



Alpha Phi Omega

National Service Fraternity

In Search of an Advisor



IN SEARCH OF ADVISOR

So your chapter is looking for an Advisor - or maybe several Advisors. It could be for any of a number of reasons: A desire to expand your resource base on campus, a lack of the requisite number prescribed in the National Bylaws, the departure of one or more long-term Advisors, or a desire to gain more insight into the community.

An Advisor can play many roles — teacher, resource, counselor, guide, mentor, and friend. What an Advisor will be to your chapter is ultimately up to the chapter. It's something that is determined by your needs and expectations, and what you will put into the relationship you hope to establish. It's also up to the prospective Advisor, based on their expectations, background, and available time and energy.

This guide is intended to help you in searching for and developing an initial relationship with prospective Advisors on your campus and in your community. Although many of the ideas are presented in a step-by-step manner, it's important to realize that you will have to determine how these suggestions can best be applied to your own situation. We encourage you to adapt these suggestions and try new ideas that may come to you while reading this guide.

Many of the Brothers who have shared their experiences and ideas in developing this guide have had positive and rewarding relationships with their own chapter Advisors. Some may also have had some not-so-great relationships, possibly due to poorly defined expectations and a lack of mutual understanding. It's an honest mix of viewpoints like this that we hope will help your relationships with your chapter's Advisors be as positive and rewarding as they can be.

Good luck!

Developing Chapter Expectations of Advisors

Your chapter will want to research, possibly via a Search Committee, what the chapter wants the Advisors to do for, or provide to, the chapter. At this stage of the process, these expectations should follow the guides below before you present them to potential Advisors.

Your expectations should:

- Be clear and specific
- Be respectful of their lives, their families, and other commitments
- Represent a role separate from that of an Active Member, an officer, or a Sectional Chair

- Include participation on the Chapter Advisory Committee. This committee should consist of all your chapter's Advisors
- Be mindful that Advisors are Brothers too!
- Include a method of education near the beginning of their membership

You may want to consider drafting a written job description of sorts that can be discussed and modified to suit the needs of both the chapter and the Advisor. Your chapter bylaws may have some basic expectations that were considered when the bylaws were written. You may want to either build on those expectations, or modify the bylaws to reflect what your chapter now expects or desires of Advisors.

Establishing a General Consensus on Advisor Expectations

Once established, the ideas and expectations of the Search Committee can be brought to the full chapter Brotherhood for adoption. This may seem to be rather formal! But by reaching agreement or general consensus, and providing accountability through voting, your chapter membership will be encouraged to take on a greater degree of ownership for the successful outcome of this process. This can be beneficial in motivating more chapter members to take an active part in finding, welcoming and interacting with new Advisors.

Advisor Manual

Once your Chapter has reached a consensus on its Advisor expectations, it would be appropriate to ensure that your Advisor Manual binders are complete.

So - what's an Advisor Manual?

An Advisor Manual binder is a collection of necessary and helpful information that a potential Advisor should have in their possession for review as they consider agreeing to serve your chapter in this capacity. A three-ring binder is usually the best bet for gathering the information together in one place.

The Advisor Manual is property of the chapter, at least until such time an individual agrees to serve as an Advisor. At that time, the chapter can decide whether the Advisor Manual then is transferred to them for ownership, or if it remains property of the chapter, to be collected at a later date for continued use with future Advisors. (Whatever you decide, it should NOT become a major issue in recruiting Advisors!)

To the extent possible, you will want to gather the following documents and information for inclusion in the Advisor Manual. You may also want to include other documents, such as regulations of your school that affect student organizations. At a minimum, these documents are necessary to adequately inform an individual about this role in the Fraternity. They will also serve as a collective guide to working with the Fraternity.

