



## An Open Letter to Students Invited to Join Honor Societies

Honor Societies have existed as a part of the higher education tradition since 1885. In 1925 the Association of College Honor Societies (ACHS) was established to help colleges and universities assess the value and credibility of these organizations.

Over the past few years there have been several groups that have emerged that are calling themselves an honor society but do not meet the standards to be certified by the Association of College Honor Societies. Based on the calls and questions that come to the ACHS office, these organizations are marketing themselves as honor societies and possibly creating confusion for students.

In order to help students and administrators make more informed decisions, the Association of College Honor Societies suggests basic questions to ask or assess before determining any organization to be an honor society:

- **ACHS certification** – this link will allow you to search for member honor societies that are certified and meet the standards: <https://www.achshonor.org/certified-societies-member-directory-#/>
- **Minimum scholastic standards for membership** – make sure there is a reason that the student is being honored and is not just being invited to join a group with no standards or criteria for membership
- **Non-profit status** – a certified honor society will always be a non-profit, 501 c3, organization. Don't be deceived by the organization having a .org website address. These groups often don't disclose that they are for-profit in their marketing materials. You have to ask them, or you can check here: <https://www.guidestar.org/>
- **Campus chapters** – make sure the organization is a registered and recognized chapter on your campus with on-campus leadership from students and/or faculty.
- **Fees** – all collegiate honor societies have a membership fee. The fee may be solicited from the invited student or, in some cases, paid for by the institution. Having a fee is comparable to your institution having tuition. The key factor is that the student should be paying to affiliate with an organization that has been certified to meet high standards the same way your institution has been accredited.
- **Transparency** – check the organization's website to make sure that it states it is a non-profit and that there is a phone number and address listed. Is there a listing of a functioning board who provides oversight to the organization?
- **Member participation in governance** – are members of the organization involved in governing the organization?

You can find more information about judging the credibility of an Honor Society at <https://www.achshonor.org/judging-credibility>