

# National Achievers Society



UNIVERSITY OF  
CENTRAL FLORIDA

## Achiever Handbook

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*"It is not your environment. It is you. The quality of your minds, the integrity of your words, the determination of your wills that will decide your future and shape your lives." - Dr. Benjamin Mays*

The UCF chapter of the National Achievers Society is under the auspices of The Florida Education Fund. Hundreds of young minority students are honored to be inducted into this prestigious society and follow in the footsteps of great leaders.

Inductees are students who demonstrate achievement academically and socially by maintaining "A" and "B" grades and adhering to excellence in behavior, so they are role models for others.

The goal of the sponsors and Parent Alliance is to continue to provide these Achievers with educational and cultural opportunities to enhance and maximize their potential in maintaining excellence and in becoming leaders of tomorrow. This will be achieved through student leadership, workshops, opportunities for leading activities and meetings, peer tutoring and counseling, educational trips, and conferences, focusing on culture and historically related subjects, test preparation, pre-college prep workshops, college tours, active parent participation at workshops, and other student-sponsored activities.

Achievers, parents, and sponsors are expected to participate in local, and state, and national conferences. Monthly meetings are typically held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month (except July and August), at UCF's Downtown campus to facilitate the attendance of all Achievers and their parents. Please refer to the calendar year events/meeting calendar. Active participation by parents is encouraged because "It takes a village to raise a child."

## A. NAS Logo Meaning, Pledge, and Litany



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 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 and memorize the litany below.

**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 (must be memorized)**

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 a National Achiever!

## **B. Centers of Excellence History:**

The McKnight Center of Excellence (MCOE) 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.

### **Centers Of Excellence 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.

### **C. 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 because of consistently upholding expectations.

#### **Program purpose:**

- Encourage, recognize, and reinforce academic achievement among minority youth
- Increase the pool of college-bound minority students
- Enhance a student's self-esteem and educational motivation
- Energize adults to rededicate themselves to preparing children to meet the academic and job standards of the 21st Century

#### **Maintaining Yearly Membership:**

Note: All National Achievers Society Members are expected to adhere to the requirements listed below. Failure to adhere to the established requirements will result in the Achiever becoming inactive in the Society.

##### **1. Attend Monthly Meetings (minimum 7 out of 9 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 during summer planning each year with Parent Alliance Leadership to best suit the needs of members. The meetings will usually last 2 hours. Achievers are expected to attend at least 7 out of the 9 meetings. 2 excused absences are permitted and should be brought to the attention of the McKnight Center of Excellence Director. 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.

##### **2. Attend and participate in at least (3) McKnight Center of Excellence events/activities per year:**

The UCF MCOE hosts several events and activities during the academic year. **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 the trips may sometimes require a fee for students to attend.

**MCOE yearly events/activities include:**

1. Induction Ceremony (November/December)
2. Community Events (ex: Thanksgiving Community Service in November)
3. Cultural Events (ex: MLK Downtown Parade in January)
4. College Tours (Summer and Fall)
5. College Readiness Workshops/Events (ex: Brain Bowl Competition, SAT Prep and CodeMasters in Summer)

**See MCOE Calendar for reference.**

**3. Attend and/or participate in the Annual NAS Statewide Summit:**

Typically held in the Spring, 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. High school students learn the benefits of taking AP, honors, and dual enrollment courses and preparing for the SAT. The Summit also includes an opportunity for students to interact with college recruiters. In addition, middle school students are exposed to different career options.

**4. Submit Achiever dues by end of September (\$25.00 per Achiever):**

All Achievers must pay annual dues of \$25 (per achiever) at the beginning of the fall semester to assist with annual programming (***The sponsorship fee for new inductees covers this cost for the first year***). This minimal financial contribution helps sustain program activities and allows for the planning of extracurricular programs and events. The dues must be paid by the end of September each year. 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 or cashier's check payable to: UCF McKnight Center of Excellence and write the achiever's name.**

**Personal checks or cash will not be accepted.**

**5. Submit Parent Alliance dues by end of September (\$25.00 per Household):**

(New Inductees are expected to submit this within the first few months of Induction to the NAS Parent Alliance Treasurer during one of the meetings or can be mailed to UCF McKnight Center of Excellence). The purpose of the Parent Alliance shall be to support the goals and objectives of the National Achievers Society and the UCF McKnight Center of Excellence. More information can be found in the Parent Alliance Handbook on the website. Each household must pay **annual dues of \$25 towards the Parent Alliance** at the beginning of the fall semester to assist with annual programming.

**Please make money-orders or cashier's check payable to: NAS Parent Alliance write the achiever's name.**

**6. Submit report cards every grading period:**

Report cards (not progress reports) submission at the end of every grading period is a program requirement of the UCF McKnight Center of Excellence to remain active. Report cards must be submitted in PDF/Full Page report card format and include the student's name, grade, birthdate, and academic year. **Individual picture screenshots will not be accepted.** For those enrolled in schools that utilize Skyward, you may initiate the District Report Cards by going to Student Management>Office>Grading> Report Cards>Reports. Report cards can be scanned to [outreach@ucf.edu](mailto:outreach@ucf.edu) or wait until the MCOE Director sends out the report card email. Please do not bring report cards to meetings or events.

**7. 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.

**8. Submit a written report on completion of a community service project (Individual or Group) each year:**

A critical facet of NAS 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 atleast 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 tothe 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 StateSummit. These hours are derived from community service projects that have been documented in the current academic year.

**9. Submit forms and requested information in a timely manner:** (FEF Application of Participation, Community Service Verification, Achiever Accomplishments, Contact Information Updates, and Evaluations/Survey)

#### **D. Inactive Membership Status:**

It is the achiever's responsibility to ensure they are keeping up with the above requirements. Failure to adhere to the above expectations will result in the achiever becoming inactive in the society. Achievers placed into inactive status will be notified if they are not meeting guidelines and are welcome attend monthly meetings (that are not replaced by activities and/or events). Achievers that go into inactive status may apply for August Reactivation. Students made inactive may begin to submit this form along with the supporting documents below in June for August Reactivation consideration. Please see website for more information.



## **E. NAS Election of Officers and Duties**

Achievers may develop their leadership skills further 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.

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 for it to be acted upon
- To state and put to vote all questions which are regularly moved or necessarily arise during 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 follow

- 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.

## **F. Awards, Recognition and Scholarships**

The UCF McKnight Center of Excellence hosts an Annual Awards & Recognition/End-of-Year Banquet each Spring 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 will also be recognized. Students must be active at least two years before graduation to be recommended for any MCOE scholarships.

**Academic Enrichment Award (AEA):** 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 (or up to 8 full-time semesters) 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. AEA recipients are required to meet one-on-one with the MCOE Director and fulfill other scholarship requirements. The MCOE reserves the right to exercise organizational discretion in the nomination process.

### **G. 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.
- 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. Parent Alliance members have their own handbook which can be found on our website.

#### **H. NAS Alumni:**

Once you graduate high school you will become a NAS Alumni. All UCF NAS Alumni (regardless of whether you are an AEA recipient or not) and local NAS alumni should maintain contact with the MCOE as we develop and continually enhance our NAS alumni engagement efforts with current K-12 achievers and their families. Please e-mail our office for more information.

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