



MORTAR BOARD

NATIONAL COLLEGE HONOR SOCIETY

2026 SPECIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

January 25, 2026

Guide to Governance

ABOUT THE SPECIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The Special National Conference (SNC) is a **virtual** conference held entirely by Zoom. The SNC has been held since 2012, and 2026 will mark the fifteenth Special National Conference.

Your chapter must have at least one collegiate delegate present at the SNC. All other collegiate members and advisors are encouraged to attend. [Advance registration is encouraged](#) so the unique Zoom link can be sent to attending members and advisors.

During the SNC, chapter delegates meet virtually and share information. It is a wonderful opportunity to learn from other chapters, members, and national leaders.

As a student-governed society, **YOU** (the collegiate members) also conduct the business of the Society. Each chapter in good standing will have one voting delegate at the SNC. Voting will take place around issues of governance (the Bylaws). Collegiate members will also elect members of the National Council.

The SNC will be hosted by the National Council, and the meeting will be conducted by National President Nathan Cordle. Come prepared to share and learn!



Timeline

Sunday, January 25: Special National Conference is held

Sunday, January 25: Voting opens at end of the SNC

Wednesday, January 28: Voting closes at 11:59 p.m. Hawaiian

How to attend

The Special National Conference will be held via Zoom meeting on Sunday, January 25:

7:00 – 8:30 p.m. Eastern

6:00 – 7:30 p.m. Central

5:00 – 6:30 p.m. Mountain

4:00 – 5:30 p.m. Pacific

2:00 – 3:30 p.m. Hawaiian

How to prepare

1. Add the SNC on your calendar and gather officers and advisor(s) to attend and confirm your attendance [here](#).
2. Read this *Guide to Governance* completely.
3. Review the National [Bylaws](#).
4. Review the candidates for election (page 9).
5. Prepare for questions you might like to ask or issues you might like to raise.
6. Prepare some thoughts about how your chapter will flourish in the upcoming term.
7. Prepare to hear national updates about the Society, as well as committee reports from the following committees:

- Standing Nominations Committee
- Governance Committee

8. Ensure the chapter has no unpaid invoices so your chapter will be eligible to vote.
9. The room will open 10 minutes prior to the start of the SNC.
10. A benefit of the Society is our national presence and connection to other members. Please prepare to leave your camera on and engage during the conversation.

CASTING YOUR CHAPTER'S BALLOT

After the SNC, **your chapter will have three days to cast one ballot**. The highest-ranking officer registered from your chapter will be considered the official delegate. Voting will be conducted by electronic ballot using an online survey tool.

Voting opens on Sunday, January 25, 2026 prior to the end of the SNC and closes on Wednesday, January 28, at 11:59 p.m. Hawaiian.

If your chapter fails to cast its ballot, the chapter's vote will be counted as an abstention. See the [Bylaws](#), Article XIII.

Eligibility to vote

To be eligible to vote on the issues raised at the SNC, a chapter must be in good standing. This includes having cleared accounts for any amount due in 2025. The National Office will reach out to you if your chapter's account is not cleared. The deadline to clear accounts is Friday, January 30, 2026.

Every chapter is required to attend the SNC.

ELECTION GUIDE

Electing the National Council

The Society's board of directors is called the National Council. It is composed of 10 elected officers whose terms run for two years, excluding the student representatives at-large whose terms are one year. Each year, Mortar Board's voting delegates are charged with the task of electing members to fill offices that will be vacated due to term expiration. At this SNC, three of the 10 offices are up for election.

