



# Building a **SUCCESSFUL** AMA medical student section at **YOUR SCHOOL**



MEMBERSHIP  
**MOVES**  
MEDICINE™

# Welcome!

It's a new academic year and the perfect time for the American Medical Association to touch base with our members who are currently in medical school. We're sharing the attached toolkit to assist and inspire members like you, our next generation of physicians and leaders, in building a successful medical student section at your medical school.

Take a few minutes to read about what it takes to get involved in "organized medicine," and how you, your peers and your school can benefit greatly from the experience.

## Choose your path, make a difference

Whether you are a new member looking to start a section at your medical school or you are transitioning into residency and about to pass the torch to the next wave of student leaders, this guide provides the insights and building blocks needed to help ensure your team has an impactful presence on campus and in your community.

Having an active medical student section at your school means having multiple opportunities to participate and engage in meaningful activities on two important levels:

- **Locally** where you can develop and host numerous educational activities throughout the year that raise awareness about health care and medicine-related topics important to you and your fellow student learners. You can also engage in community-based service efforts that aid in making our nation healthier.
- **Nationally** where your section gets wired into the AMA policy-building process, complete with voting privileges, in the AMA Medical Student Section (MSS) assembly, held twice a year at our annual and interim meetings. As a delegate, you help shape the way the AMA-MSS national governing body communicates its priorities in the AMA House of Delegates. Each meeting also provides medical students the unique opportunity to lead educational programs available to all members of the organization.

Again, thank you for being a member of the AMA, and for helping empower the country's most influential physician organization. We're very excited to see what we can accomplish together and encourage you to contact us with any questions about improving or building a successful AMA medical student section at your medical school.

Medical Student Section Governing Council and Staff  
[mss@ama-assn.org](mailto:mss@ama-assn.org)

## Table of contents

- 2 Welcome!
- 3 How to have an effective medical student section at your school
- 5 Components of your section
- 5 National events and opportunities
- 7 Planning a great year
- 8 Section officer transition guide: Discussion questions

# How to have an effective medical student section at your school

## What makes an effective section?

Generally speaking an effective section is one that functions as a unit where its members come together in a well-planned manner to foster education, participate in community service, coordinate active participation in national American Medical Association meetings and be a visible presence on campus. A well-organized section, in short, allows you and your fellow AMA Medical School Section (MSS) peers to have a meaningful impact at your medical school and on your community.

## Why should we organize?

Simply put, as an organized group you increase your ability to respond effectively—to the needs of your peers, your local community, and to those opportunities and issues relevant to medical students and medicine that may arise in the future. Local sections, for example, regularly develop and implement educational activities that fill important niches at their schools: anatomy prep sessions for first-years, board review sessions for second-years, residency selection and planning workshops for third-years, and moving and relocating tips for fourth-years.

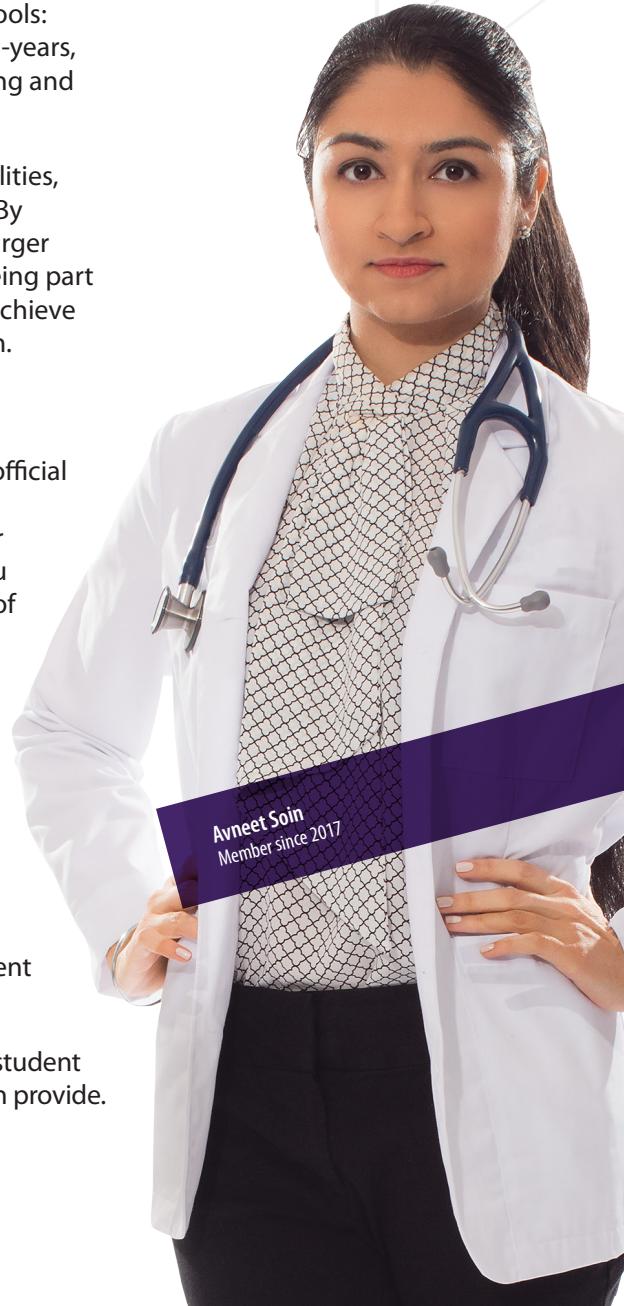
With clear channels of communication and solid outlines of responsibilities, your section is more likely to make your events and efforts successful. By being organized, you can also play an active and effective role in the larger community. The credibility of the AMA—and the professionalism of being part of an organized group—allows sections to pursue opportunities and achieve results that students, as individuals, could not accomplish on their own.

