

Starting an MCAA Student Chapter



Working Together for the
Future of the Industry

MCAreers

CAREER DEVELOPMENT AT MCAA

Mechanical contractors are always looking for well-educated, talented young people to fill professional positions in project management and business operations. To find these individuals, they turn to colleges and universities offering academic programs relating to mechanical construction and service. And they turn first to students they've met through the Mechanical Contractors Association of America, Inc.'s (MCAA) student chapter program.

In cooperation with its local affiliated associations, MCAA supports a nationwide network of student chapters in colleges and universities. MCAA's student chapter program gives students the opportunity to learn about the industry by attending regular meetings with their MCAA local affiliate sponsors, taking field trips to a variety of jobsites and facilities, working together on volunteer projects, participating in fundraising events, and more. Everyone involved in MCAA's Student Chapter program—the students, faculty, MCAA local affiliate sponsors, and contractors—benefits from their investment of time and/or resources.

Getting Started

An MCAA student chapter is the result of an agreement, either written or verbal, between:

- **An MCAA local affiliate** that may fund the chapter's activities, a scholarship, and/or a teaching position for the academic program;
- **Contractor members** of the local affiliate who are potential instructors, employers, and mentors for the students; and,
- **A college or university** school of construction management or construction science, building technology, mechanical engineering, construction engineering, architectural engineering, or similar discipline that assigns a faculty member to serve as the chapter's advisor.

The core of the chapter is the students—a group of at least five energetic, committed young people who are either planning to develop a career in the mechanical construction industry or would like to explore the industry and the career opportunities it offers.

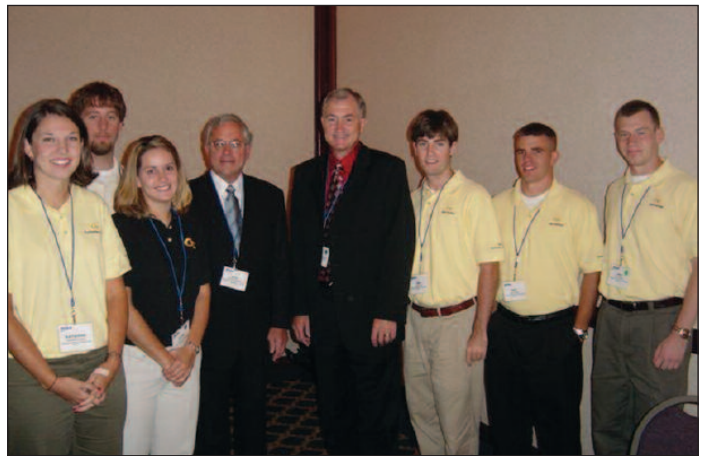
Organizing

There's more than one way to organize an MCAA student chapter. MCAA sponsors chapters that follow three operating models:

- A single organization, officially sanctioned by their college or university and sponsored by the MCAA local affiliate;
- A jointly sponsored, officially sanctioned organization supported by MCAA, the local affiliate, and another professional trade group; or,
- An umbrella organization (also officially sanctioned) cosponsored by several professional trade groups (for example, the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), or the Associated General Contractors (AGC)).

When a chapter is forming, its members should decide which model is appropriate according to the:

- Chapter's available resources;
- Chapter's mission, objectives, and purpose; and,
- Members' availability to participate in programs and activities.



MCAA President Mike Gossman (center) and Jack Wilhelmi (center left) with members of the MCAA Student Chapter at Georgia Tech at the 2004 Student Chapter Summit.

Choosing Leaders

Each chapter should create an organizational structure, a team of leaders who will direct its program toward the accomplishment of agreed-on goals and objectives.

One of the first actions of a new chapter is to create a governing board, which may include a president or chairman; a vice president or vice chairman; a treasurer; and, a secretary. Most often, student chapter members choose their officers by a majority vote. If the chapter is just forming, the faculty advisor may appoint officers.

Chapter members also may decide to appoint committees charged with carrying out key chapter functions such as membership recruitment, fundraising, or publicity. Again, chapter members decide who leads and who serves on a committee.

Officers' Duties

While chapter members decide on the responsibilities of officers, following are some general guidelines.

The **president** is the chapter's chief spokesperson and representative. The president is responsible for running chapter meetings and organizing field trips, special projects, fundraising events, or other chapter activities (or delegating assignments to other officers or chapter members).

The **vice president** takes the president's place if the president is unable to serve.

The **treasurer** collects and accounts for all fees and funds raised by the chapter.

The **secretary** records the proceedings of all chapter meetings and distributes reports to members.



The University of Wisconsin–Stout student chapter members and faculty advisor Tim Becker (far left).

Reaching Agreement

Once chapter members reach agreement on the above and any other key issues that affect the chapter, they should prepare a **constitution** clearly explaining each issue for signature by a representative of each involved party: the primary sponsoring MCAA local affiliate; the head of the college or university department or program with which the program is affiliated; and the chapter.

Benefits

An MCAA student chapter benefits everyone involved: the students; the sponsoring MCAA local affiliate; and the academic department or program. Some benefits are short-lived; others last a lifetime.

When a chapter is established, MCAA provides:

- A charter presented at MCAA's annual convention;
- Publications that faculty can use as teaching aides and references; and,
- A custom-made banner displaying the chapter's name in its school colors for use at school, MCAA local affiliate activities, and MCAA events.

The local MCAA sponsor *may* provide:

- Financial support for the chapter's activities;
- Funding for the department's faculty;
- One or more scholarships;
- Contractor members who teach or lecture, open their construction sites for student visits, or serve as mentors;
- Opportunities for students to participate in membership meetings, outings, and social events; and,
- Internship and employment referrals.

MCAA, with the cooperation and assistance of MCAA local affiliates, sponsors additional programs that further enrich the students' learning and professional development experiences:

- The *Student Chapter Summit* brings together chapter members, faculty, MCAA sponsors, and others for lively discussions, networking, problem solving, facility tours, and more.
- The *Student Chapter Competition* challenges chapter teams to use their knowledge and skills to prepare a design and bid on a real mechanical construction project. The first and second place winners receive substantial cash prizes and industry-wide recognition.
- *MCAA's Annual Convention* includes a *Student Chapter Exhibit* that offers students the opportunity to showcase their efforts and make contacts with contractors who might later serve as mentors or employers.

In addition, the Mechanical Contracting Education & Research Foundation (MCERF) funds grants to help chapters cover the costs of projects, their participation in the *Student Chapter Competition*, field trips, travel to the *Summit* and the MCAA annual convention, and student scholarships. Other MCERF grants available to MCAA contractor members help cover the costs of hiring student chapter members as summer interns.

Unlike some other national association student chapter programs, **members pay no fee to MCAA for participating in one of its student chapters.** However, chapters may decide to set membership fees to help defray expenses.



The University of Florida's Student Chapter exhibiting at the 2002 MCAA Annual Convention in Boca Raton, Florida.

A Commitment to Students' Professional Development

MCAA's student chapter program is growing in popularity because students and faculty know that the association is dedicated to helping students prepare for careers in the mechanical construction industry. When a student joins a chapter, MCAA, the MCAA local affiliate, and the university or college department commit to providing that student with every opportunity to develop professional skills, knowledge, and experiences. When students' formal education is complete, the industry will welcome them into its professional ranks.

For More Information . . .

To learn more about starting an MCAA student chapter, contact:

Ann Mattheis

Director, Career Development

Mechanical Contractors Association of America, Inc.
1385 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850-4340
800-556-3650
Fax 301-990-9690
amattheis@mcaa.org

For a list of our current student chapters and contacts, visit our website at www.mcaa.org/careers