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Scholarship: The Chapter Level

The Organization of a Chapter Scholarship Program
Reorganizing for Scholarship

In many chapters a scholarship committee already exists with few, if any, actual duties. In such chapters the task of the fraternity leader is fourfold:

He should first initiate chapter legislation outlining the objectives and duties of a "scholarship council" or "committee." Research has shown that those chapters who have written scholastic policy earn higher averages than those without such a policy. He should appoint a key chapter member to the position of scholarship chairman and a group of responsible chapter members to the scholarship council. An attempt should be made to achieve representation of various classes and colleges within the chapter.

The scholarship committee should draw up a program for formal adoption by the chapter. This act puts the chapter's approval and acceptance upon the program; the chapter is more likely to cooperate with a program that it has formally adopted.

He should embark upon a program to enhance the prestige and importance of the scholarship council so that it can function effectively. This particular task might be accomplished by implementing the following suggestions:

Set a regular meeting time for the scholarship council.

Reproduce and distribute minutes of the scholarship council meetings.

Place the scholarship chairman on the executive council.

Call for a weekly report of the scholarship council at chapter meetings.

Appropriate monies for scholarship in the fraternity budget to cover the costs of programs and printed materials. A suggested amount is about 5% of the total budget. The committee or its chairman should meet periodically with the counterpart individual in Panhellenic.

Selecting a Scholarship Chairman

The scholarship chairman, whether elected or appointed, should meet high standards for his position. This position should be recognized as one of the most important in a chapter's organization. The scholarship chairman should:

Be an above-average student. He need not be the Brother with the highest grades but he should be a good example for the others.

Be able to command the respect of all fraters and be able to relate to the other men.

Be an upperclassman with some organizational and leadership experience. He should be one of the chapter's best men.

Believe in the importance and purpose of a chapter scholarship program.

Display qualities of perseverance and determination.

The Scholarship Council

Many chapters have recognized the need for organization and leadership in conducting a scholarship program and have established a "scholarship council," or "scholarship committee," charged with the responsibility for overseeing the academic welfare of the chapter and its members.

The scholarship council is usually composed of several interested chapter members and is assisted by a faculty member or alumnus who serves as "scholarship advisor." The scholarship chairman often serves as chairman of this body.

Duties of the Scholarship Council

The scholarship council is often delegated the following responsibilities:

To evaluate existing scholastic programs and initiate modifications or improvements.

To assist the Hegemon or Hypophetes in developing a new member scholarship program.

To purchase and arrange for suitable presentation of scholastic awards.

To interview and analyze fraters who are having scholastic problems and to offer suggestions for remedial action.

To be acquainted with the services of the university or college to which men in need of assistance may be referred.

To assist the rush committee in examining the scholastic potential of rushees.

To maintain a healthy chapter attitude toward scholastic attainment.

To assist the chapter officers in establishing and maintaining rules and regulations which provide proper study conditions in the chapter house.

To serve as a liaison with members of the faculty, administration and deans.

The sponsoring of a retreat to consider chapter policy. This retreat would mean leaving the campus and going to someone's cottage or to some resort area before classes begin, to devote many hours of uninterrupted concentration on chapter matters. If this is not done by the chapter officers for administrative organization, then the scholarship committee might well consider doing so. Otherwise, the scholarship involvement can be considered along with the rest of the administrative discussion. At this time, without the press of distraction and scheduled events, much can be accomplished in a more leisurely and freewheeling discussion than is possible on campus.

Maintaining a Climate for Learning

One of the most important ingredients for a program which leads to a tradition of high scholarship is that of a chapter atmosphere which is conducive to learning. The type of chapter environment where good study habits can develop and be effective involves a consideration of both chapter policy and the physical facilities available.

Plan the activities of the chapter so that they do not infringe upon study time. This necessitates planning in advance so that undue demands are not placed upon fraters in order to meet a deadline, such as Homecoming projects, spring weekends, etc.

Consider compensating a graduate student who could serve as a counselor in residence. This man may or may not be an alumni member of the fraternity. He could render guidance in maintaining an academic atmosphere and providing individual assistance through regularly scheduled office hours.

Make the goal of sound scholarship the first emphasis of all chapter publications, including rush information.

Remember that extracurricular activities have meaning for the individual and the chapter only if they are chosen freely by the individual. Forcing individuals into campus activities is inconsistent with the basic objectives of the fraternity.

Propose that the scholarship council develop a proposal for quiet hours and means of enforcement. This proposal should be developed with the assistance of members of the chapter and voted on in its final form by the membership.

Minimize the possibility of distracting noises and interruptions of study from television, radio, stereo, card games and bull sessions through a program of rigid enforcement of quiet hours by the members of the scholarship council. Make changes in the program of quiet hours if they are necessary.

Check to be sure that there is adequate lighting in each study room.

Invest in a blackboard or other needed study aids for group review sessions.

