

## **Recruitment: as seniors become alumni**

*We have to recruit our alumni like we recruit our new members*

*Following are three programs to use in understanding the needs of senior members. You can use one, two or all three of these programs to begin to build the connection with seniors in your chapter.*

A good set-up of the room for this presentation is to have the seniors sit in the front of the room separate from the rest of the chapter or group. During group activities, have seniors work together unless noted otherwise. This separation of the seniors from the rest of the group could produce different results that could lead to some interesting discussions.

**Materials needed:** Markers, A pad of large construction paper

### **Program #1 Role of Alumni**

#### **Defining Alumni** *5 minutes*

When I say the word “alumni” what words or phrases come to mind?

*Write the responses on the board separating the positive ones from the negative ones*

Given your impressions of alumni, both positive and negative, what role do you believe alumni play in the undergraduate chapters?

*Again, record the answers on the board. At this point, you can compare the two lists of responses.*

*Are the impressions that the members have of alumni match what they believe are the roles that alumni have in the chapter?*

#### **Purpose of Program** *2 minutes*

The purpose of this program is to discuss and explore the issues that affect our graduating seniors when transitioning into the role of alumni.

We will also look at reasons why seniors chose not to be involved their senior year, which leads to these members being inactive alumni. We will then develop ways as a group that we can keep seniors involved and recruit them to be involved as young alumnus members.

First, let us examine some questions that will help us better understand the graduating seniors’ experience, then onto why we need alumni to be involved.

## **Understanding seniors and their roles as alumni 20 minutes**

*Ask participants to break off into eight smaller groups (Remember to keep seniors in their own groups)*

*Assign each group a question and the follow up question(s) from the list below. Provide them a piece of paper and a marker so that they can record their responses. (Seniors should be assigned either question 1, 2, or 3). Give groups 5-7 minutes to answer their assigned question.*

*Have each group present their responses and then post their paper somewhere in the room.*

**PROCEED TO WRAP-UP AT END OF THIS SECTION.**

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### **Questions we ask to understand the graduating seniors experience**

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1. What three things are graduating members most satisfied with in our chapter?

Follow up: How might these areas of satisfaction be incorporated in the development of dedicated alumni?

2. What are the three most important complaints that our members over the years have had about their experience as they graduate?

Follow up: What has the chapter done to try to alleviate these problems?

Follow up: How might these problems affect future alumni development and recruitment efforts?

3. What do our graduating seniors know about being an alumnus or about our alumni association?

Follow up: How do we as a chapter, or do we as a chapter, make this information available to our members?

Follow up: What ways can we provide this information accurately and effectively?

4. What are the two biggest benefits or incentives for recent graduates to become involved as alumni?

Follow up: How do we communicate these benefits to our graduating seniors?

Follow up: How can we as an undergraduate chapter ensure that these benefits exist?

5. To what extent does our recent graduates being involved as alumni match their needs?

Follow up: How can we work with our alumni associations to ensure these needs are being met?

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### **Questions to ask as a chapter to understand why we need alumni**

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6. Which areas of the chapter directly benefit from alumni involvement?

7. Which areas of the chapter benefit indirectly from alumni involvement?

Follow up: What ways can these areas be more involved in enhancing our seniors experience so that they stay involved with the chapter?

8. In flipping the issue, how committed, as an undergraduate chapter, are we to our alumni?

Follow up: What steps can be taken to enhance these commitments?

*transitions*

## **Program #2: Keeping Seniors Involved**

### **Senior Expectations** *20 minutes*

*Separate the seniors from the rest of the chapter. Have the seniors generate a list of possible expectations they have for themselves in staying involved with chapter as seniors, then as new alumni.*

*Have the rest of the chapter generate their own list of expectations that they have for the senior members and for these members as new alumni.*

*Present the lists and search for common themes.*

*Processing:*

- 1. Are there common themes between the lists?*
- 2. Were you surprised by the similarities? Differences?*
- 3. Who created these expectations to begin with and why are they important?*
- 4. Who is responsible for holding our seniors accountable to these expectations?*
- 5. What are some reasons that could lead to our senior members not fulfilling these expectations?*

### **Senior Involvement** *10 minutes*

Just as we try to encourage prospective members to become involved in our chapters as members, we have to encourage our seniors to stay involved with our chapter as alumni. This encouragement and recruitment starts throughout their undergraduate experience, but especially during their senior year. Given are some points to consider when trying to recruit our seniors.

#### **1. Help seniors recognize their value in the organization.**

- Seniors are quick to become distance from the chapter because they begin to feel as though their involvement is not valuable to the chapter.
- Past chapter officers are replaced by the newer officers, the chapter's programming are more focused on the needs and wants of the younger members, issues outside of the chapter start to take priority so they are written off by the chapter as not wanting to be active.
- Your senior members should be considered some of your most valued members. They are your immediate link to the past. They have established relationships with the institution's staff members, other campus organizations, and other alumni that most members of the chapter have not yet developed, which can prove to be an important resource.
- They are also your most experienced members are normally are willing and wanting to teach what they have learned to the younger members
- Means to help them recognize their value is to utilize them in the new member education program and the member education program. Use your seniors as a resource when the chapter is dealing with issues. Assign them responsibilities instead of assuming they are "too busy" all the time. Ensure that their needs as seniors are being met by the chapter. Allow their voice to be heard in the chapter.

