Student and Academic Engagement
Best Practice Ideas for APA Leadership
2015 Fall Leadership Meetings

Planning students represent the future of each chapter, section and division and are a source of new ideas, energy and volunteer capacity. The objective of this document is to present examples of best practice ideas and case studies for chapters, sections and divisions to consider when implementing collaborative student and academic engagement. The goal is to discuss these ideas at the 2015 Fall Leadership Meetings and incorporate the feedback received into developing a toolkit or manual comprising all of the case studies and best practices. Examples are arranged in the following categories:

A. Presence on Campus
B. Scholarships, Awards, and Competitions
C. Discounts to Chapter Conferences and Chapter/Section Events
D. Events
E. Career Programs/Employment Networks
F. Leadership Opportunities
G. Mentoring Programs
H. Faculty Research
I. Special Projects
J. Other Ideas – APA/AICP Student and New Planner Task Force

When reading the list of ideas, keep in mind that a chapter, section or division can implement these types of programs through a variety of different models (e.g. on an ad-hoc basis, through a membership committee or Young Planners Groups, etc.), depending on its size and capacity.

A. Presence on Campus

- Build a relationship between APA leadership and school leadership.
- Offer APA representatives as guest lecturers in classes.
- Offer APA representatives as speakers at student orientation sessions.
  - Example: Every year, the LA Chapter leadership attends the UNOPLUS student orientation. The chapter points out the benefits of students becoming members of the national organization, the chapter and the section.
- Ask schools to host chapter/section meetings at different schools throughout the state.
  - The NJ Chapter has its office at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers.
- Follow up by APA National with student recruitment efforts.
  - Example: APA National sends universities and chapters electronic marketing materials to promote the Early Career Membership Program.
- Engage vigorously in opportunities for chapter involvement in the PAB Accreditation Process, including review of school strategic plan materials, review of school’s Self Study Report, comments on accreditation review to PAB, and direct participation in the accreditation site visits.
Example: The LA Chapter has consistently assisted UNO PLUS with PAB accreditation activities, personally speaking to members of the committee on the close relationship with the school, and vice-versa.

B. Scholarships, Awards, and Competitions
- Offer scholarships to study planning, directly through the chapter/section or through partnerships with schools.
  - Example: The Planning and Law Division has a PLD scholarship.
  - Example: The International Division offers up to two $1,000 grants to undergraduate or graduate students pursuing a study abroad program, doing international research, or participating in an international internship program approved by their school.
  - Example: The LA Chapter offers a $2,000 scholarship to assist a group of students attend the national APA conference. This funding is normally applied to shared housing for the students such as an Air Bed and Breakfast rental.
  - Example: The California Planning Foundation (CPF), which is part of the CA Chapter, raises and awards over $50,000 annually for student scholarships.
  - Example: The CO Chapter recently contributed $1,500 to the University of Colorado-Denver to achieve a matching grant for a scholarship in Sustainable Studies.
- Create writing or other competitions.
  - Example: The VA Chapter will host a ‘final four’ competition among universities in the state in 2016.
  - Example: The Economic Development Division has a best paper competition.
- Recognize stellar students through awards programs, and utilize awards offered by APA National for local celebrations, including but not limited to, AICP Student Project awards, Outstanding PSO awards, and/or Outstanding Students awards.
  - Example: The VA Chapter recognizes graduate and undergraduate students in the category of “Professional Promise.”
  - Example: The FL Chapter has an Outstanding Student Project award.

C. Discounts to Chapter Conferences and Chapter/Section Events
- Offer discounts on registration fees to chapter conferences and chapter/section events.
- Arrange a separate student room block for the conference at a lower cost.
  - Example: The NE Chapter offers scholarships to attend the NPC, free to attend the chapter conference.
  - Example: The NJ Chapter has a longstanding partnership with the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers for the chapter’s annual conference. The school covers registration fees (at cost) for all students and faculty to attend the annual conference. Students are asked to volunteer (which they definitely do!) The registration in 2015 was approximately 150 attendees. Create volunteer opportunities in exchange for free or discounted prices.
  - Example: APA National reimburses students $100 in return for 4-8 hours of volunteer time at the National Planning Conference.
D. Events
- Create student-focused conferences either as stand-alone events or linked to the chapter conferences.
  - Example: The Southeastern Planning Students Conference rotates among chapters each year, the faculty signs off on the sessions.
  - Example: The CA Chapter organizes a ‘student day’ on the first day of the conference, involving students and faculty and chapter members, free to students.
- Organize student presentation sessions during the chapter conference.
- Organize conference sessions aimed at students/young and emerging planners.
  - Example: The FL Chapter has organized FAICP presentation sessions offering career advice.
  - APA National organizes an emerging professionals track at the National Planning Conference. Chapters and divisions play an active role through volunteering.
- Host networking mixers among students, professionals, and faculty.
  - Example: The VA Chapter organizes open house events at planning firms and public agencies the third week of October.

