

## Student and Sustaining Membership in NSNA: Together We Rise

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### Did you know?

With 50,000 members plus advisors, consultants, staff, and supporters, the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) is all about professional identity, community, and connection. Five different categories of membership ensure that everyone can find a home through NSNA. Active and Associate Memberships are for students. Extended Membership continues for alumni up to 6 months post-graduation. Two types of Sustaining Membership exist: Agency Sustaining Membership is available to nursing programs and organizations, and Individual Sustaining Membership is for everyone who joins to learn about and support NSNA and its members. Sustaining members do not need to be nurses, although many are (see Box 1).

### The Foundation of the NSNA: Sustaining Students and NSNA

Although not a type of membership, the Foundation of the National Student Nurses Association (FNSNA) sustains (i.e., supports) NSNA and its members through its mission of fundraising, which has generated millions of dollars in scholarships and contributed to the organization's continued existence.

### Sustaining Membership: What Everyone Needs to Know

Sustaining Membership is the most enduring, yet least known and least utilized, type of NSNA membership. Unlike student memberships, which end when students become alumni, Sustaining Membership, which can be joined at any

time and renewed annually, can be a life-long commitment. As of September 2025, NSNA had about 195 Individual Sustaining Members, and 31 nursing programs held Agency Sustaining Membership. Please note that these numbers do not reflect membership transitions, such as the addition of new members that occur at the start of the academic year.

Agency Sustaining Membership brings national recognition and visibility. Member agencies are honored at NSNA's events, such as the Mid-Year and Summer Leadership conferences, and at NSNA's annual National Convention, as featured on the NSNA website and in NSNA's publications.

Many people who belong to agencies with Sustaining Membership do not realize the importance of having their own Individual Sustaining Membership. Communication is between NSNA and the agency. Individual Sustaining Membership ensures an ongoing connection with NSNA through information sent to every Sustaining Member in this category.

**Discounts Make a Difference:** As of 2025, NSNA offers a \$25 discount from the \$50 annual Individual Sustaining Member fee for groups of five or more Individual Sustaining Memberships. This strategy fosters communication among supporters of NSNA and can inspire nursing programs to recognize, value, and support Sustaining Membership for their faculty and staff. In addition, family, friends, and others may recognize the impact of NSNA in new ways as they band together for conversations, benefits, and savings. At the same time, their

memberships provide financial support vital to the programming and operations of NSNA.

### Why is Individual Sustaining Membership Especially Important for Faculty, Deans, and Directors?

Weingarten, and colleagues (2018) surveyed NSNA's faculty and administrators' perceptions of support and barriers to student attendance at state and national conferences. A mixed-methods approach included demographic information, a 23-item Likert-style questionnaire specifically developed for the study, and qualitative comments. Observations from the study indicated the impact of deans, directors, faculty, and students on attendance at state and NSNA conferences. Additionally, a critical need for education on the importance of attending NSNA conferences was identified throughout nursing programs. Participants noted education to be "a strategy for achieving nursing course and program outcomes related to course content, role formation, and professional development" (p. 1).

The numerous resources provided by NSNA to Agency and Individual Sustaining Members address the need for education about NSNA and its impact on developing a professional identity and professionalism in nursing students from the earliest days of nursing education.

In Box 2, Kenya Williams, EdD, MSN, RN, RP, CAE, Chief Executive Officer of the NSNA and its charitable arm, the

## Box 1 Membership in NSNA and State Associations

Growing and thriving across generations since its founding in 1952, the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) is a mature organization that is unique in its purpose of fostering professional identity and promoting professionalism in nursing students, thereby shaping the future of nursing. NSNA strives to communicate accurate and timely information in many ways, including: The NSNA website; *Getting the Pieces to Fit: The 2025-2026 Handbook for State Associations and School Chapters*, a comprehensive resource updated yearly for all things NSNA; its publications and emails; social media such as Instagram (@nsnainc) and Facebook; and through its in-person and virtual conferences and convention, such as the upcoming MidYear Conference in Cincinnati (November 6 to 9, 2025). Additionally, NSNA's staff is available to answer questions and facilitate connections for students, faculty, and others.

