

Honorary organizations have been an essential part of higher education for over one hundred years. Their purpose is to encourage and honor superior scholarship, service and leadership achievement. UF students and recent graduates are often mailed invitations to honor societies. While there are a number of honor societies that are legitimate and are a great addition to your resume, there is also a possibility the organization is simply collecting membership dues and offers no benefit to you. As an example, if you received an invitation to a society which has no phone number for contact and a website which was "down for a brief period of renovations" it may indicate the society is not legitimate and does raise some concerns.

With so many societies out there, it is difficult to determine who is legitimate and who is not. There are typically two types of honorary organizations: professional honoraries and leadership/service honoraries. Student organizations may be listed in the Office of Student Activities database as Honoraries if they meet the following criteria:

- Their organizations are members of a national sanctioning organization such as the Association of College Honor Societies (www.achsnatl.org) or the Professional Fraternity Association (www.profraternity.org)
- Or they have been approved as an Honorary Society by the University of Florida Honors Program (www.honors.ufl.edu) and meet their criteria for recruitment
- Or are sponsored academic honorary student organizations of a University of Florida academic department or college.

When considering joining an honor society we recommend you check the list of societies accredited by the Association of College Honor Societies and the Professional Fraternity Association, Inc. There are approximately 45 Honoraries at the University of Florida which meet this criteria (<http://www.union.ufl.edu/sac/organizations.asp>). Before applying or joining an honorary, it is recommended for students to determine if the Honor society has been certified as meeting the high standards of the a national sanctioning group or to examine the following criteria:

Minimum scholastic criteria

- Undergraduate (Specialized and Leadership) - Rank in the upper third of the class. That rank converts to a 3.2 or 3.3 GPA in most cases - 3.0 is likely too low. Honor societies that advertise a minimum 3.0 are probably more appropriately labeled Recognition Societies (a definition that has been generally accepted since 1925) or Scholastic Organizations.
- Undergraduate (General) - Rank in the upper 20% of the class.
- These criteria are minimal; many societies have higher standards.

Governance

- Membership participation in setting authority for control of the affairs of the organization.
- Governance by officers/board members elected by the membership.

- Membership participation in approving and amending bylaws. o Full financial disclosure.

Campus Chapters

- Formal chartering of each campus chapter by institution and college/department petition, approved by official action of the governing body of the national organization.
- Candidate selection by the campus chapter.
- Membership invitation by an official chapter.
- Chapter representation in national governance.
- On-campus contacts whom you can ask about the society.

Web Site - the following items should be accessible by the general public:

- National Officers and Headquarters Staff
- National Office mailing, telephone, fax, and e-mail addresses
- Criteria for membership
- Benefits of membership
- Membership / initiation fee
- Bylaws
- Chapter charter policies and procedures

If you receive information from a honor society you do not recognize and the society claims to have a "University of Florida Chapter", we recommend contacting the Office of Student Activities at www.union.ufl.edu/sac or (352) 392-1671 to confirm the organization is actually a registered student organization at UF; or to discuss the organization with the department's student affairs liaison if the group is a sponsored student organization of an academic department or college.

Minimum Scholastic Criteria provided by the Association of College Honor Societies, http://www.achsntl.org/pres_let2.asp