

Overview

What is it?

A local administrative staff association invites membership from the administrative staff employed at a local college. Guided by terms of reference or a constitution, and local leadership, the association supports the professional interests of its members while supporting the strategic objectives at that college. All full-time, part-time, contract and seconded administrative staff may belong. While OCASA membership is encouraged as a prerequisite for membership, local ASAs might encourage membership from all administrative staff.

Why have one?

The ASA provides local opportunities for advocacy, networking, mentoring, leadership and professional development. While provincial OCASA works on behalf of all college administrators across the province, that work and information can help to support the efforts of the local college ASA.

Since 2003, each college Board of Governors and/or President determines local terms & conditions of employment for administrative staff (including a compensation policy). It is more imperative now that a local consultation and information sharing process be encouraged between ASA leadership and the senior management team at that college.

What are the benefits to the college?

- improves information exchange
- provides administrators' perspective on committees
- helps with employee retention and satisfaction
- develops leadership capacity
- encourages networking
- builds bridges

What are the benefits to administrators?

- more PD opportunities
- improves information flow
- networking supports improved working relationships
- adds leadership opportunities
- provides a credible college voice

What is the ASAs relationship with OCASA?

OCASA does not "charter" local associations and the relationship is an informal one.

Colleges are encouraged to elect a college representative to be a liaison with OCASA for information sharing purposes, and to help guide provincial strategic efforts. These representatives form the Committee of College Representatives, which provides an advisory role to the OCASA Board of Directors.

OCASA is available to the local ASA to help develop needed resources, provide data, share best practices, etc. The provincial office is committed to the development and ongoing success of the local ASA.

Local ASAs are encouraged to adopt OCASA's Commitment to Professionalism (Appendix 1) as they engage their colleagues and college management. They are also encouraged to support the OCASA mission statement.

Getting Started

Every college has its own history, culture and ways of “getting things done”. The following includes suggestions for starting an ASA, and may not necessarily flow in this order. Consult the OCASA office for further guidance and assistance.

Leadership team: Forming a leadership team of three to five people is recommended. It is important to include a diverse range of administrators representing different service areas of the college, who also enjoy the respect of their colleagues. An ASA is to represent the interests of all administrators and should not represent the perceived interests of a few, or reflect the agenda of one. Best practice also suggests that key ASA leadership needs to be at a Dean or Director’s level to have the ear of senior management.

Meeting with the President/Senior Management: Including the President in the formation of the ASA encourages acceptance, helpful direction and guidance for future exchanges. The most effective ASAs have the support of and enjoy regular meetings with the college president.

Communication with administrators: Using email, informal conversation, meetings, etc. determine the interest level of administrative staff, including their immediate concerns and desires that as ASA could address. A survey could be used to identify top priorities.

Plan an initial meeting: Gather administrative staff for an orientation, PD event, social event – whatever works at your campus to generate interest. Use the opportunity to discuss the ASA. Consider inviting a representative from OCASA (Executive Director and/or Executive member).

Governance: Local ASAs are encouraged to develop terms of reference or a constitution to guide the affairs of the association. Contact the OCASA office for samples.

Elections: Holding elections gives more credibility to the process. OCASA can help with this process by providing an electronic option.

Business Plan: Establishing strategic priorities and goals around advocacy, PD, and social events will ensure that action happens. This can be accomplished in the inaugural meeting. Consider instituting a small local fee (\$1.00-\$3.00/pay) to help cover local initiatives, or an initiation fee for first time members that goes into the ASA account.

Bank Account: Setting up a special account at the college is the easiest way to manage the cash flow for the ASA and does not require a change in signatures whenever leadership changes.

How can OCASA help?

At any Stage in the development process the OCASA office can be consulted.

OCASA can offer tools to support the election process, survey process and member communications process.

Elections: OCASA can offer an online ballot process to allow the leaders to remain at arms length. All we need is information about those running for a position: name, title, ASA position.

Surveys: OCASA maintains a professional membership with Survey Monkey allowing us unlimited surveys. We can offer you support in generating a survey and running it.

Member communications: Through our online email service, we already have groups defined for each college. This service can be made available to you, allowing you to offer professional looking communications with your members (currently we use Constant Contact).

Website: OCASA can also offer you a web page just for your local ASA. Here you can post announcements, events, etc. We can even do the posting for you.

Best Practices

This is not an exhaustive list. These give examples of ASA involvement in the life of the college.

Advocacy:

- regular (monthly or quarterly) meetings with senior management, including the president, HR director, VPs
- poll members (anonymously) for information on workplace matters (might also be requested from senior management)
- have annual compensation discussions when the recommendations come out from Council
- representation on strategic planning for college
- bring ideas/solutions to the discussions
- actively offer to participate in solutions/programs (i.e. leadership development program for admin staff)

Professional Development:

- regular events: speaker breakfast/lunch; wine & cheese
- topic ideas: CAAT Pension Plan, Insured Benefits, retirement planning, mental health in the workplace, stress, strategic planning, leadership, diversity, etc.
- work with local HRD staff to develop local events

Networking:

- regular/annual/semi-annual events
- breakfast/lunch/wine & cheese
- invite college president for discussion
- build into PD event
- offer event when staff are already gathered for college business

Information sharing:

- ASA newsletter
- ASA website (OCASA can offer web space for your own page)
- Listserve

Leadership team/Executive:

- have a minimum of 3-5 people sharing the load – improves recruitment, event planning, information dissemination and advocacy
- ensure that some of the leadership is at a Dean's or Director's level, particularly when meeting with senior management

ASA Presence:

- an ASA office, door labels
- sponsor college activities such as a PD event for admin staff

- OCASA Day: offer a coffee break for admin staff sponsored by OCASA (on multiple campuses if appropriate)
- get invited to new staff orientation events
- have existing members identify themselves in someway (i.e. everyone has an OCASA mug – and uses it)

College Committees:

- all admin reps must be OCASA members
- representation on all major committees
- representation on hiring committees for admin positions

Membership:

- OCASA membership automatic for local ASA members (local ASA is local OCASA group)
- endorsement of OCASA membership from college president (noted at new staff orientation, when invited to ASA event, in written communication)
- have one person on leadership team committed to recruitment
- actively recruit new hires (with assistance from HR)
- send out recruitment promo with each issue of *College Administrator*

Appendix 1

Commitment to Professionalism

1. OCASA members are committed to the highest standard of professional conduct, acting with excellence and integrity. In the course of their duties, OCASA members aim to work in a manner that supports and promotes the strategic objectives of their local college and the work of their colleagues across the province.
2. OCASA, as an association, is committed to supporting its members in their professional goals through advocacy, encouraging professional development, providing regular communications and facilitating opportunities for networking and mentoring. To this end, OCASA is committed to working collaboratively and cooperatively with college partners while also upholding the highest standard of professional conduct, acting with excellence and integrity.

Vision: Your partner in administrative excellence.

Mission: OCASA is a voluntary, professional association which supports and advocates for Ontario's community college administrators, while building and promoting administrative excellence for the betterment of the college system.