E. Career Programs/Employment Networks
- Arrange for APA leadership to volunteer at university job fairs to help students become aware of companies in the area.
- Use schools to advertise jobs and internship opportunities.
- Volunteer for job reality or speed networking events.
  - Example: The NJ Chapter hosts a “Planning Reality 101” annually to connect students with practitioners in an informal setting to discuss the realities of what it’s like to be a professional planner in the field.
- Create a job shadowing program.
  - Example: The CO Chapter hosts an annual Job Shadowing Program with a structured application and matching process.
- Develop career resources or materials that can be shared at events.
  - Example: The Transportation Division’s Emerging Professionals Group (aka TPD Vanguard) developed a guide called “Ten Tips” which includes advice from experienced transportation professionals on various topics to help students and new professionals navigate the transportation industry.
  - Example: The AZ Chapter’s “Career Advice for Emerging Planners” is a national survey providing tips and information about getting hired and succeeding in your first planning job.

F. Leadership Opportunities
- Formalize a position for PAB-accredited university liaisons and/or student representatives on the chapter board. Could rotate among schools or be multiple positions.
  - Example: The TX and NC Chapters have a position for student rep on the state board; TX also has a university rep.
  - Example: The CO Chapter has three key Board positions to engage student and faculty: a student rep who sits as a regular Board member; a Board position and
funding for an Emerging Professional Planners Group; and a Board position for a faculty rep.

- Invite students to volunteer for leadership opportunities on specific committees, on a project-basis, or Young Planners Groups/Emerging Professionals Groups.
  - Example: The NJ Chapter hosts a “Volunteer Summit” to introduce students (and other members) to volunteering with the chapter.
- Ask faculty to serve on chapter/section committees.
- Arrange for chapter/section leaders to serve volunteer for university committees.
  - Example: The KS Chapter representative participates in the hiring and welcoming process for new faculty.

**G. Mentoring Programs**

- Develop one-time or ongoing mentoring programs.
  - Example: The AZ Chapter partners with Arizona State University’s PSO to host a year-long mentorship program.
  - Example: The IA, NC, VA and FL Chapters host a Mentor Match program at the chapter conference.
  - Example: Several Young Planners Groups organize and manage mentoring programs at the state or section level, such as New York Metro, Illinois, Washington, and several APA California Sections (San Diego, Sacramento Valley, Los Angeles, Orange County, and Northern).

**H. Faculty Research**

- Suggest research topics to faculty through ‘research agenda’ conversations or projects.
- Partner with universities to solicit and promote the availability of funding for planning research on a single project or program.
- Create ways for faculty to present their work and exchange ideas about links to practice.
  - Example: The KS Chapter has worked with universities to hold symposiums that allow faculty to present their research to planning practitioners to show the practical applicability of planning research.
  - Example: The NC Chapter hosts a webinar of interesting faculty projects.
  - Example: The MD Chapter arranges for faculty to give presentations at chapter conferences that focus on research with practical uses.

**I. Special Projects**

- Create committees and project teams that are led and/or staffed by students or emerging professionals.
- Provide ways for students to get real world/meaningful experience like a CPAT.
  - Example: The University of New Orleans requires students to do ‘real world’ projects, which the LA chapter can get involved with.

**J. Other Ideas – APA/AICP Student and New Planner Task Force**

The APA/AICP Student and New Planner Task Force is charged with making recommendations for how APA can better welcome, engage, and retain students and new planners. The following is a list of preliminary suggestions, not listed above, to engage faculty and students. These ideas are based on data from surveys and focus groups of students, YPGs/EPGs, faculty, employers and
chapter presidents. The Task Force is gathering feedback at the leadership meetings to better inform these recommendations. For more information, please refer to the APA/AICP Student and New Planner Task Force’s report to the APA Board (Exhibit 9.6 in Board packet).

- APA National to provide guidance on best ways to welcome new members, students, PSOs, and faculty.
- APA National to suggest ideas for studio classes, workshops, and independent student research that reflects practice needs; possible via a webinar for ideas exchange.
- APA National to expand efforts to explore and build linkages to agencies and foundations that provide research funding.
  - Example: The CDC Chronic Disease Prevention Grant.
- APA National to broaden and expand opportunities and outreach to encourage faculty to write articles for APA publications.
- APA National to explore developing a grant program for student research.
- APA National to explore a program offering students real-world experience, either in conjunction with or similar to the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) program.
- APA National to raise awareness among employers about posting internships to JobsOnline for free.