Vice President of Alumni Relations

Resource Manual

Shaping People – Shaping Business
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Building alumni relations is vital in the progressive development and maturity of your chapter. The local alumni and your chapter make up the core of your fraternity professional network. They are the single greatest benefit of joining our fraternity – but only if you and your chapter set up the systems to properly harness it.

The Vice President of Alumni Relations:

- Maintains contact with local and chapter alumni on behalf of the chapter on a consistent basis;
- Provides opportunities for alumni to re-connect and get involved;
- Develops relationships with alumni that enable the chapter and alumni to be a part of a close-knit professional network;
- Acts as the chapter liaison with the local alumni chapter (where available);
- Works with the chapter, regional alumni manager and alumni to provide education to the student members on the responsibilities and opportunities of an alumnus (i.e. new alumni orientation);
- Performs other duties as directed by the Heritage Center’s Director of Alumni Development.

As the vice president of alumni relations, this resource manual serves to guide you in the areas you are charged with responsibilities. For further guidance or questions, contact:

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Database maintenance is the most important tool we have to stay in touch with our alumni. Contact information that is out of date or incorrect causes us to miss out on alumni involvement including volunteers, donors and general participation in fraternity events. Project Re-Connect is an ongoing program to not only find ‘lost’ alumni, but to maintain contact information on file to ensure accuracy. Each October, every chapter receives a spreadsheet listing its alumni. Depending on the chapter’s age, some also receive alumni in their geographic area.

What do we do with this information?
Using this spreadsheet, you will begin to build (or add to) your chapter’s alumni database. Accurate contact information is the foundation of proper alumni relations.

How do we find or update alumni information?
Best Resource — The school’s alumni center (alumni association, foundation) is an excellent resource. They have the money, resources and time to track your school’s alumni; it’s also their mission. See Appendix A for a sample contact letter.

Six Degrees of Alumni — Use alumni to find alumni! Ask each alumnus to identify six other alumni they have contact information for. Once you receive this information, ask those alumni to provide information for six alumni they are in touch with. Continue the process until you have current contact information for all of your alumni.

Internet — There are several avenues online that can assist with tracking down alumni. Some of these include: Google, Facebook, LinkedIn, Classmates, etc. Just be sure to verify that the person you found is the right person.

Phone-a-thons — Reserve a few chapter meetings for phone calls. There are several benefits to this method. First, it provides personal contact with your alumni. Second, it involves your entire chapter. See Appendix B for talking points you should keep in mind when making these calls.

Physical Mailing — When it comes to bulk mailing, be sure to include “Return Service Requested” on the outside of the envelope. This way you will receive notice of any forwarding addresses. Remember to forward these address changes to the Heritage Center.

Direct Mail Company — Contact a local company that specializes in direct mail. Ask the company to donate its services to your chapter. Some companies have access to postal verification services, or may be willing to do a mailing on your behalf. Also, your city’s visitor’s bureau is a great place to contact about mailing letters on your behalf.
| Graduate Forecasting |

Identifying members that are graduating provides a variety of benefits. For the chapter, it allows for better preparation. As the VPAR, you will have a clear idea of how many members you will need to provide New Alumni Orientation for.

The Graduate Forecasting Tool is on the documents and forms page of akpsi.org. When reporting the forecasted graduates, you will need each member’s permanent phone, mobile phone (if available), and non-school or permanent email address. The goal of the Graduate Forecast is to provide the fraternity with permanent contact information. Thorough and timely information will create less work in the long run for Project Re-Connect. The Graduate Forecast is due the first month of each term, no later than October 15, February 15 and April 15 (for quarter schools).

| Alumni Events |

Alumni events provide opportunities to meet new people, re-connect with brothers and build brotherhood. People want to see each other, reminisce and find out what brothers are doing these days. Who is married? Who has children? What are everyone’s professional achievements? Alumni events are a means for student and alumni members to come together and network (socially and professionally).

The benefits of the chapter hosting and event should not be underestimated. Students can meet witness others who were once in their shoes; seeking a degree and preparing for their careers. Just seeing the lasting bonds of friendship and brotherhood can give student members a new respect and appreciation for what their current experience as a student member of Alpha Kappa Psi.

