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# Tribune Manual

A Guide to Achieving and Managing  
Successful Alumni Engagement

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Sigma Chi EDU | Tribune Resources

## Table of Contents

The Tribune Office .....	2
The Importance and Benefits of Alumni Involvement and Support .....	2
Essential Responsibilities .....	2
Differing Needs of Alumni Generations .....	3
Communications—Initiating and Staying in Contact .....	4
▪ Print vs. digital	
▪ Digital communication and social media	
Fundraising .....	6
▪ Give before you get	
▪ Preparation	
▪ Start a project	
▪ Follow up	
Event Ideas .....	7



## The Tribune Office

Having been nominated for and accepted the office, you now occupy one of the most important roles in your chapter. Too often this role is filled as an afterthought by a new initiate or a member who may not be interested in or committed to doing an effective job.

Frankly, if you are one of the latter, then consider resigning and finding another member who will take the job seriously and is willing to do the needed work.

However, assuming that you are serious about doing this job well, this manual will provide many of the resources you will need to be effective.

## The Importance and Benefits of Alumni Involvement and Support

There are a great deal of historical evidence and measurable data that confirm the reality that the most effective, robust and enduring chapters are those with significant and consistent alumni involvement.

Their experience, skills, insight and long-range perspective can have a profoundly positive impact in support of officers and undergraduates alike in building and maintaining individual and chapter strengths.

- **As Mentors:** In a trusting relationship with an alumnus, individual brothers seek and gain coaching and guidance support in addressing and resolving one or more issues faced by a member in his pursuit of a degree. Their skills and experience may fit with your interests and talents.
- **In making Connections/Referrals:** Alumni are often in the position to open doors for summer jobs and/or referrals to potential career and job opportunities after college.

## Essential Responsibilities

- Build and maintain an accurate and current data file of alumni in the chapter's area and graduates of your chapter.
- Ensure that periodic communications are created in appropriate platforms and content to keep alumni informed of the chapter's activities, progress and events.
- Keep International Fraternity Headquarters informed promptly of current officers and required reports.
- Engage other members in planning and implementing alumni events and inclusions in chapter activities.
- Seek input and training from one or more of the resources available from Headquarters and other chapters.
- Identify your replacement for the next officer transition period.

## Differing Needs of Alumni Generations

Not understanding or ignoring the differences between an alum's generation and your own age and time will dramatically hinder your ability to be effective in engaging alumni. There is not one tried-and-true strategy to get all alumni involved.

For example:

- At the risk of stating the obvious, the needs and interests of alumni often vary widely from yours and your brothers'.
- Your methods of communicating, language use, frequency and timing will be different, depending on the generation a particular alumnus occupies.
- If the first effort to engage an alumnus is a request for his time or money, you risk losing him forever.
- Adjust your strategy by generation.

Here are some age-specific strategies to use. These are just trends and not concrete descriptions of alumni:

- Never restrict alumni of any age from any type of engagement opportunity.
- Recent graduates: These members are often still used to a direct connection with the undergraduate chapter. They still know much of the membership, have a valuable rapport with the chapter and want to stay involved. Take advantage of this. Get these members to serve on the chapter advisory board. Get them involved on projects they are interested in. These members have little to give financially but will put in much effort if you involve them.
- Established alumni: These are alumni in their late 20s, 30s and 40s. These will be the most difficult alumni to engage with. The focus of their lives is often on their jobs and families. Your focus here should not be to get them in an advisory position. Simply getting them at an event is enough. Their time is limited, so target your larger fundraising or social events at them. Their attendance will strengthen their bond to the organization. It is an investment for the future when they will have more time to help out.
- Senior alumni: Alumni who are retired or are approaching retirement often have newly found free time that you can utilize. These alumni may not be as interested in the ground-level projects that recent graduates prefer, but there are ways to utilize them. These alumni remember the Ritual fondly; give them the opportunity to participate.
- Hold regular alumni Ritual meetings outside of your regularly scheduled chapter meetings. Avoid chapter business—just do Ritual. This will renew alumni's interest in Sigma Chi and increase the chance they will become more involved.
- Set up mentorships between these alumni and members with similar interests. These kinds of relationships will be exceptionally valuable.

