Chapter 1

Building an Outstanding ACS Student Chapter

Susan A. White, Joseph A. Piechocki, Jr., and Matthew J. Allen*

Department of Chemistry, Wayne State University, 5101 Cass Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48202
*E-mail: mallen@chem.wayne.edu

The Wayne State University American Chemical Society-Student Affiliates (WSU ACS-SA) was reactivated in August 2011, after a long absence. The chapter has established a strong presence on campus and has designed its own annual events. The chapter has built relationships within the WSU Chemistry Department, the ACS Detroit Local Section, and other ACS Student Chapters. The WSU ACS-SA was proud to earn the American Chemical Society’s Outstanding Student Chapter Award in its fourth year and is working hard in its fifth year to continue, and build, on its successful traditions. The WSU ACS-SA is striving to create a legacy that will endure long after the current members graduate so that WSU will continue to have a strong ACS student presence on campus. The lessons learned by the students and their advisors during the journey from nothing to a thriving chapter will likely be of help to universities looking to begin active chapters. The approach taken by the WSU ACS-SA is described in this chapter.

Introduction

Promoting chemistry and chemical education is a challenging task. One way to encourage students to become involved is by seeing how much other interested students enjoy learning and promoting the subject. Establishing a student chapter of the ACS is a great way of engaging a student population to boost interest in chemistry. However, a chapter is unlikely to begin without determined and passionate students, and the process can appear so daunting that many students will not want to participate. In the course of starting a chapter, several questions need to be asked: How does a chemistry club start? What is needed to build
a student chapter? And, how will the chapter continue to be successful each year? The re-establishment of the Wayne State University American Chemical Society-Student Affiliates (WSU ACS-SA) (1) chapter is a good example of how a club can quickly develop and to become positively recognized and supported by chemistry faculty members and university students.

Setting up a chapter to be successful is a challenge; there is not one right way for a chapter to become established, grow, and have members benefit from the professional rewards of the chapter. However, from experience building and growing a chapter over the past five years, the WSU ACS-SA has been able to accomplish many goals, including developing a professional rapport with the Department of Chemistry, networking with other chemistry clubs and the local section, and encouraging students to take an interest in chemistry. In the remainder of this chapter, the route that the WSU chapter took to become a successful student chapter is described along with suggestions to assist other new or reactivated chapters.

Historical Background

The WSU ACS-SA was originally established in 1943, with fifteen ACS members. Since that time, the chapter has had many incarnations. The current chapter was reactivated with the ACS in 2011, when a small group of six dedicated and enthusiastic students approached Professors Matthew Allen and Mary Kay Pfum with the idea to restore the chapter for the 2011–2012 academic year. Under the leadership of the chapter President, Milad Karim, and Vice President, Zeinab Moubadder, the new chapter met all of the requirements of the ACS and the WSU Dean of Students Office in time for the Fall Term of 2011. The leadership of the newly activated club was recognized for their hard work with the ACS’s Honorable Mention Award in their first year. The chapter continued to grow, expand, and prosper, and by the fourth year, it earned the ACS Outstanding Student Chapter Award. Since its reincarnation in 2011, the WSU ACS-SA has continued to grow. The chapter currently has approximately 60 paid members and endeavors to be a healthy organization that proudly represents the Department of Chemistry and WSU.

Starting a Chapter

Once the decision to begin or reactivate an ACS student chapter is made, steps can be taken to make the chapter officially recognized by organizations that can help the chapter thrive. There are two ways in which the student chapter can be recognized: as a student organization at the university and as an official ACS chapter. We recommend that new or reactivated student chapters concurrently evaluate what is necessary at both the university and the ACS level because there likely will be overlapping requirements. Being recognized at both levels can be beneficial. At the university, the chapter gains exposure to students and enables networking opportunities with other student organizations. The ACS offers several benefits including access to the network of chemists and chapter development
resources offered only for student chapters. Additionally, both the university and ACS can be a source of funds to support activities. To be recognized by the university, the WSU chapter is managed within the Dean of Students Office that provides guidelines and rules that must be followed within organizations or student clubs at WSU. WSU requires that organizations have a club name, a president or leader, and at least one other member. The president and other designated leaders of the organization make up the initial board of the organization. The Dean of Students Office also recommends that an advisor be selected to guide the students and assist with building the chapter. Furthermore, it is required that a constitution be submitted to the Dean of Students Office, where it is maintained while the chapter is active.

