



OFFICIAL SCHOOL MINISTRY ORGANIZATION OF
THE COPTIC ORTHODOX DIOCESE OF THE SOUTHERN UNITED STATES

www.susocsm.org

Chapter Guidebook & Manual

2025-2026

“We are ambassadors for Christ.”

2 Corinthians 5:20



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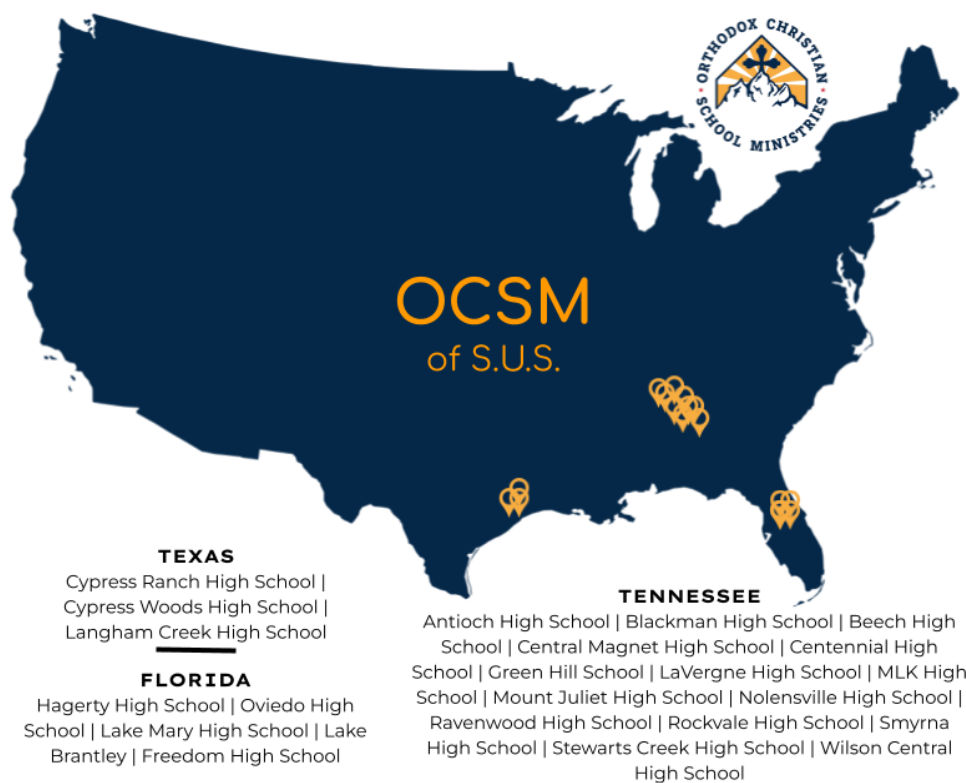
I. About Orthodox Christian School Ministries (OCSM)

I. a. OCSM Mission Statement and Vision

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN SCHOOL MINISTRIES (OCSM) is a ministry for Orthodox Christian high school youth, established to unite students on their respective campuses in prayer, fellowship, and service. OCSM inspires students to live out the True Faith and impact their world for Jesus Christ concurrently with their academic life at school.

The purpose of OCSM is to integrate each young person into the life of the Church and foster an environment of commitment on the school campus to live out the Orthodox Faith daily, to grow in Christ, and to form spiritual and social bonds between each other. OCSM brings high school youth to a deeper devotion to the Holy Orthodox Church, its faith, canons, and worship.

The goal of OCSM is to provide a holistic environment in which students may collectively develop and learn the tools required to navigate their transformative teenage years. Through a uniform curriculum, a sense of fellowship, and the guidance of clergy advisors, OCSM provides a nurturing environment in which students are encouraged to question, challenge, and engage with the Orthodox Faith and learn how to use the wisdom of the Church and the Faith to excel and grow in their daily lives.



I. b. OCSM Life

Orthodoxy is a way of life. Our OCSM ministry tries to consistently be a mirror along these lines of life. In this manner, OCSM has three pillars, known as 'OCSM Life' by which our gatherings and activities commit to our OCSM mission through these three pillars: Discipleship, Fellowship, and Service.

Discipleship

Discipleship is the core of Christianity, based on the work of the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the Lord's command. Being a disciple of Christ means entering into a living relationship with Him and following the footsteps of His disciples as they submitted themselves to their Teacher. We, likewise, in the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Orthodox Church, are disciples of our clergy and hierarchs, living the faith according to Church Tradition.

- ⊕ *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher. (Luke 6:40)*

Fellowship

The Holy Trinity is the perfect model of fellowship; the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit share perfect communion and exist in perfect love. By gathering in fellowship and by showing love for one another in Christ, we emulate the life of the Holy Trinity in our daily life. We will continue to spread our Agape love to one another inside and outside of the church.

- ⊕ *Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:1-4)*

Service

Christ came not to be served, but to serve. Christ calls us to be the servants of all. As teens, we seek to emulate Christ in this and honor and glorify God by serving mankind, using our God-given gifts and talents.

- ⊕ *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23-24)*

I. c. OCSM Patron Saint

Virgin Martyr Theodora and Martyr Didymus the Soldier, of Alexandria

The Holy Martyrs Theodora the Virgin and Didymus the Soldier suffered for Christ during the persecution against Christians under the emperor Diocletian (284-305 AD), in the city of Alexandria in the year 304 AD.

