



Ritual Resources

A packet of questions, exercises, and essays about our Ritual

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Introduction

What is the Ritual? How can I learn more about it? How can I get other brothers to discuss it?

If you've ever asked any of these questions, then this packet is for you. *Ritual Resources* is a set of brief exercises designed to help you explore your own feelings toward the Ritual of Sigma Chi. These exercises aren't designed to make you an expert on Ritual history; you won't find an explanation of the Fraternity's development, or an interpretation of its ceremonies. Rather, this material is structured to allow you to ask yourself—and others—questions which you may not have yet had the opportunity to ask yourself. As a member of Sigma Chi, you deserve the chance to discuss our values and how they relate to you. *Ritual Resources* is designed to give you that chance.

How to use this packet

The exercises included in *Ritual Resources* are each slightly different. Some consist of readings and discussion topics, others are simply a list of questions. Each is followed by a case study—a practical, real-world example of the ideas presented—followed by more discussion questions. Whatever the configuration of the exercise, each is designed to stimulate thought and discussion among a group of people. The “group” is entirely up to you—it can be an entire chapter, an officer retreat, a pledge class, or simply yourself.

How to implement the exercises is limited only by your creativity. Perhaps the easiest method would be to simply select an exercise that looks interesting, read it aloud to your group (or photocopy it for each person), and then discuss the questions in turn. Hopefully, each question will lead to further discussion and new points, with each member sharing his own thoughts and opinions.

The goal of each exercise is simple: talk about the Ritual with friends. Thus, *wherever* the questions ultimately take you is okay! *What* you do is not as important as the fact that you are *doing* it. Any of these

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exercises, even if you only do part of one, or do it on your own, will give you a *Ritual experience*—an experience that you probably haven't had the opportunity to have in some time.

Suggestions and facilitation tips

The eight exercises are roughly grouped into four categories: the role of the Ritual, the Ritual and you, the Ritual and your brothers, and the Ritual and others. These categories should give you a basic idea of the main themes involved. Notice, however, that as with many other aspects of our Ritual, each exercise could to some extent fit in every category.

Some suggestions on how to use these exercises:

- discuss one a week during chapter meeting;
- use several during I-Week as part of your Initiation preparation;
- use one each time you meet with new initiates as part of your post-initiation training;
- pick one to use during a pledge class, officer, or brotherhood retreat—or they could constitute your complete retreat;
- discuss one in conjunction with an Interfraternity Council or Greek system workshop;
- talk about a question or two with a couple of brothers over a pizza on Friday night.

Anywhere you need a conversation topic, choose an exercise—likewise, anywhere you normally find conversation, these exercises are appropriate!

Facilitating discussion is simple—just read the question and ask people what they think. If no one says anything, a good way to start conversation is to talk about what *you* think; people should open up. Or, split the members into two groups, assigning each group a side of the case study. Then, ask the groups to debate their respective sides.

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You should get some interesting arguments on which to build discussion.

A final tip: Never put anyone on the spot or force them to answer any question. If someone just wants to listen, that's great—he'll definitely take something away from the discussion. Try to make conversation informal. Sit on couches, on the floor—wherever you would normally hang out.

Where are the answers?

You'll notice that there are no "answers" included with the questions. This is because the only right answers are the ones you truly believe. *The "ideal" or "textbook" answers aren't going to help anyone become closer to his own idea of what the Ritual means to him.* As you use this packet, keep an open mind not only towards the responses of your friends, but also towards the feelings in your heart. Those are the only answers with which you should be concerned.

Is this secret?

There are no overt references to or explicit quotations from the Ritual of Sigma Chi in *Ritual Resources*. While this feature helps preserve the secrecy of our ceremonies, it serves to convey another, more important message: The Ritual itself, while secret, is intended to be understood and appreciated by all the world through the actions of our brothers. One of the aims of these exercises is to make brothers feel more comfortable about discussing the Ritual, and to teach an appreciation of it not as a secret ceremony, but as a visible guide for life.

To say it again: There is nothing in this packet that cannot be shared with your pledges, parents, university advisors, professors, fellow Greeks, Interfraternity Council members, friends, family, or girlfriend. In fact, you are encouraged to share your feelings about our Ritual with whomever you would like. The secrecy of our ceremonies is useless if it translates into a Fraternity of men shielding their

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dedication to the White Cross from the world. Be proud of your dedication; “reflect your ideals unselfishly to all mankind.”

What is a Ritual?

Exercise: Your Sigma Chi Experience

- What is a Ritual?
- Why do we have a Ritual?
- What would the fraternity be like without the Ritual?
- Would your own Sigma Chi experience be different if there were no Ritual?