Similarly, the ACS chapter guidelines need to be consulted for the rules and requirements for clubs (2). To be recognized by the ACS, a chapter must have at least six paid ACS student members, a faculty advisor, bylaws, and a submitted charter application. The bylaws can also be part of the constitution setup with the college or university, and they are likely to contain some of the same sections mentioned above (Figure 1).

![Flowchart](image_url)

**Figure 1. Flowchart of the steps necessary for a club to be recognized at WSU and by the ACS**

Two elements that are common between the WSU and ACS are the need for an advisor and a constitution or bylaws. Both selecting an advisor and creating a constitution are crucial to a club’s success. In choosing a chapter advisor, the students in the club need to select an advisor with whom they feel comfortable working, who can help make crucial decisions, and who can help guide the chapter. In the WSU chapter, the chapter advisors are involved with some of the activities of the club; however, the advisors do not make final decisions. The WSU ACS-SA chapter is student led, and students are the decision-makers and generate professional alliances and connections. The main roles of the advisors are to provide guidance toward making critical decisions and to help the club navigate within the university structure to achieve the student chapter’s goals.

In our opinion, the ownership taken by the students is a major reason why the chapter has been successful. Students are able to develop critical thinking skills, professional networking skills, and are exposed to writing and communicating by proposing grants and planning and executing events.

An organized club is difficult to manage without written rules and procedures, and a constitution helps the club maintain an organizational structure. Colleges or universities sometimes have templates for constitutions for student organizations; however, a club likely is not restricted to what the template contains. Some things the constitution at WSU contains are the goals and purpose of the organization,
membership requirements, officer definitions and responsibilities, requirements for being an officer, election procedures, defining quorum and methods for holding meetings, and procedures for amending the constitution. Although this is not an all-inclusive list of what a constitution could contain, it includes the basic foundations for beginning the chapter. Once all of the requirements have been met and approved, the student chapter is officially recognized at both the college or university and the ACS.

Creating a Strong Foundation

Establishing Regular Meetings

Once the executive board members are selected, it is important to decide the exact details of the club’s member and executive meetings. Based on the experience of the WSU ACS-SA, meetings are best attended if scheduled to occur regularly at the same time and place. Chapters can choose a frequency (weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) that suits the chapter, but setting the schedule at the beginning of each semester offers predictability for busy students. At WSU, attendance of member meetings is the largest and most consistent throughout the semester when the time and place are announced either early in the semester or before the semester begins. Attendance is also largest when the meeting schedule does not change. A meeting time strategically determined by the board members maximizes the availability of students to attend. The WSU ACS-SA chapter tries to avoid the times of all of the major chemistry classes and picks a time attractive to students when the largest number of board members can attend. At WSU, early morning meetings or meetings on Friday afternoons have not worked well, so those times are avoided. The WSU ACS-SA constitution requires that board members attend the meetings; as a result, meetings are scheduled to avoid the classes and obligations of all board members when possible. We recommend that meeting times and places are set before a chapter starts to heavily recruit members. Selection of a schedule prior to widespread recruiting permits advertisement of the meeting times on recruiting flyers, social media, or websites. In addition to member meetings, regular executive board meetings have been vital for club management at WSU. At the board meetings, issues for the next member meeting are discussed and all events and activities are voted on and arranged. The time spent in board meetings yields shorter, more engaging, and better prepared member meetings. We find that weekly meetings for both the board and the members allow the club to keep everyone informed and add structure to the administration of the club.

At the initial member meeting of a semester at WSU, the club executive presents a brief introduction of the board, an overview of the club, a schedule for the semester, and an explanation of all the opportunities offered by the chapter and the ACS. It is important to describe the offered opportunities at the first meeting because students want to know if investing in the club will be worth the benefits and skills that they can obtain. In addition to the above presentation, the organization distributes informative flyers and registration forms that potential members can complete. For WSU, the best meeting attendance occurs when
coupled with small promotions. Free food and small giveaways, like swag from the ACS National Meeting, help increase attendance. The best meeting attendance for 2015 involved liquid nitrogen safety training, required for making ice cream, combined with sampling the product.