There lived in Alexandria a maiden, Theodora, well-educated and of noble lineage. She avoided being seen in public to shrink from the eyes of men who desired her. In order to put an end to the passionate desires of the men who sought to use her, Theodora professed her intention of



preserving her chastity. She quenched their lust but not their wickedness: the men who once desired her began to inform against her. She was brought to trial before the pagans for her Christian faith. The prince subjected her to a long interrogation, tortured her for her faith, and then ordered that she be thrown into a brothel where the soldiers would have free access to her to indulge their carnal lusts. Theodora prayed fervently to God to save her from defilement, and a soldier called Didymus came to her and told her that he was a servant of Christ. He dressed her in his soldier's garb and himself in her dress, then let her out and remained in the brothel himself. He was seized and brought before the judge, where he acknowledged that he was a Christian and had saved Theodora and was now prepared to die for Christ. He was condemned to death and taken out to the place of execution. Theodora ran up to him there and cried out: *'Although you saved my honor, I did not ask you to save me from death. Yield the martyr's death to me!'* Didymus replied: *'My beloved sister, do not hinder my death for Christ, nor the washing of my sins in my blood.'* Hearing this exchange, the pagans condemned them both to death. They were beheaded and their bodies burned. They suffered with honor in Alexandria and received eternal wreaths of glory in the year 304 AD.

Virgin martyr Theodora portrays a model life for every Orthodox Christian youth desiring to live the faith and to preserve one's chastity, because her commitment to live chastely was backed by knowing and living the faith. A determined character, she was not lured or swayed by the ungodly. Rather, she found her identity in her Savior. Holy martyr Didymus the Soldier, a brave example of sacrificial respect

and honor for young men, hastened in response to the devastating order of the Emperor. He acted as brother and protector to Theodora, desiring to be martyred to preserve the chastity of his sister in Christ. So ought to be the life of Christian youths, committing their faith and chastity to God and willing to preserve each other's purity to the extent of martyrdom.

St. Theophan the Recluse (1800s), in a homily to a group of nuns at a Convent which he oversaw, wrote: *"For he who refuses to give in to passions and sinful desires does the same as he who refuses to bow down and worship idols. He who refused to worship idols was given over to external sufferings, while he who refuses to satisfy the passions actually wounds himself and forces his heart to suffer until the passions quiet down in him. Victory over passions is a self-inflicted spiritual martyrdom, which is performed invisibly in the heart but is nevertheless very painful."* (Kindling the Divine Spark, pp. 39)

In this world – in academic and social settings, Orthodox youth are presented daily with ample, devious opportunities to compromise our commitment to live faithfully. Because we know the faith, understand the faith, and live the faith, we stand brave, steadfast against the world. Let us take the life of holy martyrs Virgin Theodora and Didymus the Soldier as means to hike this mountain of the earthly life, that we might arrive to our destination in the Kingdom of Heaven, rewarded and crowned for keeping the faith and preserving our chastity.

Pray to the Lord on our behalf Holy Virgin Theodora and Holy Didymus the Soldier that He may forgive us our sins and strengthen us in this age.

The account of Virgin Theodora and Didymus the Soldier is written by Saint Ambrose in his book II, "Concerning Virgins" and recounted by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty in Encyclopedia of the Saints and Fathers of the Church (vo. 4). H.G. Bishop Youanis, the late Bishop of Gharbia, in his book, Paradise of the Spirit, Chapter 7 - The Life of Purity, tells the story of Martyrs Virgin Theodora and Didymus the Soldier as model examples of "two heroes who were martyred for the sake of the life of purity."

I. d. Diocesan Leadership Structure

Episcopal Overseer

His Eminence Metropolitan Youssef, Metropolitan of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States

