

**FORMING A STUDENT CHAPTER
AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF MEDICINE**

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of the Florida Rural Health Association.***

Establishing a student chapter associated with the Florida Rural Health Association (FRHA) took quite some time because it had never been done before. When the idea was initially proposed to the FRHA, it was received with excitement and full support. The ground work to achieve this however, required a lot of planning and after almost three years of preparation beginning in 2000, finally became a reality in 2003. Hopefully, after what we have learned, the process can be expedited for any group wishing to be affiliated with their respective state health association and ultimately the National Rural Health Association.

First, a chapter needs to be established at the university where students, regardless of their respective field of study, have an interest in advocating and promoting rural health. Once this chapter has been established and has its means of governance, contact needs to be made with the state rural health association informing them that a student chapter has been formed and that an affiliation would like to be made between the two groups. We received the support of the FRHA, but they had to adopt changes to their by-laws in order to recognize our chapter and future chapters within their association. We became officially known as The Florida State University Medical Student Chapter of the Florida Rural Health Association. With this title other chapters, such as nursing, could be formed at Florida State as a separate entity, but still part of the FRHA. It was proposed that with time, hopefully other schools would establish chapters using this template as a means of showing affiliation with the FRHA.

In summary, the greatest time factor in becoming associated with a state rural health association is being officially adopted by the association. This will most likely occur at the state rural health association annual conference with the general membership present to vote. There may be some wording within the chapter's constitution that will have to be modified to fit the state rural health association's constitution, but ultimately the necessary affiliation between the students and the association will be of great benefit for both groups. The FRHA has supported us 100% in establishing our chapter. Other state associations have expressed interest in what we have done in Florida, and students will most likely find their state association excited about making the affiliation.