

Chapter Conference Planning Guide

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Introduction

Holding an event at your school is a lengthy and challenging process, but one that ultimately will strengthen your chapter and increase the quality of the region as a whole. Putting on a chapter conference allows members of individual chapters to get a hands-on experience with the student leadership component of the Junior State. Through this experience, members of a chapter can learn how to work together, engage in political discussion, and enhance their overall JSA experience exponentially.

Before you proceed with any planning, discuss potential conference dates with Neil Govoni (ECR Vice Mayor) and Dan Delgado (ECR Director of Chapter Conferences). Please keep in mind that an event should not be publicized until your school's administration has given approval and that your Vice Mayor has scheduled the date of the event. After confirming a date, get together with your chapter to announce the upcoming chapter conference to go over the work that will need to be done in preparation for the event. Planning of the conference can take a few weeks, so be sure to manage your time wisely and distribute the workload throughout the chapter. The more people that get involved in the preparation process, the smoother the event will run. Every JSA chapter varies in their size and the ways they operate, so schools will have the opportunity to make their conference unique such as by instituting new debate styles and coming up with a thought-provoking theme. Not only will providing a new type of JSA experience increase the attendance of your one-day event, but it will also benefit the region as a whole. Below are several guidelines that your chapter can use to plan your conference:

For All Chapters:

All chapters must create an **agenda** for your chapter conference. The agenda presents how the day will go about and without it, attendees will have no idea what the debate topics are or what time all of the events begin. Print enough agendas so that every delegate receives one **approximately one week before conference day** once you get an idea of expected attendance numbers. When constructing the framework of your event, keep in mind the debate rooms that you will be using in your school and plan the agenda accordingly. A special activities block or keynote speaker is always recommended, as it adds distinction to your chapter conference. Activities block events include JSA Musical Chairs, Impromptu Debates, Risk Debate, or a special event that your chapter designs for your conference.

Hosting a one-day JSA event at your school can be a great opportunity to raise a great deal of money for your school's JSA chapter. This money could go towards lowering the cost of conventions and transportation, or you could buy sweatshirts or t-shirts for all the members of your chapter. Having a bake sale near the front desk, selling pizza for lunch at a profit, and charging five dollars for admission are all effective ways of generating revenue for your chapter. However, fundraising at chapter conferences is not limited to these strategies, and anything you think of that can reduce the prices of future conventions for your chapter is strongly encouraged.

Conference Coordinator

Regardless of the size of a chapter, every chapter conference should have one person that is designated as the Conference Coordinator. While working with fellow members of their chapter,

the Conference Coordinator should design the overall skeleton of the agenda, retrieve the building plan and designate debate rooms in the school and oversee all the work that is done in preparation for the day of the event. The Conference Coordinator is responsible for producing fully printed agendas containing a full debate list and a clear schedule of the day by the last chapter meeting before the conference.

For Larger Chapters:

In many cases, a chapter will have a great deal of members that want to actively participate in the conference coordination process. In addition to Conference Coordinator, a Chapter President can select a wide array of positions to assign that will help plan the conference. Below are some suggested positions to create for ensuring a well-run JSA Chapter event.

Director of Debate(s)

The prime responsibility of the Director of Debate is to create, publish and assign a list of debates for the conference. If your chapter wishes to write blurbs for your school's event, the Director of Debate(s) would be responsible for assigning blurbs to chapter members and making sure that all blurbs are completed on time. These debates should be relevant to politics, original, and appealing to prospective attendees. Debates and blurbs must be submitted to your Vice Mayor and approved **at least two and a half weeks before the conference.**

Director of Logistics

The Director of Logistics directly communicates with members of the region that plan on attending the conference to make sure that they get to the conference safely, efficiently and affordably. The Director of Logistics should work out public transportation timetables and fares well in advance so students can have a travel plan before the date of the conference. In the days leading up to the event, the Director of Logistics must also answer last minute questions, deal with transportation issues, and ensure that all attendees arrive and depart the school hassle-free.

