



DELINEATION OF A SUCCESSFUL CHAPTER OF LAMBDA ALPHA INTERNATIONAL

An LAI Chapter is successful if its membership enjoys timely programs, social events and diversified networking opportunities that are facilitated in a convivial setting that is stress free, personally engaging, rewarding and available at a reasonable cost.

It is the responsibility of the local Chapter Board of Directors or Executive Committee to deliver these elements.

It is the responsibility of a member of Lambda Alpha International to attend, support and participate in local Chapter activities.

The experience can be broadened immeasurably if the member also participates in the activities, web based programming and the Land Economics Weekends sponsored by the Chapter's 'International' partner, comprised of the local Chapter Presidents and elected Executive sitting as the LAI Board of Governors.

What are the ingredients of a successful local Chapter?

There are three (3) components by way of response, discussed in turn:

- A. Harnessing Reputation and Career Advantage.
- B. The LAI Standard Chapter Organizational Model.
- C. Membership Composition.

Over 85 years ago, Richard T. Ely, a distinguished professor of economics at Northwestern University in the State of Illinois, USA, crystallized a formula he had employed over many decades of student engagement through informal round tables and discussion groups.

Local Chapters of LAI employ that simple construct of assembly, information dissemination, discussion and diversity.

A. Harnessing Reputation and Career Advantage.

The International body of LAI sets the standards for membership replicated by the selection of members through local Chapter nominations, vetting and induction.

The LAI 'Society' was conceived by Ely to claim distinction and recognition in the field and advancement of Land Economics as a broad discipline engaging a diversity of talents, academia, industry and the professions.

Since 1930, those elements have remained largely unchanged and constitute an enduring legacy to the appropriateness today of the goals and objectives of the Society on behalf of its members and its public service calling.

The local Chapter is a principal ambassador and champion of maintaining the vision of Lambda Alpha International:

- a. As an honorary society of men and woman recognized for merit and contribution in the field of Land Economics;
- b. Wherein a diversity of peer membership is advanced by invitation only, on defined criteria of excellence in reputation, connectivity and fellowship;
- c. Providing venues for education, exchange, promotion and social interaction, often around meals, affording opportunities for discourse, advancement and comment on relevant issue of Land Economics.
- d. To remain non-political, non-partisan and to maintain a non-attribution environment where members and guests are encouraged to voice opinion and research in free and open exchanges advancing ideas of trial, intellectual value and earnest.

None of these criteria are more or less relevant than another. They are the core of the image of LAI membership and they underlie the principles, actions, activities and responsibilities of the local Chapter.

In conducting its activities, the local Chapters is responsible to its members. While LAI has set a minimum 'ten (10) years of experience in a related field, this does not detract from the local Chapters responsibility to identify and care for a diverse age profile of members.

The local Chapter needs to hold on to and recognize in its senior membership rolls, those candidates that are deserving of special recognition as 'Honorary', 'Emeritus' or 'Presidents Member of the Year' special category acknowledgements.

It must provide engaging, relevant programs relating to differing professional element of the discipline of Land Economics.

It must encourage member contributions in programming and afford networking, promotion, advancement and information sharing opportunities relevant to the members.

And it should provide invitational, promotion, student association, 'path to the pin' and engagement opportunities recognizing and encouraging an interest in the Society for those progressing through their careers and in pre-membership eligibility.

B. The LAI Standard Chapter Organizational Model.

Historically, LAI local Chapters were organized as voluntary associations of individuals based on the LAI Standard Chapter By-law. More recently, the Board of Governors has mandated that newly formed Chapters must be incorporated in local jurisdictions, where possible.

The Standard Chapter By-law forms a common and suitable instrumentality for the organization of local Chapters. It is modelled on the corporate form of organization requiring personnel to populate mandatory officer positions: president; secretary and treasurer.

Significant weight should be attributed to the standing committee structure offered by the Standard Chapter By-law proffered by LAI for Chapter adoption. These include the Membership Committee responsible to encourage Chapter members to seek out, recommend and provide for the assessment of new member candidates. The Membership Committee activates the search process and procedure designed to target an induction ceremony date set by the Chapter as an annual gala event wherein approved inductees must be present.

As discussed below, the Membership Committee conducts ensures the Chapter membership is populated by a diverse representation of disciplines and academics offering interest and affinity to the Chapter.

The Programs Committee identifies the sinew that knits the attention of the members to the Chapter meetings. Relevant programs, timely programs, programs that are identified sufficiently in advance to permit members to schedule their attendances are essential.

The Chapter President needs to ensure that at least two (2) active members populate and actively participate both of these standing committees. Membership on the Executive Committee is voluntary and the key to its success is dividing and delegating labor so as to not over-burden even the most enthusiastic of volunteers.

A hallmark of good management and proactive engagement, is the election at the outset of a vice-president, all officers to be on a one (1) or preferably two (2) year term, as a heir apparent to the president for succession planning.

In addition, matters that can arise for Chapter disposition can be many and varied. An Executive Committee of eight (8) to ten (10) provides a compliment for special projects, absences and related maladies occurring in any organizational structure. While the LAI by-law makes any voting member of the LAI Executive Committee who is a local Chapter member an *ex-officio* member of the local Chapter Board, it is for that Board to decide whether voting privilege will be extended or duties assigned.

Finally, LAI informally promotes a local Chapter membership target of one hundred (100) persons, at least, to populate an active and engaged local Chapter and to replace retiring members. By experience, roughly one-third of the membership attends a Chapter function, apart from induction ceremonies and special occasion events or dinners. It is this membership level that enables local Chapter dues to support a full or part time 'executive director' to accommodate administrative, communication and the organization of member functions. It is this position that can make the difference between a Chapter that functions seamlessly and one which places repeated demands on the local Chapter Executive Committee.

For a further discussion on local Chapter functions, please see the Briefing Memoranda at lai.org.

C. Membership Composition.

A seminal identifying characteristic of a successful LAI Chapter is its focus, support and active recruitment of a membership composition that provides for diversity, can cross pollinize land economic disciplines and can add diversity in age, professional and sector representation.

Past efforts at identifying this range and diversity exist. However, local circumstances differ and while real estate related trades may dominate in one community, consultant and professional services may predominate elsewhere. A diversified Chapter reduces the risk of leadership paralysis or dysfunctional programming.

While 'quota's' is probably not appropriate, representation from industry, the building and development trades, from the services -law, land use planning, architecture, economics and engineering are appropriate. No less so are the disciplines of academia, finance, real estate transactions and appraisal. These all contribute equally to the synergy and strength of a finely tuned Chapter of LAI.

Follow and maintain these elements and the local Chapter will excel with its roster of newly minted members actively identifying emerging opportunities for new candidates they wish to honor and circulate amongst.