TITLE

Advisor's Guide
 Questions & Answers Booklet
 Chapter Roster of Members and Current Officers
 Chapter Advisor Expectations
 Membership Registration Form for Chapter Advisors

SOURCE OR COMMENT

National publication
 National publication
 Chapter
 Chapter
 Form to be sent into National Office

National President's Letter to College/University Leadership	Sent at least annually by National Office
Fraternity Hierarchy	May be sketched or described in writing
Pledge Manual	National publication
National Bylaws & Standard Chapter Articles of Association	National publication
Chapter Bylaws	Chapter
Regional Leadership Directory	National publication
(List of Alumni Leaders and Chapters)	
Leadership Index	National publication
Chapter Reporting Requirements	National publication sent each fall
Modular Seminar For & About Advisors	National publication
Risk Management Policy	National publication
Membership Policy	National publication
National Pledging Standards	(Included in Pledge Manual)

Who's Out There?

While a chapter can have as many Advisors as it feels necessary, it is important to note that our National Bylaws, Article IX, and Standard Chapter Articles of Association, Article VI, require each chapter to have as a minimum of four or more Advisors including, two Advisors from the faculty, administration or staff of this educational institution, one Advisor representing Scouting or other youth services, and one Advisor from the community.

Keep in mind the needs of your chapter when looking for Advisors. It may be possible to take a "targeted marketing" approach in conducting your search if you know the needs of your chapter. For instance, if your chapter deals with large sums of money, but consistently has Brothers who may be less than fully qualified overseeing the chapters finances, perhaps "targeting" someone in the business or accounting department would be helpful! Likewise, if your chapter hosts many events on campus, asking the Chief of Campus Security to serve as an Advisor may help build upon a good working relationship with that office. In many cases, potential Advisors will be members of the campus or community with whom your chapter already has a connection and asking them to be an Advisor will simply recognize and help to strengthen existing ties.

There are some other possible avenues to success that you shouldn't ignore. You may find your school is among the colleges and universities that have lists of faculty and staff who are seeking this type of opportunity. If so, lucky you! Also, most colleges and universities that also have "faculty and staff only" periodicals which come out on a weekly or monthly basis. A well-placed article may be helpful in spreading the word of your chapter's search for Advisors. Finally, don't overlook new faculty members, who may feel the need to get involved as a way of becoming a true member of the campus community. If you can help them satisfy this need while accommodating the hectic schedule of their first year on campus, you may strike gold! Taking advantage of opportunities such as these usually requires some extra investigation on your part to simply find out about them, but they may prove to be very beneficial in your quest!

Lastly, it is important not to overlook what may be your most valuable resource in this effort: your existing Advisors! Have you heard the saying, "birds of a feather flock together?" Your Advisors are likely to know colleagues and associates who are like-minded in their desire to work with students outside of the normal classroom and administrative routines. It is certainly wise to involve them in every aspect of this effort in which they are interested and willing to participate. You may find that they themselves have many ideas of what they could do for your chapter, if only they were asked. Now's the chance to ask!

Building the “Sales Team”

Who will approach the coveted potential Advisors on behalf of your chapter? To be sure, the Brothers who are asked to put their chapter’s best foot forward should be articulate, assertive, sensitive and especially informed on matters concerning the Fraternity and their chapter. You want them to make a good impression that fairly represents your chapter and your needs. That can only mean the chapter president, right?

Well, maybe. It’s not necessarily a solo act.

To be sure, the chapter president is the representative of the chapter by virtue of their job description. However, the chapter is not just the president. Potential Advisors won’t want to have a thundering herd chasing them across campus, begging them to join APO, but would probably appreciate getting the feel for the general leadership and chapter membership from the beginning.

Two to three Brothers should be selected to assist in this process, and it may be helpful if the same Brothers can meet with all potential Advisors. Discussions on the potential Advisors can then be held among Brothers with the same set of impressions. The chapter president or a vice president should be one of these Brothers. One of your Advisors may be willing or interested in going along as well — it’s your call, and theirs.

Hint: Those selected should be thoroughly acquainted with the Advisors Manual prior to approaching potential Advisors!