Responsibilities of National Officers

Generally, a member of the National Council should:

- Affirm the mission and Purpose of Mortar Board
- Establish and maintain a comprehensive set of policies and procedures that reflect the Society's governance
- Select the Mortar Board chief executive and review annually
- Accept fiduciary responsibility; approve and monitor the budget
- Promote the organization nationally, regionally, and locally
- Contribute to the development of programs

Characteristics of qualified candidates

- Commitment to higher education and to the values of Mortar Board
- Computer literacy and skills to receive electronic communication
- Good communication skills—both verbal and written—and the ability to listen carefully
- Ability to evaluate, research, and propose solutions and make decisions with a group
- Demonstrates leadership skills and the ability to work with and attract others to the cause
- Past or current service to Mortar Board and experience with fundraising, donors, or volunteer service programs
- Service on other community or national boards

Duties of offices up for election this year (from the *Bylaws*)

VICE PRESIDENT

Shall serve as liaison to the region coordinators and decide all proposals for dismissal from membership.

SECRETARY

Shall be responsible for working with the National President to set agendas for National Council meetings, maintaining accurate Minutes of each meeting of the National Council and of conferences, follow-up with National Council members on agreed upon action items, and ensuring that governing documents are accessible to members.

ALUMNI REPRESENTATIVE AT-LARGE

The Alumni Representative at-Large shall serve as a liaison to alumni members and chapters.

SPECIAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE BUSINESS

Proposed amendments to the *Bylaws of Mortar Board, Inc.* for consideration by chapters in January 2026

*New language in **bold**, language to ~~strike~~ in purple.

AMENDMENT 1

Article IV National Leadership

Section 2 – Region Coordinators

Section 2.3 - Region coordinators shall be appointed by the National President for a ~~one-year two-year~~ term and shall be eligible for re-appointment. In the event a vacancy occurs during a term, a new region coordinator shall be appointed to fulfill the unexpired portion of the term and will be eligible for re-appointment at the next reappointment date.

Action Proposed

Update from a two-year term to a one-year term

Rationale

Moving from a two-year appointment to a one-year appointment for the Region Coordinator (RC) position aligns with best practices for volunteer leadership roles and helps broaden our recruitment pool. Many prospective RCs express hesitation about committing to a full two-year term; offering an initial one-year appointment lowers that barrier while still supporting continuity.

This structure also creates a more intentional second-year agreement. By requiring mutual interest from both the Vice President (who works closely with RCs) and the RC, the continuation into a second year is based on demonstrated performance, engagement, and commitment. This ensures stronger alignment, greater dedication, and ultimately better outcomes for the regions and the organization as a whole.

AMENDMENT 2

Article V – Meetings

Section 4 – Voting capabilities of chapters

Section 4.1 - Voting privileges will be suspended for any chapter ~~whose fees have not been paid or whose official membership report has not been submitted to~~ **not in good financial or operational status with** the National Office. Chapters whose voting privileges are in jeopardy shall be notified by the National Office prior to each conference.

Action Proposed

Change the above wording to remove direct mention of fees and reports and instead take a more comprehensive view of each chapter's overall operational and financial status.

Rationale

The current language focuses too narrowly on fees and membership report deadlines and does not account for the broader operational and financial factors that influence a chapter's standing. With the addition of fall selections and twice-annual voting (Special National Conference and National Conference), the criteria need greater flexibility.

An assessment of overall chapter status (still taking membership selection and chapter finances into account) allows Mortar Board to more accurately determine voting eligibility while recognizing legitimate extenuating circumstances. This ensures transparency and fair participation across all chapters.

AMENDMENT 3

Article VI – Chapters

Section 1 – Collegiate Chapters

Tapping

Section 1.10 - Tapping is the historical act of ~~gently tapping a new member on the head with a mortarboard and is a way to~~ publicly recognizing a candidate for selection into Mortar Board that continues today.

Action Proposed

Remove the direct mention of tapping new members on the head with a mortarboard.

Rationale

Chapters tap in different creative ways that are meaningful to them, and this language allows them the flexibility to do so. Updating this section ensures the description reflects current practices while preserving the spirit of Mortar Board's tradition of tapping.

