

MEMBERSHIP VICE PRESIDENT'S HANDBOOK

NATIONAL CONTACT INFORMATION..... INSIDE FRONT COVER

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCE MATERIALS:

National Pledging Standards - Pledge Manual
Alpha Phi Omega Membership Policies - Pledge Manual
Statement of Purpose for the Policy of Risk Management - Pledge Manual
The Standard Policy of Risk Management - Pledge Manual
Sample Chapter Reaffirmation Form - Pledge Manual
Sample Rush Calendar - Survival Guide for Small Chapters
General Information Survey - Survival Guide for Small Chapters
Chapter Membership Program Survey - Survival Guide for Small Chapters

INTRODUCTION

An effective membership program includes a plan for recruiting prospective members, educating them about the Fraternity while they are pledges, and keeping them active after they are initiated. While these can be treated as separate programs (and many chapters do) the clear relationship among these three areas means that each must be closely coordinated with the other.

This coordination can be done by establishing a chapter office of “Membership Vice President” and assign the entire membership program to this officer. Working with a membership committee, the Membership Vice President will be able to plan an aggressive and effective program that will result in the chapter’s growth. An alternative approach is to segment duties between a Membership Vice President, Fellowship Vice President, and a Pledge Vice President.

No manual can provide a total recipe for your membership program. You must carefully analyze your chapter, its programs, and your campus before deciding on the best plan. However, we have tried to provide some basic guidelines. This guide is intended as a starting point, from which you will be able to build your program. If your chapter program requires that you take on the roles of Pledge Trainer and Fellowship Vice President, it is recommended that you study those Leadership Series publications as well.

It is recommended that during the term of your office you work on creating a supplement to this handbook to assist the future Membership Vice Presidents of your chapter. This would include some of the following information:

- Chapter Bylaws
- Contact information for the current Section Chair, Region Director, and Advisory Chair
- Pledge Trainer Handbook and Fellowship Vice President Handbooks if needed.
- Last years Annual Active Membership Form as submitted to the National Fraternity.
- Calendar of Membership Recruitment activities from the past year.
- Schedule of general events throughout the school year.

Throughout your service as Membership Vice President, remember that you have chapter advisors and a Sectional Chair (and staff) who are willing and able to assist you. Use their talents and experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Membership Vice President is responsible for the maintenance and growth of the chapter's membership.

More specifically, the position's responsibilities include:

- a) Knowing and upholding Alpha Phi Omega's National Bylaws and Standard Chapter Articles of Association as well as your chapter's "bylaws".
- b) Knowing and upholding the National Pledge Standards, as adopted by our National Convention.
- c) Establishing and maintaining a working relationship with the Chapter President, other officers, and advisors.
- d) Recruiting and developing a membership committee, including a rush coordinator, pledge trainer and fellowship chair.
- e) Developing a program that recruits new members for the chapter.
- f) Developing a program (based on the National Pledge Standards) that educates pledges about the purpose of the Fraternity, its history and the chapter's program.
- g) Developing a program that will increase the percentage of Brothers who remain in the chapter from the time of initiation until they graduate.
- h) Serving as an active member of the chapter's Executive Committee.
- i) Making sure that someone is responsible for pledge and initiation ceremony.
- j) Make sure that you and your Chapter are following the Membership and Risk Management policies of the Fraternity.
- k) Any other duties as assigned by the President.

THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Coordinating, recruiting, education and retention are major tasks. . . and impossible for one person working alone. That is why you need a membership committee.

This committee should include a cross-section of the chapter. You might, for example, want to recruit one or two people from each pledge class. This will give you the benefit of their experience with that semester's program. More important, it will give you a "head start" toward knowing enough about each Brother to develop a plan that will keep them active.

You will need to ¹appoint someone to handle each of the following responsibilities:

1) **RUSH:** While recruiting should be a year round effort, you will need someone who can energize the chapter around a plan to bring in new members. This person must be able to organize a comprehensive effort, which has been developed by and agreed to by your committee.

2) **PLEDGE TRAINER:** Unless your chapter elects someone to fill this role, you will need to appoint someone to this position. Your education program is the heart of successful membership programming. The person selected to coordinate this effort must be able to communicate effectively as well as recruit others to help. A thorough knowledge of the Fraternity and your chapter is essential. (See the Leadership Series Pledge Trainer's Handbook for additional information)

3) **RETENTION COORDINATOR:** Keeping Brothers actively involved in the chapter is a full-time job. You must understand what each Brother seeks from Alpha Phi Omega and determine how to provide it within the chapter's program.

4) **FELLOWSHIP CHAIR:** Unless your chapter elects someone to fill this role, you will need to appoint someone to this position. This is more than someone who plans good banquets (although that could be part of the job). You must also have a diverse program to make people feel welcome and enjoy chapter meetings, service projects, and lounging in the office. High emphases on Risk Management with regards to the activities planned are always considered. Your faculty advisor and sectional chair can help clarify any questions. (See the Leadership Series Fellowship Vice President's Handbook for additional information)

In addition to these appointments you may want to assign members of the committee such things as publicity, materials, production and so forth. The Leadership Series Public Relations Chair Handbook can be an invaluable

¹ Appointment of non-elected offices may require executive committee approval. You may want to refer to your bylaws on proper procedure.

resource. It is important that everyone on the committee have a specific assignment.

