

What DO Alumni Want?

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There is no shortage of talk about how chapters and our individual undergraduate brothers can benefit from alumni involvement. However, there is not near enough talk about how our alumni brothers can benefit. If we can help them meet THEIR needs, they will be much more willing, and likely, to help meet our chapters' needs.

So what do alumni want? And, perhaps just as important, what do they NOT want? Here is a short list we've compiled based on a whole bunch of experience with alumni from chapters all over the country. We've tried to put it into some sort of logical organization, but know that alumni priorities can have these in virtually any order of importance.

Alumni **DO** want to be kept informed of what other alumni are doing. Publishing an 'alumni' newsletter twice a year is a great way to do this. Ninety per cent of the space should be devoted to articles about, and pictures of, individual alumni. Keep the chapter news, event announcements, and general interest articles to a minimum.

Alumni **DO NOT** want to be solicited frequently. Solicitations should occur in no more than 1 in 5 contacts, and preferably, no more than 1 in 10. This includes mailings (a poor way to ask for donations anyway), phone conversations, personal visits, and during alumni events.

Alumni **DO** want to see regular evidence of a healthy undergraduate chapter. Regardless of whether they ever say anything about it, nearly every alumnus cares how the chapter is doing. In-depth analysis is not necessary, just regular and consistent positive news about a variety of things including recruitment, scholarship, philanthropy, chapter management (especially finances), community involvement, social functions, intramural sports, school relations, and parent involvement. It is better to highlight one or two details versus trying to generalize about many different facets at one time.

Alumni **DO NOT** want to, at any time, learn or discover that the undergraduate brothers are anything less than exemplary stewards of the house. Attempting to 'sell' reasonable care of the facility as an example of positive programming on the part of the chapter sends the message that this is neither expected nor normal. Raise your standards high and keep them there - this is fundamental.

Alumni **DO** want to be treated well when they are guests at both the chapter house and the school. Treat them as brothers, respected brothers, and be sure to include their guests in your planning.

Alumni **DO NOT** want to take advantage of the chapter or create problems for the undergraduates. At least this is true of the alumni you should be concerned about. If you have younger alumni who are a source of trouble, either due to behavior at social events or unwanted involvement in your member education program, do not hesitate to involve other 'good' alumni to police the 'bad' alumni. They will eventually grow-up and either fade away or become useful, but in the meantime you do not have to be their victim.

Alumni **DO** want to contribute, provided they are receiving a value they perceive. If an alumnus takes the time to attend an event, or to respond to a call or mailing, then he **IS** perceiving value. It is up to you to discover how to increase and sustain that value, and to ask for a specific contribution from him. Donations of time or money can come in many forms - try to find the right match for each of your involved alumni.

Remember to make 'consistency' your watchword. This means that an alumni program is best managed by alumni.