*transitions*

## **2. Remember that alumni involvement is just not monetary.**

- It is a common to hear younger members joke to senior members about the need for them to donate money to the chapter after graduation. These jokes sometimes become serious after the member actually graduates.
- Recent graduates are going through a transition that can prove to be trying time when it comes to finances. This is the time that most graduates are getting that new apartment, looking for that new car, trying to purchase new furniture, starting to pay back student loans, and still be able to put some money back. Money can be very tight.
- Putting such a strong emphasis on recent alumni to start donating money to the chapter can push a new alumnus away from the chapter. Their sense of guilt that could develop since they want to give but can't, could prevent the recent grad from wanting to be involved with the chapter.
- There are plenty of ways for recent graduates to be involved with the chapter that goes beyond just monetary donation. The chapter and other alumni members should immediately assist the newer alumni in finding ways for them to help the chapter that both has some benefits for the new alumnus and are not so demanding given his new time constraints.

## **3. Not all memories are good memories**

- It is common in all chapters to stereotype members based off past behaviors. Some stereotypes have more truth than others do, but most are not always accurate. It is easy to assume that a member who enjoyed being "the life of the party" as a sophomore will also enjoy that same title as a senior.
- Entering one's senior year is a time that many students start to prepare for the transition from college life to life in the "real world."
- One part of this transition is re-identifying one's personal and professional goals. These new sets of goals do not always mirror the reputation that a member may have within the chapter.
- In trying to leave this reputation behind, members may chose that the best course of action is to leave the chapter behind altogether.

## **4. Do our seniors leave their undergraduate experience with a bang or do they fade away?**

- A member gives of himself for four years to his organization just to be rewarded at the end with a last minute, thrown together ritual alumni ceremony and a couple of minutes at the end of chapter to make a speech.
- After he leaves the room, the chapter quickly forgets that their senior brother is about to face one of the most exciting times in his life.
- Does this sound familiar? What steps do we take as a chapter to show our appreciation to our senior brothers? How do we help in celebrating one of his greatest achievements of graduating from college?
- The senior year is a time for reflection for many students and this reflection on past experiences can be shaded by the current experiences. Allowing our seniors to just fade out of the chapter could lead to them not finding their undergraduate experience to be as valuable and satisfactory as it may have been.
- We need to rejuvenate our seniors experience so that they can find value in the membership. Finding value in their experiences comes the desire to be involved beyond graduation.

***PROCEED TO WRAP-UP AT END OF THIS SECTION.***

*transitions*

## **Program #3 Identifying ways for seniors to stay involved as seniors and new alumni**

*Break the chapter down into smaller groups making sure that the senior members are disbursed evenly within the groups.*

*Assign each group an area of operation (Recruitment, Brotherhood, Community Service, Finances, Risk Management, Public Relations, Social, Executive Council)*

*The group will then generate ways that seniors can assist in that area of operation. Then the group will generate ways that recent graduates can assist in that area of operation. (5 minutes)*

*Each group will present their results. (10 minutes)*

*Using the chapter's responses, discuss immediate action plans that they can take to convert their lists into practice. (10 minutes)*

Along with the great ideas that you have all created in keeping seniors involved. The NIC staff has also generated some ideas.

*Go over the NIC's list of ideas to keep seniors involved. (5 minutes)*

## **Wrapping Up 15 minutes**

I hope that throughout this session you have gained a better realization to why we need to recruit our seniors to stay involved as alumni.

We were able to identify some issues concerning the needs of seniors, reasons why seniors are not involved, and some methods to keep seniors active in the undergraduate chapter and then active as recent alumni.

To conclude this session, we are going to perform an activity that will allow each of the underclassmen to tell the seniors what they have meant to the chapter and for the seniors to tell the rest of the chapter what they have meant to our graduating seniors.

*Place pieces of paper on the wall that has each senior's name at the top.*

*Have the underclassmen members spend time walking around and writing whatever message they would like to convey to each senior. It could be a thank you of some kind, recognition for past, current or future achievements, good luck wish, reflection on past memories, a reminder of what value that member has in the chapter.*

*The seniors should form a group outside of the room and write a thank you message to the rest of the chapter.*

*The seniors will then be allowed to take their paper home with them and the chapter should hang the seniors message somewhere visible in the chapter house, lounge, or common meeting area.*

## **Another possible exercise that can be implemented into the program**

*Have the seniors leave the room.*

*The rest of the undergraduate chapter generates a list of accomplishments that the chapter would not have achieved if the seniors were not members of the chapter the past four years.*

*For example, maybe several senior members were on the intramural champion basketball team, one the seniors was student body president that brought the chapter a lot of recognition with the university, one senior was the philanthropy chairmen whose efforts led to the chapter winning the campuses philanthropy/community service award or a national award through their fraternity.*

*Bring the seniors back into the room and have the chapter give testimonials to why they included the items that they included.*