



UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

McKNIGHT CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

National Achievers Society

Student Handbook



NATIONAL ACHIEVERS SOCIETY

I. Centers of Excellence

The McKnight Center of Excellence gets its name from the McKnight Foundation established in 1953 by the late William L. and Maude L. McKnight. The Centers of Excellence (COE or Centers) were established in 1985 and are community-based entities created to identify and motivate historically disadvantaged minority elementary and secondary students to increase the pool of these students who are qualified to enter college. The mission of the Centers includes: (a) assume a more proactive stance in the education of youth; (b) employ the development of a group achievement model for disadvantaged elementary and secondary students; and (c) increase the pool of students who are prepared, motivated, and qualified to enter higher education.

Ten Centers operate throughout the State of Florida in Dade City, Ft. Lauderdale, Gainesville, Lake City, Miami, Orlando, Palm Beach, St. Petersburg, Tallahassee, and Tampa and are governed by the Florida Education Fund (FEF) located in Tampa. Each of the Centers provides individual and group motivation, academic skill development, cultural enrichment, career awareness and increased exposure to higher education.

The Florida Education Fund has established the following program requirements:

- Establish Academic Enrichment Centers to supplement student learning experiences.
- Identify and acknowledge high achieving disadvantaged students through the National Achievers Society
- Sponsor the Brain Bowl Competitions designed to improve academic skills outside of the classroom through local and statewide competitions in mathematics, history and culture, word definition, speech, and writing.
- Include African American churches in a significant portion of Center activities to encourage and promote the church as an integral and primary resource.

COE Program Highlights:

- More than 20,749 students have been inducted into the National Achievers Society since 1985.
- 100% of NAS seniors graduate from high school and at least 95% of NAS graduates enroll in institutions of higher learning each year.
- Since the Annual Brain Bowl Competitions began in 1985, more than 18,896 students have participated as team members and 921 students have won college scholarships.

II. National Achievers Society

The National Achievers Society (NAS) formerly known as the McKnight Achievers was established to encourage students in grades kindergarten through grade 12 to excel both academically and culturally. The Society focuses on the importance of higher education and group accomplishments; NAS has enjoyed success in helping students develop a sense of achievement and pride that has turned learners into leaders.

Eligibility for membership into the NAS includes:

- Enrollment in 6th through 9th grade at the time of application
- Earning grades of at least two A's and no C's
- Being sponsored by an adult in the State who agrees to serve as the "significant other" in the Achiever's life
- Writing a Laws of Life Essay
- Submitting two letters of recommendation (one must be from a school official)
- Being recognized for artistic and cultural talents and competing in and winning competitions at the regional or national levels

Members of the National Achievers Society must adhere to the following:

- Maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average
- Participate in NAS monthly meetings along with their parents
- Attend and/or Participate in the Annual NAS Statewide Summit
- Submit a written report on completion of a community service project each year
- Attend and Participate in at least 3 UCF McKnight Center of Excellence events
- Submit Dues by the posted deadline
- Submit report cards every grading period
- Attend and Participate in 1 Induction Ceremony each year
- Submit forms and requested information in a timely manner

Failure to adhere to the established requirements will result in the Achiever becoming inactive in the Society.

A. *Requirements*

1. Maintain a Minimum 3.0 Grade Point Average, with no grade lower than a "C", and only one "C" in honors, gifted, or advanced placement classes.

Students whose grades fall below a "C" average are encouraged to seek tutoring assistance from their local schools and community organizations. Middle school

students are encouraged to sign-up for free online tutoring at the NAS Online website. Please contact the Director for the sign-up information.

2. Attend the Monthly Meetings

Monthly meetings are held once a month during the academic year (September – May). The meetings will include activities that motivate and prepare students for higher education opportunities. The dates, times, and locations are determined each year to best suit the needs of the membership. The meetings will usually last 1 to 1 ½ hour. **Achievers are expected to attend at least 7 out of the 9 meetings. Failure to attend the 7 meetings will result in the Achiever becoming inactive in the Society. Inactive Achievers are prohibited from participating in any NAS events or activities.**

3. Attend and/or Participate in the Annual NAS Statewide Summit

The NAS Summit is an annual educational Pre-College Summit sponsored by the FEF that includes workshops for students in grades K-12. The workshops for middle and high school students motivate and prepare them for college, while exposing them and their parents to higher educational opportunities. The high school students learn the benefits of taking AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses and preparing for the SAT.

The Summit also includes a college fair for high school students to interact with college recruiters. In addition, the middle school students attend a career fair to expose them to different career options.

Achievers also have the opportunity to showcase their talents during the Talent Extravaganza.

4. Submit a Written Report on Completion of a Community Service Project Each Year

A critical facet of this program is the community service requirement. It is important for multicultural youth to understand the value of giving back to the community. By reaching back and pulling others along, the entire community prospers. Achievers are required to complete at least one community service project each year. They may participate in an individual or group project to serve their respective communities. All Achievers must complete a Community Service Verification Form (available on the website) and submit it to the MCOE. Please refer to the Community Service Verification Form for the types of projects that qualify as community service.