## Communications—Initiating and Staying in Contact

Communication is essential to initiating and maintaining relationships between undergraduate chapters and their alumni.

In fact, our experience shows that alumni will often resent spam and financial solicitation emails. They appreciate more communications on ways to volunteer and get involved.

Key areas of involvement include the following:

- Initiation
- Recruitment
- Finance
- Risk management
- Scholarship
- Job counseling
- Fundraising
- Community service
- House improvements and maintenance
- Assistance with Ritual for alumni meetings

### Print vs. digital

Although undergraduates most often communicate online, some alumni will still prefer hard copy newsletters—this will depend on your chapter and the number of alumni living in your region.

### Digital communication and social media

As we tend to communicate via online tools more these days, this guide focuses on fundamentals for fostering an active online community. Because we can all contact each other online, communication is no longer a one-way street.

Basics for online communication:

- Make sure you collect and update the permanent emails of alumni and graduating members.
- Avoid .edu email addresses. They often expire shortly after graduation.
- Form communities: Use Google Groups, Facebook Pages, LinkedIn Groups and the like to let alumni keep in touch with each other, as well as let you keep tabs on their lives.
- If an alumnus gets married, has a child or celebrates another major life event, include it in your next newsletter if you have permission.
- To foster an active online community, make sure that alumni will find the group useful. For example, a LinkedIn group may connect younger graduates seeking career opportunities with older graduates who are trying to find new hires; a Facebook group may connect all alumni in a city for possible future get-togethers. Include local alumni from other chapters in your communication.

As technology changes, so too does the way we interact with others. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter are key tools for interacting with those who are far away from us. Facebook may still be the most popular tool for communicating with those who have lost touch or might be too far away to reach through traditional methods of communication (active military, international alumni and the like).

This section will give a small rundown on methods for using these tools.

Facebook has an immense reach. There are more than two billion active users on Facebook; many of them are Sigma Chis. In addition, more people from the college graduate demographic are joining. Facebook is free to use and makes nearly all of its money from advertising.

Tips for using Facebook:

- Set up events through your Facebook page or group and include all of the necessary logistics. These can be downloaded to calendars, so this is a useful tool for busy alumni.

- Facebook may issue notifications to those who follow you, so try not to post excessively. Regular posting is expected, however, so make sure to post one or two items per day.
- Issue public relations posts regularly. Let people know how much money you raised for charity, which community service events you participated in and the awards you received.
- Do not post things that will reflect poorly upon the chapter. Facebook's reach is massive, and once something is posted, it can't be undone.

Twitter can also be a valuable tool in a chapter's communications arsenal. The Tribune should be an administrator of your chapter's Twitter account.

Tips for using Twitter:

- It is exceptionally valuable for reaching recent graduates. These members have grown up with social media, and often rely on sources such as Twitter for some of their information.
- Unlike many other social networks and email, Twitter does not issue notifications about each post from an account a user follows. This means that you can use it more often without annoying recipients. Two to three tweets a day often serves as a thorough, but not aggressive, frequency. If it is a slower time of year, one to two will serve.
- Use Twitter to issue useful, timely information, such as event logistics and reminders.
- Also issue public relations posts regularly (donations to charity, awards received and the like).
- Remember to keep it professional. Some light-hearted humor is OK, but do not engage in conversations via Twitter that will reflect badly on the chapter.

## Fundraising

### Give before you get

One of the biggest mistakes many chapters make is that the only time they contact their alumni is when they are asking for money. In a word, it is resented! Before you ask an alumnus for money, it is important that you have a well-designed alumni relations program.

### Preparation

For chapters with a house corporation, the corporation often handles housing-related fundraising. It is essential that you communicate with your house corporation regarding any matters of fundraising. Its members are more skilled in this area and since they are alumni, have a better feel for your chapter's situation and how other alumni view it. They often conduct their own fundraising programs, and the active chapter must be careful not to inadvertently compete with such campaigns.

