



NATIONAL STUDENT CHAPTER GUIDEBOOK

This document was developed to serve as a guide for student unit chapters to assist them in understanding their role and duties.

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National Student Unit

The role of the Student Unit is to provide for and to promote the professional development of post-secondary students of family and consumer sciences or related subjects who are individual members of the American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences.

All student members of AAFCS are members of the National Student Unit. “Student” is defined as any individual seeking a degree in a postsecondary program through the pursuit of FCS-related coursework. Part-time or full-time students are eligible.

Throughout the year, the National Student Unit Officers coordinate webinars, networking events, and other activities to engage the student members and provide them with professional development opportunities. A formal meeting of the National Student Unit is organized by the National Student Unit Officers each year and held during the AAFCS Annual Conference. All AAFCS student members are encouraged to participate to share feedback, learn about upcoming activities, and to network with fellow students.

National Student Unit Officers

The role of National Student Unit Officers is to:

- Represent student members on the Leadership Council and retain three votes on the Council.
- Promote the development of student leaders.
- Promote the AAFCS strategic direction.
- Promote professional development, networking, and collaboration among students and between the students and AAFCS groups.
- Be responsible for compiling national Student Unit-related directories.
- Be responsible for updating HUGS application forms as needed.
- Plan experiences for AAFCS student members

Student Unit State Chapters

Students may establish formal student unit chapters at their home institutions, informal student unit chapters, or virtual student units.

Resources to support your formation of a student unit chapter can be [found here](#).

All student units, regardless of formation type, may register their chapter with AAFCS.

To register a Student Unit Chapter with AAFCS, at minimum, the following is needed:

1. One student unit advisor. An advisor is a:
 - a. An AAFCS professional or emeritus member, in good standing.
 - b. Someone who offers guidance to the student unit on issues of structure, Robert’s Rules of Order, fundraising, and program development.
2. Two or more AAFCS student members.



To register your student unit chapter, [click here](#).

Key Benefits of Student Unit Chapters:

- **Networking and Mentorship:** Connect directly with professionals, and faculty for career advice and potential employment.
- **Professional Development:** Gain insights into career paths, attend workshops, and participate in panel discussions, technical report preparation, and seminars.
- **Hands-on Experience & Projects:** Participate in industry-specific activities like site tours, competitions, and research projects.
- **Leadership & Soft Skills:** Develop leadership, communication, and organizational skills by managing chapter events and activities.
- **Resources and Access:** Access journals, industry publications, and specialized software.
- **Career Advantage:** Build a stronger resume through involvement, showing potential employers that members are active and motivated.
- **Community and Support:** Build relationships with peers who share similar interests, promoting a collaborative learning environment.

Benefits to registering a chapter with AAFCS:

- Recognition on the AAFCS website.
- Invitations to attend student unit chapter collaboration meetings.
- Access to unique opportunities and resources to help you build your chapter.
- Creation of a chapter forum in the AAFCS Online Forums, upon request. Forums include a shared library, events page, discussion board, and more.

Communications Between Student Unit Chapters and National Student Unit

The goal of the AAFCS National Student Unit system is to develop an ecosystem where state chapters can share information, coordinate on projects, and communicate needs to the national office.

Each Affiliate may have one or more State Student Unit Chapters. Each Affiliate is advised to establish communications with each State Student Unit Chapter and to provide them with opportunities to engage at state conferences and other events. Communication can include but is not limited to:

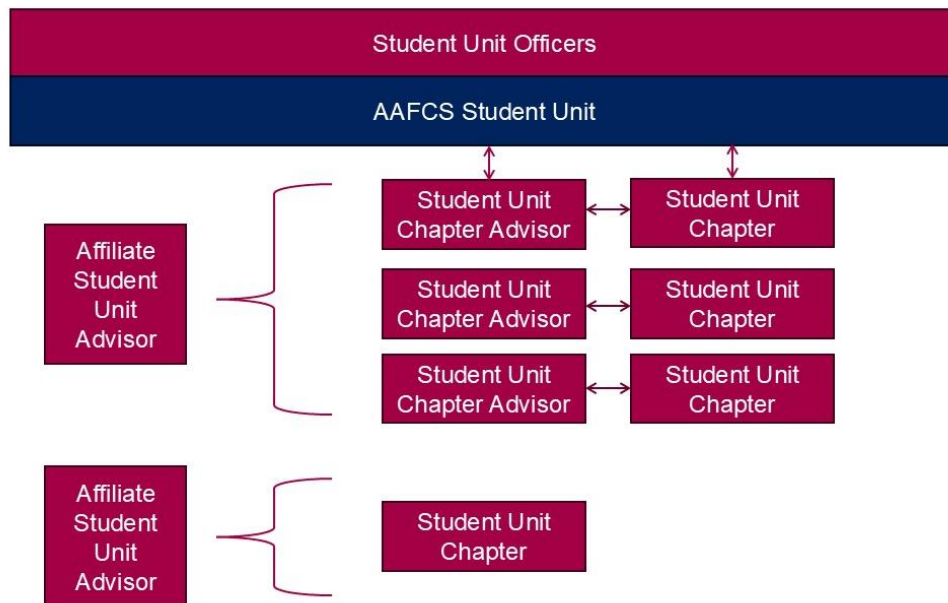
- Regulator reporting from the State Student Unit Chapter to the Affiliate Board or a main point-of-contact (referred to as the Affiliate Student Unit Advisor).
- Outreach from an Affiliate point-of-contact (i.e., Affiliate Student Unit Advisor) to each State Student Unit Chapter.
- Invitations for the Student Unit Chapter President or Advisor to attend Affiliate Board meetings.
- Virtual or in-person events to coordinate activities between State Student Unit Chapters.