The Achiever who has completed the most hours will be recognized during the NAS State Summit. These hours are derived from community service projects that have been documented in the current academic year.

5. Attend and Participate in at least 3 UCF MOCE Events

The UCF MCOE hosts several events and activities during the academic year. The events will include, but are not limited to: College Readiness Workshop, College Tours, and various cultural/community events. In addition, the National Achievers Society also participates in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parades as well as attending other culture events in the community. All Achievers are expected to wear their t-shirt and/or jacket at all MCOE/NAS events as well as community events where Achiever participation has been requested.

Academic and culturally enhancing field trips are scheduled during the academic year. Achievers must be an active member and submit a parental consent form (available on the website) to be eligible to travel with the Center. The trips may require a fee for students to attend.

6. Submit Dues by September 29, 2017

All Achievers must pay annual dues of \$25 at the beginning of the fall semester to assist with annual programming. This minimal financial contribution helps sustain program activities and allows for the planning of extracurricular programs and events. The dues must be paid by September 29, 2017. Please contact the UCF McKnight Center of Excellence if you have an extenuating circumstance that is preventing you from paying dues on time.

Students who fail to pay their dues shall be considered inactive and are prohibited from participating in any NAS events or activities.

Please make money orders payable to: UCF McKnight Center of Excellence and write the Achiever's name on the money order. Please do not send cash. Dues should be mailed to:

University of Central Florida
McKnight Center of Excellence
P.O. Box 163620
Orlando, FL 32816-3620

7. Submit Report Cards Every Grading Period

All students are required to submit their report cards to the MCOE following each grading period. Failure to submit report cards will result in the Achiever becoming inactive.

8. Attend and Participate in 1 Induction Ceremony each year

Achievers play a vital role in Induction Ceremonies. The students take an active role in hosting, speaking, and performing (songs, poems, and musical instruments) during the event.

9. Submit Forms and Requested Information in a Timely Manner

The required forms will include, but are not limited to: FEF Application of Participation, Contact Information Update, Parental Consent, Community Service Verification, Achiever Accomplishment, and Evaluation/Survey.

B. Officers

The Achievers have the ability to develop their leadership skills by holding a leadership position in the Society. Prior to the end of the academic year, the NAS members will elect officers to fill the positions of President, Vice President, Secretary, Parliamentarian, and Historian for the upcoming year.

In order to run for office, Achievers must meet the following criteria:

- Attendance at a minimum of 7 out of 9 monthly meetings prior to the election
- Payment of annual dues prior to election
- Attendance of at least 4 NAS events during the year
- Participation in an Induction Ceremony
- Submission of all report cards during the year
- Must have been active with the Society for at least one year prior to serving in a position

After an election, all officers will be required to attend a Leadership Retreat to learn the roles and responsibilities of each position. Workshops are conducted to enhance students' confidence and ability to conduct business meetings. All officers will be trained on parliamentary procedures.

1. Description of Officers

President

The duties of the President are as follows:

- To facilitate meetings on time by taking the chair and calling the meeting to order
- To announce business before the membership in order for it to be acted upon

- To state and put to vote all questions which are regularly moved or necessarily arise in the course of proceedings, and to announce the result of the vote
- Prepare, in advance, for the business of the meeting (generate agendas and topics for discussion)
- Be knowledgeable of parliamentary procedures;
- To restrain members, when engaged in debate, within the rules of order
- To forward all information, announcements, and pertinent data to membership at large upon request of the Parent Alliance and/or McKnight Center of Excellence Staff
- To assume leadership and responsibility when participating in community activities with the Parent Alliance and/or National Achievers Society

The order of business for regular meetings shall be:

- Introduction of Officers
- Introduction of New Members
- Ice Breakers
- Monthly Meeting Theme (guest speaker/workshop/etc.)
- Voting (as needed)
- Adjournment

Vice President

The duties of the Vice President are as follows:

- In the absence of the President, the Vice President will preside and perform the duties of the President
- Assist the President in fulfilling their duties
- Assume the role of President should the incumbent resign or become impeached

Secretary

The duties of the Secretary are as follows:

- To record minutes of the meeting
- To submit the minutes to MCOE on a monthly basis, no later than one week after the NAS meeting
- To secure minutes of previous meetings for historical reference
- To record the name of the member who introduces a motion
- To have a list of all officers and their current contact information
- To notify all members of meetings
- To call the meeting to order in the absence of the President and the Vice President and to preside until the election of a

chairperson pro tempore (for the time being or temporary), which should take place immediately

Parliamentarian

The duties of the Parliamentarian are as follows:

- Must become versed in the rules and procedures of parliamentary law. He/she advises the presiding officer on questions of procedure so the business of the organization can be conducted efficiently and impartially

Historian

The duties of the Historian are as follows:

- To maintain historical records of the National Achievers Society activities in the form of newspaper clippings, photographs, and printed material in a binder from year to year.