Initial Call

A member of the Search Committee will want to make contact with the potential Advisor for an initial meeting. This is a chance to explore of their possible interest and any existing knowledge of Alpha Phi Omega. This should really be done in person or by phone. Also, as part of the “sell,” it’s not a bad idea to offer to share the Advisor Manual for their review in advance of a meeting. If the person is interested, a face-to-face meeting is scheduled between him or her and the chapter representatives.

Remember, these individuals will begin forming their impressions of your chapter (and you) from the first contact. Politeness, warmth, follow-through, generosity, confidence, and organization are just a few qualities you can demonstrate through this part of the process.

The Face-to-Face Visit

Visit in teams of no less than two Brothers, but don’t overwhelm your prospect. Take turns speaking, and share the lead in discussing your chapter, its needs and its activities. Not only does this help to provide a complete response to every question or concern, it also makes it clear that Alpha Phi Omega is not just a one-person show. Being punctual and dressing nicely will also help to convey your mature attitude and respect for their taking the time to meet with you.

Preparing adequately for this visit is the key to the successful outcome. Review the Advisor Manual and its contents so you know what you’re showing them. Learning what you can about the potential Advisor is also a good step. This will allow you to talk directly about parts of this role that could meet their needs and fit in with their interests and who they are. Selling “what’s in it for them” (without using that language, of course) can be very powerful.

An invitation to attend an upcoming event or meeting is usually an appropriate way to encourage any growing interest they have at this point. Potential Advisors will also be curious as to the “next step,” therefore, sharing with them the process of how Advisors are selected by your chapter should happen at the end of the visit.

Finally, you may want to suggest a timeframe that will allow for their consideration of your invitation to serve as an Advisor. Two weeks is probably adequate if they have already had information from the chapter for a few days, and also, to keep the process moving. Setting a date for a follow-up contact is also appropriate.

Thank You’s

Ah, the almost forgotten art of communicating gratitude via written word! Yes, as our mothers and grandmothers taught us, thank you notes should be sent to the potential Advisors within two days of visiting with them. It need not be long or fancy, as simple sincerity is the key. And for those of us who use the computer 18 hours a day, this is a time when we should reacquaint ourselves with pen and paper and let the electrons rest!

Making an Appearance (or “Hey, they took us up on the offer!”)

If the potential Advisors choose to participate in an upcoming event or meeting, be sure the chapter knows about it! Not just so they can be “on their best behavior,” but so that all can lend their attention to the potential Advisor.

If at all possible, one Brother who visited this important guest should serve as their “escort” for the event or meeting – greeting them on arrival, staying with them to answer questions or explain things, and ensuring an introduction early in the meeting. When introducing the potential Advisor, feel free to include something you learned about them beyond what the Brothers may already know. (“This is Dr. Quantum. He teaches Physics,” is not a snappy intro!)

Reconnecting

On the agreed upon date, one of the Brothers from the “Sales Team” checks back with the potential Advisor to inquire about any additional questions or concerns. This can be via the phone, or face-to-face. Again, if it is face-to-face, go in teams of two or three!

If the individual is interested in being a chapter Advisor, thank them, and let them know when the chapter will act on their expressed interest, and when they can expect to hear from the chapter. By this point, you should have a good idea as to what the chapter’s reaction is likely to be, particularly if the individual was able to visit a chapter event or meeting. If so, handle this exchange accordingly.

If the potential Advisor chooses to pass on your invitation, thank them and ask for additional feedback on their decision. If they feel comfortable in explaining their decision, you and the chapter may gain some insight into how your group appears to others and how the Advisor search process might need to be revised. (If possible, don’t forget to regain possession of the chapter Advisor Manual!)

Talking it Over and Making the Decision

As soon as possible, the Search Committee should share its knowledge and experiences with the chapter. Questions are asked and answered. After sufficient discussion, a vote should be taken, giving ownership for this decision to all chapter Brothers.