Alumni receive requests for money from many places and are sensitive to poorly timed, frequent requests. Asking for money too often or too early in the engagement process will only serve to alienate and disenfranchise valuable members of your alumni community.

While it would be ideal for all of our alumni to stay involved, the reality is that due to their lifestyles (beginning a new family, working full-time and so on) alumni will show various levels of time, energy and interest in doing so.

This is inevitable; however, given the number of alumni, the best first steps to take are as follows.

### Start a project

Alumni want to help: As expected, alumni who are working don't have the time to spearhead a project for the chapter. It is up to you to take the initiative.

- Build a mentorship program between alumni and undergraduate members.
- Start a fundraiser for Derby Days. (Emailing with a purpose is a great way to gauge the interests of various alumni.)
- Keep track of the interested alumni: List alumni who are enthusiastic to help and respond to your projects. These Sigs will be the foundation for your "active alumni list."

### Follow up

- Maintain communication and recognize contributions: Keep in touch through any type of communication (email, Facebook and the like). Send a note on their birthdays, major life events and even dates of initiation.
- When alumni contribute, send a personal letter of thanks no later than 72 hours after you receive their gift.
- Don't reinvent the wheel: When the new Tribune is elected, make sure he is acquainted with the alumni. Personally introduce the new Tribune so that there is a basis for connection.
- The basis of these relationships is friendship. Who are the Sigma Chi alumni? In your area there are likely alumni both of your chapter and from other chapters across the continent. It is important to encourage involvement from all alumni in your area.
- When initiated, you became a Sigma Chi for life and are a member of the General Fraternity as well as your initiating chapter. With this in mind, you have hundreds and in some cases thousands of alumni in your area who are a valuable resource for your chapter. Soliciting alumni of other chapters for funds for your chapter is not condoned, in fairness to their own chapters.
- Some examples of how to find alumni in your area:
  - Member address lists or labels are available from Headquarters in several formats and at no charge.
  - You may request member addresses, phone numbers, occupations (if reported by the member), chapters, graduation years and statuses (Life Loyal Sig, dues payer and so on).
  - The materials you receive will include a guide to member codes, such as those indicating who are Life Loyal Sigs.
  - Research the chapter initiation roll book.



## Event Ideas

Here are some events you can use to draw in alumni, and increase the engagement between your chapter and your alumni base. Note that as many undergraduate members as possible should attend these. Alumni will have little interest in attending chapter events that do not have the support of the chapter.

- Brother's Day is an excellent opportunity to get together with a group of alumni. This annual, Fraternitywide celebration is often held sometime in mid-February but can be scheduled on any convenient weekend. Brother's Day is intended to be a special celebration during which all Sigma Chis, young and old, gather to honor our Founders, our heritage and our friendships with each other. If the local alumni chapter is planning a function, contact the alumni chapter president and ask how your undergraduate chapter can become involved.
- Regular speakers from alumni around you are valuable sources of insight. Find out what the members of your chapter are interested in and try to schedule opportunities for alumni in those fields to address the chapter. You will have to judge for yourself the viability and frequency of a program like this based on the depth of your alumni pool. As always, remember that you are trying to make friends with these people. Have meaningful conversations with them, provide them with a free meal if possible and always send a thank-you note.
- The Ritual meeting attracts alumni because they have a strong connection to our Ritual, but often have little exposure to it after graduation. Schedule regular Ritual chapter meetings at a time convenient for alumni. Make sure that regular communications go out reminding alumni about these meetings. Refrain from doing any business. This is not a time to ask for money. Let the alumni run the meeting. This event is about their interests. Let them reconnect with our Ritual without introducing any of the pressures of chapter operations.
- Alumni luncheons combined with a regular meeting provide an opportunity for alumni to interact with undergraduates and each other. If there is an alumni group near you, there is a great chance this event already exists. It is smart to designate liaisons who can attend regularly and report to the chapter. If this kind of thing doesn't exist near you, reach out to local alumni and get something started.

