



AIR & WASTE MANAGEMENT  
ASSOCIATION

SINCE 1907

# Student Chapter Quick Start Guide

## Introduction

Welcome to the Air and Waste Management Association's (A&WMA) guide to creating a student chapter. We're always looking to get more people involved, and offer a place for students to learn, network with professionals, give back to the community, and have fun!

A&WMA is an organization of students and professionals working in the environmental field, whose mission is to provide a neutral forum for exchanging information. Tours of facilities, technical presentations, and social/networking events are common.

PNWIS is a section of A&WMA that covers the north western US and western Canada. The annual PNWIS conference involves an Environmental Challenge (EC) that tasks students with solving real world environmental problems. This conference also offers a great chance to meet professionals in the field, learning what they do in their jobs and building your network.

Starting a chapter can be a bit daunting, but this guide should help you through the process. If at any point you have any questions, please reach out to the PNWIS board. We're excited to help! Contact info for board members can be found at [www.pnwis.org/the-board/](http://www.pnwis.org/the-board/)

## Chapter Startup Checklist

Here are some general steps for starting a chapter. These will be explained in more detail in following sections:

- Find a dedicated faculty member
- Gather members – 10 students are required
- Elect officers
- Draft chapter bylaws
- Fill out Petition for Student Chapter
- Register as A&WMA members
- Submit forms, dues, and bylaws to A&WMA
- Hold a chapter meeting
- Organize a social or event
- Set up a transition plan
- Organize a team to compete in the EC

## Finding a Mentor

A dedicated faculty member is an essential first step in forming a student chapter. Since students graduate and move on, a mentor is often the only constant member of a chapter. Mentors offer consistency in chapter operations, and help with the transitional process as new chapter leaders are elected. Find a mentor who is willing to commit to many years of running the organization.

## Gather Members

10 student members are required to start a chapter. Previous chapters have gathered 10 members, but had some of them graduate before finalizing chapter creation. It is important to complete the rest of the process as quickly as possible after reaching the minimum! It's fine if your membership numbers drop below 10 after your chapter is created, this is only required for the initial sign up process.

## Elect Officers

How you want to handle elections is up to you, and can be as formal or informal as you like. At a minimum, you will need a Chair (President), Vice Chair (Vice President), Secretary, Treasurer, and a Faculty Advisor (Mentor). Some chapters also have Director positions, who can fit whatever role you want them to.

## Draft Chapter Bylaws

The bylaws are the rules and regulations that govern your chapter, sort of like a constitution. You can edit them as you like, but you'll need to follow a few of A&WMA's guidelines. Most chapters follow a pretty generic template, like the one attached to this document. This must be submitted with your petition for a student chapter.

## Fill out Petition for Student Chapter

This form lists the 10 student members, elected officers, and name of your chapter. It must be sent to both your regional section (PNWIS) board, and the A&WMA board of directors. Send this to the PNWIS board for feedback, and to start the chapter creation process.

## Register as Members of A&WMA

Each of your 10 student members plus your mentor should register as an A&WMA member by going to [www.awma.org/students](http://www.awma.org/students) and clicking the "Join Now!" button. The membership fee is \$35 per student, and \$195 for your mentor. If you need help raising funds for the associated membership fees, reach out to the PNWIS board. Their contact info is available at [www.pnwis.org/the-board/](http://www.pnwis.org/the-board/). They have sponsored student chapters in the past, paying part or all of the registration dues.

## Submit Everything to the A&WMA Board of Directors

The contact information for the A&WMA Board of Directors is available at [www.awma.org/staff](http://www.awma.org/staff). The current Student Programs Manager is Robin Lebovitz, who can get the ball rolling for board approval. Once you have your Chapter Petition form filled out, Bylaws written up, and all students are registered members, submit it all and wait for approval!

## Schedule a Chapter Meeting

Congratulations! You're now an official student chapter of A&WMA! Your first order of business should be to hold a chapter meeting. Most student chapters hold meetings once a month, or every couple of months, but make sure you set a schedule to follow for the rest of the academic year. Meeting topics include planning for upcoming events, brainstorming fundraising ideas, and gathering interest/planning for the PNWIS conference.

## Have a Social or Event

At your meeting, come up with some fun ideas for events. Student chapters will often hold fundraising events to help pay for travel to the PNWIS conference and pay for operating expenses of the chapter. Barbeques, pizza parties, or other fun events are encouraged. It's also highly recommended that you schedule a couple of community service events during the year, like picking up trash along the highway, planting trees, or fundraising for a charity your group finds important. Be creative, it's supposed to be fun!

## Have a Transition Plan

Now that your chapter is registered and active, you need to make sure that it stays that way. The biggest reason student chapters disappear is that they don't transition to the next group of student leaders well. Draft up some guidance for the next chair that includes things like meeting agendas, contacts for events you've held, ways that you've recruited members in the past, everything! Make sure that you hold elections for the next year's leaders with plenty of time to have a turnover meeting, where you discuss all of the ins and outs of operating the chapter. Involve your mentor in all of these discussions.

## Set up an EC Team

One of the best opportunities for students is the Environmental Challenge, held at the PNWIS conference. This challenge tasks students with solving a real-world problem in a way that is practical, economically viable, and environmentally responsible. Monetary prizes are awarded to the top teams, and the winning team wins a paid trip to ACE, A&WMA's national conference. It's really great experience, and all students are highly encouraged to participate. Check out [www.pnwis.org/students](http://www.pnwis.org/students) for more info.