

Merit Scholar Award Study Guide

BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS *of* AMERICA

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The BPA Merit Scholar Award is a prestigious award in the BPA Cares Program and is open to any advisor or student member. To achieve this honor, a member must score 90% or higher on the objective exam, which consists of 50 multiple-choice and true/false questions.

This study guide is designed to serve as your primary roadmap as you prepare for the Merit Scholar exam. It is highly recommended that you also review any additional information referenced within the website links provided throughout this study guide.

GENERAL INFORMATION

National Center Headquarters

The BPA National Center is located in Franklin County in Columbus, Ohio.

Meaning of Organization's Name

- **Business:** The field for which we prepare our students; emphasizes that we educate our members to work efficiently, not only in an office setting, but also in a wide variety of business situations.
- **Professionals:** Our students indicate they join Business Professionals of America to take advantage of a wide variety of professional development opportunities.
- **Of America:** Symbolizes pride in our country and its free enterprise business system.

Mission Statement

To develop and empower student leaders to discover their passion and change the world by creating unmatched opportunities in learning, professional growth, and service.

Vision Statement

To be an innovator in Career and Technical Education, providing our members with opportunities for growth through education, competition, community service, and personal development.

Annual Theme for 2025–26

Amplify Your Impact

National BPA Tagline

The purpose of the organization's tagline is to serve as a linking device between our organization and our name. The official tagline is: **Giving Purpose to Potential**. To ensure that there is a clear communication of Business Professionals of America, the tagline may be used with the logo for printed pieces. However, this is not a requirement for use of the logo.

Official BPA Pledge

We are met in a spirit of friendship and goodwill as we prepare for careers in a world-class workforce. We work together to develop professionalism and leadership through Business Professionals of America, and pledge our loyalty to our nation.

Official BPA Colors

- **Navy Blue:** Signifies the success achieved through leadership and professionalism.
- **Red:** Symbolizes the friendship obtained through the teamwork of our organization.
- **Tan:** Represents the bountiful fields of opportunity in America.

Proper Usage of Acronym (BPA)

The acronym "BPA" is acceptable in casual conversation and personal correspondence to identify the organization. Once the name is spelled out in full, the acronym may be used in text. The acronym may not be used for cover titles or headlines.

Our Emblem



The four points of the BPA shield stand for Ambition, Leadership, Sociability, and Poise. The shield itself stands for honor and dignity, as well as the importance of business in America. The stripes represent education, citizenship, loyalty, patriotism, competency, and dependability. The bar represents the service provided by employees in business occupations. The quill and inkwell represent the stability of business occupations through the ages. Lastly, the torch represents worthy goals.

Official BPA Attire

- The official BPA blazer is navy blue with the logo located on the left side.
- The name tag is to be worn on the right side of the jacket.
- The highest Torch Award pin earned is to be worn on the right lapel.
- The officer pin is placed on the right lapel above the nametag.

Social Media

BPA social media are designed to provide news, information, and engagement opportunities for advisors, and student members.

- **Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/BPAconnect>
- **Twitter:** @BPAconnect
- **Instagram:** <http://instagram.com/company/BPAconnect>
- **LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/BPAconnect>
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/BPAconnect>
- **TikTok:** @BPAconnect

BPA Week

Business Professionals of America Week takes place the second full week in February and coincides with Career and Technical Education Month.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

Members of the Executive Council represent the BPA student members from across the country. These student officers serve one-year terms and are elected each year during the National Leadership Conference.

The Secondary Division Executive Council is composed of up to six officers, and the Post-secondary Division Executive Council is composed of up to four officers. The Executive Council positions for the Secondary Division are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Historian, and Parliamentarian. The Executive Council positions for the Post-secondary Division are President, Vice President, Secretary/Treasurer, and Parliamentarian.

Executive Council candidate requirements:

- Be a student member in good standing for the current membership year, as of February 15.
- Be currently serving, or have served, as an elected officer of a chapter, regional/area, or state association of BPA.
- Secondary Division candidates must have a cumulative 2.75 grade average based on a 4.0 scale (official school transcript required).
- Postsecondary Division candidates must have a cumulative 2.75 grade average based on a 4.0 scale (official school transcript required). This GPA requirement is cumulative for the past two terms.

To learn more about the Executive Council, visit <https://bpa.org/about-us/executive-council/>.

Officer for a Day Program

This program provides Middle Level members with the opportunity to shadow the Executive Council for a day at the National Leadership Conference.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

National BPA Board of Trustees

The Business Professionals of America Board of Trustees is composed of a talented group of educators, organization and community leaders, and industry professionals dedicated to the mission and vision of our organization. The Board of Trustees made up of 13 voting members and two non-voting ex-officio members. This group meets regularly throughout the membership year and manages all affairs of Business Professionals of America. To learn more about the current Board of Trustees, visit: <https://bpa.org/about-us/board-of-trustees/>.

State Association Advisory Council (SAAC)

The State Association Advisory Council (SAAC) collaborates with BPA's Classroom Educators Advisory Council as well as other support groups and special committees to improve programs. In addition, SAAC supports and facilitates the implementation of programs, policies, and activities as established by the Board of Trustees. To learn more about the State Association Advisory Council, visit <https://bpa.org/about-us/state-association-advisory-council/>.