OCSM Clergy Board

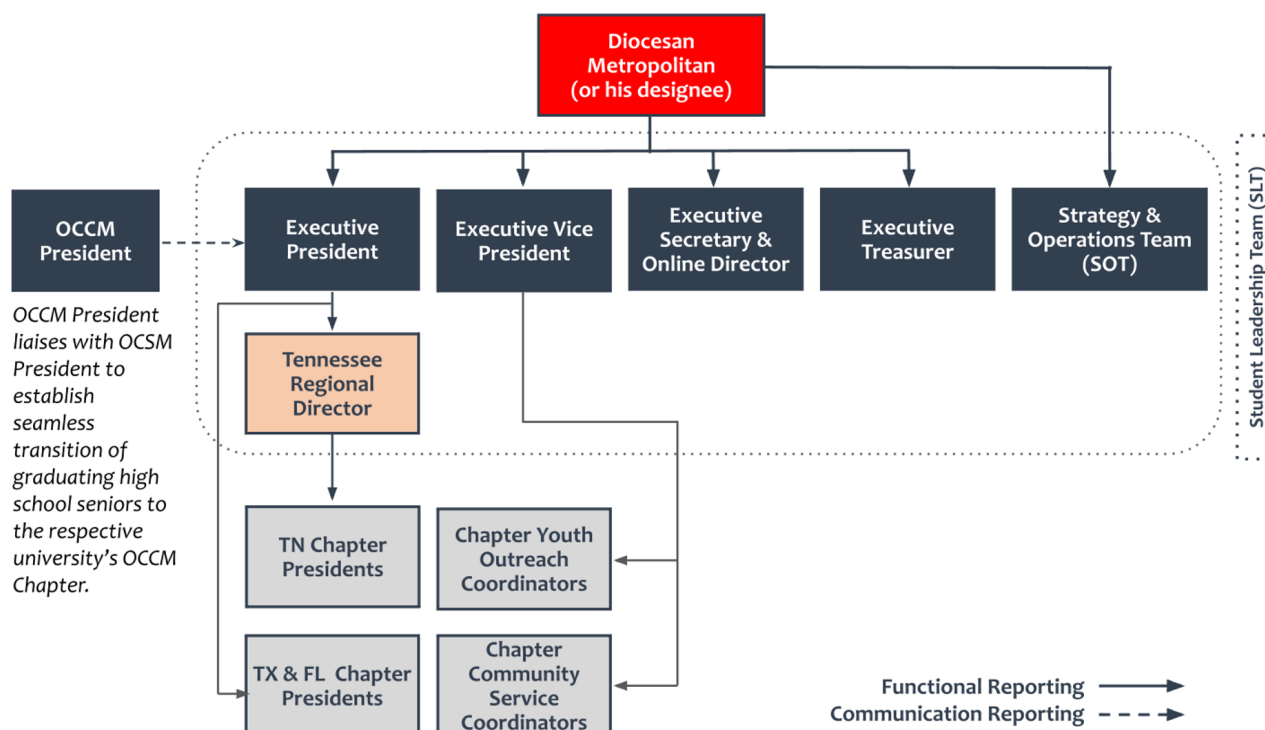
Fr. James Gendi, St. Mary & Archangel Michael – Houston, TX; OCSM Designee of the Metropolitan
 Fr. Jerome Maximous, St. Mary & St. George Coptic Orthodox Church – Tallahassee, FL
 Fr. Daniel Ebrahim, St. Barbara Coptic Orthodox Church - Nashville, TN

Accordingly, Fr. James is the Regional Clergy Advisor for Texas; Fr. Jerome is for Florida; and Fr. Daniel is for Tennessee.



Orthodox Christian School Ministries of SUS (OCSM)

Ministry Leadership Organization (Year 2024–2025)



Service Operations Team (SOT)

Formed of former student leaders from Orthodox Christian Campus Ministries (OCCM), the SOT is tasked with key duties for the sustainability of OCSM: 1) plant new chapters through methodical assessments and geographic studies in the Diocese; 2) oversight of the chapters and mentoring the officers in their leadership roles; 3) liaise with the Clergy Advisors to provide regular updates, alleviating the workload of chapter oversight from the clergy; and 4) work with the OCSM SLT in planning OCSM Summit annually.

Curriculum Design Team (CDT)

Formed of young professionals in key subject areas for learning, the CDT works with select OCSM student leaders to design a curriculum suitable for the mission of OCSM. The team also assists the chapter with implementing the curriculum and necessary follow-ups.

I. e. Student Leadership Team (“SLT”)

The Student Leadership Team comprises the Executive Board (President, Vice President, Secretary & Online Director, and Treasurer); the Regional Directors, and two Committee Chairs.

Selection and Duties of OCSM Student Leadership Team

- ⊕ The candidate is appointed and serves a one-to two-year term.
- ⊕ The appointment process is facilitated through expression of interest by the candidate(s), a series of interviews, and final selection.
- ⊕ Interested and qualified candidates for the position will apply to the Designee of the Metropolitan when an announcement is made publicly to the OCSM organization.
- ⊕ Candidates shall complete an online application outlining their interest to serve this role.
- ⊕ Qualified candidates will be offered an interview with the Designee of the Metropolitan and the sitting SLT member for the role.
- ⊕ The selected candidate will be announced upon final selection.

Duties of the Executive President:

1. Oversee the Chapter Presidents along with the Tennessee Regional Director.
2. Hold a monthly conference call with the Executive Board and the Chapter Presidents.
3. Oversee all OCSM paperwork and meetings, and submitting all business in writing, once per month, to the Designee of the Metropolitan.
4. Preserve the OCSM Constitution and Bylaws.
5. Oversee the activities and planning of the **OCSM Summit** program.

Duties of the Executive Vice President:

1. Work together with the OCSM President in the completion of duties.
2. Develop strategy and programming for the Community Service (CS) and Youth Outreach (YO) ministry plan.
3. Oversee and follow through with the Community Service and Youth Outreach Coordinators across the chapters to ensure progress of plan.
4. Ensure that a permanent record of all OCSM business be sent to all OCSM members, including information submitted to OCSM Leadership through the Designee of the Metropolitan.
5. Keep an accurate record of OCSM committees programming and event attendance.
6. If the president is unable to fulfill their duties, the OCSM Vice President will assume the role of OCSM President.

Duties of the Executive Secretary & Online Director and Treasurer:

Secretary & Online Director

1. Schedule Executive Board monthly calls and other ad hoc meetings.
2. Take meeting minutes at all Executive Board meetings and submit them in writing to the Executive Board within 24 hours.
3. Maintain the OCSM Executive Board tasks list, following up on progress with task owners, updating the board on progress during meetings.
4. Maintain a database of all OCSM Chapter leadership contacts.
5. Build and maintain OCSM's social media presence and impressions.
6. Create content and rolling activity for OCSM's media channels (Instagram, etc.).
7. Maintain an integrated relationship with the Regional Directors, Committee Chairpersons, and other SLT members to highlight OCSM programs and initiatives and Chapter events.

