INFORMS Student Chapter Best Practices

General Suggestions
- Find a good advisor
- Support inter-disciplinary interaction
- Include graduate as well as undergraduate students
- Adapt the amount of your activities to the size of your student chapter

Organizing and Networking
- Build a team of volunteers
- Encourage diversity among chapter officers
- Recognize good efforts
- Maintain a calendar of tasks
- Plan events such as coffee hour, quarterly socials, potluck parties, bowling, hiking, ski trips, movie nights
- Generate funds for chapter activities
- Become an official graduate or undergraduate club at your school
- Maintain a webpage
- Participate in the INFORMS student newsletter “OR/MS Tomorrow”
- Interact with officers of other chapters through web-logs, etc.
- Build Omega Rho Honor Society chapters

Providing INFORMS Professional Skills Training, Education
- Tutorials on using LATEX and C++ programming
- Tutorials on using optimization software and callable libraries
- Organizing regional student-oriented mini-conferences

Promoting Research and Practice
- Organize student seminars
- Organize faculty research presentations
- Organize speaker seminar series
- Organize field trips
- Invite alumni to speak

Promoting Participation and Interaction with INFORMS Communities
- Membership of INFORMS sections and societies
- Participation in fora and special interest groups
- Taking leadership roles within INFORMS
- INFORMS speaker program

Promotion and Nomination for Various INFORMS Student Awards
- Judith Liebman Award
- George E. Nicholson Student Best Paper Award
- Sections and societies sponsored student paper awards

Social Service
- Fundraising events
- Introduction of OR/MS in local schools
General Suggestions
Find a good advisor who has interest and dedication to support the student chapter. Seek help from the advisor and do not shy away from discussing chapter issues with the advisor.

Strive for a wider audience by supporting inter-disciplinary participation and including graduate as well as undergraduate students. Invite students and faculty from different departments to your activities. To involve them, encourage students from other departments to become officers. Try to offer activities that will benefit and are of interest to both graduate and undergraduate students.

We all have a busy schedule so adapt the amount and type of your activities to your student chapter.

Organizing and Networking
Work with a team of volunteers. Many new students come and many current students graduate every semester, therefore you need to have a team of officers working on various issues related to maintaining a chapter such as membership (recruit and retain) and alumni relations. Have different teams to work on different activities and clearly specify their responsibilities. Encourage diversity among chapter officers. Diversified groups bring a variety of ideas to the table. Maintain a list of members to facilitate timely communication among your members about your events and ideas. Schools often provide a listserv, or you can use Google or Yahoo groups. Recognize volunteers, staff and faculty for their good efforts. It does not have to be a monetary award, often just a certificate works.

Make a plan of activities that you want to have in a year. Further break the plan into semesters and months. Do not forget to pass the sign-up sheet during these events to get a few more members for your chapter. Some of the activities that you might plan are industry seminars, graduate seminars, technical workshops, semester newsletter, mini-colloquium, social events, farewell banquets, and welcome parties.

- A welcome and orientation party at the beginning of the semester for new graduate and undergraduate students is a good idea. Invite all students, new or old. Old students are the ones who welcome and help new students. Identify key areas where new students would need help, give them an orientation about the INFORMS chapter and invite them to join as participants or as officers.
- Field trips are of huge educational and social value. They also provide an opportunity for the members to get internships and senior year design projects. Field trips generally tend to take anywhere from 2 months to 6 months from initial idea to actual realization, so keep trying but never get disappointed if it does not work sooner. Seek help from faculty members also in deciding a suitable place.
- Ending the semester with a farewell party provides an opportunity to bid farewell to the graduating students, give officer awards, take photo of the graduating class and enjoy a food banquet. It also helps the students learn about the various places where the graduating class is going.
- Activities such as coffee hour, potluck party, faculty-student sports tournaments, hiking, golfing, etc. are also great socializing events.
- Conduct a seminar series to allow graduate students to present their work to their peers and other faculty members. These seminars provide a good platform for graduate student to hone their presentation skills and boost their confidence for upcoming national conferences. Undergraduates can also benefit from it by learning about the various exciting research areas in the field.

Money is very important for any organization, and there are many ways to generate funds for the chapter. The list given below provides some of these:
• File activity report on time to obtain the seed money from INFORMS.
• Approach department head for event specific requirements. It is most likely that department can pick up the tab for many activities such as seminars and workshops.
• Contact alumni at events such as tailgate party, department visits, etc.
• Ask professors if they can help you raise money through their industry contacts.
• Sometimes, universities may provide funding for specific events. Contact the department of student activities, etc.
• Becoming an official graduate or undergraduate club at your school. Then you can utilize the funds that schools assign to their clubs.
• Apply to INFORMS for event specific funding.
• When you invite a company for a seminar, you may ask if they would like to provide some food in their seminar. This generally works well, because companies do not mind small expenses. Accept it or not, food is a big crowd puller for students.