Designate if possible, a room or area other than the library where group studying and review may occur. Keep the library separate so that fraters living out of the house may have a quiet place to study. Alumni and parents clubs might well provide and equip the physical plant with an eye toward making it a better place in which to study.

In prompting a chapter library, one must bear in mind that the library is not to be a replacement for the university or college library, but rather something useful for reference purposes of a brief nature. Such standard books might be an unabridged dictionary, a set of some major encyclopedia, some of the textbooks which have been abandoned by men in the chapter for use in courses, and some well-selected magazine subscriptions. The scholarship committee might well encourage each graduate to give to the chapter the book that he enjoyed most during his college career.

Programs of Scholastic Assistance and Improvement

The precepts of the fraternity teach that the primary duty to self, family, college, country, and fraternity, is to do the best job of which we are capable. Part of the value of the fraternity experience rests in learning to live with and be of service to our fellow man.

The scholarship chairman and the scholarship council can provide an invaluable service to the Frater who requests or is in need of academic assistance through the establishment of a program to aid those who are scholastically deficient in any way.

The following is a brief discussion of a few topics which may be considered in such a program of assistance.

Encourage the members to seek assistance from their professors. As the number of college-going students continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important for students to attempt to maintain a close relationship with members of the faculty. The uninterested or uncooperative faculty member is the exception rather than the rule.

Be familiar with and utilize the services of the staff of the university's testing and reading Centers. Encourage a Brother who is floundering due to vocational indecision or personal problems to seek assistance immediately.

Provide a system of tutorial assistance whereby those persons who are more proficient in certain fields may assist other Fraters having difficulty. Outside resources in the form of faculty members or graduate students may also provide help. Conduct reviews before examinations, particularly in the usual survey courses. Post the names of Fraters who will serve as tutors so that those who are deficient may sign up for assistance.

Establish a systematic method of securing weekly reports of new members and share this information with the big brothers.

Avoid forced study tables; these represent a negative approach to the problem of self-discipline and call into question the quality and maturity of new members. Too often, forced study tables are noisy, poorly ventilated, become substitutes for concentrated individual study, and are seen as an opportunity for a good time. Rather, concentrate on a scholarship program which assists the individual in budgeting his time, in learning how to study, and in utilizing his time most effectively in an atmosphere conducive to learning. Discard fraternity examination files which are too often used as a crutch or substitute for individual study. It is the poor and unusual teacher who continues to give the same examination. Students may obtain a basic understanding of the style of the professor and type of questions from the instructor prior to the examination.

Curtail the extracurricular participation of fraters who are experiencing scholastic difficulty. Constitutional provisions of the national fraternity and of the local campus interfraternity council provide that a member is not in good standing if he is delinquent in scholarship. When this action is taken, see to it that efforts are made to assist the individual to correct this deficiency.

The scholarship committee and chapter might seek sources of funds to assist students whose only deterrent from completing their academic work is financial need. This kind of scholarship program should not be hard to come by if local philanthropists, alumni, and parents are sought for their help.

Scholarship: The Rushee and the New Member

The Rush Guest

Unless men are considered and selected for membership who have the basic ability and motivation to fulfill the academic requirements for graduation, the fraternity cannot serve as a catalyst to the educational process. Few colleges admit students who do not have the basic skills to do college work. There are certain factors, however, related to the past performance and future goals of the individual which should be considered before approving a prospective member.

Appraise a man scholastically as you would socially or by any other measuring device.

Discuss with each rushee his high school background in scholarship as well as his activities and social life. This is important. Discuss his course programs. Inquire into his attitudes toward study, grades, teachers, and his college program. If possible, discuss these same factors with the rushee and his parents.

Consider with the rushee his long range professional and vocational goals. Do these reflect the thinking of someone who is fairly mature? Are these similar to the goals and aspirations expressed by other members of the chapter?

Examine the scholastic background of the rushee through as many tangible means as possible.

Academic subjects completed in high school and the grades achieved.

Rank in graduating class.

Test scores in admissions tests, reading and aptitude examinations. Remember this important fact. According to existing research, these factors--high school academic performance, rank in class, and college admissions scores--present the best indication of a man's future academic performance on the campus.

The chapter scholarship committee should develop from chapter records a set of information on the likelihood that a man will be initiated. One such technique might be the compilation of the high school grades and SAT scores for every man who joins. Then a table could be devised with the expected grade point as the body of the table, plotted against high school grades and SAT scores. Based on your own chapter's norms, you can develop a grade predictor for your new members, useful in deciding whether or not they are a good academic risk before pledging takes place.

During rush, there should be an emphasis on house scholarship performance. This might include the scholarship rank and pictures of the top scholars prominently displayed, a list of membership of various honoraries, and scholarship holders specifically listed. Such lists and tabulations might be included in any rush book or on the chapter bulletin board for display.

Continue to be on the alert for good quality upperclassmen who have proven themselves academically. Many of the most outstanding leaders in the Fraternity joined as upperclassmen.