Treasurer

1. Maintain the integrity of the organization's EIN.
2. Update and maintain the OCSM ledger and keeping a record of all Chapter bank accounts.
3. Provide training and maintain a flow of communication with Chapter Treasurers to ensure compliance with all organizational regulations.
4. Seek sponsorships and spearhead donation efforts.

Duties of the Regional Director:

1. Oversee all OCSM activities of the Chapters in their respective region and ensure they abide by the OCSM code of ethics and general guidelines.
2. Ensure the adoption and enforcement of the OCSM Constitution and By-laws in the Region.
3. Hold a monthly call with the Chapter Presidents of the region and maintain communication with them, keeping them up to date with concerns, initiatives, activities, events, retreats, etc.
4. Maintain contact with the Secretary & Online Director to promote regional events and highlight success stories through social media.

Attendance of Conference Calls for the Student Leadership Team

All OCSM leadership are expected to attend OCSM General Business Meetings as well as their assigned meetings. The assigned meetings and their respective members are outlined below. If a member of any meeting cannot attend the meeting, they shall contact and notify in advance the individual presiding over the respective meeting. Three (3) unexcused absences will result in the removal of the member from their role. The runner-up for the role may be notified to take the position, an election may be conducted, or an interim appointment might be made to fill the position.

1. OCSM Executive Board Conference Call

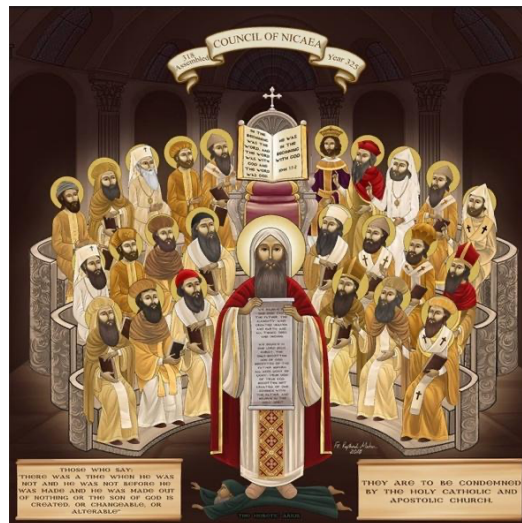
The Designee of the Metropolitan shall lead this call.

- Executive President
- Executive Vice President
- Executive Secretary & Online Director and Treasurer
- Service Operations Team (SOT)

2. OCSM Chapter Presidents Conference Call

The Executive President shall lead this call.

- Tennessee Regional Director
- Chapter Presidents
- Service Operations Team (SOT)



3. OCSM Chapter Coordinators Conference Call

The Executive Vice President shall lead this call.

- Chapter Community Service and Youth Outreach Coordinators

II. Starting a New Chapter

II. a. Getting Started

The very first step to start a new Chapter at a school is to take initiative and get a headcount of potential members. Find out the requirements for starting a student organization from the school's administration and ensure that the group can meet those requirements. Once you have this information, you are ready to contact the OCSM Executive Board and relay this information to them.

II. b. Chartering Your Chapter

The OCSM Executive Board may then contact you in order to gather more information and walk you through any additional steps necessary to get chartered.

II. c. Registering on Campus

Once you are chartered, you may then proceed with registering the organization with your school. Each school has a different procedure, so you must follow the procedure outlined by your school. The OCSM Executive Board will provide you with a template constitution. You may suggest edits to the Template Constitution to comply with your school's requirements, then send it back to the OCSM Executive Board. **Any edited form of the constitution must be sent to the OCSM Designee of the Metropolitan at admin@susocsm.org for approval prior to being presented to the school.**

II. d. Engaging Your Members

Once you have finished setting up your Chapter, you have to make sure your members are engaged. Make sure you set a meeting time that is consistent and that is favorable for members' availability; that way members are aware of what to expect. Including socials and team-building events along with your normal meetings goes a long way in keeping members engaged. If you need help coming up with ideas for these socials, feel free to reach out to your Regional Director.

Try to engage with the student body at your school by tabling, if available, and inviting classmates and other students to the meetings. Joining a well-established group can be intimidating, so make sure new members feel welcome by introducing them to the group and remembering their names.

III: Chapter Management

In order for members to benefit from OCSM, the organization must be run in an orderly fashion. Every board member must complete tasks on time in order for the club to be properly managed. In addition, rules set in place will serve as boundaries and requirements for Chapter Leadership and regular club members. Through proper planning and control, OCSM can be properly organized. This will create a sense direction for everyone in OCSM. Most importantly, every board member must be aware of his/her roles and responsibilities in order for OCSM to be fruitful. **When taken to a social event, there must be an adult to supervise appointed by your chapter's clergy advisor.**

III. a. Chapter Leadership Roles & Responsibilities

The group of students in an OCSM Chapter is the nucleus of the OCSM life on campus. The group is facilitated and guided by a team which includes elected student leaders, a clergy advisor, and a faculty sponsor. OCSM is a time commitment, therefore it is crucial to create a committee of dedicated and passionate students. Every club member must follow the set rules so leadership can be effective.

