

PHI MU ALPHA  AMONG MEN  
SINFONIA HARMONY

**Guide to Chapter  
Alumni Relations  
Officer's Duties**

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2010 Edition

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## REVISION HISTORY

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Krueger: removed non-historical references to alumni clubs; approved by NEC (10/25/2009) Changed title to Director of Alumni Engagement and Alumni Engagement Committee

## INTRODUCTION

A common phrase heard among brothers in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia is "Once a Sinfonian, always a Sinfonian." It is the spirit of this phrase that has fostered loyal alumni Sinfonians for more than one hundred years. The alumni Sinfonian looks to the lessons introduced in his college days for inspiration and strength throughout his daily life. Yet, while probationary and collegiate memberships are the core experiences for a lifetime journey in Sinfonia, the participation of the alumni member is not passive or secondary. He assumes the vital role of supporting the Fraternity's continued efforts to build musical students into men of high ideals and of ensuring that the Sinfonia experience is available for generations of students to come. Sinfonia's sixth Supreme President, Percy Jewett Burrell, wrote in 1910, "As students we were in the 'getting' business; as alumni we should be in the 'giving' business." Alumni membership in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia provides the possibility to give back to the Fraternity and its collegiate membership all of the benefits of the life-changing lessons learned through probationary and active membership. All Sinfonians are called upon to achieve the fullest potential of this possibility by making the most of their post-collegiate participation."

Alumni are a reflection of our past, a representation of our present, and a link to our future. This vision of a Fraternity that fosters ongoing relationships through an environment that invites, supports, and presupposes post-collegiate involvement and interaction on local, regional, and national levels is critical to the future of our Order. Every chapter has alumni, and every collegiate member will become an alumnus of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. While the probationary and collegiate membership experiences provide the foundation for a lifetime journey in Sinfonia, the alumni experience can be the most substantial. Continued involvement in Sinfonia after graduation is an expectation and obligation of membership.

The Alumni Relations Officer has one of the most important jobs in the chapter – to maintain this relationship and connection to the over 90,000 alumni Sinfonians across the country. The Alumni Relations Officer is the first link in Sinfonia's alumni infrastructure. It is how this link is developed that will determine the Fraternity's ability to truly create a lifetime experience for its members.

### Duties of the Alumni Relations Officer

The *General Regulations for Collegiate Chapters*, Article XI, Section 7, describe the duties of the Alumni Relations Officer as follows:

The Alumni Relations Officer shall compile and maintain an accurate list of names and addresses of all former members of the chapter and of other alumni Sinfonians in the vicinity. He shall notify the National Headquarters of any changes in the addresses, as well as any chapters or associations in other localities of his own chapter's alumni moving into their geographic areas. He shall be responsible for the creation and distribution of an alumni newsletter annually. He shall assist in the coordination of the chapter's alumni functions, and shall regularly inform and invite local and chapter alumni to chapter events. He shall act as a liaison between the chapter and any associations in his locality. He shall perform such other local duties as his collegiate chapter may designate but shall hold no other chapter office.

In addition the Alumni Relations Officer is primarily responsible for the chapter's overall alumni relations program. The Fraternity's expectations for this program are embodied in the Citation for Alumni Relations. A chapter with a strong alumni relations program should have no problem answering the following questions positively:

- Does your chapter have a current and comprehensive list of its alumni?
- Does your chapter have a current list of alumni in the area regardless of the initiating chapter?
- Did your chapter produce a newsletter or similar publication for alumni during this academic year?
- Did your chapter have any written communication with alumni other than a newsletter during this academic year?

- Did your chapter provide opportunities for alumni to participate in the activities of your chapter during this academic year?
- Did your chapter sponsor an event specifically for alumni during this academic year?
- Were area alumni, regardless of initiating chapter, invited to chapter functions (initiations, concerts, etc.) during this academic year?
- Were alumni address changes reported regularly to the national headquarters?
- Has your chapter played a role in developing an area alumni association or enlarging an existing association during this academic year?
- Did any members of your chapter graduate within this academic year? If so, did your chapter present the Ceremony for Graduating Brothers?

The Alumni Relations Officer has a huge job before him and should enlist the help of the chapter to handle all of these responsibilities. It is the only office that may not be combined with another office. Many chapters create an Alumni Relations Committee to ensure that the effort to build and maintain relationships with alumni is successful.