Alumni can see firsthand that student members are still practicing in ways they did themselves during their time as a student member. Alumni events can serve as fundraising opportunities; not just as another expense to the chapter. Overall, alumni events are an important aspect to brotherhood - bringing alumni together is a way to remind fellow brothers of how important Alpha Kappa Psi was and still is to their personal and professional development.

Below are some tips to keep in mind when planning an alumni event. Also utilize the Alumni Reunion Planning Kit on akpsi.org to with planning alumni events.

- Annual events are the best way for alumni to re-connect at their leisure.
- Alumni rely on knowing the chapter hosts an event at a certain time each year.
- Couple the event with a large school event that brings in a large portion of alumni such as homecoming, sporting events, commencement, etc. See if your alumni center will help with planning and advertising the event.
- Make it easy on alumni by hosting ‘flow-through’ events. They allow alumni to re-connect according to their schedule be it for five minutes or five hours. They also allow the chapter to not have to put together intensive programs. Make it similar to a fun reception!
- Plan ahead of time – Invitations should be in the mail (or emailed) no later than one and a half to two months before the event. Start with a “save the date” and follow-up with the invitation and reminder. Remember, alumni have family, jobs and other commitments to balance!
Communicate with your alumni in a non-fundraising/non-event specific way at least twice an academic year. Regular communication helps to build and maintain a relationship with alumni.

There are a variety of ways to communicate with alumni. Developing a communication plan and schedule will help you organize your chapter’s communications and give your successor a plan to follow. It also counts for points on the Annual Chapter Report. There are several things to keep in mind when putting together your communication plan.

First, what is the best method of contact for your chapter’s alumni? A printed newsletter? Email updates? Online newsletter? It is best to mix both electronic and printed methods as some alumni do not have email addresses, and you may not always have the correct mailing address. If you do plan to send a tangible publication, be sure and include it in your chapter’s budget when planning. Keep in mind that email and electronic newsletters are less expensive than printed publications. Whichever form you choose, be sure to keep the format consistent each issue.

Second, you’ll need to decide what content to include in your communication. There are a few questions you need to ask yourself when deciding content:

- What is important to our alumni?
- What chapter success have we achieved recently? (i.e. awards received, new pledge class or initiates, etc.)
- What important changes have we encountered as a chapter?
- Where do we need help? (i.e. need for professional speakers, fundraising, etc.)

Always remind your alumni to keep their contact information current, preferably by updating it on akpsi.org.

Remember when you are writing a newsletter, or other communication, keep the material engaging and entertaining. Not only should the written content be interesting, but the layout, including font, graphics and colors, should also be appealing.

Finally, you’ll need to decide on a communication schedule. How often will you contact your alumni? Once a month? Once a quarter? Every academic term? Decide what is feasible for your chapter. Take into consideration time and financial commitment. Remember, at minimum every chapter should have contact with its alumni twice a year.
New Alumni Orientation (NAO) is critical for your chapter; it provides a smooth transition from the collegiate experience to the alumnus experience. In order to start things off right, your responsibility is to teach the graduating members what it means to be a “good” alumnus, and how they can stay involved far beyond their collegiate years. Alpha Kappa Psi is after all not a collegiate experience but rather a life experience. Remember, NAO should not be a last minute, rushed event. Take time to plan your orientation. This is the first impression your members will receive as an alumnus, make it a memorable one.

Key things to cover when planning the NAO

- **Volunteer opportunities**
  - Inform the graduating members of all the ways they can stay involved and the benefits of continuing to give their time and talents to the fraternity.
  - Utilize the Volunteer Clearinghouse and Speakers Bureau to register their interest in volunteering.

- **Updating contact information**
  - Members recently out of school are likely to change addresses frequently. Make sure graduating members receive fraternity communication by keeping their address updated with the Heritage Center.

- **Donating to the Alpha Kappa Psi Foundation**
  - By supporting the Foundation, alumni continue to provide educational opportunities for members, including The Academy leadership program, and numerous scholarships.

- **Join an alumni chapter**
  - Alumni chapters are a great way to remain connected to the fraternity while meeting and networking with local alumni.
  - Alumni chapters have significantly less requirements compared to student chapters.
  - Alumni chapters are allowed to send delegates to Convention to have a voice and vote in Chapter Congress.
  - Don’t have a local alumni chapter? Contact the Director of Alumni Development at the Heritage Center to find out how to start one.