The New Member

In a recent study at the University of Illinois nearly three-fourths (73.8%) of the hundreds of rushees to fraternities stated their foremost motive for joining a college fraternity was "to help me get better grades." The obligation for the fraternity to serve as a positive contributor to the freshman academic experience is an obvious one. The reciprocal responsibility on the part of the new member as a probationary member of the fraternity is also apparent. A chapter's records of high scholarship is usually the result of the type of man the chapter seeks to join.

Reference was made earlier in the Manual to the need for the scholarship council to work closely with the new members through weekly reports to the Hegemon and Hypophetes which are shared with the Big Brother. Similarly, many of the points referred to throughout the Manual also apply to the scholarship program of the new members.

One basic question which is asked frequently is, "What is the best kind of relationship between the older and younger members?" Some insight into the best approach for the

active chapter to take in working with new members in scholarship or any other area of the fraternity is presented in a study which was conducted at the University of Kansas. The purpose of this study was to find differences in fraternities that excelled scholastically, socially and athletically as compared to those who were not successful in these areas.

The differences as described by the author of the Kansas study, William R. Butler, are as follows:

The chapter atmosphere in which new members were respected, accepted, and encouraged was definitely related to high scholastic achievement. In opposition, an atmosphere in which new members were belittled, embarrassed, and made to feel inferior was concomitant with low scholastic achievement.

The new member programs of the high achieving fraternities were based upon a system of management and guidance rather than law enforcement. Considerable opportunities were allowed for new members to become self-directing. On the other hand, an atmosphere in which new members were given little opportunity to take self-initiated action and be responsible for those actions, usually contributed to poor scholarship. New members tended to copy the behavior of the older members in both the high and low groups. The older members of the high fraternities were constantly aware of themselves in the new members' presence and made every effort to present themselves to the new members in the best light. In the low groups, the activities generally deviated greatly from the behavior they expected of their new members.

Seeing and understanding the new member as an individual who had definite physical and emotional needs was an important factor in the high ranking groups. The low groups had few provisions in their new member programs for satisfying the new members' personal and academic problems. They believed that physical and mental discipline would produce academically successful members. Results showed that attempts to control new members by using a maximum amount of punishment yielded a minimum amount of production.

The high achieving fraternities used methods of controlling new member behavior which were based upon the use of reward alone, or a combination of reward and punishment. They stressed positive inter-personal relationships between non-actives and actives. The low group primarily used punishment and reproof and developed negative inter-personal relationships.

Scholarship Council Responsibilities With New Members

The scholarship chairman should meet with the new members at their first official meeting and should state the chapter's view on scholarship. If the new members are made aware of scholarship emphasis from the day they are bid, the chapter climate in one college generation should improve drastically.

The scholarship chairman should consider the writing of a standard letter to parents of all new members explaining to them what the chapter's policy is on scholarship and how their son's academic career will be furthered by his fraternity membership.

The selection of a Big Brother for each new member should be given consideration by the scholarship committee as well as the Hegemon. The person selected should be able to work well with the new member in question, both intellectually and socially.

A weekly report of the new member's grades should be required at meetings of the new member class, and reports made to the chapter about the progress of the new members. There should be a minimum standard for initiation based on a scholastic grade point, necessary to remain in good standing.

There are a number of gimmicks which might be employed to help promote good scholarship among the new members, such as steak and beans dinners, studying with older members, and so on. Many of these are just what the name implies - "gimmicks." They may not serve any useful function. If they do and have proven to be of value, then they should be continued.

Chapter Scholarship: Additional Suggestions

There are a number of different techniques over and above those referred to earlier which have been used to develop and maintain a program of scholarship by various chapters. This list is not exhaustive but may be of some value as you consider ways to improve academic achievement.

Have public presentation of scholastic achievement awards such as trophies, plaques and certificates, outstanding freshman scholar, highest room award, etc. Too often the "activities man" or the athlete outdistances the scholar in terms of recognition.

Post grades of all chapter members through the use of a scholarship bulletin board with group and individual progress reports through graphs and charts, pair off Brother with the highest and lowest scholarship or Big Brother-Little Brother competition.

Give cash prizes for scholastic improvement and achievement as well as for selection to membership academic honoraries, such as Phi Eta Sigma, Phi Beta Kappa, or Tau Beta Pi.

Invite faculty members and businessmen to talk on the importance of academic achievement and its relevance to post-graduate life working in business or the professions.

Post notices and bulletins about university lectures, concerts and exhibits.

Investigate with your alumni the possibility of their sponsoring a "scholarship achievement ring" program. Specially designed rings are available through the Balfour Company.

Raise the academic requirements for initiation to slightly higher than the local Interfraternity Council standards.

Arrange an annual "Scholarship and Awards Banquet" for the chapter, or for a number of chapters in a district, with the parents and college officials in attendance.

Make frequent use of scholarship news in chapter, campus, and local news media.