

Student Nomination Process

I. Motivation

The AOA Beta Chapter of Louisiana values a well-rounded membership – one exemplifying not only scholarship but also leadership, research, and service to its profession and community. The nomination process outlined by this document is designed to foster such a membership. Per the AOA Constitution, chapters are afforded significant latitude in developing their own criteria for student nomination but are strongly encouraged to use criteria which recognize the attributes of a well-rounded student: “Scholastic achievement should be the primary but not sole basis for nomination of a student. Leadership capabilities, ethical standards, fairness in dealing with colleagues, demonstrated professionalism, potential for achievement in medicine, and a record of service to the school and community at large shall be criteria in addition to the academic record” (2009, IV.2.c). As members and custodians of the AOA Beta Chapter of Louisiana, we feel that it is not only a privilege but in fact our responsibility to uphold the Society’s mission: to enhance professionalism, scholarship, research, leadership, and service within the field of medicine.

II. Overview of Nomination Process

The Nomination Committee shall consist of current student members, the Chapter Councilor, and the Chapter Secretary-Treasurer. According to the system described within this document, the Nomination Committee shall rank eligible students and select from this rank-list an appropriate number of students. These student selections shall be presented in a confidential meeting to all interested Chapter members, who will vote to accept or reject them. If rejected, all present at the meeting will deliberate until reaching a consensus regarding the list. Acceptance of the selection list constitutes nomination of all students named in the list for membership in the Chapter.

III. Number of Students Nominated

Per the AOA Constitution, “...the upper twenty-five percent of their class shall be considered as eligible for nomination for election. From that number, one-sixth of the total number of the class expected to graduate may be nominated for membership” (2009, IV.2.a). Furthermore, “Up to one-half of the quota for any class may be nominated for membership in the spring of their junior year” (2009, IV.2.b). During the spring of a given class’s junior year, the LA-Beta Chapter shall nominate between six and ten students from the class as junior AOA members. All remaining members shall be nominated in the summer of their senior year. Nominating students at these times not only facilitates building of a well-rounded membership, but the nomination of junior members also helps ensure continuity from year-to-year, as well as providing additional time for planning the Annual Visiting Professorship Banquet. At the Chapter’s discretion, several spots may be reserved for use in the spring of the senior year to recognize students exhibiting extraordinary achievement during their fourth year; see Section XIV for additional details.

IV. Criteria for Selecting Students to Nominate

Student members shall be selected for nomination on the basis of academic and non-academic criteria. As discussed previously, the broad criteria will help ensure a well-rounded membership within the Chapter and thus work to uphold the Society's mission. The criteria are as follows:

Professionalism: The Dean of Student Affairs shall review records of all eligible students, and any student with significant conduct issues, e.g., violation of the Honor Code or unprofessional action, on his or her record shall be excluded from consideration. The decision as to what constitutes a significant conduct issue shall be left to the Dean of Student Affairs, and while the Dean may choose to discuss this issue with a Chapter officer, the student's identity shall be protected. Furthermore, in order to protect the student in question, issues of professionalism shall not be discussed among other members and especially not during the nomination meeting.

Course Grades: Using course grades obtained from the Registrar, the Office of Student Affairs will calculate a three-point GPA for each student. Quality points are awarded as the number of credit hours for each course multiplied by: three points for a grade of Honors, two for High Pass, one for Pass, and zero for Fail (Pass/Fail courses shall be omitted when calculating GPA, and a course shall be counted multiple times if requiring remediation). GPA is then calculated as the sum of quality points divided by the total number of credit hours for all courses used to calculate quality points. For the selection of junior members, GPA shall include grades from the first two years of medical school, i.e., basic science courses. For the selection of senior members, GPA shall include grades through the end of the third year, i.e., basic science courses and junior clerkships. Eligibility for membership shall be determined on the basis of this calculated GPA; students with a GPA in the top quartile of the class shall be considered for selection.