Developing and Arranging Events

At WSU, any discussion about scheduling meetings for the next year is generally accompanied by a more complete annual agenda including the potential chapter events. The ACS student magazine inChemistry often highlights many of the original, fun, and interesting events held by student chapters around the country. The choices for possible events are nearly endless, but the WSU ACS-SA has concentrated on two large annual events along with a multitude of smaller activities. The WSU ACS-SA annual events are the Faculty–Student Mixer and the For the Love of Chemistry Symposium. The Faculty–Student Mixer is held in the atrium of the Chemistry Department in November. The mixer encourages students to meet and speak with chemistry professors and fellow students. After the professors are introduced, the students and faculty mingle, providing a low-pressure opportunity to ask questions. Students can discuss possible majors, courses, and research options with the professors and other students. Numerous undergraduates have found a research position through participation in this mixer.

The second large annual event is our multi-school For the Love of Chemistry Symposium traditionally held in February. This has been the WSU ACS-SA’s largest event each year. Attendance at this event has averaged over 100 people per year for the past three years, and in 2016, it was attended by students from seven schools. This event was inspired by our chapter’s love of chemistry and our desire to interact with other chapters. This all-day event starts with four career speakers, each representing a different chemistry-related field. After the career talks, the speakers form a panel to answer questions about their careers and chemistry careers in general. The panel is followed by a keynote speaker who discusses research related to the love of chemistry theme. After lunch, the schools compete in a chemistry demonstration competition. The symposium ends with tours of the chemistry building and a mixer.

The club participates in several other professional and academic activities. The WSU ACS-SA attends ACS National Meetings and presents Successful Student Chapter Posters. The club attends the Detroit Local Section Student Member Meetings and ACS Regional Meetings when possible (3). Additionally, the WSU ACS-SA competes annually in the Battle of the Chemistry Clubs, a multi-school event held in January. Beyond participation in the events described above, the WSU ACS-SA chapter organizes its own outreach events such as Cub Scout Chemistry Day and high school chemistry tours. Members also volunteer for ACS Detroit Local Section outreach events. The ACS Detroit events include Earth Day demonstrations at the Detroit Zoo, Girl Scout Chemistry Day, and Zoo Boo (a Halloween-themed evening at the Detroit Zoo with costumes, candy, and hands-on chemistry demonstrations).

Campus events are wonderful opportunities for recruiting new members. WSU hosts three annual recruiting events for student organizations: Festifall for
freshmen before fall classes begin, Student Organization Day for all students in September, and Winterfest for all students during the winter semester. The WSU ACS-SA participates in all three of these events and performs a liquid nitrogen ice cream demonstration during Festifall and Student Organization Day. These two events recruit the majority of new members each year, and the liquid nitrogen ice cream is a crowd favorite. Our members are trained to safely handle liquid nitrogen, and we make instant ice cream for the crowd with enough ice cream for everyone to sample. It is fun for the chapter and the audience. The chapter’s members dressed in lab coats and safety glasses, free ice cream, and the spectacle of the liquid nitrogen demonstrations enable our club to stand out from the other clubs when competing for the attention of potential new members. Flyers with meeting details and scheduled events are handed out with the ice cream, and potential new members have a moment to hear about the club as they eat their dessert.

Some of the events that the WSU ACS-SA organizes are just for fun. In 2015, members used chemistry to make their own holiday ornaments to hang on a tree in the Chemistry Department. The club has toured Behind-the-Scenes at the Detroit Institute of Arts to learn about the analytical chemistry involved in art restoration and authentication. Annually, during the winter holiday break, the WSU ACS-SA holds its holiday social where students ice skate together before enjoying dinner at a restaurant in downtown Detroit. In addition, at the end of the school year, the WSU ACS-SA has established a tradition of a dry ice curling competition for the entire Chemistry Department. Undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, and staff vie for the department championship by testing their skill in the atrium of the chemistry building. Finally, the club occasionally organizes smaller events and often volunteers to help with events hosted by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Chemistry Department, and the university.