## What are the key steps if I am just getting started?

A critical step to establishing a section is to become recognized as an official “club” by your medical school’s administration. In some cases, this may be a simple formality; in other cases, registering your section with your administration is required *before* obtaining support for your group. You also may need to provide some documentation to your school’s dean of student affairs that describes your section’s goals and organizational structure, as well as information about the AMA Medical Student Section’s work and presence at the national level.

The relationships you build with the faculty and administration at your medical school are extremely important to the health of your section. Identifying a faculty or administration member who can advise your section will offer continuity for students during transition periods. A section mentor also can bring both general organizational knowledge and institutional memory to your section’s efforts and structure, and can help new student leaders get up to speed with current issues and priorities important to the AMA.

If the administration at your school is averse to having an AMA medical student section on campus, it is important to articulate the benefits a section can provide.



For example, in addition to bringing its own unique flare to organized medicine, a section can help educate students about *non-clinical* topics that are not part of their medical school's core curriculum. A section can also contribute to bettering public health in the community and to enabling medical student representation at the national level. (Here, the [AMA-MSS leadership and staff](#) are a valuable resource for students who would like guidance *before* speaking with their deans or school administrators about establishing a section on campus.)

### I'm excited! Where can I get some ideas about education and community outreach?

The AMA has a wealth of expertise and well-articulated points of view on issues that impact the profession, patients and medical students—so much so that it can be overwhelming to know where to begin. Once your section is formally recognized as a club by your dean and your team is up and running, two outstanding starting points for ideas are the [AMA Education Center](#) and [AMA PolicyFinder](#).

It's also important to talk to other students on your campus and identify gaps in knowledge (curriculum or otherwise) and/or pain points in your community.

Are your classmates unsure about what it takes to use an electronic health record? Is your community particularly struck by the opioid epidemic? Is there a student-run clinic that needs volunteers? These are just a few examples of questions that can be addressed through things like lunch-hour seminars or community service events. Learn about your community, and the individuals and families who live and work where you go to school. What do they need? Education on public health issues? Health screenings? Would local high schools benefit from visits from medical students who could potentially serve as mentors or educators on careers in medicine and health care? The more you know about the needs of your community, the more success and meaning your section activity will have.

### OK, I have my idea, now what?

Go forth and carry it out! Be sure to share all the great work your section is doing on campus through the [AMA Medical Student Facebook Group](#) and by liking its [Facebook page](#). While not required for your section activities, you're invited to apply for an AMA "Section Involvement Grant" to secure funding, whether it is for community service, education or recruitment. We encourage you to apply for a grant to help make your engagement efforts even more robust and impactful. If you choose to apply for a grant, be sure to build in additional time as grant applications must be submitted and received at least 30 days *before* the date of the activity.

Learn about your community, and the individuals and families who live and work where you go to school.



## Does my section need a bank account?

Once your section is recognized as a club by your school's administration, work with your medical school administration to establish and provide the parameters for your accounting needs.

## Anything else I should know?

Many state and county societies have a state governing board composed of student leaders. Each of these groups, like your own, meets regularly and may host meetings near your school. By contacting your state's medical student section leadership, you might find areas of mutual interest that you can bring to your campus and community.

# Components of your section

## How should your section be organized?

How your section is run—i.e., how will decisions be made, how will ideas be generated, how can members get involved—depends largely on the size of the medical school and the number of AMA student members on your campus.