The role of the OCSM Chapter President is to provide inspiration and leadership to fellow students and guide the direction of their Chapter as prescribed from the OCSM diocesan organization, through the active participation of their fellow members. The Chapter President is the main contact for students on campus and should direct, with the input of the other Chapter members, the decisions made regarding all aspects of the group's activities and life.

Chapter President:

1. Responsible for the overall health and leadership of the Chapter.
2. Seek direction from the Chapter Clergy Advisor regarding the spiritual life of the Chapter.
3. Engage the Chapter Faculty Sponsor with hopes of expanding awareness of OCSM in the larger campus community and seeking opportunities for Orthodox Christianity to have a voice on campus through seminars, lectures, and participation in school volunteering events.
4. Have an outline of activities/goals/etc. planned for the year. Put together calendar/to-do list of events on a regular basis so officers can stay on track.
5. Responsible to lead officer meetings and chapter oversight, ensuring that all tasks are completed by the officers.
6. Hold regular meetings with Chapter Officers and Clergy Advisor to stay on track with the chapter's spiritual, service and outreach plans.
7. Responsible for weekly announcements to the chapter for upcoming meetings or events.
8. Participate in a monthly conference call with the Regional Director and other Chapter Presidents of the region.
9. Represent the OCSM Chapter before all entities.

Chapter Vice President:

1. Upkeep chapter calendar (events, speakers, etc.).
2. Contact and confirm speakers. Coordinate food/activity.
3. Reserve meeting rooms/space for OCSM meetings and events.
4. In charge of planning Tasbeha (if applicable).
5. Liaise with and oversight of Community Service events with the respective chapter coordinator.
6. If the President is unable to fulfill their duties, the Vice President will assume the role of the President.

Chapter Treasurer:

1. Must read and follow the OCSM Financial Policy as outlined in the *OCSM Guidebook & Manual*.
2. Ensure fundraising activities are in full compliance with diocesan guidelines as outlined in the *OCSM Guidebook & Manual*.
3. Responsible for keeping track of all finances (income and expense) in detail and making them available to the OCSM Executive Treasurer upon request. Absolutely, no personal bank accounts to be used.
4. Buy food for the meetings (if applicable) or delegates to one of the members.
5. Responsible for assisting the President in the creation of the budget for upcoming events.
6. Submit a budget report to the OCSM Executive Treasurer at the end of each academic year.

Chapter Secretary & Social Media Coordinator:

1. Responsible for taking meeting minutes, compiling the minutes of each Chapter meeting, and sending them along with any action items to the members of the meeting.
2. Maintain a database/list of chapter members including full name, phone number, email, and grade level and provide to the Youth Outreach Coordinator.
3. Responsible for taking attendance at each meeting and event as well as keeping an updated record of all active members in that Chapter.
4. Comply by the Social Media Policy as outlined in the *OCSM Code of Ethics*.
5. Make advertisement material (i.e., fliers) and upkeep social media channels, ensuring awareness on chapter meetings, events, and highlights of completed events.

Chapter Community Service Coordinator:

1. Plan and prepare well for monthly community service events.
2. Leverage the Community Service Idea Bank on the website to schedule and launch community service events.
3. Report and record/log chapter events in the respective Google Form of the OCSM Community Service Committee.

Chapter Youth Outreach Coordinator:

1. Work closely with the President and Secretary to touch base and encourage enrolled student to attend chapter meetings and events.
2. Leverage the Youth Outreach Idea Bank on the website to schedule and launch outreach events.
3. For outreach, develop small groups of invested members in this effort to build fellowship and friendships, and check-in with disconnected members.

III. b. Nomination and Election Process of Chapter Leadership

1. The OCSM Chapter Leadership Election Guidelines ("Election Guidelines") are incorporated by reference.
2. All Chapters are to adhere to the Election Guidelines when conducting their nomination and election process.
3. Chapters are to start this Nomination and Election in process in March, or as prescribed in the Election Guidelines.
4. The OCSM Chapter Leadership is elected to a one-year term. Campaigning is not allowed.
5. The Chapter President will announce the start date of the process with plenty advance notice to the members of the Chapter.
6. Nomination is through **self-expression only**. A *Self-Expression Questionnaire* form is sent out to all chapters to kick off the process. There will be one unique form per region.
7. The Clergy Advisors shall oversee the nomination and voting processes in each region entirely.
8. Clergy Advisors will not participate in nomination or voting, but they have the right to veto non-qualifying candidates per the criteria set for a member to run for office.
9. A vetting process is then conducted to examine the qualifications of the applicants.
 - a. Step 1: The Chapter Clergy Advisor along with the Chapter President will vet the applicants to ensure the qualifications are met.
 - b. Step 2: The Clergy Advisor will vet the applicants with their parish priest and their Father Confessor.
10. The ballot for the Chapter is created and the election date is announced to the Chapter with ample time ahead of the election date.
11. The election is then conducted online via Google Forms per the announced date.
12. All officers shall be elected by *simple majority vote* by the members.
13. The results are sent to the Clergy Advisor.
14. The new officers are announced to the Chapter.