Raising Funds

As events are planned, the question of funding generally arises (Figure 2). While some activities are free to plan, several of the events require a substantial influx of money to operate. The bulk of the chapter’s funding is from three different sources. One source of grants is the ACS undergraduate office (4). The ACS grants available to undergraduate chapters are listed on the ACS Student Chapters section of their website. The WSU ACS-SA has received two types of ACS grants: National Meeting Travel Grants ($300) (5) for travel to the ACS National Meetings and Inter-Chapter Relations Grants ($750) (5) that have supported the For the Love of Chemistry Symposium. The other current ACS undergraduate grants include ACS Starter Grant for New Chapters, the Community Interaction Grant, the New Activities Grant, and the Undergraduate Programming at Regional Meetings Grant. The second major source of funding for the WSU ACS-SA is the Dean of Students Office at WSU that offers grants for student organizations at WSU through the Student Activities Funding Board. That board has approved annual grants for the Faculty–Student Mixer and the For the Love of Chemistry Symposium. The third and largest contributor to the club is the WSU Chemistry Department. Much of this support has been generously
approved by Professor James Rigby, the chair of the department, who is a strong advocate for the club. The department allows the club to use its facilities for events and donates money to support the club’s programs. The department financially supports the For the Love of Chemistry Symposium, the Faculty–Student Mixer, and trips to the ACS National Meetings. In addition to the three major sources of funding, the WSU chapter has received money through smaller fund-raising efforts including membership dues, small donations, bake sales, cleaning labs, and T-shirt sales. For more ideas, we recommend talking to other chapters about their successful ideas, consulting the ACS website, and reading *inChemistry* magazine for suggestions of innovative fund-raising approaches.

![Flow chart for the steps suggested to setup meetings, plan and participate in events, and find funding.](image)

### Recruiting Members

At the beginning of the third year, the WSU ACS-SA spent all summer planning events and ways to fund them, but when the fall semester started, the main goal was to recruit new members. One of the most important elements for the chapter’s success is recruiting and maintaining student members. The WSU chapter strives to maintain a diverse club, so membership in the chapter must be attractive to students of all undergraduate levels from new freshman to graduating seniors. From a club administration point of view, younger students might turn into multi-year members and future multi-term board members. Older students often have experience to share with other members as potential board members. Moreover, from the club’s perspective, a membership that is representative of the entire chemistry undergraduate student population is ideal. At WSU, the club hosts a variety of activities, some of which may appeal to different types of students or undergraduate levels. The WSU ACS-SA chapter helps students who are interested in meeting people who can provide advice regarding classes and majors as well as making like-minded friends and potential study buddies. Most members appreciate the chances to learn and show leadership, to acquire professional skills, and to volunteer and resume-build.

In addition to providing social and professional opportunities, membership must be affordable for the students, and there must be a value to paying the chapter dues as well as the ACS National membership dues. The chapter membership for the WSU ACS-SA is currently $10. Some benefits of the WSU Student Chapter are for members only. For example, while on-campus events are open to all students, many off-campus events are only open to members.
For WSU students attending ACS National meetings with the chapter as paid chapter and national members, the WSU ACS-SA has been able to pay all hotel expenses. This financial support allows students to attend meetings and present their research or just come to learn more about careers in chemistry and visit a new city. The club also currently organizes annual tours of chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, and these tours are only available to paid members. Furthermore, only paid members have voting rights for elections or meeting decisions, and they are afforded the first priority to attend events with a limited capacity. Finally, the WSU ACS-SA requires that any student that wishes to run for an executive board position is a paid chapter and national member prior to the election.

Communication and Promotion

Membership recruitment at WSU is closely linked to club communication. The Secretary is responsible for emailing all members and other interested WSU students to promote events, membership, and other club news. At every meeting and event, the email addresses of all the students present are collected. A comprehensive email list of interested students and members is an invaluable asset to any ACS chapter. The WSU ACS-SA has recognized that communication is essential to the chapter’s success. Regular email messages inform students of upcoming meetings, events, internships, and volunteer opportunities. The WSU ACS-SA chapter endeavors to send minutes from the most recent past meeting promptly to update absent students of upcoming activities. Student attendance at meetings varies due to conflicting class schedules, work, exams, and other issues, so communication allows all students to participate as much as they choose. The club uses the email list judiciously and limits the club emails to those that are directly useful to club members because too many emails can cause students to request removal from the email list. Additionally, the WSU ACS-SA chapter was able to obtain help from the department to use departmental email lists to send relevant emails to all Chemistry students, faculty, graduate students, and staff. The club uses this option to invite the entire department to participate in the annual end of the year dry ice curling departmental competition. For invitations to faculty, we found that in-person invitations deliver a higher turnout than email invitations. For example, we organize the Faculty–Student Mixer that helps chemistry majors learn about undergraduate research. For the Faculty–Student Mixer, members of the WSU ACS-SA deliver printed invitations by hand to each faculty member after sending email invitations. The faculty commitment to attend the mixer increases substantially when students ask them personally to attend.

