACHS branding and endorsements.
- **Media Exposure:** Enjoy enhanced opportunities for media coverage and promotional activities.
- **Event Participation:** Receive invitations to exclusive ACHS events and conferences.

## Foster a Culture of Excellence

Being ACHS certified means fostering an environment that values and strives for excellence:

- **Inspire Members:** Motivate your members to pursue higher standards in their academic and professional endeavors.
- **Cultivate Leadership:** Develop future leaders who are dedicated to ethical practices and academic achievement.
- **Build Community:** Strengthen the bonds within your society through shared values and goals.

## Rights and Obligations of Certified Member Societies

Certified member societies must continuously meet ACHS requirements and support its mission. They have the right to participate in Council activities such as voting on governance matters and nominating and electing members for the Board of Directors, as long as they remain compliant and meet ongoing obligations to:

- submit the ACHS Annual Report to the Executive Director

- pay annual dues on a sliding scale based on annual new members (\$530-\$2,930)
- Formal compliance reviews are conducted on a 5-year rotational basis

## Procedures for Affiliation

The petitioning society shall:

- Compare its overarching governing document (constitution and/or bylaws) with the ACHS standards and eligibility criteria.
- Discuss the above comparison with the ACHS Executive Director and/or President, and make changes necessary to meet all of the standards and criteria.
- Optional, but advisable: Participate as an observer at an ACHS Annual Council Meeting.
- Submit the petition form and accompanying materials and \$500 petition fee to the ACHS Executive Director at [executivedirector@achshonor.org](mailto:executivedirector@achshonor.org) (forms below).

## Key Petition Documents

- Petition Form
- Petitioning Society Self-Assessment Form
- [ACHS Bylaws](#)