### **The Alumni Perspective**

What do alumni want? That depends on the alumnus. The successful chapter alumni relations programs are the ones that recognize this and work to create a variety of opportunities for their alumni to remain connected to the organization. Generally speaking, the reason an alumnus wants to remain involved after his graduation is usually one or more of the following:

- A desire to continue friendships in school.
- An interest in the status of the chapter and a desire to see and visit Fraternity friends on special occasions.
- An interest in the institution.
- A willingness to actively serve the Fraternity.

A successful alumni relations program keeps these things in mind as it develops its communications, events, and programs for its alumni.

## **GETTING STARTED**

The first step towards creating a vibrant alumni program for the chapter is to get an idea of whom and where the alumni are. If the chapter is 20 years old, it is likely that there are 200 or more brothers who were initiated into the chapter. In addition, depending where the chapter is located, there may be at least another 100 brothers who live within an hour of the chapter who were initiated somewhere else. Gathering and maintaining the contact information for these Sinfonians and future chapter and local alumni will be necessary as the chapter develops its alumni relations program.

### **Using MyDesktop**

MyDesktop is the set of tools that the Fraternity has provided its members to handle a variety of tasks. It can be accessed through the National Fraternity website ([www.sinfonia.org](http://www.sinfonia.org)). In order to activate a MyDesktop account and access the tools, brothers must register on the site. Registration requires only a brother's member number and birthdate. If the member number is unknown, it is also possible to look up this information using the member's name and school of initiation. Once registered and logged in, brothers can change their password, update their profile (including personal contact information), manage listserv subscriptions, and locate member instant messenger screen names. Chapters can register probationary member classes, file initiation reports, obtain chapter member lists, and report changes in their officers. Every chapter officer has the ability to access these tools and should become familiar with them. The tool that is of the most interest to an Alumni Relations Officer is the ability to get chapter member lists. These lists include both current collegiate members and alumni of the chapter. It also allows the Alumni Relations Officer to update the contact information of the chapter's alumni. In addition to the Alumni Relations Officer using MyDesktop to gather and

update information, he should inform alumni of the tool as well. By encouraging alumni to use MyDesktop to keep their information up to date, chapters will be able to maintain better contact with them.

## KEEPING CONTACT INFORMATION CURRENT

The contact list is only useful if it stays current. There are several different ways a chapter can obtain current contact information for their alumni.

### University Alumni Affairs office

One of the first things an Alumni Relations Officer should do is visit the college or university Alumni Affairs office, which may supply the chapter with updated information on the chapter's alumni. In return, they will usually ask that the chapter keep them posted on updates received from alumni. Many alumni affairs offices will also allow the chapter to use their resources to accomplish alumni-related duties (e.g. long distance calling, postage and mailing, publication resources, etc.) In some cases alumni affairs offices have even provided chapters with funding for alumni reunions/gatherings.

### Listing lost alumni in the chapter newsletter

Listing lost alumni in the alumni newsletter is a great way to find alumni for which the chapter is missing contact information. Sometimes, alumni on the mailing list will know where these lost alumni are and can provide the chapter with contact information.

### Online directory resources for address research

There are many online services that the chapter can use to get updated contact information on its alumni. There are both free services and services that require a subscription fee. Some of the more commonly used free sites include [www.switchboard.com](http://www.switchboard.com) and [www.whitepages.com](http://www.whitepages.com) and can be very helpful to a chapter trying to find addresses. If the chapter has lost alumni, it may be a good idea to try and find them online before sending out a newsletter or other alumni communication.

### Maintaining a local database

The National Fraternity encourages chapters to utilize MyDesktop to get the most current contact information for their alumni. They also ask that chapters keep this contact information current using the Chapter Membership List tool available to them. If the chapter comes across local alumni and new contact information for these Sinfonians, they should report that information to the national headquarters. If the chapter keeps information in its own separate database in order to produce mailing labels, mail merge documents, etc., it needs to make certain that updates are sent to the national headquarters and/or are updated via MyDesktop.

## ONE GREAT BROTHERHOOD - CHAPTER ALUMNI VS. LOCAL ALUMNI

In addition to the chapter alumni listing which, can be obtained from MyDesktop, a chapter is also responsible for maintaining contact with the "local alumni". Local alumni include those who live within an hour's driving distance from the chapter. It is important that all Sinfonians remain connected to the Fraternity even though they may have relocated to another part of the country. We are all part of one great Brotherhood united in our mission through our ceremonies and rituals. Welcome these men as if they were always a part of the chapter, and the chapter will see the benefits. These "local alumni" lists can be obtained from the national headquarters. Before calling, make a list of the zip codes (just the first 3 digits) that fall into the chapter's geographical area. A staff member will extract the list from the membership database and send it to the chapter.

