

Starting a New American Legion Post on a College Campus in Alabama

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: How many members are needed to start an American Legion post?

A: The American Legion organization at the state level, called a Department, requires 15 new members to request a temporary charter for a new post.

Q: Who is eligible to belong to The American Legion?

A: The eligibility requirements were established by Congress. Individuals that have at least one day of active federal service with an honorable character of service during periods of conflict are eligible. There are several specified date ranges. The latest range covers all of our Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan War veterans, August 1990 to present. Staff, faculty, students and alumni that meet the eligibility requirements may join.

Q: Is there any documentation needed to join?

A: A membership application is needed along with proof of eligibility (i.e. DD Form 214 or active or retired I.D. card) and annual dues payment established by the post. The first membership payment is in cash or check. Afterwards, members can easily renew online through the national website.

Q: What are the annual dues for the post?

A: The membership will decide on the post annual dues amount. A portion of the dues go to the national, state and district headquarters to cover administrative expenses at the respective levels. The required amount to send forward per member is currently \$29. Any additional dues amount will remain at the post for their administrative expenses. Check with some of the surrounding posts to get a rough idea.

Q: Can members from other American Legion Posts belong to a college campus post?

A: Post members can accept or deny memberships. However, members can only belong to one post at a time. They may transfer their membership into the campus post or out of the campus post when desired.

Q: Can spouses of military members, veterans or Legionnaires join The American Legion?

A: Only spouses that meet the eligibility requirements established by Congress can join The American Legion. However, female spouses, mothers and daughters of Legionnaires can join an American Legion Ladies Auxiliary. The college campus may want to consider establishing that organization in the future. They have a separate charter. Also, sons and grandsons of Legionnaires may join an organization called Sons of the American Legion. If the veteran is

deceased, but meets the eligibility requirements, then the relatives of the veteran may join the applicable Auxiliary or Sons organization.

Q: What is the value of joining an American Legion post?

A: The American Legion is a non-profit veteran service organization. It is basically a group of veterans that share the common bond of military service and their desire to continue serving others. The organization's motto is "Veterans serving veterans." The organization typically serves and supports other veterans and veteran organizations, children and the local community. A campus post can benefit members through networking opportunities across the campus, in the local community and from regional, state and nation, based on their involvement and participation. Members are eligible to visit nearly 14,000 posts throughout the nation. The post is a great medium to connect with other veterans on campus where they can share experiences and issues concerning their work, transition, education, VA eligibility and entitlement, etc. It enhances student engagement with fellow veterans to include staff and faculty. The post members may want to develop a local veteran scholarship. There are some other member discounts from national and local businesses. Members receive the largest veterans' magazine in the nation.

Q: Are there any limitations in belonging to a campus post?

A: The limitations are typically those established by the member. If the member isn't able or doesn't desire to attend meetings or participate in events or activities or volunteer for leader positions, then the benefit of belonging becomes more limited.

Q: What type of activities are available for fundraising?

A: Funds can be raised by donations from members or other organizations. The post may decide to conduct a raffle to give away a purchased or donated item by selling tickets for a drawing; i.e. raffle a free concert ticket. The tickets can be sold to members and non members. Members may decide to sell products such as calendars, chocolates, nuts, etc. as a fundraising project. Members can seek pledges for an event (run, walk, etc) in their area and submit the donations to the post for a specific fundraising campaign or the general fund. These are just a few suggestions. Members may have some additional ideas.

Q: Does the organization have to conduct fund raising campaigns?

A: All American Legion posts must support at least one American Legion program according to the National Constitution and By-Laws. There are numerous programs. Some don't require fund raising, but they would require some type of volunteerism or collection of products.

Q: What are the initial costs of setting up an American Legion Post?

A: There is a 501 (c) 19 filing fee which runs about \$400. Also, the post may want to become incorporated which typically runs less than \$100. The post may want to conduct a fund raiser to obtain these funds. Or, a person or organization can donate the funds for these filing

requirements. There are some general administrative costs such as envelopes, postage stamps, etc. Expenses of this nature are generally covered by membership fees.

Q: What does the school gain by having an American Legion post on campus?

A: An American Legion post on campus provides another program to bolster the school as a being military friendly, broadens the scope of veteran support, offers collaboration between students, staff and faculty with the common bond of military service, enhances the opportunity for student engagement, offers staff and students leadership opportunities and establishes community good will. The post can become part of the schools marketing element for military outreach, student life and alumni programs. It may become another group for social gathering opportunities at alumni or school events.

Q: When does a temporary charter turn into a permanent charter?

A: The permanent charter is usually established after 90 days once the post elects leaders and establishes their constitution and by-laws. They must demonstrate their ability to maintain a post. The permanent charter is approved by the Alabama American Legion Department Executive Committee (DEC).

Q: How will the post conduct meetings?

A: Meetings are normally held monthly. A post typically conducts an executive committee meeting with elected officers only and then a general membership meeting. They can be conducted physically or by using Skype or Adobe connect sessions. The meetings should be informative to the members. Topics can include VA programs/issues, Legion programs, community programs, etc. A meeting guide is provided in the Officers Guide.

Q: What type of leadership opportunities are available?

A: Typically, an American Legion post will elect a post commander, and 1st and 2nd vice commanders. The adjutant can be elected or appointed. The post should also have a sergeant-at-arms, chaplain, finance officer and at least three at-large members to represent the general membership. Other possible officer positions are service officer, historian and judge advocate. To maintain good continuity, the adjutant and finance officer should come from the local staff or faculty. Most officer work and communication can be conducted via phone, email, skype or regular mail.

Q: Are there any other administrative requirements or obligations?

A: Each post must submit an annual Consolidated Post Report, usually in April or May. This can be done online. The post must submit an annual IRS filing to maintain their non-profit status. Election and installation of new officers must occur annually. The commander and/or adjutant should attend the monthly district meeting and other district or department level training and conferences. All members are eligible to attend.

Q: Will the post need to maintain a checking account?

A: Yes, the account should be set up to require two signatures on all checks. Deposits will consist of membership dues and fundraising monies. Checks are needed to forward membership funds to department and to make donations for member-approved fundraising programs.

Q: What type of resources exist to assist and support post leaders?

A: The American Legion provides an Officers Guide, an Adjutants Guide, and a Post Operations Manual. There is a national website: www.legion.org, and a post/member website: mylegion.org. Post officers from neighboring posts and elected leaders in the state at the district, division and department levels, to include the appointed Department Adjutant, are available for assistance, information, guidance and support. A new post is partnered with another local post to assist with guidance and support in the first year or two as needed.

Q: Why offer another veteran service organization on campus since we already have the Student Veteran Association affiliation at CSU?

A: The American Legion is an older, larger and more established organization nationwide. It offers membership for all veterans, not just students. The post members from the CSU staff and faculty can provide continuity that will sustain the post while students transition in and out of the organization. Also, students can maintain their affiliation if they desire to transition from a school post to a local community post. The American Legion offers numerous national programs in which a local post can choose which to support.