What qualities should officers have? Besides being a genuine model of an Orthodox Christian, an officer ought to be self-motivated, persistent, an active communicator, works equally with all the committee members, and has the ability to plan and follow through.

Who can vote? All active OCSM Chapter members are eligible to vote. The voting member must be an OCSM member for at least a semester to participate in the voting process. Non-OCSM members *are not permitted* to participate in the election.

III. c. Creating Chapter Goals

After identifying the student leaders willing to serve in an OCSM chapter, the group may identify the chapter goals and familiarize themselves with the mission statement, as described on page 3 of this document. Below are some questions to consider when defining your chapter goals when preparing to present a sponsorship request to your school.

1. What is the purpose of the club?
2. What are the goals of the meeting?
3. What are the meeting days and times?
4. Who will the club cater to?
5. Who are the officers?

Finally, find a faculty member and a clergy advisor willing to sponsor the club. The faculty sponsor provides meeting spaces and order during the meetings. Once a sponsor is identified, fill out any necessary paperwork. Some schools require approval from the principal or other administrative faculty. Please make sure to follow all school guidance so that your chapter can be registered with the school successfully. If any school guidance conflicts with anything in this guidebook, the chapter leadership is to reach out to the OCSM Designee of the Metropolitan for guidance.

III. d. Chapter Clergy Advisor (Spiritual)

As it is generally required to have a Teacher Sponsor for a student organization to be registered with a school, likewise an OCSM Chapter must have a Chapter Clergy Advisor. The role of the Clergy Advisor is to guide the spiritual growth of the students and connect them to the Church life.

The Clergy Advisor must be a priest of the Diocese, or otherwise approved by the Metropolitan or his designee, should a diocesan parish not exist in the school's town. The Clergy Advisor is usually a priest from a local church nearby the school. Priests from the six Oriental Orthodox Churches may, and are encouraged to, participate in the ministry of the established OCSM Chapters in the Southern Coptic Diocese and by signing a memorandum of understanding. The local SUS Diocese Clergy can coordinate this effort by contacting the Designee of the Metropolitan.

The Clergy Advisor shall work to integrate the school experience into the life in Christ:

1. Actively seek the input of the students and encourage them to take responsibility for the planning and execution of Chapter events, and mentor the student leaders to become fully responsible for themselves and their peers as grounded Orthodox Christians.
2. Oversee and ensure the lectures, speakers, and activities are in line with the Faith and Tradition of the Coptic Orthodox Church.
3. Attend the OCSM Chapter events as possible (i.e., Bible study, volunteering), confirming the Church's commitment to the students' growth and success.
4. Advise on spiritual matters; provide spiritual counseling and sacramental confession.

Communication and Awareness

It is necessary for all Clergy to be on-board with OCSM, its mission and its presence in the Diocese. As the Clergy is aware of their youth entering high school, it is the perfect opportunity to promote OCSM, connect the youth and encourage them to be involved with their local Chapter.

There is no term commitment for a Clergy Advisor. However, should the Clergy Advisor wish to withdraw from his role in OCSM, it is kindly requested to:

- a. Discuss the matter with the Designee of the Metropolitan;
- b. Check with other local priests that may be interested to take on the role; and
- c. Transition information and history of your role and oversight to the new Clergy Advisor to ensure a smooth transition.

IV: Chapter Life

IV. a. Planning Your Year

Planning Early: It's important to plan ahead. Whether you plan to meet weekly or bi-weekly, make a commitment to keeping regular meetings. People appreciate consistency, and if they know that meetings are on a regular schedule, they can plan around that or choose to come to an occasional meeting when they are unable to attend everyone. Make sure you involve your leadership team in the planning process, so that everyone has a chance to voice their thoughts before the new academic year begins.

Planning Concisely: As you plan meeting content, it's best to include elements that relate back to the three pillars of OCSM: Discipleship, Fellowship, and Service. The most successful OCSM Chapters include a good mix of all these elements. Make a list of concise goals for your Chapter during the coming semester or year, and revisit these frequently to make sure your Chapter's activities align with your goals.

Planning Timely: When planning your calendar for the academic year, take major events from your school or local parish calendars and map out the coming Fall and Spring semesters. Fill in known dates for OCSM events at the Region or Diocesan level and make notes on months where you do not know specific dates, but you have a rough idea of what will go on around that time. **Chapter events must not conflict with diocesan or regional retreats.** Outline when your meetings will be and what format you would like them to have. Be open to adjusting this plan as the year goes on and you learn what works and what doesn't work but try to be consistent whenever possible.

Planning Compliantly: Service is an honor with an inseparable responsibility. Therefore, we comply with the following:

- You must obtain approval from your Clergy Advisor before inviting a guest speaker, whether clergy or laity.
- Each OCSM Chapter is an *embassy* of the Orthodox Church on campus; therefore, we are bound to observe what the Church teaches and expects of us without exception. If these teachings are not in line with a personal lifestyle—that an Officer/Member is not willing to sacrifice, a clear choice should be made to be excused from his/her role.
- Such matters that are not in accordance with the Church teachings include playing secular music at OCSM events, serving non-fasting food during a fasting period, etc.
- Please refer to the **OCSM Code of Ethics** which is required to be read and signed by every Student Leadership Team member and Chapter Officer.