Once you have recruited a committee, ask them to think about the chapter's membership program and to come to the first meeting prepared with suggestions. Many ideas should have been generated during the Chapter Program Planning Conference and these should be considered. You should also closely examine the chapter's evaluation from the Planning Conference and the goals it set for membership.

At your first meeting, the goal is to develop an outline of a membership program. Use the three areas (recruiting, educating and retaining) as an agenda. After allowing everyone to voice their ideas, attempt to develop a consensus over what the chapter should do. Agree on a second meeting at which the plan will be finalized and written down.

As with all committees, part of the time during meetings will be spent listening to reports and discussing them. This is important, but remember that your committee's primary function is to develop better methods of recruiting, educating, and retaining Brothers. Spend most of your time working on this.

RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

A student's decision of whether or not to join Alpha Phi Omega is based largely on whether he or she believes that the Fraternity will meet a personal need. A prospective Brother must feel that membership offers them something they want, whether it is friendship, the opportunity for service, or for leadership development.

This means that to recruit, your chapter must have an effective service program and must be able to promote it throughout the campus. No one will join a group that they have never heard of or that does not appear to do anything. At the same time, you do not want to develop an image of doing nothing but work. You must also let people know that you enjoy what you do and have fun doing it.

The committee must select techniques that will allow you to make as much personal contact as possible. This will allow you to "sell" the Fraternity directly to the prospective members and to answer their questions. Prospectives must have the feeling that they are wanted by the chapter and will belong in it.

Among the approaches you should consider are information booths in major campus buildings, knocking on dorm doors, open service projects to which the student body is invited, and so on. The possibilities are endless. You can supplement these personal contact methods with mailings, posters, flyers in orientation packets, etc.

Once you have developed a plan, analyze it carefully. Would you be attracted to Alpha Phi Omega by it? Another consideration is whether the chapter has the resources to carry out the plan.

Once the plan is agreed to, everyone in the chapter must understand it and be able to follow it. You should explain it fully at a chapter meeting and use the role-play at the end of this section to demonstrate it to the chapter. This should include a "sales pitch" developed by the committee which must also be explained to the chapter.

After this session, you may want to select your best sales people and have them carry the load in terms of personal recruiting. You will also need to equip them with the best supporting materials available. (Use a mixture of the Fraternity's publications and your own creations.)

Finally, emphasize that recruiting is a leadership developing process and that everyone in the chapter is responsible for it. Your program should be structured so that you are constantly developing a list of prospective members and building contacts with them.

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITING

===== ROLE PLAYING EXERCISE

Select one or two people from your committee to act as the recruiter. Tell them they will be expected to use the “sales pitch” developed by the committee to persuade a prospective member to join.

Then, select three other people to act as the prospectives. Ask one to act totally uninterested in joining, the second to be very interested, but in a social fraternity, and the third to be curious but not excited.

Have each discussion take place in front of the chapter. Then ask for suggestions on how to improve the approach. Keep in mind that your purpose is both to polish the “pitch” and to explain it to the rest of the chapter.

RUSHING

When you mention “recruiting” to most Alpha Phi Omega Brothers, the first reaction is “Rush”. Rush, the period during which the chapter conducts an extensive campaign to recruit pledges, should be the culmination of your recruiting, not the entire process.

Once your chapter has established a continuing recruitment effort, “rush” becomes less stressful and more productive. The rush coordinator begins with a list of prospective new members and the goal is to add to them, instead of starting from scratch.

The rush coordinator should begin by selecting a committee to work with. Among the responsibilities to be assigned are:

1) **PUBLICITY:** Must develop and carry out promotional campaign, including newspaper articles, leaflets, posters, and whatever techniques are available and effective on your campus.

2) **PHYSICAL ARRANGEMENTS:** Responsible for making room arrangements for rush meetings and the Ritual; insuring that chapter exhibits and historical items are brought to the meeting and are secured after it; obtains audiovisual equipment as needed.

3) **RUSH MEETING PROGRAM COORDINATOR:** Working with the rush coordinator and Membership Vice President, plans the program for the Rush meeting and insures that each participant knows in advance what is expected.

4) **RECRUITER COORDINATOR:** Everyone in the chapter should be working on locating prospective members. This coordinator is responsible for keeping track of these efforts so that one dorm is not ignored while another is inundated. In addition, she/ he keeps track of the names and addresses of each prospective and arranges for each to be escorted to the rush meeting.

Once this committee has been gathered, explain the plan developed by the Membership Committee and what will be expected of each person. Be sure to ask the Membership Vice President to attend this meeting, both to emphasize its importance and to answer questions about the program.