Service to Community & Profession: Participation points earned towards the Community Service Elective (CSE) and Professional Development Elective (PDE) shall be converted into a Service Index (SI) from 0 to 1. Each CSE point shall equate to 0.005 of an SI point, e.g., 80 CSE points equates to 0.4 SI points. As PDE points can receive more weighting per SLE policy, each PDE point shall equate to 0.0025 of an SI point, e.g., 80 PDE points equates to 0.2 SI points. The SI points converted from CSE and PDE points shall be totaled, and the sum shall not exceed 1. The conversion factors are such that a student must go above and beyond (by 33%) the requirements for the CSE and PDE electives in order to score this maximum number of SI points. For the selection of junior and senior members, CSE/PDE points earned during the first two-and-a-half and three years, respectively, are considered. Additionally, it is acknowledged that students may perform service that falls outside the realm of CSE/PDE credit. These activities should be listed in the designated space on the Application and further detailed in the narrative (see below: Leadership & Research). Up to two additional points (for a total possible service score of 10) may be awarded by the Nominations Committee for these endeavors ("Subj. Service Score").

Leadership & Research: To be considered for selection, each student must submit an Application. Current student members shall review and assign scores to each Application. Scores shall be determined per a prescribed, primarily objective set of rules; some subjectivity is allowed to account for attributes which are not feasibly objectified, e.g., a student might have

assumed leadership responsibilities within a student organization without having been an officer of that organization. To assist with subjective portions of the assessment, students will be encouraged to submit (as part of the Application) a narrative of their leadership experience and personal roles in research projects (including that conducted during a MD/PhD program or research year) while attending medical school (or on leave for research). This narrative should also include a description of any service activities outside the scope of volunteerism recognized by SLE. These narratives shall be limited to 2975 characters total and shall not include activities for which a student received SLE points, for such activities are considered elsewhere (see above: Service). Reviews of Applications shall be blinded, i.e., reviewers shall not know the names of the students who they are reviewing. Furthermore, each Application shall be reviewed by at least three student members, at least one of which shall be a student officer. These Application reviewers shall work separately when assigning scores but shall convene to review their score assignments. This final group review is to help ensure that the rules (including subjective assessments) have been uniformly applied. Throughout this process there shall be a single non-blinded facilitator, not a member of the Nomination Committee, responsible for collecting Applications from students, redacting these documents to exclude overtly identifying information, and returning a list of students and corresponding leadership and research scores to the Nomination Committee. While redacted Applications might contain non-overtly identifying information, particularly when reviewing members of one's own class, this system is designed with fairness in mind. What the system lacks in objectivity shall be balanced by the professionalism and integrity of members involved in reviewing Applications.

Reviewers shall assign to each student scores for leadership and research. Scoring guidelines for these categories are below, and reviewers shall adhere to this set of rules. Subjective points are to be awarded for specific categories not in these tables, or for students who fall within one of the categories but really went above and beyond what is expected – this is where narratives help.

Leadership	maximum score: 5
Subjective Assessment of Leadership	max subjective points ... 2.0
SGA President	points/year ... 1.5
SGA Officer (other)	1.0
Class President	1.0
Class Officer (other)	0.5
Aesculapian President or Curriculum Evaluation Coord.	1.5
Aesculapian Board Member (other)	1.0
Aesculapian Member	0.5
Interest Group President or Vice-President	0.5
Interest Group Officer (non-President or VP)	0.25
Camp Tiger Officer	0.5
Camp Tiger Director	1.0

Research	maximum score: 5
Subjective Assessment of Research	max subjective points ... 2.0
Peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter – FIRST author	points/item ... 2.0
Peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter – not first author	1.0
Case study, review, abstract, or poster – FIRST author	1.0
Case study, review, abstract, or poster – not first author	0.5
Personally Presented (i.e. Does not include posters) research at national, regional, or state conference	1.0
Submission of grant proposal to an external funding agency	1.0
Active and ongoing involvement in Honors Program research	1.0

Research activities receiving scores shall include only those conducted as part of one’s medical education; activities conducted or resulting from efforts prior to entering medical school shall not be considered. Research during a MD/PhD program or research year shall be considered. For an abstract itself to receive points, it must have been submitted for publication and not just as part of an application to present a poster or talk at a conference. For papers to be awarded points, they need not have already been accepted for publication but must have been officially submitted for publication (or for posters: submitted for acceptance); papers and posters that are in progress but not yet submitted shall receive no points. The Chapter concedes that a paper/poster in progress (but not yet submitted) might indeed represent a large amount of work and therefore allows the subjective assessment of up to two research points. Leadership is likewise difficult to objectify, so the subjective assessment of up to two leadership points is also allowed.

