

NATIONAL PLEDGING STANDARDS

The National Convention has adopted National Pledging Standards for use by all chapters. The Standards and their rationales are as follows:

1. The general objectives of pledging. An appropriate period of pledging consists of a well-rounded program of opportunities in Leadership, Friendship and Service. The program is in conformity with the National Bylaws, Standard Chapter Articles of Association, state and federal laws and campus regulations. The purpose of the program is to identify students who will embrace and make a lifetime commitment to the principles of Alpha Phi Omega and to prepare those students for active membership.

Rationale: This is the overall purpose of pledging and reflects the legal obligation of all members of Alpha Phi Omega.

2. Hazing during pledging. An appropriate period of pledging has no place for hazing practices. These include the degradation of individuals, personal service demands, and any other practices inconsistent with the spirit and principles of Alpha Phi Omega.

Rationale: The concept of pledge membership long ago progressed beyond such practices since they violate the member's obligation to state law, the National Bylaws of the Fraternity and the regulations of most campuses. Alpha Phi Omega members respect the worth of human dignity and, in firm support of our heritage of intellectual freedom, do not tolerate unequal or abusive treatment of any person.

3. The length of a pledging period. An appropriate period of pledging should not be less than six weeks or more than ten weeks in duration.

Rationale: Pledge membership and the period of pledging must provide adequate time for pledges to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to function as active brothers of the Fraternity, and as officers of their chapter, and to develop the commitment for continuing service throughout their collegiate years and beyond. Pledgeship, whether as part of a structured pledge class or through individual contracting, must provide these opportunities but must not last for such a time period as to interfere with other obligations of the pledges.

4. Use of the Pledge Ritual. An appropriate period of pledging begins with the introduction of students into Alpha Phi Omega only by the Official Pledge Ritual and their timely registration with the National Office in the approved manner.

Rationale: No person may receive the rights, benefits, and privileges of pledge membership in Alpha Phi Omega until these requirements have been satisfied.

5. Wearing of Insignia. An appropriate period of pledging includes wearing an official Pledge Pin at all times.

Rationale: Chapter Image, on and off campus, is a vital concern of all members, new and old. The prominent and proud display of an Alpha Phi Omega Pledge Pin instills pride through identity with Alpha Phi Omega, signifies the chapter's presence on campus and in the community, and may also habituate all members to proudly wear Fraternity insignia.

6. Instruction in pertinent facts. An appropriate period of pledging includes instruction in the National Bylaws; Standard Chapter Articles of Association; chapter bylaws; chapter officers and advisors; the decision making processes of the chapter; key campus officials; and sectional, regional and national officers of the Fraternity.

Rationale: It is vital for every new member to develop a working knowledge of the operating rules and procedures of the National Fraternity, the individual chapter, and the sponsoring college or university campus. In addition, it is highly advantageous to be familiar with and knowledgeable of future resource personnel on campus, in the community, and within the Fraternity.

7. Alpha Phi Omega heritage. An appropriate period of pledging includes education in chapter, campus and Fraternity history, including our special ties to and relationship with the Scouting movement and our common background.

Rationale: The chapter, the sponsoring college or university, the National Fraternity, and the Scouting movement have rich heritages, which should be shared with all those who follow. An appreciation of this common heritage, bequeathed to all current and future members, is a thing to be cherished.

8. Pledges in chapter meeting. An appropriate period of pledging includes direct observation by pledges of the decision making process of the chapter.

Rationale: Pledges should be given the opportunity to have additional contact with the brothers and to learn more about how their chapter conducts business. The chapter retains the right to decide what portion and number of its meeting are appropriate for pledges to attend.

9. Interchapter relationships. An appropriate period of pledging includes an opportunity for all pledges to visit one neighboring Alpha Phi Omega chapter.

Rationale: One of the most difficult concepts for new members to grasp is the scope of our National Fraternity. The wide acceptance of Alpha Phi Omega, its principles, and the good works of its members span hundreds of campuses. Pledges should have the opportunity, firsthand, to see it functioning on campuses other than their own.

10. The development of leadership. An appropriate period of pledging includes the opportunity for each pledge to participate in chapter planning functions; leadership development experiences; and sectional, regional and national conferences and conventions.

Rationale: Our Cardinal Principle of Leadership is often merely assumed rather than developed, and involvement in these opportunities satisfies this need well. Virtually every active brother agrees that conferences and conventions on all levels provide a unique learning experience for all who attend. Conference and/or convention attendance additionally reinforces interchapter visitations by establishing an appreciation for the national scope of Alpha Phi Omega.

11. The promotion of friendship. An appropriate period of pledging includes a requirement that each pledge meet and establish a fraternal relationship with all active, associate, advisory, and when possible, honorary members of the chapter.

Rationale: For the newly initiated, fraternalism is often difficult concept to understand because of stereotypes, confusion, or even ignorance. The exemplification of our Cardinal Principle of Friendship and the unique role of collegiate fraternalism are experiences, which, more than any other factor, will determine a pledge's willingness to remain committed throughout the collegiate years and beyond. All members of the chapter grow personally as these relationships are established and fostered.