- **Become a Life Loyal member of Alpha Kappa Psi**
  - Started in 1929, the Life Loyal membership program is the longest-standing program of the fraternity.
  - Be recognition at every fraternity events!
  - Gain a lifetime subscription to The Diary of Alpha Kappa Psi. If we have your address, you will get the Diary and keep up on all the current fraternity news.
  - Be immortalized in print (as a new Life Loyal member in an issue of The Diary).
  - Receive a special membership recognition pin and certificate!
  - Gain special discounts (as an alumni life loyal member).
  - Both students and alumni can become Life Loyal members, though joining as a student member will cut your cost in half.
| Keys to Success |

- Make the responsibilities of alumni relations an integral part of the chapter – just as rituals, the ACR and recruitment are to the chapter’s operations.

- Develop a system that the most ambitious of VPs is happy with and the least ambitious of VPs can still implement. Keep everything that alumni see and do is consistent each year.
  - Regardless of what stage of life they’re in, create events that alumni can enjoy now, and five, ten or more years down the road.
  - Don’t ‘rebuild the wheel’ each time a new VP takes over – work on enhancing the basic structure that the chapter has established through better content, better activities at events, etc.

- Solid record keeping, strong succession management will help with effective transition each year.

- Build a relationship with your school’s alumni association or alumni relations office – these are local experts that can help enhance your alumni relations program, as well as provide the necessary support to continue operations.

- Give advanced notice! Make sure alumni know the opportunities they have to help the chapter far out in advance: interviewers for Mid-Court and Court of Honor, guest speakers at new alumni orientation, etc.
  - Remind, remind, remind.
  - Be creative and personable without being obnoxious.

- Combine communication. Too much communication means events and announcements start to get deleted, ignored or tossed. Make the communication your chapter sends to alumni something they will want to make sure to read!

- Build a relationship with local alumni chapter (if applicable).

- Express gratitude in a timely manner, preferably with hand written thank you notes.
Appendix A: Project Re-Connect Solicitation Letter

<<Name of recipient>>
<<Office/Department >>
<<University/College>>
<<Street>>
<<City, State, Zip>>

<<Date>>

Dear <<University Official>>,

As a student organization focused on the various interests of business, we realize the importance of having a strong alumni network. Our alumni serve as role models to our student members, and create a network of professionals with real world experience. In an attempt to build and maintain this network, we are working to update our alumni’s contact information.

Alpha Kappa Psi is the largest and oldest professional business fraternity in the nation with more than 240,000 living alumni throughout the world and more than 220 active chapters in the United States, Canada, China and United Kingdom. With the vast number of living AKPsi members throughout the world, we as a chapter realize the possibilities are endless for networking, provided that we annually maintain our alumni relations program.

To maintain our alumni relations program, we are asking to gain access to the <<University/College>> alumni database so that we may update our alumni addresses and add the contact information we need in order to keep in touch. The benefits to you are two-fold. First, our alumni relations program involves bringing alumni back to campus when possible. This includes homecoming, <<university specific events>>. Second, as we continue contact with our alumni, we not only strive for them to remember Alpha Kappa Psi, but also the <<University>> so that they realize both are affiliations for life.

As always, any new information we find we are more than willing to share so the university can stay informed of any changes within our shared alumni base. We feel that in doing so, both the <<University>> and Alpha Kappa Psi are winners. We would love the opportunity to meet with you face to face and discuss the possibilities of a true symbiosis between both our <<University>> and fraternity. I hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully,

<<Name>>
<<Greek Name>> Chapter
Alpha Kappa Psi
<<University Name >>
<<Phone>>
<<Email>>
<<Address>>
Appendix B: Project Re-Connect Talking Points

When contacting alumni in an effort to reconnect:

- Speak clearly and at a normal pace.
- Call during convenient hours; not dinner time, or too late into the evening.
- Be sure all your members are prepared to answer questions regarding the fraternity and the chapter.
- Briefly explain that you are trying to re-connect, and that you would like to verify the member’s contact information.
- Respect members’ privacy.
- Remind members that AKPsi is for life.
- Be courteous and polite.
- Send a thank you note after you receive new information.
- Ask the member if they are in touch with anyone else from your chapter.