Objectivity vs. Subjectivity: The Chapter has worked to develop a process for the fair selection of a well-rounded group of students for nomination. Prior to the creation of this document, the Chapter selected its student nominees on the basis of course grades alone. While this has indeed been an objective and fair method of selection, it does not take into account other attributes that are valued by the Society. Professionalism, research, leadership, and service to the community and profession can be to some extent quantified by an objective set of rules. As this can be difficult, however, the criteria outlined above allow for some degree of subjective assessment. As described above, the process for reviewing Applications is designed to minimize bias, and the integrity of student members reviewing these documents will help ensure that the process is fair.

V. Ranking of Students Based on Selection Criteria

Eligible students who submitted an Application (firm requirement, though extenuating circumstances may be considered) shall be ranked according to the following formula, such that a student’s GPA, service, leadership, and research scores account for 80, 10, 5, and 5 percent of their ranking:

$$80 \times [(GPA) \div (3.0)] + [(8 \times SI) + \text{Subj. Service Score}] + [\text{Leadership Score}] + [\text{Research Score}]$$

Students with the highest scores per the above formula shall be added to the selection list until all available positions are filled. Some deliberation might be required in the rare event of a tie with regards to points. Students with significant conduct issues shall be excluded from the list, regardless of their score. This list is considered tentative until officially accepted by the Chapter.

VI. Chapter Acceptance of Selection List

The student selection list shall be presented to all interested Chapter members in a confidential meeting. Students on this list shall be presented in random order; their scores shall be withheld. The list shall be put to vote for acceptance by simple majority. A single vote shall be available to each Chapter member in attendance regardless of position; there shall be no voting by proxy. In the event a majority vote is not obtained, deliberation shall be permitted such that a consensus can be reached. While student scores might need to be revealed to facilitate deliberation, only that information which is absolutely necessary shall be presented. For example, if an attendee insists that an eligible student should be added to the list, that student's score may be presented along with the lowest score of a student (anonymously) on the list. Once a majority vote is reached regarding the selection list (original or revised per deliberation), it shall be binding and constitutes nomination of all students named in the list as new members of the Chapter.

VII. Notification of Nominees

Newly nominated members shall be individually notified via e-mail or (preferably) phone call from the Chapter President and/or Vice-President. During the following week, the Office of Student Affairs shall announce new members to all students, residents, and faculty via e-mail.

VIII. Notification of AOA National Office Regarding Nominees

The Chapter shall promptly notify the national office of newly nominated members, such that the national office can send each student instructions regarding registration and payment of dues.

IX. Student Failure to Pay Membership Dues

Failure of a nominated student to register with the national office and pay membership dues by the deadline specified by the national office shall constitute forfeiture of the nomination, which is final and not open to discussion. Any student forfeiting his or her nomination thusly shall not again, as a student, be nominated by the Chapter.

X. Student Refusal of Nomination

Students may refuse nomination by sending either a letter or e-mail to an officer of the Chapter. While the end-result of this refusal is equivalent to forfeiture of nomination via failure to pay membership dues, formal refusal reflects positively on the student's professionalism, and he or she may again, as a student, be nominated by the Chapter.

XI. Reallocation of Forfeited and Refused Nominations

Should a student forfeit or refuse the Chapter's nomination, it shall be made available to another eligible student. If refused or forfeited by a junior student, this nomination shall be made available during the nomination of senior students. If refused or forfeited by a senior student, this nomination may be offered to the eligible senior student with the next highest score and who has not been excluded on the basis of forfeiture of a previous nomination.

XII. Scholarship Award

Scholarships shall be awarded annually to newly nominated junior AOA members who attain the highest ranks (1-n) per the aforementioned scoring system. Its award is based solely on rank. The number of scholarships, as well as the dollar amount of each award, shall be determined by Chapter officers and student members after acceptance of the selection list. Scholarships will be presented at the Annual Visiting Professorship Banquet in the spring. Any student forfeiting his or her nomination after receiving this scholarship award shall not be required to return it.

