



GAMMA SIGMA ALPHA

FACULTY MANUAL



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FACULTY RELATIONS

Introduction:

A Faculty Relations Program is more than a scholarship dinner or tea once a year.

The goal is not only to build regular meaningful interactions between members of the chapter and faculty outside the classroom, but to demystify fraternity and sorority life and put a human face on the chapter. No group can be successful doing this once a year for an hour.

This process requires planning, creativity and drive. It's an intentional process. Almost every group has their foundation in the pursuit of scholarship or academic excellence.

Therefore, part of our goal should be to support the mission of the host institution. How do we become a part of that process? Where can connections be made to bridge faculty and student interaction outside the classroom? We are a partner with the institution not an escape from the responsibilities of academia. However, the current perception of fraternity and sorority membership might be one of unethical behavior, entitlement, misogyny or worse. Faculty who have had negative impressions of fraternity and sorority life are not going to want to participate in any chapter activity. Some chapter members may even live up to the stereotypes of the Greek community but in most cases, those members are not the majority. Creating meaningful, planned interactions can help the chapter or community correct those unfortunate perceptions and build stronger relationships.

Culture:

Before the chapter can begin a faculty relations program there has to be an assessment of the current chapter culture. Take a look at faculty relations from the inside. Have a discussion at a chapter meeting or retreat to find out where members stand. Where are we in our relationship with the institution? Are members respectful in class? Do our members meet their professors before or after class? How many see their professors during open office hours? What do Faculty members think of the chapter or community? Are members interested in improving relations? Figuring out where the chapter stands will help plan what steps to take next in building a program. Faculty can see through poorly veiled attempts and superficial placations of programs to "appreciate" them.

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Culture (*continued*):

Common sense dictates that the chapter can't be successful if it plans anything the members won't support. Members have to attend and be engaged if the program is to be successful. The engaged part is most important. All the members could be required to attend, but if they aren't talking with the faculty it will be as uncomfortable as a bad junior high dance. This also requires a look at the level of engagement the chapter desires. If the chapter has a faculty advisor, discussing the chapter feedback and any proposed ideas with the advisor would gain the chapter some advantage.

Think from the Faculty point of view:

No one wants to go to an event where they may not know anyone, the cleanliness is questionable, no one will talk to them, they are offered stale cookies and watered down punch and there's no program. The faculty leave with a story of their experience which will not be flattering and could hurt faculty relations for everyone. In general, one or two wasted evenings at events like this and faculty stop attending everyone's events. Some faculty view all chapters the same so if they have had one bad experience they extrapolate the experience to all groups. So the chapter will have to distinguish itself from the rest of the community to stand out through genuine interaction and buy-in from members. Think of a successful faculty event in the same way you would think of a successful recruitment event.

Overall:

Think about some goals for the program. What would make this successful? Is it having a certain number of faculty present? Getting a thank you note from a faculty member? Presenting some positive information about the chapter directly to faculty? Having the program covered by the newspaper? Productive interactions? Why are you doing the program and how do you measure if you've done it? Having those things out-lined beforehand help members buy into the success of the event. Remember nobody wants to waste their time so preparing members in advance with goals and expectations will go a long way to making the event work.

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First Time Out:

If you are just beginning a faculty relations program you want to start out small.

Host that appreciation event for members and their professors to celebrate the academic successes of the chapter, but make sure you do it right. First impressions count.

What do you want out of the program? As a first try it could be just for members and their professors to get to know each other better. Set the location date and time at the very beginning of the term. You have to plan a little farther in advance for the faculty than you would have to do for a chapter event. Think about what type of event you want to hold and what the chapter can afford i.e. reception, tea, lunch, dinner, dessert. You want to do something nice with the budget available so don't host an event larger than your budget. Be creative, you don't have to spend a lot for the event to be memorable.

Also think about a time that will be welcoming to faculty. Holding something on a week night at 9:00 PM or on Saturday afternoon may not bring faculty back to campus. Ask members to help put together the guest list. Pass a sheet around at a meeting or create a Google Document. Make sure that when a member adds a name they include their name as the invitee. (Make sure they know if they add a name, and that they will be expected to be present at the event.) Create both electronic and paper invitations. Have each member who invited a guest deliver the paper invitation in person 3-4 weeks before the event. Their name and the faculty member's name needs to be on the invite. Then follow up with the electronic invitation to gather the RSVPs 2-3 weeks out. If you use an on-line invitation program, the program will send out reminders for your event at predetermined times automatically.

Think of this event as a recruitment activity. When a faculty member accepts the invitation, make sure the chapter assigns a member to "host" that faculty member preferably the person who invited them.

That member spends the entire event by that faculty member's side so there's no chance the professor is left with no one to talk to. Do that for all your guests. It is the host's responsibility to introduce the professor around and make sure they get served refreshments. If you are having a meal, those members hosting professors get to go first with their guest. Make sure to greet guests at the door and have that host meet the guest at the door or have someone escort the guest to the host. Be sure to provide parking.

Have a program at the event. Don't just eat and run. What is the message you want the guests to take with them when they leave? Talk about the chapter scholarship program, give certificates to the top and most improved scholars, have the faculty advisor speak, or present a faculty member of the year award.