## CREATING THAT CONNECTION - THE ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

One of the major tools that an Alumni Relations Officer uses to communicate with alumni is the chapter alumni newsletter. While a chapter should send out a minimum of one newsletter per year, it is highly recommended that it produce a newsletter at the beginning of each semester. This will allow the chapter to communicate future events for alumni to attend, and opportunities for them to become involved with the chapter.

### Content of the Alumni Newsletter

The content of the alumni newsletter should cater to what the alumni want to hear. It should focus on the items that would be of interest to an alumni brother who possibly hasn't heard from the chapter, or the national Fraternity, for several years. A common mistake is writing too much about what is going on in the chapter. Sure our alumni love hearing about how the chapter is doing, but what they are really interested in is hearing about what the brothers who were there with them are up to now. A good alumni newsletter should include the following:

- A message from the chapter president and Alumni Relations Officer
- Alumni news
- Chapter news
- Campus news
- Photos
- Calendar of events

### A message from the president and Alumni Relations Officer

The most effective messages usually concentrate on a particular issue. For example, a message about the president's vision for the chapter during the upcoming academic year would be the good subject for this section. The Alumni Relations Officer would want to concentrate on an issue that is relevant to alumni – e.g. The Sinfonia Educational Foundation. The issue should be timely and relevant and the focus should be positive in its outlook.

### News about alumni

This is the most important part of the publication, as it is targeted towards alumni. This section should include small notes about many different alumni, and should also have larger profiles of more notable alumni, such as a faculty member or recent award winner. This section can also be used to enlist alumni's help in finding contact information for other alumni. If the chapter is planning on alumni taking the initiative to submit stories themselves, there could be a long wait. However, there are ways of obtaining this information. Ask each member to call an alumnus from his hometown, inquiring about his accomplishments or other Fraternity alumni's accomplishments. The undergraduate member should take down all information instead of asking the "callee" to mail in any information. Also, have several members go to faculty on campus and interview them. When scheduling interviews, be sure to give plenty of advanced notice and let the interviewee know the purpose of the interview (i.e. that it will be published).

### Reporting on chapter events

Don't let the publication be a vehicle solely for blowing the chapter's horn, but do tell what's happening in the chapter. What are some strong aspects of the chapter? Who are this semester's probationary members and what towns are they from? Has the chapter received any awards on campus or in the area? What are the chapter's future plans? Are there any alumni events in the near future? Be sure to include the address of the chapter for return articles and other information. Chapter stories should be kept short. In fact, a good motto for articles is, "The shorter, the better." Alumni will not be interested in all the details. One way to add more depth to articles, while keeping them short, is to separate the larger stories. Take two facets of one event and write two, more interesting stories. If they are related, put them next to each other or surround them with a single border. Avoid inside jokes. What may seem funny to the chapter may not be to alumni. It is possible to be conversational without using chit-chat. Stories about individuals should be kept short as well. You can place a number of one or two sentence stories all together, separating them with an asterisk or another

"dingbat." Identify each individual by hometown and initiation year. Decide to boldface either each name or each initiation year - this adds some visual interest.

### **News about the campus**

Alumni will be interested in major construction, new deans, presidents, etc. Athletic schedules could be included. Concert schedules for large ensembles could also be included.

### **Photos**

The phrase "A picture is worth a thousand words" is very true in alumni publications. Good quality photos add a lot to the text content of the newsletter.

### **Calendar of events**

Include everything that's going to happen in the future. Tell when formal meetings and recitals are. Tell alumni when the next performance of the ritual will be. Include chapter and Founders Day activities.

Again, remember to keep the publication focused on your audience – the alumni member. As a general guideline, a six page newsletter should be broken up as follows:

Page 1: Introductions from the Alumni Relations Officer and chapter president

Page 2: Alumni gossip

Page 3: Fraternity news: national, regional, and province

Page 4: Fraternity news (con't.): chapter news; school news

Page 5: Upcoming events; Lost list of alumni

Page 6: Contact information

FLAT OUT REQUESTS FOR MONEY SHOULD BE AVOIDED AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. Simple presentations of things the chapter is doing should suffice. Selling any project well without requests should get the attention of some alumni brothers who will voluntarily donate to any cause. Only in special cases should you ask for money. Remember that our brothers, once they graduate, are constantly bombarded for donations by their *Alma Mater*.

## **LAYOUT AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

How the newsletter looks and feels will play a large part in whether alumni will actually read the publication. Special care should be taken to produce the highest quality newsletter that fits within the chapter budget. Using newsletter templates, high-resolution graphics and photos, and a quality printer will contribute to a high quality publication.