Maintain a webpage for your chapter to provide visibility. This will also help to attract participation from nearby schools that do not have an official chapter and are interested in similar activities. Visiting other chapters’ website may give you more ideas about what to put on your website. Publish regular newsletters to let others know about your activities. Highlighting the activities of your student chapter as a Spotlight Chapter in OR/MS Tomorrow is a good way to increase visibility of the activities in your school. It also helps you practice your professional writing skills. If you are interested in becoming a Spotlight student chapter, visit the OR/MS Tomorrow website at http://ormstomorrow.informs.org/

It is also a great idea to share your experience with other chapters. The INFORMS website provides information about various student chapters and their contact email and phone numbers. On the INFORMS website (http://www.informs.org/) follow the communities link and then the student chapters link. The INFORMS website also provides information on how to start a student chapter in the “Student Chapter Officers Handbook”. Participate in discussion type weblogs (for example http://beinformsed.blogspot.com/) or start a new blog for initiating discussion among officers of various chapters to share experiences, ideas of fundraising, documents etc. One such blog has been started by Texas A&M chapter officer Homarjun Agrahari http://prez-homarjun.blogspot.com/.

Providing INFORMS Professional Skills Training, Education
Conduct workshops to help the students familiarize with different software such as CPLEX, SAS, MATLAB, C++ etc. This will help them in their coursework also. Tutorials on LATEX are also very helpful for graduate students writing technical papers and thesis.

Promoting Research and Practice
A speaker series is a great opportunity for you to learn how to organize a professional event. The speaker series can also help you to get to know faculty and students from other departments with similar interests. Furthermore, a good speaker series will make your student chapter well known.

• Start small by inviting faculty from your own school. It is also a good possibility to start interdisciplinary interaction.
• Expand the scope of your invitations as your experience grows.
• Don’t hesitate to invite experts. They are generally very happy to speak for a student chapter.
• Invite speakers from various industries in your area. Industry seminars are always very attractive for student members because (1) Many industries also collect resume for internship and co-ops (2) They often provide free food and small gifts. Industry seminars also help faculty members to make new contacts.
• Explore ways to fund your speaker program through the department, school, company sponsorship, INFORMS speaker program, etc.
• Before the speaker series starts, be well prepared in understanding all processes involved in inviting and reimbursing speakers (directions, parking tickets, tax forms).
• Think about a small gift for the speaker.
• Create a personal relationship with the administrators involved – you will communicate with them a lot in the months to come.
• Talk to a speaker series coordinator in your school or at another student chapter.
• Facilitate interaction of faculty and students with the speaker after the talk, for example, by providing lunch.
• Send invitations to faculty, students, and local newspapers.
• Make sure your speaker series is announced on the university/school/department webpage.

Taking Leadership Roles within INFORMS
INFORMS has many societies such as the decision science society, optimization society, simulation society etc. Motivate students to become members of these societies depending on their research interests. Take leadership role within INFORMS by participating in various subdivisions and societies. For example, a student can join the INFORMS Chapter/Fora committee as a student representative.

Promotion and Nomination for Various INFORMS Student Awards
Promote members to compete for various student prizes given by the INFORMS society. The Judith Liebman Award recognizes outstanding student volunteers who have been "moving spirits" in their universities, their student chapters, and the Institute. Also there are many awards for exceptional research. The George Nicholson Student Paper Competition is held each year to honor outstanding papers in the field of operations research and the management sciences written by a student. The prize is given each year at the National Meeting if there is a suitable recipient. The George B. Dantzig Award is given for the best dissertation in any area of operations research and the management sciences that is innovative and relevant to practice. INFORMS subdivisions and societies also sponsor many student awards. More information regarding various awards can be obtained from [http://www.informs.org/](http://www.informs.org/).

Social Service
Social service is a great opportunity to help others in need as well as to increase the visibility of OR/MS in your community. You are not only helping the communities around you but also instilling a sense of cooperation and collaboration among the volunteers. You could start your own fundraising activities or join efforts in other departments. Examples of possible fundraising activities are:

• Collect food and clothes for activities, such as the Katrina relief effort.
• Work with organization such as Habitat for Humanity.
• Make an INFORMS lottery or quiz, where the proceeds go to charity.

Promoting OR/MS in local schools will stimulate interest in OR/MS. Children can learn how stimulating and useful math can be. You will also learn how to present your profession in an exciting way.