Take the time to have each host introduce the faculty member they invited to the audience. At the very least welcome them and thank them for what they do. If the chapter already hosts successful events, ratchet up the program. Invite one of the faculty members to speak about their research or a hobby they have. Faculty love to talk about the things they do outside of the classroom.

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First Time Out (continued):

Another way to approach this is to have an activity that helps facilitate interaction between the faculty and members. Think of simple games that groups of members and faculty can compete in together; trivia contests, Pictionary, campus celebrity game night, Hollywood Squares. These events can have multiple teams of faculty and students working together. Just make sure it's not too competitive. It's sometimes good to have a small favor to present to the guests as they leave. These can be anything from small bags of candy to a list of members who can baby sit or are willing to help out with projects around the house. Just make sure it has your name and email on it. Follow-up in one week with a thank you note to the faculty for attending. Ideally this should be written by the member inviting the guest, but it can be assigned to the officer in charge of the event. If possible get the members to write the notes at a meeting and send them collectively. Use the guide for hosting faculty events from the GSA web site for more help on planning the event.

Other considerations:

There will always be members who don't have a specific professor able to attend the event. Assign them as greeters/coat attendants. Provide name tags for guests and members. There should always be someone at the door to let guests in, welcome them and say good evening when they leave. They can also help match up the member with their guest. Have faculty in attendance sign a guest book when they arrive. It's a great way to keep track of who attended without looking like you are taking attendance. Make sure there's a predetermined schedule or agenda for the event to follow and stay on that schedule. The program should begin about half way into the event once everyone has had a chance to eat and have some conversation. Make sure that any activities are progressing and are being well received. Be willing to change course if things aren't working.

If you have mastered the faculty reception it's time to increase the chapter relationship. Work with your chapter to develop a goal for your program that includes additional events or time commitments beyond the reception idea. Start small and build on your successes. Co-host events with other chapters to draw more people to the event. After it's over evaluate the event in relation to the goals established.

Ideas for building relationships:

For larger general elective classes on campus, sponsor a review with the faculty and open it to all students. Before midterms or finals, some professors sponsor review sessions to help students prepare for midterms or finals especially in the sciences. Offer to host one of the sessions in your house. If this is a new idea to your campus, approach a professor from a large general elective class and ask if this would be something the professor would support. If these programs already occur, ask how you can help out. Make sure you provide refreshments afterwards to allow those in attendance to mingle or seek additional help.

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Ideas for building relationships (*continued*):

Make participation in campus lectures part of the chapter's point system or new member program.

Many chapters use point systems for attendance at formals or room draw to live in the house.

Tie to that system a point or two for attending lectures on campus. This allows members to participate where their interests lie. As part of the new member program, have bigs and littles pick a campus lecture to attend together.

Faculty appreciation day. At the beginning of the term put together a care package for the professors of the chapter membership for that term. It easy to create and deliver a card to those faculty wishing them a successful year. The chapter could go above and beyond by creating finals care packages or thoughtful tokens for the faculty members; an apple with a quote, a plate of cookies or a gift card to Starbucks thanking them for the term. If you are working together as a community deliver fruit baskets to the departments and offices or sponsor a faculty car wash day.

Participate in the institution's or a departmental lecture series. All parts of academia bring in outside presenters ranging from the nationally famous to those involved in cutting edge research as one time lectures or part of an ongoing program. Divide the chapter into teams and have each team pick a lecture or program they want to attend. Teams could be by major or interest. Most of these programs are scheduled well in advance hence an organized chapter could have the information early on for all teams to decide what they wanted to attend at the beginning of the term. The point being that the chapter is represented as a big part of the programs that support the academic mission of the institution. As a group the chapter is seen as being involved in the academic side of campus and supporting educational programs. It is important that those attending are leaving a good impression. Members shouldn't go and be disruptive or disrespectful in any way by sleeping, texting through the program or worse. They should be there to listen and participate because of their interest in the topic and their commitment to that purpose before the program can be successful.

Put together a forum panel of faculty and students to talk about an important issue current to the campus climate. This issue could be any topic that affects both students and faculty. Look for a topic that the two may differ in perspective to garner a more lively discussion. This program works best if the audience has both faculty and students present. If possible work with a Dean's office, the provost or the president of the institution to get faculty participation. Some institutions have an undergraduate teaching office which may also be a good place to find co-sponsorship. Ask the president or other high ranking official to moderate the panel. Plan the event over a lunch where members of the community can brown bag it to the program. Create a diverse panel of 4 or 5 faculty and 2 students and make sure to allow time for audience participation and questions. Plan and advertise well in advance. If possible get the program on the institution's calendar and included in any mailings, announcements or newsletters that go out to faculty. It may take extra time to find these outlets and discover the appropriate way to submit the programs information. Planning the details in advance will help meet those publication deadlines.

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Ideas for building relationships (*continued*):

Host a series of faculty lectures in the house or in a general location on campus.

Spend some time creating a theme and ask several faculty over the course of the term to speak.

Examples could be your favorite faculty, women in leadership, issues facing today's society, or new discoveries in a particular field. To put together a program this large make sure to plan it at least a term in advance. Select a location that will give you a more intimate environment like a living room so that those who attend have a personal experience. Hold the program the same time and day of the week so participants can develop a pattern. Put the information for all the programs out at one time.

Hold a post lecture reception to allow those who attended to meet the faculty member one on one.

Make sure the event is promoted to faculty as well as students.