- Leadership development programs to develop Student Unit Chapter members into future affiliate leaders.
- Recognition for State Student Unit Chapter service projects, programs, and recruitment efforts.

The National Student Unit Officers will establish communications with each Affiliate Student Unit Advisor and/or each State Student Unit Chapter (leadership and advisor). Communications can include but is not limited to:

- Regulator reporting from the State Student Unit Chapter/ Affiliate Student Unit Advisor to the National Student Unit Officers.
- Outreach from the National Student Unit Officers to each State Student Unit Chapter.
- Invitations for the Student Unit Chapter President or Advisor to attend National Student Unit Officer meetings.
- Virtual or in-person events to:
 - Coordinate activities between Student Unit Chapters.
 - Identify needs such as resources, training, and other support.
- Leadership development programs to develop Student Unit Chapter members into future leaders.
- Shipments of resources and tools for use by the State Student Unit Chapter.

Diagram of Typical Communications between the National Student Unit Officers, Chapters, Chapter Advisors, and Affiliate Advisors.



Duties of Student Unit Chapters

Student Unit Chapters should be designed to build community amongst students, to advance their understanding of emerging issues, and to grow future leaders. While the National Student Unit Officers work to promote and develop the national student unit, so does the Student Unit Chapter. Each chapter is encouraged to develop an annual work plan which aims to:

- Promote the development of student leaders.
- Promote professional development, networking, and collaboration among students and Affiliate professional and emeritus members.
- Promote Family and Consumer Sciences.
- Recruit new members to the Student Unit Chapter and AAFCS.

Student Unit Chapters are also encouraged to work on one or more service projects each year to support local families and communities and engage with local businesses.

Student Unit Advisor

Student Unit Advisors play a critical role in supporting Chapter members as they develop programming and events for their fellow members. Advisors may find themselves serving as:

- Mentor – developing relationships and genuine interest in students and their organization.
- Teacher – help to broaden the groups understanding, to examine challenges from all points of view.
- Leader – connecting people to each other, providing communication and a shared vision.
- Follower – understanding the goals and work of the student organization and contributing to its success.

The needs of each student unit chapter will vary, depending on the interests and experiences of its members. Some groups may focus on service; others may be more interested in career exploration and professional development.

The advisor serves as a resource to provide guidance, assist in developing action plans, and developing programming.

There are two types of advisors, the Affiliate Advisor and the Chapter Advisor.

Affiliate Advisor

The need for an Affiliate advisor will depend on the number of chapters within an Affiliate's state and the duties of current Affiliate officers.

Affiliate advisors typically serve as the main point-of-contact for student unit chapters, helping to coordinate joint events, projects, outreach, and reporting back to the Affiliate Board.



Chapter Advisor

Each Student Unit Chapter must have at least one Chapter Advisor to apply for chapter recognition with AAFCS. Chapter Advisors play an important role as outlined below:

1. Provide Continuity and Stability

Student chapters often experience high annual turnover, so advisors help maintain organizational memory and consistency from year to year.

They serve as the official point of contact for the chapter and receive organizational communications, resources, and updates.

2. Guide, Mentor, and Support Student Leaders

Advisors mentor students in leadership development, professionalism, and decision-making.

They help students connect with resources, navigate challenges, and grow personally and professionally.

4. Facilitate Communication and Information Flow

Advisors ensure that important information from the national organization (e.g., membership rosters, updates, opportunities) is shared with student officers.

5. Serve as a Mentor, Mediator, and Team Builder

Advisors help build a cohesive officer team, support goal-setting, and mediate conflicts when needed.

They encourage alignment between chapter activities and the organization's mission.

6. Provide Oversight Without Taking Over

Advisors strike a balance between being hands-on and hands-off depending on chapter needs.

Their role is to advise, not run the chapter—empowering students to lead while offering guidance and support

Typical duties of the Chapter Advisor include:

- Meeting regularly with the Student Unit Chapter's President
- Attending Student Unit Chapter meetings
- Reporting to the Affiliate Advisor, when applicable.



- Reviewing and advising on accounting, when needed.
- Auditing finances with the Student Unit Chapter Treasurer
- Attending and advising the Student Unit Chapter during trips to conferences, business meetings, and so on
- Assisting the Student Unit Chapter with election concerns
- Helping to promote Student Unit Chapter functions
- Guiding and providing insight into the background history of the Student Unit Chapter
- Maintaining the history of the Student Unit Chapter
- Assisting with risk management decisions