Bylaws outlining roles and responsibilities can, for some medical schools and students, serve as the foundation for running a fair and effective section. With an appropriate set of bylaws, you can identify leadership positions and corresponding responsibilities. The following are customary leadership positions and duties (feel free to modify position responsibilities as appropriate to fit your section's needs):

- **Section president** is responsible for ensuring the section is recognized as a club on campus and coordinating all section activities on campus. The section president is the certifying officer for your delegate.
- **Delegate** is your section's voting representative on items of business at national AMA-MSS annual and interim assembly meetings. In his or her official capacity, your AMA delegate represents the interests of your section nationally and communicates the actions taken at every national meeting to the section.
- **Community service coordinator** is responsible for coordinating service activities on campus and/or in your community.
- **Secretary** is the record keeper who is responsible for maintaining the section's documents and materials.
- **Outreach leader** is the individual who serves as the liaison to the AMA Medical Student Outreach Program and is responsible for coordinating membership recruitment and retention activities on campus.

By contacting your state's medical student section leadership, you might find areas of mutual interest that you can bring to your campus and community.



A successful team requires commitment and accountability. To help your section avoid struggling with either of these components, be sure your bylaws include any known consequences of *not* fulfilling one's responsibilities (e.g., poor communication leads to misinformation). To the best of your ability, be transparent and up front from the beginning!

## National events and opportunities

### National AMA meetings

The AMA-MSS assembly, which meets every June (Annual Meeting) and November (Interim Meeting), is composed of delegates from medical schools across the country. In addition to focusing on policy and advocacy issues, AMA-MSS business meetings offer you such things as educational programming, renowned speakers, workshops to practice your clinical skills, panels offering career advice, a national symposium to present your current research, and opportunities to network with physician leaders from across the country. Meetings also give you the chance to see old colleagues and make new friends.

**A successful team requires commitment and accountability.**

### AMA National Advocacy Week

Each year the AMA's Government Relations Advocacy Fellow coordinates grassroots advocacy efforts on pressing, top-of-mind issues in health care that coincide with AMA medical student members being in Washington, D.C., for AMA National Advocacy Week. Activities include lunchtime seminars with guest speakers knowledgeable about current issues and trends, and training on how to lobby your representatives and promote your messages on social media.

### AMA Medical Student Advocacy and Region Conference

This is an annual conference for AMA medical student members that's designed specifically to increase your awareness of legislative issues and provide first-hand experience in the practical aspects of physician advocacy. Activities include briefings on legislative issues, interactive educational sessions on effective advocacy and lobbying techniques, and a full afternoon on Capitol Hill meeting with legislators and their staff.

### AMA Doctors Back to School™

This program sends physicians and medical students to local grade schools, high schools or community centers to encourage children from underrepresented minority groups to consider a career in medicine.



## Leadership opportunities

Separate and distinct from those leadership positions associated with your local medical school section, the AMA also offers a wide array of *national* leadership opportunities that are available to our medical student members. These national positions include:

- AMA-MSS Governing Council positions
- AMA-MSS committees
- AMA Government Relations Advocacy Fellowship  
(This is a premiere, one-of-a-kind opportunity for a medical student to develop advocacy skills and legislative knowledge by working directly with the AMA's Washington, D.C., staff. The skills acquired through this position will serve as powerful assets throughout your career. Fellows who have held this position have found the experience to be one of the most enjoyable and worthwhile parts of their medical education. [Learn more](#) about this exciting fellowship, which includes the opportunity to travel to targeted medical schools and engage in recruitment efforts.)
- Food and Drug Administration Professional Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement Internship
- AMA council positions (seven separate councils offer medical student appointments)
- AMA Board of Trustees (medical student member)
- AMA Foundation (medical student member)
- American Medical Political Action Committee (medical student member)
- National Board of Medical Examiners
- Liaison Committee on Medical Education
- National Resident Matching Program

For more information on any of the activities above or to speak with someone who has participated in any of these leadership roles, visit the [AMA website](#).

## Planning a great year

Below is a guide for your section's calendar, which includes suggested deadlines to keep you and your team organized. It's recommended that you tailor your calendar to include your school's mandatory curricular activities, such as major exam blocks, so your events do not conflict. Conducting monthly check-ins with your section's board members, either virtually or in person, is a useful way to ensure your section is being productive and addressing any outstanding issues or needs. Planning and having a great year begins with your members being excited about being involved in this extracurricular activity and finding fulfillment in educating their peers and the community. Use your judgment in tailoring your efforts to meet the unique circumstances of your section.



## September

- For new sections, register your *section president* on the AMA website
- Meet as a *section board* and begin identifying the gaps in knowledge, both among your peers and those associated with the needs in your community
- Determine educational and/or community service activities to host during the year that fill these gaps and needs
- Identify a plan of action (e.g., delegate responsibilities, AMA Section Involvement Grant funding, and the need for administrator involvement)
- Certify your school's *delegate* by the established deadline
- Register for the AMA-MSS Interim Meeting

delegate responsibilities to new members, add in new activities ideas provided by new members)

## February

- Congratulate section members who were selected for national leadership positions
- Have hosted at least three section activities on campus or in your community

## March

- Hold elections for new section officers if current officers are graduating

## April

- Certify your school's delegate by published deadline
- Register for the AMA-MSS Annual Meeting

## May

- Complete section officer transitions if officers are graduating
- Review the AMA-MSS Annual Meeting handbook

## June

- Attend the AMA-MSS Annual Meeting
- Share learnings from previous AMA-MSS Interim Meeting with section members
- Celebrate your successful year as an AMA section!