Email is only one way to circulate information about the club. Spreading the word about the latest events of the WSU ACS-SA is a multimedia effort. Flyers, emails, and visits to chemistry classes yield good results. Digital media tends to provide no-cost and low-effort options to boost awareness about the club’s activities, and the WSU club largely focuses on its website and Facebook page. The WSU ACS-SA attempts to take pictures of all the activities each year. These pictures are perfect for the website, Facebook, the annual report and future promotions. For the club’s website, a free Google site for the webpage combined
with a static page on the WSU Chemistry Department’s website are used, but there are many free ways to create websites. Facebook also works well for the WSU club at no cost. When a WSU member dedicates time to regular Facebook postings, attendance at meetings and events rises. The WSU ACS-SA chapter has collaborated with the South End (the school paper), the university event calendar, and the public relations offices in the Chemistry Department, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the university itself. Furthermore, all of the public relations offices at WSU have active Facebook pages that promote chemistry club events and achievements.

Finding a Physical Home Base

During the chapter’s third year, membership increased to 70 paid members, new grants were approved, and an ambitious series of events were planned for the year. Since May 2013, the new board had focused on collecting supplies for the chapter. Prior to the third year, the chapter had relied on the board members to purchase items at their own expense when needed. However, nothing was left with the club, so the club had no possessions of its own. Small items that were donated to the club were often lost when board members graduated. The Chemistry Department took notice of the expansion of the club and offered an office in the Chemistry Building. A physical office provided a place to accumulate assets that belonged specifically to the club. All of the equipment, demonstration supplies, decorations, flyers, membership applications, and office supplies of the club are now secured and easily available. Once an office was acquired, the club began to accrue supplies and save money because small items were lost less often, avoiding unnecessary replacements. The office was more than just storage; it also established a home base and club presence in the Chemistry Department. Finding a permanent physical home was necessary for the development of the WSU ACS-SA, and the Chemistry Department is definitely home for the club.

Designating Event and Committee Chairs

Once the chapter began to increase the number of annual activities it organized, a significant contributor to the chapter’s success came from assigning responsibility to individual officers and members for all events and important undertakings. Early in the re-established club, certain details were forgotten or overlooked, or students assumed that someone else would take responsibility for a particular issue. These lapses in attention to detail meant that the club often ended up scrambling at the last minute. Since our third year, for each major event, an event chair or event co-chairs have been assigned to oversee the running of the event. Each event is divided into committees for the most important components, and each committee has its own chair, such as a decorations chair, food chair, correspondence chair, or public relations chair. The method of assigning personal responsibility for all the details of an event to individual members has been an organizational strength for events hosted by the WSU ACS-SA. The chair positions are usually designated based on experience and member requests. For the larger events, such as the Faculty–Student Mixer and the For the Love of
Chemistry Symposium, co-chair teams are usually chosen to pair an experienced board member with a newer member. This allows the newer member to gain experience for the next year and ensures that event knowledge is retained within the chapter. Additionally, chair titles enable members to demonstrate their leadership abilities on their resumes or during interviews because the titles suggest leadership over an important event or committee.

**Strengthening the Relationship with the Chemistry Department**

As the club grew, it actively tried to connect with all aspects of the Chemistry Department to become an integral part of the department’s identity. ACS members volunteered to help at Chemistry Department events. ACS Chapter events occurred in the department on a regular basis allowing everyone to become familiar with the chapter. The chapter reached out to all faculty members to include them in the Faculty–Student Mixer and other events. Faculty members, graduate students, and chemistry staff support the club’s bake sales, mixers, symposia, and everyday events. Members of the WSU ACS-SA began visiting chemistry classes to promote their club and events with the permission of the faculty. Overall, connecting with the entire Chemistry Department has given strength and support to the developing club while providing an eager group of volunteers to help at Chemistry Department events.

**Volunteering on Campus**

Beyond the Chemistry Department, volunteering to help around campus has forged bonds and relationships between WSU ACS-SA members and different parts of the university. Our liquid nitrogen ice cream demonstration has been requested to be included as part of the Chemistry Department Graduate Research Symposium, a College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Symposium for potential donors, and Wayne State University’s Open House Days for high school and transfer students. Student members have also assisted the college with other events including campus tours and informational sessions for potential undergraduate researchers.

