

Ed Schoder, EdD

One of the greatest joys of being the NHS advisor is that I am privileged to work with 200 of the nicest juniors and seniors at Oakdale High School. These students excel in scholarship, service, character and leadership.

The drawback is the emails, phone calls, and conversations—at unimaginable times and places—I find myself having with parents whose sons and daughters were not accepted into the NHS. In an effort to dispel myths, I am offering the following advice. I have advised both the NHS and Faculty Council at two schools for ten years; I served on the Faculty Council for six years prior to becoming an advisor. While I am no longer a voting member of the Council, I am privy to their deliberations. I do work with them to establish standards for membership. If you are interested in the NHS, please make sure that you meet the Faculty Council's minimum expectations in the four following areas:

- **Scholarship:** Eligible juniors and seniors must have a cumulative, unweighted Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher on September 1st of the academic year. Eligible students and their parents are notified in writing by September 15th of the application process. If accepted, members must maintain a 3.5 GPA.
- **Service:** The Faculty Council expects applicants to have a minimum of six hours of meaningful, documented, community service for each year of high school prior to their acceptance. This service is cheerfully and enthusiastically rendered to benefit the aged, poor, disadvantaged and physically challenged. Volunteer service is uncompensated; it transcends the nuclear and extended family. Community service cannot benefit a profit-based business. If accepted, members must perform 16 hours of community service with the NHS.
- **Character:** The Faculty Council expects candidates and members to uphold the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and reliability. Applicants and members are expected to obey school and community rules; they exemplify desirable behavioral traits like cheerfulness, poise and punctuality—even under trying circumstances. They accept and grow from advice and criticism. The students—not their parents—take responsibility for fulfilling obligations. As the Faculty Council asks for faculty input regarding character prior to acceptance, they will request quarterly updates after students are inducted.
- **Leadership:** The Faculty Council looks for candidates who actively promote the school's civic life by participating in multiple, meaningful school activities. Applicants should belong to at least one school club and participate in sports or community activities. They exercise a positive influence in upholding school values and inspire positive behaviors from their peers.

Over the past nine years, I have learned that it is not the end of the world if one is denied acceptance into the NHS. Not being accepted is a learning experience that helps students prepare for college. The Faculty Council can be viewed as a precursor to college admissions committees. If the council senses a weakness, it is possible colleges will perceive the same weakness. I have witnessed tremendous positive growth by several students who were denied admission their junior year. In

addition, the NHS is not for every student. Membership adds to one's obligations, primarily 16 hours of mandatory NHS community service. It is okay to have other priorities in life. Finally, while this brief overview aims at clarifying basic expectations, the Faculty Council acknowledges that there can be extenuating circumstances that prevent the desired level of community service—but not the desired level of character! If you have questions or concerns, please see me.

So, with this advice, go forth and volunteer at Frederick Memorial Hospital! Clean kennels and walk pets at the Humane Society! Finish your Eagle Service Project! Teach arts and crafts to toddlers at vacation bible school! Visit Walter Reed Army Hospital with the Veteran's Club! Swing a hammer for Habitat for Humanity! Enjoy your summer; enjoy helping others: the aged, poor, disadvantaged and physically challenged. This is all about building character and leadership while performing service. Just remember to document your service and get your supervisor's phone number for the application.
(r.02.27.2020)