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## Forming a COPRI Student Chapter

Congratulations on taking the first step towards starting a graduate-student Chapter at your school! The process of registering a Chapter with COPRI is straightforward. This document is intended to guide you through the process and provide some tips to keep your Chapter active and operating effectively.

### Starting a COPRI Student Chapter

Starting a Chapter essentially consists of six tasks:

- 1) Complete the COPRI Chapter application;
- 2) Make sure your fellow graduate students are student members of ASCE or COPRI (or both);
- 3) Register the Chapter with your university;
- 4) Set up leadership structure and establish key functions of your Chapter;
- 5) Sign COPRI Student Chapter Memorandum of Understanding (MOU); and,
- 6) Secure funding sources for operating your Chapter.

### Chapter Application

The application provided on the Student Chapter section of the COPRI website requests standard information that is relevant to starting a student organization. You can always amend the mission statement and the Chapter's interests as your Chapter develops. Submit your completed application to [copri@asce.org](mailto:copri@asce.org).

### Membership

Members of a Chapter should be student members of ASCE and/or COPRI and be currently enrolled in a graduate program. Membership is FREE for all current students. It is usually a good idea to appoint someone in charge of making sure that everyone in your graduate program completes the ASCE membership process, there are excellent benefits to becoming a Student Member.

While undergraduate students do not meet the official criteria for Chapter membership, many existing Chapters have found ways to incorporate undergrads in their activities.

### Register the Chapter with Your College or University

It is a good idea to formally register your Chapter with your college or university. Official registration may entitle you to student organization grants and funding sources. Also, most offices of student activities (or student organizations) have emailing lists that notify you of relevant university-hosted activities, such as career fairs and outreach opportunities. Finally,

depending on your institution, the use of university vehicles and coverage by university insurance may require official registration.

### **Chapter Structure and Objectives**

The procedures for governance should be discussed with the Chapter members and the faculty advisor. Typically Chapters function to enhance the educational and social experience of graduate students by providing a centralized way to organize activities.

Another key function is to encourage, and perhaps financially assist, Chapter members to participate in COPRI specialty conferences. A third key function of many Chapters is to promote the field of engineering through outreach activities with undergraduate students and area schools.

### **Funding**

The primary funding sources for Chapters are departmental funds and industry contributions. Other funding sources of existing Chapters include grants offered by universities to officially registered student organizations. The faculty advisor of your Chapter should be able to assist the student leadership with the process of establishing funding sources.

When available, COPRI funds can help cover the cost of officer travel for meetings and the costs of activities such as guest speakers or specialty conferences.

### **Tips on Organizational Structure and Leadership**

The key to having high quality management and sustained high activity level in your Chapter is to officers composed of both masters and Ph.D. students. Experience has shown that six or seven officers for large Chapters (greater than 15 members) and no less than four officers for small Chapters (15 or less members) will reduce the chances of one officer becoming overwhelmed with management duties.

Having Ph.D. students represented in the leadership helps break down social cliques between masters and Ph.D. students with the added benefit of the 'long-range' view provided by someone with an involvement spanning multiple class years of master students. A final key piece of advice is to choose one or more faculty advisors who view the Chapter as an integral part of the graduate program and will champion the Chapter to future classes.

### **Ways to Use Your Chapter**

Chances are your graduate program already has extracurricular events such as visiting speakers, a prospective student weekend, field trips, and picnics. The Chapter provides a centralized way to organize and manage these types of events, participate in COPRI functions, and perform outreach activities.

Chapter participation can help members feel more connected with their colleagues and broadened their view of what it means to be a member of a profession.