ALUMNI RELATIONSHIP

Alumni Don’ts
Not connecting with your alumni? Here’s what you might need to improve. Today’s alumni are yesterday’s students. Priorities and interests change after graduation, and one bad experience could decrease someone’s chances of returning to the chapter. If alumni aren’t engaged, you might be making one of these mistakes.
Treating alumni as an obligation

If alumni feel like you are only reaching out because you have to, they will be less likely to engage.

Reaching out to alumni should be treated as a genuine opportunity to connect. If you appear uninterested, they will feel the same way. Instead, develop a relationship with your alumni and utilize their experience as a resource for your chapter.
What you think is true about an alumnus may not be the case. Don’t miss out on an opportunity because you didn’t ask first.

Not all alumni are the same, and if you make an assumption about their interests or communication preferences, you might miss something big. Before you write off an idea, ask your alumni what they think or what programs they want to see. Your thoughts about what they want could be incorrect.

“Never assume an alumni member only wants to be contacted for big events like Yellow Rose Banquet, rituals, or pledging events. Alumni want to be able to come to the meeting you have on the 12th of April where all the chapter is doing is going over a few upcoming events and some small business. Also, don’t assume all alumni use email, text, are on Facebook, or even enjoy getting mailers. You have to tailor multiple ways to keep alumni in communication with the chapter. This is where having a committee just for alumni relations is a huge thing.”

– Corey Maston, Theta Omicron
3 Requesting things at the last minute

Time is a valuable resource for alumni, and they can’t do everything. If you want a response, give them as much time as possible to respond.

Alumni lead busy lives with work and families, so they often need to schedule months in advance. Asking for assistance at the last minute could result in not only low attendance but the idea that you don’t value their time. Increase your chances of having alumni involvement by giving them more time to plan ahead.
When you don't know someone personally, it's hard to take them seriously if they communicate unprofessionally.

Even though everyone is a brother of the same Fraternity, being professional is still important. Build a rapport and ensure all communication is of a professional nature. Use spell-check, write in complete sentences, avoid text language or slang, and be polite.
Communication is important, but too much communication can lead to negative results.

Bombarding alumni with emails every time the chapter has a meeting or event can be too much. Instead of separate emails or communication tactics, create a schedule to share applicable and appropriate information at once. This will keep the chapter more organized, give alumni more time to prepare, and limit your chance of overwhelming them.
“Give back to your alumni rather than ask them for things. By giving them awards, recognizing their achievements, etc., you build goodwill, and that goodwill will probably be returned back to the chapter... the alumnus would instead ask you what you need from them.”

– Stephen Smith, President of ASEAN Alumni Chapter

Frequently being asked to contribute to fundraisers will not only turn alumni away from donating, but also from wanting to be involved with the chapter at all.

If you only reach out to alumni when the chapter needs donations, alumni will lose interest. Instead, build a relationship on the values of brotherhood and professionalism. Highlight their accomplishments and find ways you can help your alumni so they’ll want to give back to the chapter with time, talent, and treasure.
Forgetting about them

The easiest way to alienate your alumni is to forget about them. Don't lose sight of those relationships.

Alumni relationships can't be developed if you don't attempt to foster them. A chapter should not ignore alumni or let time pass without informing them of the chapter's progress. Even if an alumnus isn't interested at a specific time, they might be at a later point. Don't forget about alumni who may have moved into the area. The Heritage Center can provide a list of these alumni who might be interested in connecting with your chapter.

It's easy to get caught up with student members, but the best resources are those who have been there before. Alumni can provide insight and financial contributions, but only if you develop the relationship first.
More in the Alumni Relationship Series:

Increasing Alumni Engagement  |  Alumni at Events  |  Alumni Newsletters