



WESTERN DISTRICT STUDENT CHAPTER TOOLKIT

Student Funding and Initiatives Committee

LAST UPDATED: September 2024



Purpose of the Western District Student Chapter Toolkit:

This toolkit offers strategies for establishing and growing Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Student Chapters. Strategies for funding, activity planning, and recruitment are included. This is intended to be a living document that will be updated periodically to reflect the latest best practices. The Western District Student Chapter Toolkit is not meant to replace the existing student chapter resources listed below:

Existing Resources for Student Chapters:

- [ITE Student Chapter Handbook](#) (2011): Comprehensive guide on establishing and managing student chapters, including how to organize activities and manage membership. The handbook also provides strategies on how to organize student chapter leadership, recruit a faculty advisor, and engage professionals.
- [Student ActivITE Guide](#) (2022): Lists common activities successfully hosted by student chapters and student-focused activities hosted by ITE annually.
- [Sample Student Chapter Marketing Materials](#) (updated regularly): Sample marketing materials including flyers, pamphlets, and infographics.
- [K-12 Transportation-Related STEM Activities](#) (updated regularly): List of age-specific transportation-activities.
- [SLS 101: A How-to-Guide to Student Leadership Summits](#) (2019): Webinar on attending and hosting Student Leadership Summits (may require purchase).
- [ITE Student Leadership Summit Best Practices](#) (2017): High-level guidance for organizing a Student Leadership Summit (SLS).

Database of Student Chapter Activities:

As part of this toolkit, a database of student chapter activities has been created: [Student Chapter Activities Database](#). The database includes activities from Annual Reports submitted to the Western District by student chapters. If your student chapter would like to contribute additional data or have questions about the database, please contact the [Student Funding & Initiatives Committee Chair](#).

Funding Strategies for Student Chapters:

Funding is consistently identified as a top challenge by student chapters in the Western District. This section offers strategies for general funding and strategies specific to funding participation in Student Leadership Summits (SLS) and Western District Annual Meetings (WDAM).

Small Scale Fundraising

- Alumni Donations:
 - While your school may already solicit donations from alumni, some alumni may prefer to donate directly to your student chapter.
 - Reach out via mail, email, or social media. Connect with alumni through social media or keep a record of alumni mailing addresses and email addresses.
 - Providing an online donation option is convenient for donors. Your school may have their own online crowdfunding platform, which you may be required to use ([example](#)). Check school rules on where donations can be sent to and deposited.
 - If your student chapter is a registered non-profit organization, donations made to your student chapter may be tax deductible for the donor. Keep a record of donations in case your donor requests a receipt of donation.
- Merch & Special Activities
 - Selling merchandise may be an effective way to fundraise. Asking merchandise buyers to pre-order may reduce the risk of buying more merchandise than you can sell.
 - Consider charging fees popular activities or those with rewards (e.g. raffles). See the [Student Chapter Activities Database](#) for activity ideas.
 - For activities with external parties (e.g. hosting guest speakers or recruiters), consider asking them to pay for all or part of the activity.
 - It may help to explain why you they should pay for all or part of the activity (e.g. it provides a recruitment and advertising opportunity for your company, your student chapter has limited time slots for speakers, your student chapter is limited on funds).
 - Free or discounted activity fees or merchandise may also be given to new members as an incentive to join. See next section for more ideas on membership fees.
- Membership Fees
 - Consider raising membership fees if they haven't been increased recently, balancing with recruitment goals Check with your school to see if they have a database of membership fees for similar clubs which you can use as a benchmark.
 - If your student chapter offers lifetime memberships, consider changing to an annual or quarterly fee structure.