## November

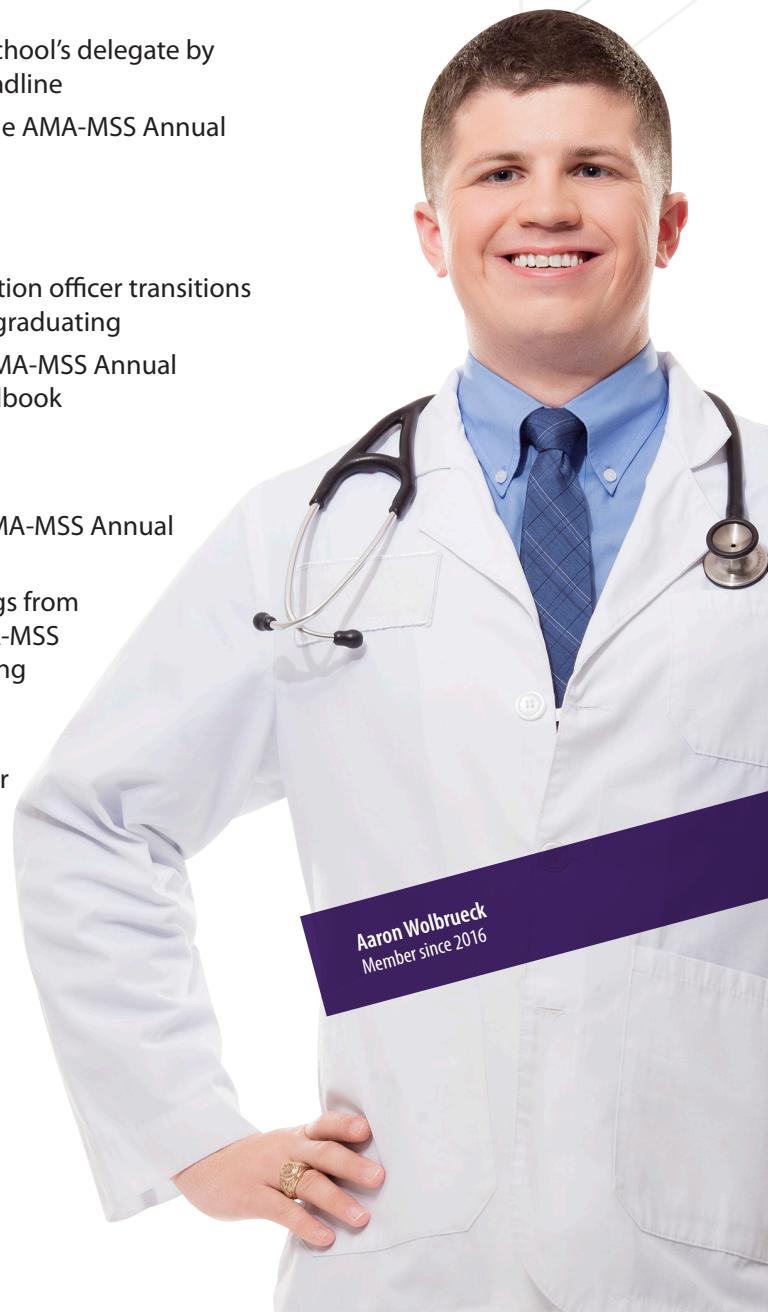
- Attend the AMA-MSS Interim Meeting
- Share learnings from Interim Meeting with section members

## December

- Have hosted at least two section activities on campus or in your community, one of which can replicate the AMA National Service Project activity hosted at the AMA-MSS Interim Meeting

## January

- Welcome new members to your section
- Revisit plan of action for the year and make adjustments (e.g.,



# Section officer transition guide: Discussion questions

1. What events did our section host during the previous year?
2. What is the status of current projects, if any, that new leadership should know about?
3. Who are the key contacts (i.e., advisor, campus administrator, etc.) new leadership needs to meet?
4. Who was our school's delegate in the AMA-MSS assembly at our annual and interim meetings?

## Section discussion questions

1. **Successes.** Things that went well. "Definitely do this again ..."
2. **Opportunities.** Things that could be better. "Here's what I would change ..."
3. **Ideas.** A goal you didn't have the chance to accomplish or ideas for further programming. "I didn't get around to ..."
4. **Other suggestions.** "Skip this, to focus on this ..."

© 2018 American Medical Association. All rights reserved.  
18-283646;pdf:11/18



Mohammed Miniatu  
Member since 2016