**Did you know?** The Student Nurses Association has three levels of membership: 1. The NSNA, 2. NSNA's state associations comprise nursing programs within the 50 states and the District of Columbia (Washington, D.C.), Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as three local chapters located in nursing programs across the country. All are connected as constituents of NSNA. A constituent of the NSNA is a state association or a school chapter that meets specific requirements. Ten members are needed for a chapter to become a member, or constituent, of the NSNA.

As a constituent, the state association or school chapter has opportunities, privileges, and representation within NSNA. Payment of dues to NSNA includes state membership.

**Did you know?** NSNA also has three *models* of school chapter membership: 1. Voluntary School Membership for individual students. 2. Total School Membership (TSM). Dues are discounted and included with students' tuition and fees. Chapter membership is separate. 3. As of 2025, Donor Supported Total School Membership for students and Individual Sustaining membership for faculty and staff. Students can opt out of Total School Membership.

### **Did you know? NSNA has 5 Categories of Membership.**

- 1. Active Membership:** Students enrolled in a state-approved program for licensure as a registered nurse, or registered nurses pursuing a baccalaureate degree or a direct entry graduate degree in nursing. Membership in NSNA automatically brings membership in the state associations. Dues are paid directly to NSNA and cover NSNA and state association membership. Chapter membership is separate. Not all nursing students who are members of their school chapters are members of NSNA/state associations. Representation in the House of Delegates at the state and national conventions is linked to the number of members in NSNA. For example, chapters have one voting delegate and one alternate delegate at the NSNA convention for every 25 members. States differ in their ratios of members to delegates, according to their bylaws or guidelines. Students in nursing programs that do not have chapters can belong to the NSNA and their state association.
- 2. Associate Membership** is open to students enrolled in pre-nursing or health care programs that qualify them for continuing education in diploma, associate degree, baccalaureate, or direct-entry graduate programs in nursing. Not all programs guarantee seamless acceptance into their nursing programs. Associate members have most, but not all, of the benefits of full, active members. For example, they cannot run for certain offices. NSNA has about 10,816 total Associate Members.
- 3. Extended Membership:** Active, associate, and individual members could extend their memberships for up to six months after graduation if they renewed their membership while still enrolled in their nursing programs.
- 4. Total School Membership:** With this membership model, the nursing program shows its commitment to professional identity development in nursing by including NSNA membership dues as a fee paid by all nursing students. Scholarships often can cover the cost of membership. Students can "opt out" of membership, although nearly everyone joins.
- 5. Donor-Supported Free Total School Membership and Sustaining Membership:** Debuted in 2025, the newest membership model brings donor support for all nursing students at the nursing program and free Sustaining Membership to full-time faculty and staff. Endowed funding ensures this model will continue at the nursing program in the future.

*Please note:* Philanthropy comes in many forms and sizes. All types that make memberships possible are valued.

Foundation of the NSNA, summarizes well the value and meaning of Sustaining Membership.

## **A New Model for Total School and Sustaining Membership**

In 2025, after 40 years of voluntary membership since its founding by then-Dean M. Louise Fitzpatrick, Villanova University's chapter of the Student Nurses Association of Pennsylvania (SNAP-Villanova) led the way with the creation and establishment of a new model of Total School Membership. With support from anonymous donors, membership at the national, state, and chapter levels is free for all undergraduate nursing students at Villanova University, including those in the traditional BSN program and the BSN programs for individuals transitioning into nursing with degrees in other fields. Additionally, individual Sustaining Membership for full-time faculty and staff is free.

National Student Nurses Association's (NSNA) Total School Membership model offers reduced membership fees for NSNA, which includes the state association, emphasizing a curricular commitment to the development of professional identity and professionalism from the start of nursing education. By including reduced NSNA membership fees that come with Total School Membership in matriculation costs often covered by scholarships, nursing programs ensure that everyone is included and can have a discounted membership. The Donor-Supported Total School and Sustaining Membership model discussed here differs from other models because it offers free membership at the chapter level and includes complimentary Sustaining Membership for faculty and staff. In addition, it introduces philanthropy as a model of support that values the life-changing professional impact of NSNA for students, their faculty, and administrators.

