

# Your Place in the Chapter

By agreeing to serve in an advisory role to the undergraduate chapter, you are exemplifying the lifelong commitment and loyalty to Phi Kappa Tau that is described in our creed. As an advisor, you will have the opportunity to positively influence the undergraduate chapter and make an impact on the lives of each and every member of the organization.

A chapter's strength is dependent on alumni support; a strong alumni-advisory board will make for a consistently strong chapter. With each year comes a new set of undergraduate officers. These officers are often forced to relearn the role and spend most of the year developing. As an advisor, you can be instrumental in providing the continuity and experience that makes the transition between undergraduate officers easier. You will serve as a valuable resource to the chapter, ensuring that lessons of the past are not forgotten.

As an advisor, you should do just that: advise, not lead. A major component of the undergraduate fraternity experience is the personal development gained through the various leadership opportunities that it presents. The chapter leadership and undergraduate voting membership should, in most cases, be the decision-making body. Only by taking control of their own affairs and learning from their mistakes and failures will they have a truly rewarding experience. Therefore, your role is to offer advice and scenarios for the membership to consider when rendering decisions, and educate the group on the consequences and outcomes of their decisions.

Advising is a true two-way communication experience. Some helpful points to remember when advising undergraduate chapter operations follow:

- Be a role model. You should model the type of behavior you would like to see in other alumni members of the Fraternity. You serve as the most visible example of what an alumnus should be.
- Hold the chapter to high standards. Help the chapter set high standards and methods of maintaining accountability.
- Clearly establish your role with the chapter. The chapter and its officers need to know and accept the role of the advisor.
- Try to attend chapter meetings. Periodically attending chapter meetings, executive board meetings, and formal associate events and meetings will help maintain a good relationship with the chapter.
- Ask for the chapter's input whenever you present a new idea or opinion. Members will be more accepting of change and new ideas if they feel they have played a part in their development or adoption.
- Give the chapter and individual chapter officers and members the same respect that you demand they give you. Your role should be viewed in some respects as a professional commitment. Your interaction with the officers on chapter business should be professional, as well. If chapter officers are not treated as equals, they will not respect the advice conveyed and the effectiveness of the advising board will be compromised.

- Work closely with the chapter officers. Open dialogue between officers and the chapter advising structure will improve your relation with the chapter and result in more business being accomplished.
- Be cautious about talking about the chapter or university's past. Chapter members usually do not like to hear about "the way it used to be." When addressing problems in the chapter, rather than using the examples of the past, use your knowledge of what happened in the past to paint a picture of how the current chapter can be better.
- Allow mistakes to be made. Easier said than done, but what distinguishes an adequate advisor from a good advisor is the ability to gauge the impact of the resulting disaster and determine when intervention is not only desirable, but also necessary. If you are too quick to intervene, however, the chapter officers will feel smothered and as if they have lost the ability to make decisions for themselves.
- Build on an officer's strengths. An undergraduate's personality is largely developed by the time he reaches college, but what can be developed are manners, behaviors, skills and knowledge. Look at performance, not at promise, and focus on strengths and not weaknesses.
- Function as a liaison. There will be times when you can be a more effective means of communication with the university, the National Fraternity and alumni members.