

FAQ about AΩA at UConn SOM



1. Will UCONN SOM have an AΩA Chapter?

Yes, UConn SOM is establishing an AΩA chapter with implementation pending a site visit from AΩA. The first student members from the Class of 2019 will be selected no later than the fall of 2018, in time for AΩA to be noted on the ERAS application and supportive materials.

2. How was it decided that we were going to adopt AΩA?

After more than two years of discussion, student surveys and faculty input, advice from the Councils and from the Academic Affairs subcommittee of the Board of Directors, careful study and much contemplation - Education Council voted to adopt a chapter of the Alpha Omega Alpha (AΩA) Honor Society at our institution. This was a much more deliberate process than has been undertaken for other decisions such as implementing the Gold Humanism Honor Society, which was put into place without this robust type of process.

3. Who can get elected to AΩA?

Students, faculty, residents, and alumni can be elected to AΩA. In addition to students, each year our chapter may select 3-7 residents/fellows for membership and 2-6 faculty members, depending on the size of the graduating medical school class. These individuals are expected to be selected by members of the society, hopefully as we develop our chapter also including students. Two to six alumni/alumnae may also be elected each year. Potential alumni inductees can be identified with input from faculty members, the alumni association, academic affairs and the office of the dean.

4. What is AΩA about?

AΩA is a National Honor Society recognizing and advocating for excellence in scholarship and the highest ideals in medicine. The values of AΩA include: honesty, honorable conduct, morality, virtue, selflessness, ethical ideals, dedication to service and leadership in addition to scholarship and academic excellence. AΩA notes that it is similar to what Phi Beta Kappa is to the letters and humanities and Sigma Xi to science.

5. How will it work?

Upon our pending approval, the school will convene a Board that, as prescribed by AΩA, must include only AΩA members. There are approximately 80 faculty members who are AΩA and many residents who would be eligible to serve on this Board. The Board will develop criteria in accordance with guidelines from Education Council for membership selection. AΩA prescribes that selection must be from the top 25% of the total class academically but we have flexibility in defining the academics. Up to 16% of the total class may be elected based on leadership, character, community service, scholarship, and professionalism.

6. Will grades in the Phase I courses be included?

This would be impossible! There are no official recordings or records of grades in the pre-clerkship courses other than Pass/Fail. There would be no way for a Board to differentiate whether a student got the highest passing grade or the lowest one. This information is not maintained.

7. Will boards count?

This would be up to the AQA Board to decide. Our school does not “teach to the boards” but recognizes its importance for licensure and we do include the USMLE topics in our curriculum. There are many who believe that passing is the sufficient competency. But we need to point out that some schools do include a cut off or inclusion of Step I in some way in the decision for AQA. Step II would not be able to be included because of the requirement to announce AQA in time for inclusion in the application process to residency.

8. What is the implication of AQA at UCONN SOM?

Honestly we don't know exactly but here are some thoughts from the process and feedback from that process:

- A. UConn was among a very small number of schools without AQA.
- B. It is surmised that it may help students who excel get into more competitive programs who value AQA. Programs can filter membership in AQA upon application reviews. We can't say if our students are excluded from residencies when they don't show up in the AQA filter. Some of our program directors noted this could be an issue.
- C. We will be eligible for awards, projects, prizes, and visiting faculty programs.

9. What is the timeline for implementation?

We await the AQA site visit and then the Board will be configured under the Direction of the Education Council. The first cohort of student selection will be the Class of 2019 in the Fall of 2018. If possible, we may implement faculty and alumni selections earlier.

10. How will this affect MD/PhD students or students who took time off?

Because the process for application relates to comparative performance of students applying in that year, it is planned that students will be eligible for AQA in the fall of the application to residency (or if not applying to residency, the fall before graduation). This will include MD/PhD students and students who took time off for any reason beginning in the fall 2018.

For more information about AQA: <http://www.alphaomegaalpha.org>