IV. b. Communication

High school students live busy lives, and one of the most common problems OCSM leaders face is how best to communicate with their Chapter. Clear, consistent communication can be the difference between a struggling Chapter and a thriving community that makes a lasting impact on their school and their youth community. We suggest you adapt the following three steps with your OCSM members.

1. Create a Contacts List

It's crucial to have a spreadsheet (roster) where you keep updated information on every student that is part of your Chapter—even the students who rarely attend meetings. A good way to do this is to set up a simple form where students enter their name, year in school, email address, and phone number.

Tip: If your high school has a roundtable or tabling event for student organizations, that is a great time to start collecting contact information from students you know on campus and publicize the organization.

2. Create an Instagram Account

You may have a couple students in your Chapter who aren't on Instagram, but chances are most of your members are. Social media is a great way to give any student the ability to start a conversation online, and it is simple to publicize events on Facebook or Instagram. Please be sure to adhere strictly by the **OCSM Code of Ethics** for all social media.

3. Set up a Communication Schedule

Whether it's just you or a team of volunteers contacting students in your Chapter, you need an intentional communication schedule so that you know when to contact each student. Consistency also benefits the students in your Chapter because they have regular meeting reminders to rely on. Here are some suggestions:

- **Email your Chapter.** A quick email five or six days before your next meeting will let your members know what's coming up next and gives them plenty of time to plan ahead. Try not to send more than one email a week on average, because it makes each email come across as a little more important.
- **Send a Text Reminder.** If you do this about six hours before your meeting starts, it serves as a great personal reminder and encourages last-minute planners to attend. You can even use apps, such as [GroupMe](https://www.groupme.com/), to easily connect all your Chapter members using just their cell number.

Commit to a strategy that you think you can maintain and see what effect it has on your attendance.

IV. c. Funding Your Chapter

Funding OCSM Chapters relies on charitable contributions and acceptable means of funding. OCSM is planned to be established as a 501(c)(3) non-profit incorporated under the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States. Efforts to generate income for OCSM must comply with the teachings of the Coptic Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the guidance of the Diocesan Metropolitan. Therefore, we have compiled a list of ideas to appropriately raise funding. Should have any questions, send them our way at treasurer@susocsm.org.

Ideas of Appropriate and Approved Funding Opportunities

- **Sponsors:** Cold calling people to ask for donations/sponsorships. (Similar to how people go about raising money for mission trips.) Donations can either be monthly or a one-time special gift. Follow-up with 'thank you' letters, monthly newsletters, etc. to make sure the sponsor feels included and appreciated.
- **Recycle:** Recycle Place collects ink cartridges (both inkjet and laser) and pays up to \$4.50 for each. Once you register your organization online, the company helps you with the collecting process by providing you with brochures and guidelines. Once you have collected at least eight to 10 lasers or 30 inkjet cartridges, you send them to the company, which will later send money to your group or organization. Create a drive within schools, businesses, churches, campus, libraries, etc. to collect ink cartridges.
- **Percentage Nights:** Get your local Chapter to tell family/friends/share on social media about percentage nights. Partner with your restaurant of choice and collect a certain percentage of sales for your organization. (Example: partner with Chipotle for 10% of all sales between 5-7 pm if you mention "OCSM" or show them a flier.)
- **Donation Jar:** Ask businesses to sponsor your event by allowing you to set up a donation jar at their place of business. Place them in several local businesses. Collect your donations once a week or more until your group has reached its' fundraising goal.
- **Shoe Drive:** In a shoe drive, individuals can donate gently worn pairs of shoes to local Chapter. Then, an organization like Funds2Orgs can pick the shoes up from your location. With Funds2Orgs in particular, the shoes your nonprofit collects are sent to small business owners in developing nations to support their small businesses. After the shoes are sorted, they'll write a check that can go right back to the local Chapter.

IV. d. Finance and Treasury Policy

Background and 501(c)(3) Guidelines

- There are different types of entities that qualify for 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status. OCSM of SUS is registered as a “religious organization”. Therefore, all financial activity should relate to the religious organization’s purpose. No one’s private interests should benefit from any financial transaction. No one should be compensated, nor should there be any advocacy of political parties.
- The IRS has very clear guidelines on how the organization’s tax-exemption status should be maintained. The IRS describes a 501(c)(3) as a “charitable organization” in the colloquial. Thus, members must perceive OCSM as such.
 - “The term *charitable* is used in its generally accepted legal sense and includes relief of the poor, the distressed, or the underprivileged; advancement of religion; advancement of education or science; erecting or maintaining public buildings, monuments, or works; lessening the burdens of government; lessening neighborhood tensions; eliminating prejudice and discrimination; defending human and civil rights secured by law; and combating community deterioration and juvenile delinquency.”
- Before any transaction of money takes place, OCSM must make sure this transaction would be described by the IRS as *charitable*. **The transaction cannot be operated for the benefit of private interests.**
- In the instance of an IRS audit, all OCSM’s transactions may be scrutinized to make sure all transactions are under the 501(c)(3) guidelines. Our organization will operate in a way that will always be prepared for an audit.
- Improper handling of money specifically includes overcompensation or misuse of organization assets. In these cases, the IRS can fine organization members up to 200 *per cent* of the benefit received. It is vital that these guidelines are understood and respected.

