



Άξιον ωφελείν τους αλγούντας
Be Worthy to Serve the Suffering

Alpha Omega Alpha announces constitutional changes to the membership nomination and election process

October 5, 2020

Under the leadership of President Sheryl Pfeil, MD, the Alpha Omega Alpha (ΑΩΑ) Board of Directors adopted changes to the society's constitution to recognize in the election of new members the highest levels of competence, character, trustworthiness, leadership, professionalism, scholarship, and service, and to support elections that are inclusive, diverse, and equitable. The changes to the ΑΩΑ constitution were made during the society's annual Board of Directors meeting.

ΑΩΑ is committed to national leadership in advancing diversity and inclusion in the profession of medicine. These changes will provide more flexibility to Chapters and value the diversity of qualities that contribute to high quality patient care, leadership, service, and scholarship. They embrace and respect differences and foster creativity in how Chapters and schools celebrate students who contribute in these important ways. While it may require continued refinement over time based on input from myriad constituents, this is an important step forward for ΑΩΑ.

"The changes adopted today by the ΑΩΑ Board of Directors are significant in furthering our core tenets of leadership, professionalism, and humanism," said Dr. Pfeil. "By promoting inclusivity, diversity, and equity we are ensuring that we remain true to our mission and motto of being 'worthy to serve the suffering.'"

The constitutional changes, recommended by the ΑΩΑ Task Force on Membership and Elections, which is chaired by Lynn Cleary, MD, have been under consideration for 18 months, and received unified support of ΑΩΑ Chapter Councilors and subsequently the Board of Directors.

"I am proud of the work of the ΑΩΑ Task Force on Membership and Elections. They have been very productive over the past couple of years, culminating in these constitutional recommendations that help recognize holistically the characteristics of excellent physicianship in selecting new members," said Dr. Cleary who was also named the President Elect at the conclusion of the ΑΩΑ Board of Directors meeting.

Under Article IV. MEMBERSHIP AND GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS, Section 2 Medical Student Memberships, the new constitution language reads:

- A.) General guidelines for eligibility and election: Each school will identify students who, based on merit, demonstrate the characteristics of becoming excellent physicians and are aligned with ΑΩΑ's mission and values and the school's determination; these students shall be considered as eligible for nomination for election (see section 2c).
The characteristics of excellent physicianship will be identified by each school; examples



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include trustworthiness, character, caring, knowledge, scholarship, proficiency in the doctor-patient relationship, leadership, compassion, empathy, altruism, and servant leadership. From this group, up to twenty (20) percent of the total number of the class expected to graduate may be elected to membership. The Dean or his/her designee will work with the Chapter Councilor to establish a process to identify students expected to graduate and who match the school's criteria for eligibility. This includes input from appropriate administrative staff who can verify that nominees have no academic or professionalism concerns. AΩA expects an unbiased, inclusive nomination and election process as described below.

- B.) Timing of election: Each school/Chapter may determine the best timing for their elections. Chapters may choose to nominate all or a portion of their quota of student members at any time during the final year prior to graduation. Up to fifty (50) percent of the total number of students to be elected may be elected in the penultimate year. Chapters are encouraged to save one or two positions in each class of students for seniors to be nominated closer to graduation, in recognition of notable achievements during the final year of undergraduate medical education.
- C.) Criteria for eligibility: Each school/Chapter will identify evidence-based methods for determining eligible students based on AOA's mission and values and the school's mission and definitions of excellence in physicianship. In addition to academic achievement, schools/Chapters should use measures of research and scholarship, leadership, ethical behavior, professionalism, service to the school and community at-large, and/or other elements determined by the school/Chapter. Each school/Chapter should identify and then weigh these elements in the election process based on their mission and goals. Each school must maintain the attributes of AΩA – academic achievement, research, education, leadership, humanism, professionalism, service – throughout the election process. Each school/Chapter must be transparent with this process and shall implement a mechanism for the selected elements and weighting to be made known to all students, e.g., handouts, orientation, website, etc. Once nominated by a Chapter, students, residents, faculty, and alumni shall not campaign in any way for election to AΩA.

“These changes in our constitution will support AΩA and our profession and are consistent with our values. We expect and will guide Chapters to establish nomination and election processes that reduce bias and are open, accepting, inclusive, and culturally aware. By doing this, we will enrich the tradition of electing members who are ‘worthy to serve the suffering,’” said Richard L. Byyny, MD, FACP, AΩA Executive Director.

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