AMENDMENT 4

Article VI - Chapters

Section 1 – Collegiate Chapters

Affiliation

Section 1.33 - Any four-year, baccalaureate degree-granting institution which is accredited ~~by its regional accreditation association~~ may be considered for granting of a charter in the Society.

Action Proposed

Remove the mention of regional accreditation.

Rationale

The proposed change aligns with current national accreditation shifts and the Association of College Honor Societies' bylaws. Coupled with ongoing federal changes of accrediting bodies, removing the reference to regional accreditation ensures institutions remain properly accredited without limiting eligibility to an outdated list of accrediting groups.

AMENDMENT 5

Article VI – Chapters

Section 1 – Collegiate Chapters

Withdrawal and Disaffiliation

Section 1.40 - Any withdrawn or disaffiliated school may apply for reinstatement ~~in the same manner as any school petitioning for a new chapter~~: **according to the criteria stated in Mortar Board chapter operational guides.**

Action Proposed

Remove the requirement for reactivating chapters to complete the full new-chapter petition process and refer to operational guidance.

Rationale

The proposed amendment removes barriers to chapter reactivation. Since the chapter was previously approved, there is no need for a full re-approval process like a new chapter. This also applies to chapters that either voluntarily left Mortar Board or were deemed inactive by the National Society, ensuring a smoother and more practical path to reinstatement.

AMENDMENT 6

Article XIII – Amendment of Bylaws

These Bylaws may be amended by a vote of two thirds, provided that advance notice has been given to delegates **for review** ~~at least 20 days~~ **a reasonable number of days** before a vote is taken. The lack of a vote constitutes an abstention. A proposed amendment must be submitted to the National Office on or before June 1 for consideration at the National Conference, or on or before December 1 for consideration at the Special National Conference. Any amendment submitted after June 1 but before December 1 shall be referred to the Governance Committee, or another appropriate committee, for consideration at the Special National Conference. Any amendment submitted after December 1 but before June 1 shall be referred to the Governance Committee, or another appropriate committee, for consideration at the National Conference. The purpose of this section shall be to provide for two opportunities for these Bylaws to be amended at a meeting of the delegates.

Action Proposed

Remove the mention of a specific number of days.

Rationale

Removing the specific number of days allows greater flexibility in providing advance notice to voting delegates. This ensures delegates still receive ample time to review proposed

amendments while avoiding the limitations of a rigid timeline, which may not always be practical. The change maintains transparency and gives the Governance Committee the ability to manage amendments efficiently without compromising informed participation.

2025-2026 NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

National Council

- President: Nathan Cordle (The University of Alabama, 2011)
- President-elect: Patience Whitworth (The Ohio State University, 2003)
- Vice President: vacant
- Secretary: Katie Verschelden (Kansas State University, 2002)
- Treasurer: Kailee Weiker (Ohio Northern University, 2010)
- Student Representative at-large: Eli Ade (Purdue University, 2025)
- Student Representative at-large: Molly McBratney (William Jewell College, 2025)
- Alumni Representative at-large: Wilson Chan (University of Louisville, 1989)
- Alumni Representative at-large: Leslie Ellis (Lenoir-Rhyne University, 2015)
- Immediate Past President: Cassandra Lucas (Purdue University, 1994)
- Foundation Representative: Craig Evers (The Ohio State University, 2001)
- Executive Director: Kirsten F. Fox (The Ohio State University, 1996)

National Foundation Board of Trustees

- President: Craig Evers (The Ohio State University, 2001)
- Vice President: Karen S. Stiner (San Diego State University, 1987)
- Secretary: W. David Lasater (Ball State University, 1992)
- Treasurer: Matthew Ross (The Ohio State University, 2001)
- Trustee: Joni Comstock (Eastern Illinois University, 2016)
- Trustee: Susan Doss (The University of Alabama, 1985)
- Trustee: Laura C. Simic (University of Oregon, 1985)
- Trustee: Jenna Vitosh (The University of Nebraska—Lincoln, 2006)
- Trustee: Bruce Ware (University of Mississippi, 1998)
- Trustee *ex officio*: Nathan Cordle (The University of Alabama, 2011)
- Trustee *ex officio*: Kailee Weiker (Ohio Northern University, 2010)
- Trustee *ex officio* and Executive Director: Kirsten F. Fox (The Ohio State University, 1996)