Classroom Educators Advisory Council (CEAC)

The Classroom Educators Advisory Council (CEAC) serves as a liaison between chapter advisors and the Board of Trustees. Its purpose is to promote the objectives of the Business Professionals of America programs, establish and monitor effective Workplace Skills Assessment Program competitive events, serve as a clearinghouse for suggested improvements and changes pertaining to competitive events, and ensure that State Associations are informed of currently adopted Workplace Skills Assessment Program guidelines. To learn more about the Classroom Educators Advisory Council, visit <https://bpa.org/about-us/classroom-educators-advisory-council/>.

National Business Advisory Council (NBAC)

The purpose of the National Business Advisory Council (NBAC) is to offer insight and guidance on the future of business and industry to assist with the development of programs that offer real-world experience for BPA students. All members of NBAC are approved by the Board of Trustees based upon recommendations from the NBAC chair and other NBAC members.

Executive Council

Members of the Executive Council represent the BPA student members from across the country. These student officers serve a one-year term and are elected each year during the National Leadership Conference.

National BPA Staff

Working primarily remotely throughout the United States, the national staff is a diverse group of professionals with a wide range of expertise in nonprofit and association management, member services management, program development and evaluation, partnership development, financial management, communications strategies, event management, organizational strategy, and more. Together, we aim to provide responsive programs and services of the highest quality to the internal and external partners of Business Professionals of America. To learn more about national staff, including individual roles and responsibilities, visit <https://bpa.org/staff/>.

BPA PROGRAMS

Torch Awards Program

The Torch Awards Program is designed to promote professionalism and leadership in both career development and personal growth. There are activities in seven Torch categories.

1. Leadership
2. Service
3. Cooperation
4. Knowledge
5. Friendship
6. Love, Hope, and Faith
7. Citizenship

Each Torch activity is worth 5, 10, 15, or 20 points. There are four levels of recognition.

Executive Torch Award: Given at the chapter level, the Executive Torch Award requires 10 points in each Torch category.

- **Diplomat Torch Award:** Depending on your state, this Diplomat Torch Award might be awarded at the chapter, regional, or state level. The Diplomat Torch Award requires 30 points in each Torch category.
- **Statesman Torch Award:** Given at the state level, the Statesman Torch Award requires 50 points in each Torch category.
- **Ambassador Torch Award:** Given at the national level, the Ambassador Torch Award requires 70 points in each Torch category.

To learn more about the Torch Awards program visit <https://bpa.org/torch-awards/>.

BPA Cares Program

Participation in this program means that members are engaging in worthwhile projects that support the betterment of their community, while having the opportunity to receive recognition from the national organization. Alumni members are also eligible to earn individual BPA Cares awards.

Service Learning Awards	Special Recognition Awards	Professional Awards
Community Service Award Environmental Action/ Awareness Award Safety Awareness Award Service Learning Individual Award Special Olympics Award	Marketing and Communications Award BPA Merit Scholar Award Chapter Activities Award of Excellence Recruiter of the Year Award Membership Explosion Award The Professional Cup	Advisor of the Year Award Emerging Advisor of the Year Award Emerging Professional of the Year Award Student of the Year Award Hall of Fame Award Outstanding Service Award

To learn more about the BPA Cares Program, specific awards, or to download the BPA Cares Handbook, visit <https://bpa.org/bpa-cares>.

Workplace Skills Assessment Program

The goal of this program is to provide all student members (Middle Level, Secondary, and Post-secondary) with the opportunity to demonstrate workplace skills learned through business education courses. Students prepare for and compete in contests in more than 100 categories in six Assessment Areas.

1. Business Administration
2. Digital Communication and Design
3. Finance
4. Health Administration
5. Management Information Systems
6. Management, Marketing, and Communication

Each division (Middle Level, Secondary, and Post-secondary) has its own set of events, and members only compete against other members in their respective division. A complete list of events with descriptions is available at <https://members.bpa.org/>.

The WSAP Guidelines are a comprehensive set of instructions, descriptions, and details to help prepare students for WSAP competitions. The Guidelines are an essential tool for participating in a WSAP event. The WSAP Guidelines can be downloaded by BPA advisors and members using your login credentials at <https://members.bpa.org/download-center/>.

Virtual Competitive Events

Virtual Competitions are available at the national level only and are open to all BPA student members. These events are separate from our WSAP program, and there are no regional or state competitions required to qualify. The registration deadline is December 1, 2025. There are 15 virtual events.

- (V01) Virtual Multimedia & Promotion Individual
- (V02) Virtual Multimedia & Promotion Team
- (V03) Software Engineering Team
- (V04) Web Application Team
- (V05) Mobile Applications
- (V06) Promotional Photography
- (V07) Cybersecurity / Digital Forensics
- (V08) Start-up Enterprise Team
- (V09) Financial Portfolio Team
- (V10) Virtual Branding Team
- (V11) 2D Animation Team
- (V12) Social Media Marketing Campaign Team
- (V13) Esports Team
- (V14) Ethical Leadership and Decision-Making Team
- (V15) Virtual Interview and Digital Portfolio Design

Student Certification Series

We offer an enhanced certification series for all student members to make sure they get the most out of their experience with BPA. To learn more visit: <https://members.bpa.org/learn>.