Letting Them Know and Making it Happen

Regardless of the outcome of the chapter vote, the potential Advisor deserves a phone call within 24 hours sharing with him/her the chapter's decision.

If the chapter has not chosen the individual at this time, accurate yet sensitive feedback is appropriate. Depending on the nature of the discussion and the outcome, an existing Advisor might be an appropriate member to make this contact.

If the chapter voted to accept the individual into Advisory Membership, information about their activation ceremony needs to be conveyed to them in terms of time, place and nature of the ceremony in which they will become a member of the Fraternity. While the ceremony should not be fully revealed to them ahead of time, it should be clear to them that our ceremonies are respectful and uplifting, and not silly or juvenile. You may want to schedule a special ceremony just for them, or they may go through the next ceremony you will hold for incoming members.

It may be in accordance with your chapter's past practices to ask this individual to participate in Pledge meetings as they await the date of the chapter's next activation ceremony. However, it's imperative to be sensitive to the individual's availability and level of interest.

Paperwork – Gotta Do It, Gotta Send It In!

Yep, don't forget this! The Application for Advisory/Honorary Membership must be completed in duplicate and forwarded to the National Office. This form is available from the National Office and does **not** require a fee. You should file this with the National Office when the individual begins their duties as an Advisor. If they have already been made a member of Alpha Phi Omega in the past, make a note of this fact on the form.

Periodic Review

Just as many chapters have mid-semester membership reviews to assess how each Brother is doing on their requirements for the term, and how well the chapter is meeting their expectations and needs, it is appropriate to do the same with regards to your Advisors. This may take the form of a chapter or executive committee meeting where the Advisory Committee attends and participates in a type of panel discussion. This can be an excellent forum to allow for a discussion between the Advisors and the chapter about how each sees the relationship working or needing to change.

Many chapters also have created the position of Advisor Liaison, in which one or more Active Member takes the time to make regular contact with all chapter Advisors, keeping them informed of chapter activities in addition to contact they may have with individual chapter officers and members. This can be an excellent way for newer members to gain an appreciation of the chapter's Advisors, and allows the Advisors to meet with regular members of the chapter.

Keeping The Relationship Alive

Just as important as finding Advisors is the task of keeping them informed, interested, involved and participating. This is not just the job of the chapter president. Rather, it falls to all chapter officers and the general membership to take the time to consider the Advisors, seek them and their counsel out when needed, and to appreciate the time they give.

Once someone agrees to join an organization, it is the rare individual who wants to belong only on paper. Without smothering them, it is important that Advisors feel like they are a part of the chapter and certainly not alone. The chapter leadership may need to help establish the concept of an Advisory Committee, which can function in several ways:

- As a peer group for Advisors to share concerns and ideas with each other
- As a safety net, so that Advisors can share their responsibilities without any one individual taking on too much
- As a resource for chapter officers and project leaders
- As another point of contact for the campus and community, particularly for the faculty and administration, and community leaders

As you build your relationship with your Advisors, keep in mind their strengths, interests and availability, which may change over time. Some, but maybe not all, would be interested in accompanying your chapter to a Sectional, Regional or National Convention or conference. Others may be interested in getting involved with the Regional or Sectional staff. You can help them pursue those interests and welcome their contributions. Soon, you'll wonder how you ever got along without them!

Other Resources

If your chapter runs into obstacles or needs additional help in finding advisors, contact any of the following for additional support and creative thinking:

- Your school's Campus Activities or Dean of Students Office
- Other organizations in the local community
- Your Section Chair
- Your Regional Director
- Other chapters
- APO-L, Alpha Phi Omega's Unofficial Mailing List E-mail: APO-L@LISTSERV.IUPUI.EDU
- The National Office

Comments and Suggestions

Now that you've read and hopefully used this guide, we welcome your ideas for how this document could be improved the next time. Did you find it useful? Were there areas that left you scratching your head? Please let us know! Send your comments to:

Alpha Phi Omega National Office

14901 E 42nd Street

Independence, MO 64055

executive.director@apo.org