12. Providing service. An appropriate period of pledging includes a weekly (or other appropriate) service obligation, equal to that required of active brothers to remain in good standing with the chapter. Sufficient projects must be available and all four fields of service should be embraced by the conclusion of the pledge period.

Rationale: Most people are willing to help others in time of need, but few are willing to make the many personal sacrifices, which a life of service may demand. Our Cardinal Principle of Service is the heartbeat of Alpha Phi Omega, and our fourfold service program encourages the experience of helping all in need, rather than just those who are in time of need. By designing this standard in such a fashion, we demonstrate that no more is demanded of pledges than of their active counterparts and that sufficient opportunity is provided for pledges to demonstrate their commitment to the service program in all four fields. It prepares pledges realistically for participation in the chapter service program as active members and strengthens the foundation for their way of life after graduation.

13. Pledge projects. An appropriate period of pledging requires the planning, organizing and execution of a chapter approved service project of some significance under the leadership of pledge members.

Rationale: A period of pledge membership would be severely limited in effectiveness if it did not provide the opportunity for the development of necessary organizational planning and leadership skills which are required of active brothers in carrying out the service program of their chapter. This standard thus carries a practical necessity while further implanting our cardinal principle of service in each member and deepening a lifetime commitment of serving humanity.

14. Academic obligation. An appropriate period of pledging gives high priority to the academic success of the pledges.

Rationale: Alpha Phi Omega is a collegiate fraternity and has an obligation to both its prospective members and to its sponsoring college or university to insure that the academic experience is both fulfilling and successful, supporting our heritage of educational freedom.

15. The use of "Pledge Books". An appropriate period of pledging includes a requirement that each pledge maintain a permanent record, which documents successful completion of the pledge program requirements, in such form as the chapter may require.

Rationale: Each pledge should be evaluated on the individual achievement of program requirements whether as a member of a structured class or as an individual fulfilling a personal contract. This permanent record will be an objective source for the evaluation of these accomplishments as well as the likely source of significant personal memorabilia in years to come.

16. The Oath of Loyalty and Service. An appropriate period of pledging includes the presentation and explanation of the Oath of Loyalty and Service to the pledges by the officers supervising the pledge class.

Rationale: A presentation and explanation is needed to assist the pledges in fully understanding the commitments they will be able to fulfill as future resource personnel on campus, in the community, and within the Fraternity.

17. Replenishing Membership. An appropriate period of pledging emphasizes the need to continue membership expansion.

Rationale: A good chapter continues to live not only through the service participation of its current members but also through their commitment to perpetuating its programs by extending membership opportunities to similarly dedicated students. This activity also further reinforces our national heritage of freedom of association.

18. Pledge period reviews. An appropriate period of pledging includes at least one opportunity at its conclusion for the constructive evaluation of the program. This evaluation should be made by both pledges and brothers and should cover both individual performances and program goals.

Rationale: Chapter programs succeed not by mere repetition, but through careful reflection upon the successes and failures experienced each time the program is offered. Evaluation is the key to healthy programs, healthy members, and healthy chapters. Evaluation is also necessary to determine the individual successes of pledge members throughout the program. The process should reveal how well they satisfy the program requirements and how well they demonstrate that they are ready for the confirmation of active membership.

19. Method of selection following pledging. An appropriate period of pledging includes objective determinations for eligibility to receive active membership based upon the individual's successful completion of program requirements. The completion by a pledge of all chapter requirements established at the beginning of the pledging experience is a strong indication that active membership may not be denied by the chapter.

Rationale: While the confirmation of active membership is the single greatest power of a chapter, this power must never be used capriciously or arbitrarily. The entire concept of pledging is to provide a complete opportunity for individuals to acquire those skills and that knowledge necessary for active membership, as well as to make a commitment to our purpose and principles. If a chapter enters into "black-balling" or some other abuse of its powers, it defeats the entire purpose of a pledge program and pledging standards. Eligibility for active membership and its rights, benefits and privileges should be based upon an objective evaluation of the pledge's successful completion of those pledging standards adopted by the chapter. Membership in Alpha Phi Omega is a great honor, earned through hard work, diligent effort and dedication to our principles. It is not based merely on a popularity vote of the other brothers. Any other reason is a betrayal of our high principles of brotherhood.

20. Initiation of neophytes by the Fraternity Ritual. An appropriate period of pledging concludes with the initiation of all qualifying pledges into Alpha Phi Omega only by the Official Fraternity Ritual and by their timely registration with the Fraternity's National Office in the approved manner. Pledges should be made aware that the Official Fraternity Initiation Ritual contains references to God and a dedication invoking the name of "Our Common God".

Rationale: The Initiation Ritual of Alpha Phi Omega is both a beautiful and significant ceremony. Its purpose is not to mark the conclusion of pledge membership, but rather to herald the beginning of a lifetime of Leadership, Friendship and Service in Alpha Phi Omega as an active brother. Every Fraternity member shares this common experience and, indeed, may not receive the rights, benefits, or privileges of active membership until these requirements have been satisfied.