Many chapters have found it useful to include an “open” service project as part of their recruiting process. Essentially, the chapter locates an “expandable” project (such as cleaning up a park) at which almost any number of people likely to show up can be put to work. Every student on campus is asked to participate through general publicity.

To the extent possible, a Brother should be assigned to work with each person who responds to this invitation. This will provide a great opportunity to “sell” the Fraternity. After the project, the entire group should do something

together such as having a meal or playing Frisbee in the park. This will help demonstrate that friendship is an important aspect of the Fraternity, will provide yet another opportunity for each prospective to get to know some Brothers and thereby will increase your chances of success.

Whether or not your chapter utilizes this approach, you should have one or two “formal” rush meetings. The purpose of this meeting is to explain Alpha Phi Omega to prospectives, tell them what would be expected of them as Pledges and Brothers, detail the chapter’s service activities. The program, while informative, should be short and upbeat.

If you have publicized the meeting to start at 7 p.m., your schedule might look like this:

7:00-7:30 Registration. (Each prospective is asked to sign in and is given a name tag and introduced immediately to a Brother who, after getting to know at least something about the prospective’s background and interests, introduces her/him to the other Brothers.)

7:30-8:00 Formal presentations. (Might include a video or slide show of the chapter’s activities, brief remarks by the President about our purpose/history, by the Service Vice President about the chapter’s service program and by the Membership Vice President about the pledging program. (NOTE: All participants should be reminded to avoid “inside” jokes or remarks - this only creates an atmosphere in which the outsiders - your prospectives - are made to feel uncomfortable.)

8:00-? Informal socializing. After a question and answer period, invite the prospective to stay and talk with the Brothers.

It is a good idea to provide “snack food” and non-alcoholic beverages before the formal program. And, if the chapter can afford it, pizza or something similar after the program should help you keep those who are interested around long enough for several Brothers to meet them again.

You may wish to announce the time and place of the Pledge Ceremony at this meeting. Whether you do or not, be sure that every person in attendance is personally invited to pledge in the day or so after the meeting.

EDUCATING NEW MEMBERS

Once a student has decided that Alpha Phi Omega might be something they want to join, it is our responsibility to offer them a program that provides the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of the Fraternity and the chapter. It is during this period that they learn how the chapter functions and the skills needed to do that. This is where the Pledge Trainer steps in and takes over. (See the Leadership Series Pledge Trainer's Handbook)

It is your responsibility throughout the Pledge's Education to assist the Pledge Trainer in any way possible. Your role as Membership Vice President is to oversee this process and ensure that the National Pledge Standards and Alpha Phi Omega National Membership Policies are met. If you have any concerns with the activities of the Pledge Trainer or other Brothers involved, you must take action to ensure that no Pledges are Hazed or treated unfairly.

RETAINING MEMBERS

Have you ever stopped to consider why Brothers leave the chapter? If you have, you'll realize that usually it is because the reason they joined is no longer there. We no longer meet their "needs".

A program to retain Brothers as actives, begins with a strong pledge program. To this must be added the opportunity for every Brother to participate in the chapter's operation. The leadership positions must be open to all. The Brothers must also enjoy what they are doing, at least most of the time. In short, Brothers will remain active as long as they can "feel good" about being part of the chapter.

The Membership Committee has the responsibility to monitor membership and keep an eye on all phases of the chapter program to insure that all Brothers are active. This may mean that the committee must seek to add leadership development opportunities or to increase service projects. The Membership Vice Presidents role as a member of the Executive Committee now becomes crucial. He or she must be able to sell the other officers and the chapter on the need for the changes proposed.

Of course, friendship is the "glue" which holds any group of people together. You will want to have a number of social events that build friendship (lunch after projects, theme parties/dinners, Friday night bowling, etc.) and add to the experience of Alpha Phi Omega. Chapter meetings should be enlivened by a

fellowship activity at the end. Use your imagination to make what would otherwise be a “dull” project into a fun and interesting one.

Encourage participation in Sectional, Regional and National activities, such as conventions and workshops. These are not only valuable for the information shared but tend to greatly strengthen a participant’s emotional ties to the Fraternity.

All of these elements are important, but perhaps the most effective retention device is to know each of your Brothers well. Then, you will be able to find out what each Brother is seeking from his/her membership and develop ways to provide it.

Also, when you see that someone is becoming less active, assign a member of the committee, (whoever knows her/him best) to speak privately with this Brother and determine if something can be done.

All of this can be simply stated: if the chapter program invites and encourages participation, your membership retention level will be high. If it does not, you will be driving people away.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of a membership program is to enable the chapter to maintain the highest level of activity possible without overburdening each Brother. It is designed to make being part of Alpha Phi Omega both worthwhile and enjoyable.

A balanced blend of service with fellowship will both encourage Brothers to stay active and prospectives to join. If you tend too much in either direction, you will find your chapter losing membership, either because you are asking too much of each Brother or are not providing the opportunity for service that your Brothers are seeking.

The approach outlined in this handbook should enable you to develop a plan that will enhance the Alpha Phi Omega experience for everyone in your chapter.