C. Awards and Scholarships

The UCF McKnight Center of Excellence hosts an Annual Awards & Recognition Banquet to recognize outstanding achievement. The awards presented will include, but are not limited to: 3.0 and higher grade point average, Community Service, Student of the Year, and Senior of the Year. The Officers from each chapter will also be recognized.

Students must be active at least two years before graduation to be recommended for scholarships. In addition, seniors interested in receiving the UCF Academic Enrichment Award (AEA) must apply and be admitted to the University of Central Florida. **Participation in the National Achievers Society does not guarantee admission into the university.** This award covers the cost of UCF tuition and fees and is renewable every year the student meets satisfactory academic progress within their 4 years of academic study. The funding for the UCF Academic Enrichment Award is dependent on the discretion and budgetary availability of the UCF Unit of Undergraduate Admissions, Student Financial Assistance, and Outreach Services.

Students may receive or be nominated by the MCOE to receive scholarships and awards from other organizations and agencies. The MCOE reserves the right to exercise organizational discretion in the nomination process.

D. Parent Alliance

The Parent Alliance (PA) is the support organization of the National Achievers Society. The Alliance works directly with the NAS. Membership is available to

the natural or legal guardian or custodian of a student who has been formally inducted into the NAS.

Parents who participate in the PA are considered reliable role models for their children. They support the Achiever's educational goals and encourage their participation in the Society. This support is demonstrated by adhering to the following:

- Ensuring the student attends monthly meetings and events/activities sponsored by the Society or the MCOE
- Ensuring the Achiever adheres to the NAS dress code (wearing their t-shirt and/or jacket) at appropriate functions to heighten the visibility of the organization. Parents may purchase their own NAS jacket through the MCOE. The cost is \$50.00.
- Assisting their Achiever in submitting required report cards, forms, and information to the MCOE
- Serving as chaperones on MCOE sponsored field trips
- Volunteering their time or special talents in support of program activities
- Supporting events as much as possible

Parents understand and agree that the purpose of the PA is to be an advocate for their child. To accomplish this goal, they support and embrace the objectives of the NAS and the MCOE.

Parent Alliance Contributions

The following are some of the activities that the Parent Alliance are responsible for:

- Coordinating educational and cultural activities for Achievers and Parents
- Planning events such as, holiday celebrations, fundraisers, and social programs
- Assisting with Induction Ceremonies
- Initiating fundraising to support NAS activities (car washes, candy sales, garage sales, etc.)

Members of the Parent Alliance elect officers and committee chairpersons each year to conduct the business of the PA. All parents are encouraged to participate on committees. The PA operates under the established Bylaws that dictate the rules and regulations members must follow. To conduct business of the PA, meetings are held at the same time and location as the Achievers' meeting. Each parent is encouraged to attend and be an active member of the Alliance. Parents are assessed annual dues (set by the PA) to support NAS activities.

E. NAS Logo, Pledge, and Litany

THE MEANING OF THE NATIONAL ACHIEVERS SOCIETY LOGO



In African sculpture and the decorative arts, there is an emphasis on symbolism, stylization and design. Oftentimes what may appear crude to the untrained eye is actually quite sophisticated and well conceived.

The National Achievers Society “logo” is true to the African tradition in that it contains symbolism, stylization and design. The logo is styled to reflect symbols that embody African art form and substance.

- An important pattern that often appears in African art is the **pyramid** or triangular design. It is often utilized as a repeated pattern. The pyramid symbolizes achievement, the pinnacle, with everything leading to the top, the best. The pyramids of Egypt (Africa) represent the historical foundation from which we as a people emerge.
- The **breaking of the chains** of slavery has a physical and a psychological meaning. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation technically freed us as a people in 1863, many of us remain trapped by an enslaved mind. A liberating educational process unlocks the enormous potential of African American intellect.
- The **Black silhouette** of a human being symbolizes the unbroken chain of Africans linked to African Americans.
- The **hand reaching** for the stars in the apex of the logo, exemplifies the following quote, “It is not a disgrace not to reach the stars, but it is a disgrace to have no stars to reach for.” -Dr. Benjamin Mays
- The **atomic symbol** represents technology and the future. Members of the Society will carry forth the best the African American community has to offer in terms of a contribution to the betterment of mankind.
- The **book** in the lower right hand corner symbolizes learning as a liberating experience. Education has represented the most direct route of upward mobility for African Americans.

Members of the National Achievers Society are expected to live up to the multiple meanings contained in the logo.

NAS Pledge

I pledge myself to uphold the high purposes of the National Achievers Society into which I have been inducted. I will be true to the principles for which it stands. I will be loyal to my school and the Centers of Excellence and will maintain high standards of excellence in scholarship, service, leadership, and character.

NAS Litany

I am excellent.

I am excellent.

I am excellent.

My mind is a pearl.

I can do anything.

Anything that my mind can conceive, I can achieve.

Anything that my mind can conceive and my heart can believe, I can achieve.

I am excellent.

I am excellent.

I am excellent.

I am a National Achiever!

All Achievers are expected to learn the NAS Litany and be able to recite it from memory at official NAS activities.