Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) is the only national medical honor society. Its raison d'être can be expressed in a phrase: to recognize and perpetuate excellence in the medical profession. As stated in the society's constitution, "Alpha Omega Alpha is organized for educational purposes exclusively and not for profit, and its aims shall be the promotion of scholarship and research in medical schools, the encouragement of a high standard of character and conduct among medical students and graduates, and the recognition of high attainment in medical science, practice, and related fields."

To fulfill the role it has set for itself, AOA elects outstanding medical students, graduates, alumni, faculty, and honorary members to its ranks. It sponsors several different programs, which are the AOA Visiting Professorships - designed to enrich the educational environment of the medical schools to which they are awarded; The Leaders in American Medicine videotape series, which present biographical interviews with distinguished men and women in American medicine; and the society's journal, The Pharos, which is published quarterly and includes non-technical papers and regular features that address a wide variety of topics of historical, philosophic, and current interest to physicians. In addition, the society sponsors annual competitions for medical students: The Student Essay Awards and the Carolyn L. Kuckein Student Research Fellowships. In collaboration with the Association of American Medical Colleges, awards are also presented annually to outstanding teachers under the program known as the Robert J. Glaser Distinguished Teacher Awards. For more information about AOA, visit http://www.alphaomegaalpha.org.

Election to AOA is a distinction that accompanies a physician throughout his or her career. Especially for the younger physician, the society provides a forum for the exchange of ideas as well as a source of valuable contacts. The NYU School of Medicine uses the following guidelines in the election of students to the NYU School of Medicine chapter of AOA:

**Pre-Clinical Assessment**

The preclinical curriculum at the NYU School of Medicine is graded and recorded by the Office of Registration and Student Records on a pass/fail basis. In order to inform discussion of students for election to membership in AOA, the Office, at the conclusion of each curricular module, asks each module director for a list of the students who performed in the top quarter of the class for that particular module.

Students are assigned a number of weighted "points" that correspond to the number of times he or she appears in the high-performance group for each module. Those points, divided by the total number of points possible for any one student to achieve, constitute a "pre-clinical percentage."
**Clinical Assessment**

A similar procedure is followed for the grades obtained in the core clinical clerkships; those points, divided by the total number of possible points per student, generates a "clinical percentage."

**Overall Assessment**

These two percentages are averaged, and this cumulative percentage determines the order in which the AOA Selection Committee discusses students. The committee considers in detail all students whose scores place them in the top 1/3 of the class. All students who perform very highly in the core clinical clerkships are also reviewed, regardless of preclinical points. In addition, the AOA selection committee members have the ability to nominate a student for consideration based on exceptional contributions outside of academics.

Students considered for AOA are discussed by the committee in depth and a holistic approach is taken. Strong emphasis is placed upon professionalism and contributions outside of academics including research and extracurricular service activities, particularly in a leadership role. The bylaws of Alpha Omega Alpha allow NYU to elect 1/6 of its graduating class to membership.