Region Coordinators

- Region 1: Dillon Cook (The University of Alabama, 2024)
- Region 1: Emily Deskus (Endicott College, 2024)
- Region 1: Vedant Kulkarni (Kansas State University, 2021)
- Region 1: Brendan Wall (Illinois State University, 2018)
- Region 2: Parker Brown (University of Mississippi, 2023)
- Region 2: McCaleb Hart (Texas Tech University, 2021)
- Region 2: Anne Mascia (University of South Alabama, 2021)
- Region 3: Olivia Beckett (The Ohio State University, 2024)
- Region 3: Robbie Kichak (University of Cincinnati, 2014)
- Region 3: Alexa Murray (The Ohio State University, 2014)
- Region 3: Rachel Wong (Purdue University, 2023)
- Region 4: Carina Huot (University of North Dakota, 2022)
- Region 4: Kailey Jerome (University of North Dakota, 2019)
- Region 5: Cadence Ciesielski (Kansas State University, 2021)
- Region 5: Shelby Morlock (Texas Tech University, 2023)

- Region 5: Reilly Roggendorff (Oklahoma State University, 2022)
- Region 6: Andrew Gray (University of Tulsa, 2021)
- Region 6: Ava Heintzelman (University of Montana, 2024)
- Region 6: Kara Stogsdill (Illinois State University, 2023)
- Liaison to the Region Coordinators: Patience Whitworth (The Ohio State University, 2003)

National Office Staff

- Executive Director: Kirsten F. Fox (The Ohio State University, 1996)
- Director of Collegiate Success: Trish Maxwell (The Ohio State University, 2024)
- Director of Strategic Advancement: Liz Cook (Bucknell University, 2025)
- Membership and Operations Manager: Ben Flox (Denison University, 2025)
- Communications and Engagement Manager: Jaqui Huff (University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 2019)
- Administrative Assistant: Morgan Feeney

2025 – 2026 Mortar Board Inc. Standing Committee Members

Current collegiate students are eligible to serve on these committees.

STANDING NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- Cassandra Lucas, Chair (Purdue University, 1994)
- Susan Herndon McGuire (The University of Alabama, 2006)
- Daniel Turner (Northern Illinois University, 1994)
- *National Office Representative: Kirsten F. Fox (The Ohio State University, 1996)*

STANDING GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

- Myra Hanson, Chair (The University of Northern Colorado, 2011)
- Cadence Ciesielski (Kansas State University, 2021)
- Nathan Cordle (The University of Alabama, 2011)
- Kirsten Hawley (Miami University, 1996)
- Katie Verschelden (Kansas State University, 2002)
- Kirsten F. Fox (The Ohio State University, 1996)
- *National Office Representative: Trish Maxwell (The Ohio State University, 2024)*

STANDING COMMITTEE ON COMMUNITY AND BELONGING

- Gabby Going, Chair (Eastern Illinois University, 2016)
- Vedant Kulkarni (Kansas State University, 2021)
- Tamika Lovelace (San Diego State University, 2021)
- Elizabeth Payton (Texas Tech University, 2023)
- *National Office Representative: Jaqui Huff (University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 2019)*

STUDENT ADVISORY BOARD

- Eli Ade, Co-Chair (Purdue University, 2025)
- Molly McBratney, Co-Chair (William Jewell College, 2025)
- Region 1 – Elizabeth Barker (University of Maryland, 2025)
- Region 2 – Ariana Johnson (Troy University, 2025)
- Region 3 – Keerstin Farson-Mantor (Otterbein University, 2025)
- Region 4 – Kamea Graham (Monmouth College, 2025)
- Region 5 – Nicholas Morris (Texas Tech University, 2025)
- Region 6 – Franchesca Bolt (University of Puget Sound, 2025)