**Connecting with the Local ACS Section**

One of the best strategies to help a new chapter is to contact the local ACS section (Figure 3). The ACS Detroit Local Section has offered the WSU ACS-SA chapter invaluable information on speaker choices, contact information for other ACS student chapters in the area, fun ACS events and talks, summer internship possibilities, as well as volunteering and networking opportunities. For WSU and other local student chapters, the Detroit Local Section hosts fun monthly lectures at their Younger Chemists Committee Brewing Chemistry Nights; organizes Kids and Chemistry events such as Zoo Boo, Earth Day at the Zoo, and Girl Scout Chemistry Day; donates funding for a Local Student Section Meeting in the Spring; and hosts various other lectures and social events. Furthermore, the ACS Local Section can connect students with industry representatives that can
help arrange educational tours of companies in the chemical industry or academic facilities.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruit Members</th>
<th>Develop and Grow Inventory</th>
<th>Establish a Reputation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obtain email addresses at events</td>
<td>Use club funds to purchase supplies</td>
<td>Become involved with other chapters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate through social media and promote at university functions</td>
<td>Secure a storage space for accumulated items</td>
<td>Be inclusive of entire chemistry department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use multimedia</td>
<td>Secure all documents in a shared drive for future use</td>
<td>Cross promote events and the club</td>
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Figure 3. Flow chart to the steps suggested for a chapter to recruit members, develop and grow inventory, and establish a reputation.

Connecting with Other ACS Student Chapters

The ACS Local Section is a wonderful resource for meeting other ACS student chapters, and the WSU ACS-SA has benefited greatly from interacting with other student chapters. When the chapter attends an ACS National Meeting, members already know students from other schools and have had big group dinners. The WSU chapter loves to mingle with other chapters, as exemplified by the third annual For the Love of Chemistry Symposium being attended by seven schools in 2016. For the WSU chapter, interchapter events lead to future professional networking partners, current friendships, friendly rivalries, and a lot of fun. The WSU ACS-SA attempts to meet as many other chapters as possible including those in the local section area and many much farther away.

Building on Success and Generating Continuity

A chapter that is running well and wants to continue after active members graduate must plan for the future and leadership succession. Professor Mary Kay Pflum remarked that in the past, the club had formed, ran well for a period of time, and then disappeared more than once during her years at WSU prior to the new version started in 2011. Professor Pflum praised the students involved in the previous chapter as ambitious and hard working. So what happened? Why had the club failed? The club seemed to rely on a handful of motivated individuals, and when those individuals graduated, the club faded. So how does a new club prevent this fading from happening again?

The WSU ACS-SA has made the future of the club a priority. Board members actively recruit and train their replacements. A digital Dropbox account was created using the club email address, rather than personal email accounts, to establish a club document archive that would last beyond graduations. Board members are encouraged to store copies of all club-related documents, grants, posters, and flyers in this centralized location so that future boards will not have...
to reinvent the club from scratch every year. When recruiting new members, the board strives to have a density of younger members that can run for the board for more than one year in the future, providing some generational memory. It is a core value of the WSU chapter that new members need to be recruited and urged to run for board positions. To have a chapter that lasts, the board plans for the future every year. Elections were placed in February so that incoming board members would have at least two months of training from their outgoing counterparts. Additionally, the chapter holds a transition meeting at the end of the winter semester with the outgoing and incoming board members. The transition meeting facilitates a direct conversation between the two boards regarding an evaluation of performance from the previous year, an itemization of any leftover tasks, an acknowledgement of any commitments already made for the next year, and a discussion of the potential events for the next year. This meeting ensures that the chapter is functioning before school begins in the fall and can repeat previous successful events and try new things.

Another way to build for the future is to periodically review and revise the official governing documents. With a chance to reflect on the chapter’s experiences, these documents improve over time. For example, the WSU ACS-SA’s constitution and bylaws were revised to include a code of conduct, explicit election regulations, conflict resolution suggestions, and methods to remove and replace officers. Each of the additions arose from situations where there was no clear path to resolve issues. Having unambiguous regulations provides a structure and guidance for how the chapter needs to proceed. Now, all new board members are required to read and sign a copy of the constitution before their term, so that they are aware of the expectations of their position. A beginning chapter might choose to include these types of provisions in their initial constitutional draft.

