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American Students Organize: Founding the National Student Association After World War II is a remarkable accomplishment. Part memoir, part compilation of documents, and part analysis, this book exhaustively covers the organization and first years of the National Student Association from its establishment in 1946 to 1952. The NSA, which became the representative organization for America's college and university student governments, played an important role both in campus politics and national social activism in the period following the Second World War. Many of the NSA's leaders, who are chronicled in this book, went on to play important roles in American society in subsequent years.

The NSA, and the individuals chronicled in this book, reflected a sense of post-war idealism and commitment to peace and democratic values. This idealism was soon shattered by the tensions of the Cold War and the ideological struggles of the 1950s. Indeed, the NSA itself got caught up in Cold War politics when it later accepted covert funds from the CIA for its international activities and eventually was exposed in 1967. The period of concern here, however, was one of the high points of American college student idealism.

Editor Eugene Schwartz and his colleagues undertook this labor of love concerning this idealistic period. No one has ever brought together so much valuable and disparate documentation, from student newspapers from the period to personal reminiscences of the key NSA leaders.

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