CANDIDATES FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL

The candidates for National Council slated by the Standing Nominations Committee:

Alumni Representative at-Large

Leslie Ellis

Lenoir-Rhyne University, 2015

Degree(s):

MBA. from Lenoir-Rhyne University

B.A. in Multimedia Journalism/Broadcasting & Electronic Media (double major) from Lenoir-Rhyne University

Recent Employment:

Associate Athletic Director for Revenue, Virginia Tech Athletics



Service to Mortar Board:

- Alumni Representative at-Large, National Council, 2024 - present
- Branding Committee Chair/Strategic Planning Team, 2020-2021
- Section Coordinator, 2017-2021
- Conference Advisory Board, 2015-2016

Secretary

Katie Verschelden

Kansas State University, 2002

Degree(s):

J.D. from University of Iowa College of Law

B.S. in Finance from Kansas State University



Recent Employment:

Assistant General Counsel, Ensign-Bickford Industries, Inc.

Service to Mortar Board:

- Secretary, National Council, 2024 – present
- Section Coordinator, 2009-2016

Vice President

Brendan Wall

Illinois State University, 2018



Degree(s):

Ph.D. in Chemistry from Iowa State University

B.S. in Biochemistry from Illinois State University

Recent Employment:

Post-Doctoral Scientist – Peptide Chemistry, Eli Lilly & Company

Service to Mortar Board:

- Region Coordinator, 2022 – present
- Governance Committee Member, 2021-2022
- Student Representative at-Large, National Council, 2019-2021
- Strategic Planning Team student participant, 2020
- Chapter Secretary, Selections Chair, and President, 2018-2020

OTHER BUSINESS

Conference Advisory Board (CAB) Applications Due March 1

Mortar Board National Office is *now accepting applications* for current students (and recent graduates) to serve as Conference Advisory Board (CAB) members for the 2026 National Conference, **September 25-27, 2026, in Columbus, Ohio**. CABs assist in the planning and execution of programming for the National Conference. A CAB's term runs from the time of appointment through the completion of the conference. [Learn more and apply by March 1.](#)

Applications for Region Coordinators and other volunteer opportunities

Interested in serving as a Region Coordinator or in a national volunteer role? [See more information here.](#) Applications are due April 1.

UPCOMING EVENTS

February 9 – 15: Mortar Board Week

Monday, February 9	Last Lecture with Past-President Gail Harrison-Corvette
Tuesday, February 10:	Advisor Meet Up
Wednesday, February 11:	Open Town Hall with the Student Advisory Board
Thursday, February 12:	Volunteer & Donor Appreciation Event
All Week Long:	Give the Gift of Membership
All Week Long:	Celebrating Chapter Mortar Board Week Events (on Instagram)
Sunday, March 15:	Deadline for Fellowship Applications
Sunday, April 19:	National Virtual Initiation #1
Friday, May 15:	Deadline for Award Submissions & Chapter Annual Report deadline
Sunday, May 17:	National Virtual Initiation #2
September 25-27:	Mortar Board National Conference 2026 (Columbus, OH)

[View all events](#)

Graduation Regalia

Beat the rush! Order your official honor cord, medallion, or stole from the [Mortar Board store](#).

Thank you!

MORTAR BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN

Vision: To be scholars ... chosen for leadership ... committed to service ... united for equity

TRANSFORMATIONAL IMPERATIVES

Emphasize the equity themes of Mortar Board's Purpose

Develop and advance the professional and personal skills of members

Engage members for life

GOALS

Brand Mortar Board to promote Transformational Imperatives

Incorporate values of inclusive excellence, community, and belonging into every aspect of Mortar Board

Achieve and maintain financial stability at all levels

Ensure Mortar Board's Impact