Partner Contests

BPA is proud to partner with organizations, State Associations, and businesses to enhance the competitive offerings available to members leading up to and including the National Leadership Conference. To learn more visit <https://members.bpa.org/partner-competitions/>.

Special Olympics

Special Olympics is the official national service organization for members participating in BPA. To learn more visit <https://members.bpa.org/bpa-cares/special-olympics-award/>.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

BPA provides membership opportunities for a broad range of students who are varied in age and skill level. To qualify for student membership, a student must be in one of the following divisions:

- Middle Level Division
- Secondary Division
 - Associate Division
- Postsecondary Division

Important membership deadlines:

- **November 1:** Membership processed by this date will ensure that chapters receive all communications from BPA and ensure membership deadlines for Regional and State events.
- **February 15:** Registrations received by this date will be eligible for competition at the National Leadership Conference.

Alumni Membership Division

The Alumni Division is open to any former active member from the Middle Level, Secondary, or Postsecondary Divisions. The BPA Alumni Division was established to provide a means for former students and advisors to maintain their involvement with BPA through continued service and support and to provide networking opportunities with other like-minded professionals.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Qualifying for NLC

To attend the National Leadership Conference, a participant must be a registered BPA member in good standing and be accompanied by an approved chaperone. Additionally, a member must qualify to attend NLC in at least one of the following ways:

- Finishing high enough in a state WSAP competitive event. Contact your State Advisor for information on regional and state conferences
- Being a local, regional, or state officer.
- Representing your state as a voting delegate for your division.
- Being involved in an Executive Council campaign either as a candidate or otherwise actively involved.
- Earning an Ambassador Torch Award or BPA Cares Award.
- Participating in the National Leadership Academy and/or National Volunteer & Internship Program.

National Leadership Conference Locations	
Nashville, Tennessee	May 6-10, 2026
Denver, Colorado	May 5-9, 2027
Orlando, Florida	May 10-14, 2028
Washington, D.C	May 9-13, 2029

BPA HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1963: The Vocational Education Act authorizes a major expansion and redirection of vocational education. The need for a student organization for students enrolled in career/technical and office/business programs was recognized.

1964: The American Vocational Association conducts a study of 43 states indicating that 67% of the state vocational education supervisors wanted a career/technical youth group for students in office/business programs.

1965: Another study confirms the 1964 study findings revealing the desire for a career/technical youth group for students in office/business programs. State supervisors meet to develop guidelines for a youth group.

1966: In July, the Vocational Office Education Clubs of America (VOECA) takes form, founded by youth group representatives to decide the most effective means to implement the office occupations youth group. After intensive effort, the Articles of Incorporation for the

Office Education Association (OEA) is established. The first three states to affiliate were Iowa, Kansas, and Wisconsin.

1971: The Office Education Association establishes the National Center in Columbus, Ohio. The Board of Trustees also approves the Alumni Division.

1982: OEA purchases the National Center located at 5454 Cleveland Avenue, Columbus, Ohio.

1983: In July, OEA conducts a dedication ceremony for the National Center.

1984: The Board of Trustees commissioned Market One (an integrated direct marketing agency in Beachwood, Ohio) to complete a marketing study of the OEA. The resulting long-range marketing plan recommended reform of the national image of the OEA.

1988: Using the recommendations of the marketing study—the OEA became Business Professionals of America.

1992: Business Professionals of America pays off the National Center and the mortgage is burned at a ceremony at the National Leadership Conference in Cincinnati, Ohio.

2003: BPA Corporate approves the Middle Level Program. The BPA Middle Level Division is born.

2004: The Middle Level Division members participate in the National Leadership Conference.

2009: The first rescheduling of a National Leadership Conference was in Dallas, Texas. This rescheduling was due to concerns with the H1N1 Influenza outbreak.

2010: The BPA pledge is changed from “We are met in a spirit of friendship and goodwill as we prepare for productive lives in business and office careers...” to “We are met in a spirit of friendship and goodwill as we prepare for careers in a world-class workforce...”.

2012: The first National Walk for Special Olympics is held at NLC in Chicago, Illinois.

2013: National virtual competitions are introduced online.

2015: The first National BPA Day of Service is held at NLC in Anaheim, California.

2016: BPA celebrates its 50th Anniversary in Boston, Massachusetts, and breaks the Guinness World Record for the largest gathering of people wearing tie-dye.

2019: Attendance surpasses 6,000 individuals for the first time at NLC in Anaheim, California. BPA unveiled a new logo and updated brand identity, including the current tagline, “Giving Purpose to Potential”.

2020: The addition of Health Administration assessment area. BPA begins offering International Independent Chapters in China and Peru.

2024: BPA begins offering International Independent Chapters in Canada, Singapore, South Korea, and United Kingdom.