Director of Special Activities

Every chapter conference should have some type of special activity or keynote speaker to help enhance the uniqueness of a chapter's event. The Director of Special Activities is responsible for planning any special events that a chapter wishes to hold and contacting prospective guest speakers. Although the special activities portion of a conference is a small part of the entirety of the event, having memorable activities requires a lot of planning. It is recommended that the full planning of the activities block is completed **at least a week before the conference.** The Director of Special Activities should also be put in charge of planning fundraisers for the conference, such as bake sales and raffles.

Note:

Despite the fact that there will be a few people primarily responsible for planning a conference, any sort of involvement by delegates should be encouraged by a Chapter President. Whether it is picking people up at a train station or counting Best Speaker ballots, simple jobs performed by chapter members will go a long way in making sure that your event will be a great success. The Chapter President is the person who is ultimately responsible for the conference, but it is their responsibility to make sure that all work is spread out amongst chapter members and participation is granted to everyone that wants to become involved.

For Smaller Chapters:

Chapter conferences should not be limited to the powerhouse chapters of the ECR, as they can serve as a great way to strengthen and grow your chapter. Even if your chapter may not be as large as other chapters in your state, do not feel hesitant to hold an event at your school. In the case of smaller chapters, the Chapter President will have an increased workload and more responsibility in planning the event. By pacing yourself and planning the conference in a timely manner, your chapter will be able to hold a successful conference regardless of its size.

The best way to increase attendance at your chapter's event is by publicizing the event so that the entire region is aware of the next event. Once a Facebook event is created for the conference, invite everyone that you know that is in JSA, and don't be afraid to invite someone from your school not in JSA as a way to recruit them. Make sure that nearby high schools are aware of your chapter conference and persuade them to attend. This goes for schools with and without JSA chapters, as inviting people from other schools to a JSA event at your school is a great way of helping to expand the region as a whole. While attempting to get more people to your event, make it easy for people to travel to your school to give them yet another incentive to attend your chapter's conference.

Schedule

A solid time plan is highly recommended for the planning of your chapter conference, but is not required. As soon as you confirm a date with your Vice Mayor, get started on the coordination process. By following these three simple steps, your chapter will have a smooth preparation period in the weeks leading up to your chapter's conference.

Step 1

Discuss the chapter conference with your chapter the first meeting after its date has been confirmed. Make sure that they all know what a chapter conference is and make it mandatory for them to attend. Depending on your chapter size, decide how you are going to plan the event. Assign work and positions accordingly and have check-ups on the planning process at the next meeting as well as with your Vice Mayor and Director of Chapter Conferences.

Step 2

Your chapter should now be in the midst of the bulk of planning the chapter conference. All major jobs such as writing debates, making the agenda, configuring travel plans, and coming up with special activities should be completed **two weeks prior to the date of the conference**. This portion of planning the chapter conference is the most strenuous and time-consuming, but it will most certainly pay dividends the day of the event.

Step 3

The final stages of planning should be devoted to working out the odds and ends of running a chapter conference so that there will be no need for panic the day of the event. This includes purchasing nametags, making best speaker ballots and posters to put outside of the debate rooms, and going through the roles that each member of your chapter will play come the day of the event. If you are having a guest speaker make an appearance at your school, don't forget to get them a small gift to present them at the conclusion of their speech. Have the members of your chapter

that are most involved in the planning process convene at someone's house the night before the minicon as a final meeting to make sure that everything is in line for the conference. If these steps are followed, you are sure to hold a successful chapter conference that will be of great benefit to both your chapter and the ECR as a whole.

The Day of the Conference!!!

On the day of the conference, the most important thing to do is to make sure that all members of your chapter are properly allocated in order to make the event run in a sound manner. Make sure that there is always someone from the chapter at the registration desk and that kids from your school can direct delegates to the proper location. If you are serving food at your event, it is often very helpful to assign people to be part of a food team that is responsible for bringing the food to the proper place and serving it to conference attendees. Don't forget to have Best Speaker Awards ready by the time Closing Session rolls around, so that way, you will be able to end the conference knowing that you conducted a well-run and prosperous chapter conference.