Finance and Treasury Policy: Executive Framework

- A single regional bank account has been set up for each region of the Diocese. That is: a single bank account in Florida will allow the Executive OCSM Treasurer to responsibly track all transactions and keep things under one umbrella. Likewise, a single bank account in Texas and another in Tennessee.
- These accounts are created with OCSM’s EIN; thus, strict financial controls must be exercised to protect the OCSM entity legally and financially.
- Each regional bank account is accessed by its Treasurer and with the Regional Clergy Advisor, who are the authorized signers on the account.
- The OCSM Regional Treasurer will keep track of every transaction made with Chapters in their region using a standardized ledger in Microsoft Excel.

- Wire transfers, PayPal, or Venmo will be used to exchange money between the Regional OCSM account and individual Chapter accounts, depending on the stage the individual Chapters are in throughout the process (more info in next section).
- The OCSM Regional Treasurer must submit a monthly financial report to the Executive Treasurer, whether there have been or have not been financial transactions during the month.

Finance and Treasury Policy: Chapter Framework

- We encourage Chapters to grow their treasuries to suffice their needs, so that it can be efficiently managed. Chapter Treasurers should research how their individual school's funding system works to take advantage of the school's support.
- Initially, Chapters shall not have their own bank accounts. Until Chapters determine that they do in fact need their own accounts through OCSM's EIN, Chapters will merely need an account agreed upon by their officers (Chapter President and Treasurer) to receive money from, and to send money to, the main Executive OCSM bank account.
- Should there be a need for a Chapter in the future to open a bank account, this is to be discussed and assessed with the OCSM Executive Treasurer and the Designee of the Metropolitan.
- The Executive Treasurer will keep track of each Chapter's evolution should the need arise, as a Chapter grows, to open a standalone bank account. This process will allow Chapters to grow at an appropriate, safe rate. It will also allow us to help States open accounts using OCSM's EIN on an as-needed basis only with the appropriate financial controls over the account.
- Bank accounts are not to be opened through the school, in order to avoid the IRS registering a different EIN than the one OCSM already has. Please contact the Executive Treasurer before opening a bank account.
- All Chapter treasurers are to coordinate with the Executive Treasurer to establish an initial fundraising goal before each semester, and to exercise all of their means to meet this goal by the end of the semester. Please note, according to Diocese's guidelines, all fundraisers must strictly be donation based. (Check '*Funding Your Chapter*' section of this guidebook.) This budgeting exercise will be specific to the means and resources of each individual Chapter.
- Any leftover funds, remaining with a Chapter by the end of the year, are to be transferred to the OCSM main bank account and held in a reserve fund until the following year. Under no circumstances shall a Chapter's funds be transferred to a member's bank account or be spent/wasted to exhaust the funds. Please coordinate the transfer with the Executive Treasurer.

Warning: We do not allow the option of opening a bank account for your Chapter—it is more of a last resort—simply because it will just cause you extra work when students graduate in passing on the account information, signature approval, keeping strong financial controls, etc.

V: Contacts

OCSM Clergy Advisory Board

Fr. James Gendi, OCSM Designee of the Metropolitan and Regional Clergy Advisor for Texas
frjamesgendi@gmail.com

Fr. Jerome Maximous, Regional Clergy Advisor for Florida
frjeromemaximous@gmail.com

Fr. Daniel Ebrahim, Regional Clergy Advisor for Tennessee
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OCSM Student Leadership Team (SLT)

Executive Board

Jason Lewis, Executive President
president@susocsm.org

Daniel Amin, Executive Vice President
vp@susocsm.org

Gena Armia, Executive Secretary & Online Director
secretary@susocsm.org

Gena Armiai, Executive Treasurer
treasurer@susocsm.org

Regional Leadership & Committees

Viola Bektor, Regional Director – Tennessee
tennessee@susocsm.org

VI: Amendments

Proposed amendments will be reviewed at the last meeting held by the Executive Board each academic year, in the Spring Semester.

In order for a change to be proposed, it must be emailed in its exact wording to the OCSM Secretary during the Fall and Spring semesters through the month of March.

Any member may propose a change. The member that proposes the change will have a chance to discuss the proposed change at the annual bylaws review. In order for a change to pass, at least 2/3 of the members of the OCSM Student Leadership Team (Executive Board, Regional Directors, and Committee Chairs) must approve the potential amendment. If the amendment does not meet this threshold, then it shall not pass. The proposed amendment can be made again if the author so chooses at the following annual review of the bylaws.

All articles, rules, and regulations of OCSM are subject to the Metropolitan of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate-Diocese of the Southern United States and may be modified by the Metropolitan at any time.

Version History Log

A log of version history shall be maintained to document the history of revisions of this guidebook.

Version #	Date of Change	Explanation of Change	Modified By
v1.0	08-Oct-20	Initial Document Creation	Tony Benjamin Nicholas Shenoda Meray Lewis Marcorios Girgis Kyrillos Nashed
v.1.1	29-Jun-23	Entire document revision: redefining the mission and vision, creation of new org structure.	Abanoub Henry Fr. Jerome Maximous
v.1.2	30-Apr-24	Revisions to the OCSM footprint map and ministry org chart; new SLT	Fr. Jerome Maximous
v1.3	09-Jul-25	Removed OCCM content from Secretary responsibilities; corrected grammar; updated chapter map	Jason Lewis