

The Cost of a National Leadership Conference

Sometimes HOSA members and their administrators look at the costs of the HOSA National Leadership Conference and wonder how the costs and location are determined. The question is sometimes raised – are there more cost effective alternatives?

In order to understand some of the choices that HOSA makes, one must look at some of the considerations that relate to the costs of the conference. The registration fee for the National Leadership Conference has been frozen since 1997 because the Board is sensitive to the cost to state associations, local chapters, and sponsors. The National Conference must be totally self-sustaining. While overall costs have increased, the registration fee has remained constant for the past six years.

Regarding the hotel registration, the Board sincerely wishes that more economical conference facilities could be located. Unfortunately, the NLC requires a unique set of facilities that can only be accommodated at a few hotel and convention properties across the country. That is the reason that HOSA has narrowed conference sites to the following locations: Atlanta Downtown, Orlando-Disney Area, Anaheim-Disney Area, and Nashville-Opryland Hotel.

HOSA's requirements for a conference site:

A conference site that is willing to host a national student organization conference. Since HOSA does not have a formal meal function and young people require triple and quad sleeping accommodations (a challenge for hotels since their normal sleeping

room customer base requires single or double rooms), some hotel properties will not book a student conference. Student organizations negotiate for the lowest possible bid for sleeping rooms, meeting rooms, and catering costs. Fortunately, HOSA has a very positive hotel history – HOSA delegates are not destructive nor cause excessive repairs or maintenance. When our students depart the hotel, the Board asks the hotel to provide the delegates with 1-2 large trash bags so they can help the hotel turn the rooms given the amount of trash (especially pizza boxes, cups, soft drink cans, etc.) in the sleeping rooms.

General Sessions with seating for 5,400 delegates/friends with sufficient staging to allow for rear video projection by those in the back of the auditorium. Few hotels can accommodate our general session requirements, e.g. Atlanta, therefore, we are forced to rent a general session meeting room with no ability to leverage our room block.

HOSA competitive events, leadership academies, educational workshops, exhibits, committee meetings require 50 meeting rooms with at least 2-3 complete turns a day to accommodate the different events in the hotels. In addition, HOSA conducts "healthcare skill events" at local healthcare facilities which we hope are located within a short bus ride for competitors, judges and event personnel. Buses are required to move approximately 1,000 delegates to these off-property healthcare facilities.

Sleeping room requirements. For the four days of the NLC, HOSA requires 7,432 room nights with our peak night requiring 1,573 sleeping rooms. Some states/chapters arrive a

day or two prior to the conference or remain 1-2 days past the conference for the delegates to enjoy the area where the conference is held. (Usually Orlando and Anaheim have more room pick-up prior to and following the National Conference dates than other locations.)

An assortment of restaurants and eating areas close to and inside the hotels where delegates can eat since the Board does not want to charge \$35-\$40 for an evening meal even if space were available.

A metropolitan area of sufficient size is required because of the need to recruit 275 judges from the health care industry.

The Board requires that a National Conference is located in a single hotel (if possible) but no more than three hotels within one block of each other. There are locations where we could conduct the conference and connect a series of hotels with a bus system. Regrettably, the cost of the buses combined with the safety issues has forced the Board to ignore multi-hotel locations with a large convention center.

The Board is very concerned about delegate safety and has requested that the National Conference not be held in Las Vegas, Los Angeles or New Orleans due to the distractions and safety issues in these destinations. With approximately 80% of the delegates being female, we are extremely safety conscious. Other large metropolitan areas are bypassed because they are too expensive for a student conference, i.e., New York City, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Boston, etc. The Board has requested that the National Conference is not held in a single location (e.g. FFA) for a variety

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of reasons, therefore, the organization is unable to leverage annual revenue for the hotels/convention center which states are able to leverage for state conferences.

During the 4-day National Leadership Conference, there are 202 meetings that have unique set-up requirements for a wide range of delegates. When an organization books a certain number of sleeping rooms in a hotel, the room rental for competitive events is waived. (The approximate cost of the hotel meeting room space needed for HOSA's events is \$275,000 if minimum requirement for sleeping rooms are not met.)

The HOSA, Inc. Board of Directors, National Officers, State Advisors, and Headquarters Staff are concerned about the following:

- Operating a "quality conference experience" for HOSA delegates since this may be the first opportunity that some have had to travel outside of their state or locale.
- Implementing "expense controls" to keep registration fees (which have been the same since 1996-97), conference expenses (i.e. general session meeting space, catering, sleeping rooms for guests/staff, etc.), and delegate costs (i.e. transportation, registration fee,

lodging, meals, etc.) at a minimum.

- Providing HOSA members with an "educational experience" as well as "competitions" for the 3,600 delegates that compete in 50 events (most at two levels — secondary and postsecondary/collegiate) with event personnel, judges, and an infrastructure that can assure well-run events.

HOSA's Board of Directors includes student members, chapter advisors, and state leaders. Their goal is to provide the best possible HOSA National Leadership Conference at the most reasonable expense possible.

National HOSA Welcomes

In 2002, a group of education and healthcare leaders in Montana had a vision for solving the healthcare workforce shortage in their state. HOSA was a part of that vision.



In June 2002, a delegation of health care leaders from Montana led by Dr. Jody Messinger, Division Administrator, traveled to the HOSA National Leadership Conference in Anaheim as the guests of National HOSA. As special guests, they had an opportunity to attend all aspects

of the conference and were able to talk with state and national HOSA leaders as well as students.

In February of 2003, the Montana Office of Public Instruction hired their first Health Occupations Education Specialist and HOSA State Advisor, Theresa Sheldon. Theresa is a Certified Athletic Trainer and Orthopedic Technologist with experience as an educator at the secondary and collegiate levels, in a large regional hospital and in an Orthopedic clinic, assisting orthopedic surgeons and providing direct patient care.

On March 19, 2003, a workshop was held at Montana State University's College of Technology in Great Falls. The workshop was hosted by Susan Cooper, Director for Med Prep at Montana State University, and included Med Prep educators from various Montana schools. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together those schools that provide Health Occupations (Med Prep) programs with those who are interested in starting programs.

Kim Smith, Director of Communications, represented National HOSA at this meeting and presented a session regarding strategies for starting HOSA chapters at both the secondary and postsecondary/collegiate levels in Montana. This meeting was in preparation for the implementation of a statewide association in the 2003-04 membership year.

The Montana health care leaders are planning to bring a small delegation of instructors to the 2003 NLC in Atlanta and will receive their National charter at the 2004 NLC in Orlando.

When it comes to preparing a well qualified healthcare workforce, Montana has the same needs as other HOSA state associations. The goal is to increase the number of students enrolling in secondary and postsecondary Health Occupations/Health Science programs by offering opportunities for HOE and HOSA in Montana's high schools.

We can tell from our visit to the state that existing Med Prep programs are in the hands of talented teachers, and that the strength of the program will continue to grow in the years to come.

National HOSA welcomes the teachers, students and administrators of Montana to HOSA!