NSNA's website offers student membership as a gift option – a recommendation evolving from this option: Gifts of Sustaining Membership. Substantial increases in Sustaining Members hold a diamond mine of potential revenue and impact.

Faculty are often assumed to be able to afford the \$50 cost of Sustaining Membership. An outcome of the Donor-Supported Total School and Sustaining Membership model, since its debut, is an appreciation for the financial issues experienced by both faculty and students, as

## Box 2 Elaboration on the Value and Meaning of Individual and Agency Sustaining Membership

By Kenya Williams, EdD, MSN, RN, RP, CAE, Chief Executive Officer of the NSNA, the Foundation of the NSNA (FNSNA)

### Individual Sustaining Membership

#### Meaning and Value:

- **Support for Future Leaders:** By becoming an Individual Sustaining Member, you are directly contributing to the development of future nurse leaders. This membership is a way to give back to the profession by supporting the National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA) in its mission to prepare nursing students for successful careers.
- **Personal and Professional Growth:** Members gain access to a range of programs and resources that aid in leadership and professional development, such as the NSNA Leadership University Honor Society.
- **Networking Opportunities:** Connect with a network of committed professionals who share a passion for nursing. This can lead to valuable partnerships and mentorship opportunities.
- **Educational Benefits:** Engage with comprehensive programs like Health Policy and Advocacy Education, which equip members with knowledge and skills to influence health care policies effectively.

### Agency Sustaining Membership

#### Meaning and Value:

- **Institutional Support and Recognition:** Agencies, schools, and organizations that become sustaining members gain recognition for their commitment to nursing education and student development. Your institution is highlighted in NSNA publications, giving visibility to your organization's support of nursing's future.
- **Resource Accessibility:** Agencies receive resources that can enhance educational offerings, like subscriptions to relevant publications and reduced rates for NSNA meetings. This is beneficial for faculty development and keeping staff informed about the latest in nursing education.
- **Promotional Benefits:** Members benefit from complimentary broadcast emails to NSNA faculty advisors, promoting faculty positions and educational conferences, enhancing your institution's outreach and attractiveness to potential staff and students.
- **Cost Savings:** Enjoy discounts on NSNA broadcast emails, insurance plans, and a variety of products and services, including travel and publishing discounts, providing significant savings for your organization and constituents.

well as the importance of support that makes membership possible for all.

Please note that philanthropy and donor support come in all sizes and are often inspired by letting individuals or groups know that membership assistance is needed and appreciated.

In conclusion, through Student, Agency, and Individual Sustaining Membership, NSNA offers multiple ways for nursing students, faculty, deans, directors, and others to foster the career-long development of professional identity and professionalism from the start of nursing education. Together we rise. **DN**

**Who can be an Individual Sustaining Member of NSNA?** Faculty, staff, deans, directors, parents, siblings, friends, and just about any adult who would like to support NSNA and its members, and to receive the benefits, including information about NSNA and its charitable arm, the Foundation of NSNA.

#### Resources

- National Student Nurses Association, Inc. *By-laws*. <https://www.nсна.org/association—chapter-resources.html>
- National Student Nurses Association, Inc. *Getting the Pieces to Fit, 2025-2026*. <https://www.nсна.org/getting-the-pieces-to-fit.html>
- Schmidt, C.K., & Weingarten, C.T. (2016). How to help students get the most from an NSNA convention: What deans, directors, and faculty need to know. *Dean's Notes*, 37(3), 1-3. <https://www.ajj.com/sites/default/deansnotes/2016/jan-feb16.pdf>
- Weingarten, C.T. (2018). From punishment to permission – What a difference a policy can make! *Dean's Notes*, 40(2), 3.
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National Student Nurses' Association

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