### **Before the layout of the publication**

The first rule of thumb in publishing is to make it correct before making it pretty. Edit all of the copy at least three times. Only running a word processor's spell-check can prevent some inadvertent mistakes, but it will not catch everything. Check for spelling errors, capitalization, punctuation, and clarity. Keep in mind Fraternity guidelines regarding publication style (i.e. stylesheet) and the use of official titles, official abbreviations, logo usage, etc. Also, use extra caution when using specific university or school identity graphics, i.e. school logo, school motto, school mascots. The newsletter can include the school's name, but make sure the publication cannot be mistaken for a school publication. Remember, schools can, may, and often will enforce strict identity usage, as it is THEIR property. Stick to Sinfonian graphics and logos.

## Compiling a stylesheet

A stylesheet is a list of guidelines that should be used when creating a publication. This helps maintain consistency amongst a chapter's correspondence and publications. Below is a list of Fraternity guidelines to be included in the chapter's stylesheet.

- "Sinfonia" and all its derivations shall be capitalized and should never be hyphenated.
- The word "brotherhood" shall appear in lower case in all references.
- "Brother" should be capitalized only when used preceding a name.
- "National Executive Committee," "National Assembly," and "Assembly" when referring to the National Assembly, shall be capitalized. Also, National Convention refers to the triennial event. The National Assembly is the body of delegates that vote on constitutional issues at the Convention.
- "Fraternity" shall be capitalized when it specifically replaces "Phi Mu Alpha." It shall not be capitalized when used as an adjective - The fraternity documents...
- Titles shall be capitalized only when they immediately precede the name of the person to whom they are assigned. "National President Ossian E. Mills resides..." and "Ossian E. Mills, national president, lives in..."
- "Lyrecrest" shall be capitalized; "national headquarters" shall not be capitalized. Do not use "national office," "national," nor "nationals."
- "Ritual" should only be capitalized as the specific title of the Phi Mu Alpha Initiation Ritual.
- The Province Governors' Council, Collegiate Province Representatives' Council, should always include an apostrophe after the appropriate "s" as above. Founders Day, however, has no apostrophe.
- The Fraternity should never be referred to as "Phi Mu." The Founders of the Phi Mu Women's Fraternity did not intend for anyone else to use their title.
- Never refer to the Fraternity as the "Frat." Also, never refer to a Fraternity house as the "Frat House."
- Alumnus refers to one person – alumni, more than one.
- Chapter should only be capitalized when preceded by the Greek letters of that chapter. Theta Omicron Chapter, the University of Tennessee chapter.

## Creating the layout

A consistent masthead, columnar layout, and interspersed photographs are a few of the things that should be considered when doing the newsletter layout. Layout programs like Microsoft Publisher, PageMaker and Quark Express make quick work of a newsletter. If the chapter does not have access to these programs, or are just starting out, good newsletter templates can be found for MS Word online, or at websites like [www.hp.com](http://www.hp.com).

A masthead is one of the most important design features of a newsletter. This is the newsletter's name, or title, which appears as a banner running across the top first page of your newsletter. It is the most important design element because it does the most to establish the publication's identity with readers.

The standard newsletter layout is three columns, though it can be two. A more advanced layout is a split page, where the top may have two columns and the bottom has one. There can also be boxes within columns to split them up. The complexity of the layout depends on what software and skills are available. The chapter should also decide if they want to have a self-mailer (a half page of the layout is dedicated to mailing information) or if the publication will be sent in envelopes. The feature article for any given issue should appear in the first column since it will get the most attention in this space. Also try to determine a permanent placement for any regular features of the newsletter (e.g. always put the Calendar of Events in the same place). Also, choose one typestyle (font) and stick with it. The idea is to establish consistency.

## Using photos and other graphics

If you're working with photographs and graphics, take into consideration how you plan to print your publication, so as to format your images properly. If you're printing directly from a computer printer, you can use higher resolution images (300dpi), but if you're reproducing on a photocopier, you should use very low resolution images (72dpi)

converted to grey-scale line-art. Low quality images significantly detract from a publication's image and appearance and should be avoided at all costs. Clip-art should also be used sparingly (if at all) to avoid making the publication look trite or clichéd.

When using photos, make sure the picture tells a story or enhances the story that accompanies it. Include captions with the photos explaining what is happening and identifying everyone in it by first and last name. Action photos add more to a publication than posed photos. Some specific tips for taking photographs for your newsletter:

- Watch the background. Keep it uncluttered.
- Don't shoot subjects in front of glass or mirrors.
- Bright sun does not make for good photographs. People tend to squint and the shadows are harsh. Try to find a shady area if taking photographs outside on a sunny day.
- Diffuse the flash on close-up pictures. White tissue paper over the flash will also work.
- Watch the film speed. Inside shooting requires fast film (400+). Outside, use lower speed.
- When shooting groups, have the subjects stand shoulder to shoulder. It may not be comfortable but it will look good in print.

