

What Is an Honor Society?

Honor Societies

The nearly seventy honor societies which make up the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) are as divergent as knowledge itself. From forestry to physics, from highly specialized to general areas, these member organizations exist for one basic purpose — to further **scholarship and achievement** in the academic areas of their members, thereby providing a forum where interested and competent students may communicate and exchange ideas with faculty and students of similar interest on their own campus and throughout the world.

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Phi Sigma Tau

Phi Sigma Tau is the International Honor Society in Philosophy. Founded in 1930 and incorporated as a nonprofit corporation in 1955, the Society now has a network of over 200 chapters throughout the United States and Canada, at both public and private institutions of higher learning. **Phi Sigma Tau** publishes a journal, **Dialogue**, for student contributions in all areas of contemporary philosophical research. Other PST publications include the **PST Newsletter** (published three times yearly) and **National Alumni Chapter Bulletin**. The **PST Newsletter** is sent to all students and alumni/ae members and contains news of local chapter activities. The National Alumni Chapter (NAC) provides a medium of exchange and communication for one-time PST members who desire to retain their affiliation with the Society following graduation.

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Local Chapters

The purpose of establishing a PST chapter on a local campus is not to replace any existing philosophy club, though activities of campus clubs and discussion groups are often sponsored by chapters. The PST Constitution provides a great measure of autonomy to local chapters so that they may better respond to the intellectual needs of their own campus communities. On some campuses, PST provides the only and much welcome opportunity for student-led philosophical discussions with faculty serving as resource persons. On small campuses these meetings often stimulate philosophical interest among students not

currently taking philosophy classes. On many campuses, PST chapters provide regular meetings where interested students and faculty may meet in small and informal discussion groups. On other campuses, chapters provide a locus of interest and attention for the philosophy program and a means of extending the classroom experience to a social level. Some chapters focus meetings on formal papers or panels, others more informally on coffee hours and other social events. Though divergent in their activities, their goals are the same — to make philosophy a living experience and to bring together students with a common interest and competence in philosophical studies.

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Local Campus Groups

Having an international organization behind local activities and clubs provides the useful function of giving cohesion and direction to their activities, as well as the establishment of contacts and communications among students and departments at other institutions. The National PST Office has as its goal the task of providing this cohesion and communication. Members of campus clubs or reading groups often constitute the population from which chapter officers and members are drawn.

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Fees & Requirements

Membership requirements are established by the ACHS (contact the officers or advisor of your local chapter for detailed information). Initiation into PST requires a one-time initiation fee (currently \$25.00) for the International Office. Local chapters may also assess dues to meet their own campus operating expenses and frequently receive additional funding from the philosophy department or their local office of student activities. The PST initiation fee is currently the lowest among all ACHS member societies.

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Expending of Fees

Phi Sigma Tau has no paid officers or staff, and all persons at the national and international levels work on a volunteer basis. The Society's annual budget (currently about \$30,000) is derived from initiation fees, subscription fees, and alumni/ae fees and contributions. About 90% of the national budget is expended on publications and supplies provided to members through their local chapters without further charge. The first year of membership in the National Alumni Chapter following graduation is at no cost to the member and includes subscriptions to all PST publications (including the **NAC Bulletin**): after the first year, NAC members are required to pay a small membership fee (currently \$5.00) to defray costs of printing and mailing.

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Membership Advantages

Phi Sigma Tau, like any honor society, provides not just recognition of academic excellence but also a means for furthering scholarship and academic communications. Achievement, like mediocrity, is its own reward. Phi Sigma Tau is not an investment with guaranteed returns. The real key to success is in the hands of the individual faculty advisors, student officers, and chapter members. College honor societies are not social clubs or keys to instant success — they are people who share a commonality of interests, anxious to further and support scholarship, interest, ethics, and professional standards in their own areas.

Phi Sigma Tau can also provide recognition for past accomplishments in philosophy, a continuation of members' philosophical education following graduation, and even perhaps assistance or information in making subsequent career choices.

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Additional Information

Contact the student officers, members, or faculty advisor of your local campus chapter or of a nearby chapter in order to learn more about their activities. For information on establishing a chapter on your own campus if one does not presently exist, write to the Executive Secretary: Dr. David E. Gibson, Division of Humanities, Pepperdine University, 24255 Pacific Coast Highway, Malibu, CA 90263-4225. [Email may also be sent to david.gibson@pepperdine.edu — please include a postal mailing address.]

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