XIII. Timeline of Nomination Process

- January: Obtain GPAs, including all basic science courses, from the Office of Student Affairs. Request Applications from the top quartile of the class (or entire class if top quartile is not yet known), allowing up to one month for submission. Obtain SLE credit points from the SLE Coordinator. Complete professionalism review.
- February: Score Applications and calculate each student's total score. Build the rank list per this score.
- March: Meet with student members and faculty advisors to discuss the junior selection list and reach a consensus regarding the list. Immediately afterwards, meet with interested Chapter members to present and vote on the selection list. Announce scholarship recipient to members.
- April: Visiting Professorship Banquet. Announce AOA members to all students and faculty.
- June: Deadline for payment of dues by junior AOA nominees; this deadline is non-negotiable.
- July-Aug: Nominate senior students by mid-August since the ERAS opens in September. The deadline for payment of dues by senior AOA nominees shall be two months later.

XIV. Miscellaneous Issues

Anonymity of Students: In the spirit of protecting personal information and maximizing fairness during the nomination process, student information shall remain as anonymous as feasible. Only a non-member facilitator, e.g., administrator in the Office of Student Affairs, shall have access to identifying information, insomuch as it is required to coordinate the selection process. GPAs, SLE participation points, and non-redacted Applications shall be protected. The selection list presented for acceptance shall consist only of a randomly ordered list of students without scores or other discrete performance information, unless the disclosure of such information is required for deliberation.

Delay of Junior Clerkship Grades: Should reporting of clerkship grades be delayed, the Chapter will accept Applications and calculate SIs for all potentially eligible students. Once these grades become available, ineligible applications shall be discarded and the process continued.

Transfer Students: Students who transferred into LSUHSC New Orleans from another medical school are eligible for nomination to the AOA LA-Beta Chapter. This policy is in accordance with the AOA Constitution: “Students who have taken part of their medical school education elsewhere will be eligible for nomination for election to the Society after being in attendance for one academic year in the medical school of the nominating chapter” (2009, IV.2.e). In order to be considered, transfer students shall submit to the same review process as traditional students. In lieu of SLE points, they may submit documents quantifying their community and professional service hours during their time at other schools which are signed by the heads of student affairs at those schools. Determination of a SI from these documents shall be on a case-by-case basis. Likewise, the equivalence of coursework in calculating a three-point GPA shall be determined on a case-by-case basis; transfer students shall of course be required to submit an official copy of their transcript from the transferring school to the LSUHSC-NO Office of Student Affairs.

OMFS Students: Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery students do not join their respective medical school class until the sophomore year. As a result, their opportunities while in medical school for leadership, service, and research may be limited as compared to their peers. To remedy this discrepancy, OMFS students are encouraged to submit a record of their service, leadership, and research activities performed in the first year of dental school in addition to their Application. Determination of the bearing of these activities on the student’s overall score will be on a case-by-case basis; however, the weighted percentages in the aforementioned formula are to remain unchanged. Furthermore, OMFS students shall be required to submit an official copy of their dental school transcript to the non-member facilitator. A conversion factor will be applied to the student’s freshman dental school grades to correct for mismatched coursework hours and disparate grading schemes in order that their GPA scale most closely approximates that of LSUHSC New Orleans. Membership in Omicron Kappa Upsilon National Dental Honor Society will also be given significant consideration. Although OMFS students are enrolled in the School of Medicine as sophomores, they are not enrolled as full-time students until their junior year. Because students are eligible for nomination only after being in attendance as a full-time student in the School of Medicine for one academic year, OMFS students are not eligible to apply for AOA as juniors but become eligible to apply as seniors.

Recognizing Outstanding Students just Prior to Graduation: Several membership positions may be reserved, at the discretion of the Nomination Committee, to recognize eligible students who were not initially nominated as senior members but who have exhibited outstanding achievement and service consistent with the AOA mission. The flexibility of these positions allows for the consideration of activities occurring during the senior year. Students may be nominated for these positions by professors, clinicians, administrators, or students. An e-mail soliciting nominations will be sent out by the Chapter president prior to election of junior members, and the Selection Committee shall award these positions during the Spring selection. As these positions are for recognition of extraordinary activities, they do not necessarily have to be filled. No positions are required to be reserved for this use; the number of reserved positions is to be determined yearly as part of the proceedings for nominating senior members.

XV. Acknowledgments

This nomination process has been influenced by the pioneering efforts of the Gamma of Texas and Alpha of Pennsylvania Chapters. The Beta of Louisiana Chapter applauds their dedication to upholding the mission of AOA.