### **Printing the newsletter**

If the chapter is going to spend the time and energy to produce a quality publication, it should consider taking the document to a printer (not a photocopy shop) to have it produced. The second best option is to find someone who has a high quality printer (preferably laser) and print them individually. If all else fails, taking the newsletter to a photocopier can work, but image quality will likely suffer.

## **DISTRIBUTION AND OTHER LOGISTICS**

The Alumni Relations Officer should not feel as if the newsletter is a monster he has to tackle by himself. Feel free to enlist the help of fellow brothers with the layout, design, database, and mailing aspects of the newsletter. When distributing the newsletter, first make sure that the most up-to-date list of alumni is available – combining the alumni lists from both Lyrecrest and your school's alumni office to make sure it is as current as possible. ALSO be sure to include those brothers who left your school in good standing, but didn't graduate (for example keep information on these brothers in a separate, easy to access file like a Microsoft Excel file).

Who should receive chapter publications? Publications should be mailed to all alumni of the chapter, even those living far away; each undergraduate, alumni of other chapters living nearby, faculty advisor, province leadership, the national headquarters, presidents of other chapters, the campus alumni office, the dean or head of the music department, the dean of student affairs, the Greek council advisor, and any other faculty and staff members who may have shown an interest in the chapter. In other words, use publications for greater campus visibility. The chapter may also wish to send copies to others with whom it wishes to communicate, such as parents. Always use the home addresses of alumni for any mailings.

Before buying stamps, check with the school or department to see if the chapter can mail pieces through their non-profit rate. Although the National Fraternity has a non-profit status, chapters must apply for status separately. Though the savings are dramatic, postal rules and regulations for using not-for-profit bulk rates are complicated. Inquire with the local post office as to the process of gaining this status. The chapter will need to mail a substantial amount per year for this to be profitable, but if the chapter is fairly large, and it sends out letters to incoming freshmen as well as to alumni, it may want to check on it. Inquire before printing, in order to comply with all requirements made by the post office. Because bulk mail is notoriously slow, use of it requires advance planning of chapter publications. For example, a Homecoming invitation should be mailed at least six to eight weeks prior to the date of Homecoming weekend. Also, bulk mail usage does not allow for the chapter to receive returned newsletters for which the address was incorrect. In order to receive these returned mailings and any forwarding addresses on file, the chapter will need to mail their newsletters First Class at the standard postal rate.

## OTHER FORMS OF COMMUNICATION

### Electronic newsletters

While most alumni will prefer to receive a newsletter in the mail, costs associated with preparing, printing, and mailing the newsletter can prohibit it from being sent more than twice per year. An excellent supplement to the paper newsletter is an electronic newsletter. The electronic newsletter is inexpensive and can be sent out whenever an important announcement or event falls between the scheduled mailings of paper newsletters. Electronic newsletters can look just as professional as paper newsletters and are easier to produce and send. By sending out electronic newsletters the chapter will also be able to stay more current on email address changes for all alumni in the area. These newsletters can also be made available for download on the chapter's website.

### Alumni content on the chapter website

An internet search for the Fraternity will result in links to many chapter websites. It is easy for interested alumni to find the chapter on the web. Be sure to take this opportunity to give them information that they would find relevant, not only about the chapter, but about any major issue in the Fraternity. Having a portion of the chapter website dedicated to alumni content can go a long way in promoting the alumni programs of the chapter. It will increase the visibility of chapter events, and help disseminate information about these events more quickly to alumni. At the very least, the website should include the name and contact information of the chapter's Alumni Relations Officer, the province alumni coordinator, and the Director of Alumni Engagement. Another idea is to create an alumni message board. This can serve many purposes. The Alumni Relations Officer can post events and current issues of the newsletter and pose questions to the alumni. The alumni can post updates about themselves and let the chapter know how they are doing. They can also leave comments, feedback, and suggestions for the Alumni Relations Officer.