Further constitutional revisions have changed the number of board members from the initial five to nine, then eleven, and then seven board positions while changing, inventing, and adapting the roles for each executive. The current seven positions are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Public Relations Coordinator, and Outreach Coordinator. The chapter had thought that a larger board would allow for more events and a more active chapter. However, the larger board led to a higher turnover rate with more resignations and removals. The most recent revision to seven board members has worked to reduce turnover and focus on a core group of dedicated members to compose the executive committee. The WSU chapter has recognized that change is important, and that evaluating what is working for the chapter, and what is not, allows the chapter to correct its course to ensure that its goals can be met.

Another method for the chapter to build on past success is to improve the chapter every year using what the group has learned (Figure 4). When an ACS Student Chapter report is reviewed at the end of the year, usually the reviewers provide concrete examples of things to do to improve the chapter’s evaluations in subsequent years. These suggestions are from reviewers who have had experience with many chapters and have the best intentions in mind for the chapter’s success. Every year, the club has attempted to respond to the suggestions from the previous annual reports, and this effort has improved the chapter. One of the best examples
from the WSU ACS-SA experience occurred after the review of the ACS student chapter report from the third year. The third year had made a large improvement in most areas, but the reviewers felt that more outreach activities needed to be held with children from kindergarten through twelfth grade. The club volunteers each year to help with the ACS Local Detroit Section Girl Scout Chemistry Day, but a second event was added in 2014, a Cub Scout Chemistry Night. The new event was designed, organized, and managed by the club. The addition of this event contributed to a better review for the chapter report the following year.

For the first two years of its new existence, the WSU ACS-SA received the ACS Honorable Mention Student Chapter Award. In the third year, after a massive improvement effort by the board, WSU earned the ACS Commendable Student Chapter Award. The WSU chapter was thrilled to receive the ACS Outstanding Student Chapter Award for its fourth year after reactivation. The improvement in the evaluations was connected to the chapter’s direct effort to add new events while perfecting established events to create a more well-rounded chapter. Adding new activities every year grows the chapter into a better student organization while providing new interesting events for multi-year members. In 2016, WSU’s fifth year since being re-established, several new events are planned.

The chapter is continuing to develop in its fifth year. How can all those who have participated in the chapter and care about the organization help safeguard the club’s future? The WSU chapter has formed an ongoing collaboration between the current board members and graduated board members to foster continuity. Several alumni are available to help the current board by answering questions, sharing documents, and providing advice and support. Some of these alumni have even joined the ACS Detroit Local Section and help facilitate communication between the two organizations. ACS members, both current and graduated, care about the future of their club and are willing to devote time to help it become a permanent ongoing part of the WSU campus for years to come.

A final idea that the club is working on to generate continuity is to create an alumni network of WSU ACS-SA graduates. An alumni network could provide networking opportunities, career advice, and possibly future internship and job opportunities. In a few years, a new event could take place on an annual basis at the WSU Chemistry Department that would be a Student–Alumni Mixer. Once graduates have had time to prosper in the job market, a list of dedicated alumni could help the chapter continue to grow and flourish.

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**Figure 4. Flow chart to the steps suggested for chapters to build on the success from the previous year:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruit New Board Members</th>
<th>End-of-Year Evaluation</th>
<th>Implement Improvements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have elections early</td>
<td>Compile annual report</td>
<td>Amend chapter documents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Train new board members</td>
<td>Receive evaluation from</td>
<td>Evaluate events with</td>
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<td>with existing board</td>
<td>ACS and prepare for the</td>
<td>suggestions received</td>
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<td>next year</td>
<td>Develop new ideas for</td>
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Conclusion

The WSU ACS-SA has blossomed over the last five years into a club that is active on campus, with the ACS Detroit Local Section, and with other ACS Student Chapters. The students in the club have diligently worked to develop and expand the club. From its small, enthusiastic beginning, to its more established present, the club has been shaped by student ideas and goals. The path to a stronger and better chapter has been a learning process for the club leading to constant self-evaluation followed by plans for improvement. The ability to build on success, learn from mistakes, and prepare for the future as a group has been a strength of this club.

References

1. The ACS designated undergraduates as “student members” in the late 2000s; however, when the WSU club re-activated, the moniker “student affiliates” was used. Consequently, throughout this chapter, we chose to use the name of the club that is in our constitution and our official designation for both WSU and the ACS.


5. Values are from 2012–2016.