

ENSURING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE DURING COVID-19: ADVICE FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP TEAM

The impact of COVID-19 on many of our campuses will present unique challenges as you try to promote and support the academic success of your members. Whether or not your members are taking classes in person or online/remotely or living on campus or with their families a long distance from campus, the importance of scholarship for Phi Gamma Delta remains. COVID has brought many changes into our lives, including the way your chapter will operate and how members will engage with each other during this academic year. However, we should expect our members to continue to strive for academic excellence, and we should support them as well. The expectations that you have for your chapter's members should remain high, even if we must demonstrate empathy and flexibility for members who are not able to meet those expectations during a challenging time.

As you should know, the Fraternity has a comprehensive [Scholarship Manual](#) that details the components of a comprehensive scholarship program, along with specific suggestions for each component. The guidance that is provided in this manual can help your chapters thrive academically. Below are some specific suggestions within the framework of the *Scholarship Manual* to consider in the wake of COVID-19, especially because many of your members will be taking classes online and, in some cases, will be living far away from campus. If there is one piece of advice for ensuring the academic success of your members and new members during the upcoming academic year, it is this:

Check in with each other frequently. Your brothers will need your collective support and encouragement more than ever before, as they seek to complete their academic responsibilities under unusual circumstances.

The Scholarship Team

Under normal circumstances, it is important to have a Scholarship Team that includes the Scholarship Chairman, as well as cabinet officers, recruitment chairs, new member educators and others. Having a deep team of individuals who work together in a coordinated fashion to promote scholarship and support those in need of assistance is even more important right now.

Recruitment & Scholarship

Recruitment will be different on many of our campuses, and it is possible that the number of people interested in joining a fraternity on your campus may be lower than in previous years. However, it is important that we maintain our standards for welcoming new members into our brotherhood. The adage that "quality is more important than quantity" should always apply, but particularly now. Resist the temptation to lower your academic standards when recruiting new members.

Scholarship in New Member Education

Teach Study & Time Management Skills

In order to better support new members who are taking all or most of their courses online, this is a great opportunity to be intentional about helping them learn how to study and manage their time, as well as learn other skills that are critical to their academic success. On many campuses, there are staff who would be willing to speak to new members remotely (or in person if that is allowed and feasible depending on your campus's particular circumstances). You can also ask members who excel in academics to share their academic success tips with new members during the new member process.

Peer Tutoring

Brothers in the chapter are a great resource to support new members as peer tutors. Even if some of your new members or brothers are living away from your institution, peer tutoring can happen remotely. If your chapter does not do this already, create a spreadsheet of courses that members have taken, which indicates if brothers

did well enough to help others. Keep this list updated every semester and share it with the new members. This list can also be helpful when members are preparing to register for new courses.

Study Hours & Study Tables

Depending on the situation on your campus, it may not be possible for the new members to gather in one place to study as a group (as is the practice in many chapters). This is an opportunity to get creative. For example, new members could gather to study together remotely using Zoom or similar tools. Virtual breakout rooms could be used for those who need to work together on something or who need assistance. There can be time built in at the beginning or end of the study session for new members and brothers to connect, socialize, etc. If your challenge is finding a location for your new members to study as a group, it may be possible to reserve rooms on campus that would allow new members to gather by following social distancing guidelines. If your chapter has required study hours for new members, but they are not able to physically or virtually study together, the honor system may have to be employed, which provides a great opportunity to highlight the importance of *Morality*.

Big Brother/New Member Father Program

A primary purpose of being a Big Brother/New Member Father is to help the new member to be a good student. This will be even more important with the added challenge of online classes. It is important that Big Brothers/New Member Father's check in regularly with their Little Brothers/New Member Sons, including via remote meetings if required by circumstances to see how they are doing academically and to offer assistance, encouragement and share useful resources.

Scholarship Support

A key aspect of scholarship support is ensuring the chapter creates an environment where brothers can succeed academically. For those with a chapter house, during a time when many students will be taking online courses, such an environment includes having Wi-Fi that meets the chapter's needs. If you believe that your chapter's Wi-Fi is not sufficient to support those who will need to take classes online, you should consult with your house corporation to seek assistance or explore what the chapter can do on its own to improve its Wi-Fi.

Designated Study Space

For those chapters where brothers live together in a chapter house, there may be a need for intentional efforts to ensure that those who live in the chapter have the space needed to take their respective online courses free from interruptions. This may require additional communication and planning among roommates regarding their course schedule so that they are not attempting to "attend" their respective courses from their room at the same time. It may also require implementing a system where some members have priority for using the library, dining room or other spaces in the chapter house for academic purposes during specific times.

Utilize Campus Services

Make sure that chapter members are aware of and encouraged to use the various campus resources that are available to them. These services include mental health assistance, academic support, writing assistance, career advising, etc. On many campuses, services that were previously provided in person are being provided remotely or in a hybrid fashion. Your members may need to be reminded that these services exist, and if any of them are taking classes away from the campus, they may need to be reminded that they can still access these services.

Utilize the Chapter Scholarship Advisor

If your chapter has a Scholarship Advisor, they are a great resource for academic assistance, even from a distance. If members are taking classes away from campus, it is still possible for the Scholarship Advisor to provide support to new members and brothers remotely.

Chapter Tutoring & Peer Editing

The advice provided in the *Scholarship in New Member Education* section regarding peer tutoring would apply here as well. Tutoring can be provided remotely. It is important to be intentional about making sure brothers

and new members know how to identify potential tutors within the chapter. Creating a list of courses taken by chapter members is a great tool to make this easier.

Speakers at the House

Even if it is not possible for brothers to gather at the chapter house as they would previously, it is possible to arrange opportunities for guest speakers, including college staff and Fraternity graduates to speak to the chapter remotely about a range of topics.

Recognition & Incentives

Bulletin Brag/Boards

It is possible to use electronic tools such as GroupMe, Slack, private Facebook groups, etc. to recognize the academic achievements of our members as opposed to recognizing these achievements physically within the chapter house.

Recognition Dinners

If it is not possible to host recognition dinners due to COVID, those who should be recognized during the remainder of 2020 could be recognized in 2021. Another option might be to provide gift cards to a restaurant for those members who were to be recognized for their academic achievements or to host smaller recognition events that follow appropriate social distancing guidelines in order to keep members safe.

Scholastic Accountability

Holding our brothers and new members accountable for the chapter's academic expectations is still important, even during the time of COVID-19. Required meetings, or check-ins, involving members and chapter officers, the Scholarship Advisor and/or faculty may need to be conducted virtually, rather than in person. There may be a need for creativity regarding social consequences related to academic performance. It is also important to be empathetic about the unique circumstances of some members during this challenging time, but the flexibility shown in those circumstances should be the exception and not the rule.