## SOME FINAL TIPS ABOUT ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

- Make the design of the publication attractive and interesting. If the publication is not eye catching, it will wind up in the trash without being read.
- Be sure to identify the Fraternity, the chapter, the college or university represented, the chapter address, phone number, and date of publication.
- Design a masthead or flag for the publication. Establish a design that will be recognizable and retain it for several mailings. Many newsletters seem to change with each editor or officer change. A consistent publication will be immediately recognized.
- Compile a stylesheet. It will assure consistency in the writing.
- Select interesting and clear photos. If the photos are not clear, don't use them. Look for action pictures, not just posed pictures.
- Use a good printer for the newsletter. If it's worth spending time on, don't ruin it by making copies on a bad machine.
- Use a large portion of the publication for alumni news. This is the main audience.
- Be positive in talking about chapter news. It is okay to mention problems, if the article shows what is being done to solve them.
- Get someone to edit the copy. If the chapter can find an English or Journalism major, that is even better. There is nothing more unprofessional than for an alumnus to receive a publication that is riddled with spelling and grammatical errors. The chapter's image is affected by the quality of its publications – make certain that it is of the highest quality.
- Make the publication current. Once work is started on the newsletter, keep working. Don't let it bog down. Stick to deadlines.
- Consider more than one publication yearly. If the chapter has a lot of information, spread it out into more issues.

- Consider a self-mailer. It's easier than stuffing envelopes and will save money also.
- Consider taking advantage of any non-profit mailing rates which may be available through the college. The saving is tremendous.

## INVOLVING YOUR ALUMNI

A critical part of the Fraternity's vision for alumni affairs is involvement. There are so many brothers out there with a variety of different talents and expertise. Their years of experience provide chapters with unique opportunities to learn how things work "in the real world" before they graduate. Chapters should take advantage of the opportunity. Alumni want to remain connected to the Fraternity and the local chapter is uniquely able to make this happen.

### Inviting Alumni to Attend Chapter Events

Alumni brothers should always be invited to, and made welcome at chapter events. The programming of any event should take into consideration not only chapter alumni brothers, but brothers from the surrounding area and other chapters. Chapter alumni want to know how their home chapter is growing, and alumni away from their home chapter like to know how Sinfonia is doing in their area. By inviting them to chapter events such as Chapter and Founders Day ceremonies and Ritual presentations, alumni are able to stay in contact with the chapter and meet the Fraternity's newest members. The only contact many alumni have with the Fraternity is at these special events. If they are not invited, or do not hear about them early enough, alumni will lose that connection. Where a collegiate brother can make a recital with only a few days notice, an alumnus may need a month or more to be able to fit the event into his schedule. Chapters need to make a special effort to plan their events in advance – at least a semester, and in some cases a year ahead of time. Invitations should be sent to alumni at least two months prior to an event. This will result in the best chances for good alumni turn out. Another important thing to remember is persistence. The chapter may plan a huge alumni event and for its efforts have minimal participation. It will take continual communication and contact with alumni before the chapter can expect great attendance for any event. The best chapter alumni relations programs are ones that have been in place for years and are the result of chapters who have continued to communicate and work with their alumni over time.

### Opportunities for Alumni Participation

The number one mistake chapters make when dealing with alumni is immediately asking for money. Asking alumni to invest their financial resources into the chapter is something that should only happen after the chapter has established long-standing relationships with them. The chapter should concentrate on getting alumni involved before asking for them to invest. There are two other powers of the Fraternity – man and music. Alumni can be choir participants for a Ritual and can even participate in the Ritual cast. Alumni have many "real world" experiences that they are more than willing to share with the chapter. Try setting up meetings of alumni and collegians with similar interests. Alumni are perfect for performance seminars or to provide extra musicians for a *Mills Music Mission* or American Music Recital. Once the chapter has established good relations with alumni and shown them the good that the chapter is doing, they may decide to give money without being asked. When the chapter does ask for money, be sure it has a specific goal in mind, is able to explain it and its necessity to the chapter, and reports back to the donors once the goal is achieved.

### Planning an Alumni Event

Oftentimes, the Alumni Relations Officer will be the chairman for all alumni events that the chapter hosts. This means that he will be responsible for coordinating and organizing the event as well as enlisting, overseeing and motivating others during the planning process. When programming an alumni event, three things need to be kept in mind:

- First, be reasonable in asking for a time commitment. These brothers are adults. Some have families to take care of, others may be older and don't have the full stamina for a lot of activity, and others might just want the free time to reminisce with other people their age over a cup of coffee.