Large Scale Fundraising

- Sponsorships
 - Developing a sponsorship program can be a successful long-term source of funding. Typical sponsor benefits include free advertising and guaranteed speaker meeting time slots. At a high level, the steps to creating a sponsorship program are:
 1. Produce a sponsorship program document: This document should outline sponsorship costs and benefits. Expect the document to be used by professionals to propose sponsorship to their respective company.
 - Example sponsorship documents:
 - [Cal ITE 2021-2022 Sponsorship Packet](#)
 - [Cal Poly 2023-2024 Sponsorship Webpage](#)
 - [CSUF 2023-2024 Sponsorship Packet](#)
 2. Grow your sponsor network: Prioritize potential sponsors with an existing connection to your student chapter. Existing connections include being a guest speaker at your school, employing current or past members of your student chapter, or connection to your faculty advisor. Connections may also be made by networking at conferences, ITE events, or sending “cold emails”.
 - When “cold emailing,” it is important to provide adequate context. Explain who you and your student chapter are (mentioning ITE adds legitimacy to your student chapter), how you heard about the company, and why they should consider sponsoring. Provide your sponsorship program document.
 3. Provide quarterly or bi-annual updates to your sponsor: Updates are typically sent in the form of a newsletter (email or print) and highlights how their sponsorship has helped your student chapter so far.
 4. Renew sponsorships: When a sponsorship expires, offer an easy way for the sponsor to renew. Consider incentivizing renewal with discounts or additional perks. Providing a summary of how the sponsorship benefitted both the sponsor and your student chapter may also encourage sponsors to renew.
 - If your student chapter does not have the administrative capacity for a full sponsorship program, consider implementing only a few components. For example, your student chapter could begin charging guest speakers, or selling advertising space on merchandise.
- Local Section
 - Check with your local section for grant opportunities. If none, encourage your local section to develop one.

- [Connections Grant](#)
 - Administered by the Western District Student Funding and Initiatives Committee. This grant awards up to \$500 for activities that help foster relationships with other organizations.
- [Data Collection Fund](#)
 - Administered by the Western District. This fund pays student chapters \$1,600 to collect trip generation and parking data. The grant is awarded to up to five student chapters.

Funding Student Attendance at the Western District Annual Meeting (WDAM)

There are several awards available through the Western District to help students attend WDAM. For more information on the awards listed below, see [Student Chapter Awards](#).

- [Outstanding Student Award](#): Winner receives free registration.
- [Student Paper Award](#): Winner receives free registration.
- [Student Chapter Award](#): Winner receives \$1,000 for travel to WDAM.
- [Student Chapter Momentum Award](#): Winner receives \$1,000 for travel to WDAM.
- [James H. Kell Award](#): Winner receives \$1,500 for travel to WDAM.
- [Regional Travel Scholarship](#): Winner receives \$500 for travel.

Recruitment:

Recruitment can be difficult, especially for less established student chapters. However, there are effective strategies your student chapter can implement to increase membership beyond attending club fairs and advertising in classes.

- **Prioritize recruiting during first meetings of the year or term:** The beginning of a new year or term is typically when students are “shopping” for new clubs. Being ready with a showcase of your club’s past and upcoming activities (e.g. field trips, speakers, conferences, projects) helps new students understand what to expect when joining your club. Additional perks (e.g. free food, networking, training, travel to conferences, community, and friends) may also be emphasized.
- **Utilize your activities for recruitment:** This could range from advertising membership benefits at events to hosting activities with special privileges for members (e.g. paid events where members get a discount or free access). Have an easy way for new members to apply and pay for membership at your events.
 - Consider assigning officers or existing members to greet attendees when they arrive. Greeters may also sit with new students and engage, recruit, or help attendees feel welcome. Attendees who feel welcome are more likely to come back and ultimately become members.
- **Discount membership for a limited time:** This is especially effective at the start of the school year. Advertising a limited time discount on membership incentivizes potential members to buy now.
- **Remove membership fees:** Membership fees can be a barrier to participation for many students. If financially feasible, removing membership fees can include those previously excluded.
- **Partner with other organizations:** Hosting joint events with partner organizations increases your student chapter’s exposure to potential new members. Offering joint membership options may also incentivize potential new members to join.

Student Leadership Council:

The student leadership council provides a forum for open discussion of key issues and challenges that different student chapters face. It is a space for collaboration and can be especially helpful for less established student chapters. Visit the [Student Leadership Council webpage](#) to learn more about how your student chapter can get involved.