- Second, make it inviting and interesting. A Ritual performance alone might not be a compelling reason to come and visit; but a Ritual performance with other alumni and faculty might draw some people in. Remember that the activity alone will not encourage alumni participation. The chapter has to work to tailor the event to the interests of alumni in order to make them desire to show up to events.
- Third, make it worthwhile. If an alumnus shows up to an event, be sure to thank him personally. Follow it up with a letter or card of thanks. Also take the time to introduce them to people who they may not know and show them around. If the time is taken to make them feel welcome and comfortable, they will return and maintain their communication with the chapter.
- With all of this in mind, the next step to creating a great alumni event is to create a plan. It takes anywhere from six months to a year in order to create an alumni event.

### **Deciding on the type of event to plan**

There are several different types of events that encourage alumni participation. These range from a simple reception before another event to a luncheon to a full blown dinner banquet. The size of the event will determine how early the chapter should begin working on the event. When deciding on the event, keep in mind the alumni perspective. For example, making events "spouse-friendly" will encourage and get more participation from alumni.

### **Determining the location of the event**

If the event involves a banquet, the chapter will need to secure a location for the event. If the event is going to take place on campus, make sure that the chapter reserves the appropriate rooms. Get a confirmation of the reservation in writing. Also, if it is a food event make contact with the campus catering service and reserve the date and location. If holding the event offsite at a hotel, restaurant or banquet facility, make sure that the contract is reviewed thoroughly before it is signed. Contracts should be reviewed and signed by the treasurer and chapter president – no one else. Things to watch out for in a banquet contract include tax and gratuity fees, room rental, deposit amounts and due dates, method of payment, multimedia fees and any other surcharges outside of the actual food cost. These "hidden charges" can add significantly to the cost of the event and need to be taken into consideration when budgeting and pricing the event.

Sometimes, the event may take place over the weekend or may be part of a larger celebration. The chapter may want to reserve a block of rooms at a local hotel. Hotels will usually block rooms at no cost to the chapter until 30 days prior to the event. Event attendees are responsible for calling the hotel to book their rooms within the chapter's block. Under no circumstances should a chapter "guarantee" a block of rooms since it could be left with unused rooms for which it has to pay.

### **Setting the program for the event**

About six months prior to the event, the chapter should create a rough schedule. This should include a list of any potential speakers and special guests. The Alumni Relations Officer should contact these people right away to secure their attendance at the event. Remember, if there are any contracts to be signed (i.e. honorarium), they must be reviewed and signed by the treasurer and chapter president. Other details will also need to be finalized, such as the menu for any food events.

### **Publicizing the event**

To properly publicize an event to alumni, it takes more than just a simple postcard announcement 2 months prior to the event. The event should be listed in every chapter publication, calendar, and announcement for the full 6 months preceding the event. Once the date and general program is set, an announcement should be sent out to the alumni immediately. This will allow them to reserve the date on their calendars and it increases the likelihood of their attendance. As more details are solidified, these should be communicated to the alumni. About 3 months prior to the event, the chapter should send formal invitations to its alumni with self-addressed response cards requesting RSVPs. Set the RSVP deadline early enough to be able to finalize the logistical needs of the event (seating, food, etc.) – probably 3-4 weeks before the event.

### **Final preparations for the event**

By this time, the chapter has finalized the schedule and has a list of who is attending the event. The final preparations involve an "event walkthrough". The chapter should look at the event from the perspective of an attendee and make sure all of the small details are handled including registration and check-in, event programs, a welcoming committee, and anything else that would make alumni feel at home ("roll out the red carpet"). At the actual event, make certain that chapter members are interacting with alumni and that the event stays on or close to schedule. If the chapter has planned the event thoroughly, everything should go smoothly.

### **After the event**

While planning and hosting an alumni event can be exhausting, it is important that within two weeks following the event the chapter does a post-event analysis. The chapter should look at what went right and what went wrong and determine what changes should be made for future events. The Alumni Relations Officer should write a summary of the things that happened, including the time line, for the event chairman of the next event. The chapter should also make sure to send thank you letters to each alumnus that attended the event. If it is a recurring event, the date of next year's affair can also be included. Finally, the chapter should make sure it sends special thanks to anyone who helped execute the event including the guest speaker. This little extra effort will leave alumni feeling good about the event and increase the chance that they will participate in the future.

## **OTHER ALUMNI OPPORTUNITIES**

### **Working with Alumni Associations**

If there are alumni associations nearby, chapters should work to build relationships and a connection with them. Working together, the chapter and the association can be a real example of Sinfonia as a lifetime journey. The chapter should make sure that the local alumni association is informed of its events. The chapter should also encourage graduating brothers staying in the area to become involved with the association when they graduate.

### **Creating an Alumni Association**

If the chapter knows that there is interest in forming an alumni association, they should contact the province governor and the province alumni coordinator. These officers have the experience and resources to guide alumni members through the process to becoming an alumni association. If there are members who are interested in learning more about the process, consult the Alumni Association Resource Guide.

## **THE TRANSITION FROM COLLEGIAN TO ALUMNUS**

A brother's journey as a Sinfonian is not over when they graduate or leave the sheltering institution. Continued participation in Sinfonia after graduation is a privilege and obligation of lifetime membership. It offers opportunities for brothers to engage in sociability, musical activity, and leadership similar to those enjoyed in the collegiate chapter. It also enables him to support the Fraternity's continued efforts to build musical students into men of high ideals and ensure that the Sinfonia experience is available for generations of students to come.

### **Ceremony for Graduating Brothers**

From the introduction to the Ceremony for Graduating Brothers:

The main purpose of this ceremony is to remind Brothers that membership in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia does not end when they receive their diploma—it is for life. Secondly, it is a time of remembrance when departing Brothers recall some of the positive experiences the Fraternity has given them. Lastly, it serves as a way to honor the graduating Brothers for service to their collegiate chapter.

Membership in Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia is for life. Many brothers forget that as they go through graduation and into the real world. It is the job of the Alumni Relations Officer to remind these brothers what there is for them after graduation in our beloved Fraternity. The Alumni Relations Officer should make certain that this ceremony is treated with the same reverence and seriousness as the Fraternity's other ceremonies. Invitations should be sent to the province leadership, especially the province alumni coordinator and any local alumni associations. Make sure graduating brothers are aware of the opportunities to stay connected to the fraternity after they graduate. Give them a couple of pre-addressed "Change of Address" cards to keep the chapter and the national Fraternity updated on any address changes. These small steps are extremely important to prevent alumni from becoming 'lost Sinfonians.' This ceremony is vital because it not only gives us the chance to honor our brothers, but help them remember what the Fraternity has done for them. With this memory, they may be more apt to 'Work for Sinfonia' as Sinfonia has worked for them.

## OTHER RESOURCES FOR THE ALUMNI RELATIONS OFFICER

### Chapter Alumni Relations Committee

Because of the great responsibility given to the Alumni Relations Officer, many chapters find it useful to create a committee to assist the Alumni Relations Officer with his duties. This does not have to be a one man job. The more people the Alumni Relations Officer can share the burden with, the better and more productive the alumni relations program will be.

### Chapter President

The chapter president has exclusive charge of the correspondence of the chapter with the national officers and is the primary contact for the province governor, collegiate province representative, and province alumni coordinator in the province. He can be a great asset when it comes to communicating with officers outside of the chapter. As the chapter president, he can also allocate resources for the work of the alumni relations program.

### Faculty Advisor

The faculty advisor is the best link to the institution. Whether it is speaking with the university's alumni affairs office or other school officials, the faculty advisor can many times get in where the chapter cannot.

### Province Alumni Coordinator (PAC)

At the 2003 National Convention, the Assembly voted to recognize the position of the province alumni coordinator. This officer is in charge of all province wide alumni activity and might just be the greatest resource when planning an event, gathering information about alumni in the area, or suggesting activities. In most cases he is an active alumnus with a great deal of Fraternity experience who also has the benefit of access to the knowledge of the other PAC's across the country.

### Director of Alumni Engagement

This recently created national staff position handles all of the alumni activities and programs of the Fraternity. He is only a phone call away ((800) 473-2649 ext.104) with answers to almost any alumni related question.

### Alumni Engagement Committee

This national committee is primarily responsible for the creation of new fraternity alumni activities and policy as well as updating current programs and policy. When anyone in the chapter has an idea related to our Fraternity's alumni program, this committee can be reached via email ([AlumniAffairs@sinfonia.org](mailto:AlumniAffairs@sinfonia.org)) to make suggestions for the future.

### Local Alumni Associations

If the chapter is lucky enough to have an alumni association in the area then it already has a huge advantage when it comes to its alumni relations program. The alumni association has already gathered together a group of alumni who are interested in staying involved with the Fraternity and anxious to lend a local chapter a hand whenever possible.

**Campus Alumni Affairs Office**

This office can provide the chapter with updated information on its alumni and may also have resources to help the chapter with its publications.





PHI MU ALPHA  AMONG MEN  
SINFONIA HARMONY

PHI MU ALPHA SINFONIA  
FRATERNITY OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS

10600 Old State Road  
Evansville IN 47711-1399

P: 800.473.2649  
812.867.2433  
F: 812.867.0633

[www.sinfonia.org](http://www.sinfonia.org)  
[lyrecrest@sinfonia.org](mailto:lyrecrest@sinfonia.org)