Case Study 1: The Chapter Meeting

This semester, your chapter's weekly meetings have started to run three or four hours. In an effort to cut down the length of the meetings, an older brother during new business makes a motion to eliminate the Ritual opening and closing. When several other brothers object, he says, "Well, why don't we compromise and use Ritual once a month; the other three meetings will be strictly business meetings." The motion passes with that amendment.

- How long are your chapter's meetings? Why?
- What portion of the meeting takes the most time? Does taking out the Ritual solve the problem?
- Is a "business" meeting different from a Ritual meeting?
- Is a meeting without the Ritual still a Sigma Chi meeting?

Case Study 2: Changing Initiation

In an effort to help Initiation to go more smoothly, the Magister has identified several portions of the ceremony as irrelevant or superfluous to the major elements. As the Magister identifies another section to be omitted, a sophomore member raises the following question: "Is it right for us to change the Ritual like this?"

What is a Ritual?

- Is it important to conduct the Ritual as written? Why?
- How would you support this brother's question?
- How do you plan for a meaningful Ritual experience? Is a rehearsal appropriate?

This second case study was taken with permission from the National Interfraternity Conference's *Challenges and Choices*, and is © 1990 by the National Interfraternity Conference.

A Guide for Life

Read the essay at right and then discuss or answer the questions that follow:

Why does Sigma Chi Fraternity have a Ritual?

Like many questions, the answer depends on whom you ask. And though no one will tell you that the Ritual is unimportant to the Fraternity—and in fact, most brothers will fiercely defend the Ritual as central to Sigma Chi’s purpose—not all have taken time to contemplate the very existence of the Ritual. Why does Sigma Chi have a Ritual? Furthermore, what is the Sigma Chi Ritual? And most importantly, what does Sigma Chi purport to offer us through the Ritual? What is its role in our individual lives?

A common experience

In one sense, the Ritual of Sigma Chi Fraternity has the same purposes of rituals found in everyday life, from religious ceremonies—marriage, baptism, weekly worship—to modern rites of passage like graduation. These rituals, while containing a deep and often extremely moving message, exist to define the traditions of an organization. When paired with ceremonies and words unique to a particular nation, religion, school, or club, these traditions provide a standard formula for the organization’s activities and teachings. When taken together, the two forge a common bond among the organization’s members. Every member participates in the same ceremony, hears the same words, lives the same experience. If successful, this common experience, in turn, gives the organization continuity and structure, and fosters pride among the members.

These traits are fairly easy to recognize in the Ritual of Sigma Chi. Not only is a chapter meeting at a specific chapter the same from week to week, but a chapter meeting or Initiation in New York is identical to one in British Columbia. This common experience—the fact that a brother from one part of the world can meet a brother anywhere else and instantly have a connection— is one of Sigma Chi’s strongest attributes, and is central to our notion of brotherhood. In fact, it is the

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maintenance of this commonality that absolutely requires the elimination of hazing and other alterations to our Ritual; such improprieties create a disparity between the experiences of our members, and thus undermine our unity.

A lesson to practice

However, the Ritual of Sigma Chi also has deeper purposes. Fundamentally, the Ritual is a presentation of Sigma Chi's basic teachings, aims, ideals, and purposes. At the same time, the Ritual is the method by which these aims, ideals, and purposes are themselves taught and impressed upon new members. It is this duality—message and mode of communication, lesson and method of instruction—that makes the Ritual difficult to understand, and that confuses and confounds many brothers. To truly embrace the Ritual, a brother must understand that the Ritual is not simply the Ceremonies of Initiation performed twice a year, or chapter meetings held once a week. Rather, the Ritual is meant to be lived and practiced—it is a lesson that we are to incorporate into our lives. In the words of the Ritualistic Statutes, the ceremonies of the Ritual and the lessons they teach are “meaningless except as the ideals and aims which they exemplify are impressed upon the hearts and lives of those who become wearers of the White Cross.”

The world expects more of us

In other words, being a Sigma Chi means constantly applying the lessons of the Ritual to our actions, continually comparing our deeds with our Ritualistic words. The man who reverently participates in chapter meeting, and then during the week violates each virtue he extolled, is a hypocrite who has missed the point. But when we truly understand the Ritual's lesson of constantly applying the virtues throughout our lives, we realize that at one time or another every brother is bound to be a hypocrite who has missed the point. Everyone makes mistakes. As brothers, we each need to try harder, all the time.

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A strong foundation

So what, after all of that, is the goal of the Sigma Chi Ritual? Ultimately, the idea is not to produce men who can still recite the Jordan Standard at age eighty, or who blindly obey the Sigma Chi's Ritual, ceremonies, and values above other rituals, ceremonies, and values. Rather, the goal of the Sigma Chi Ritual is to supply a strong foundation on which one can build one's own creed and code of conduct. The goal is not necessarily a man explicitly dedicated to the identical ideals of Sigma Chi, but a man who is dedicated to the type of human lifestyle that the ideals of Sigma Chi, when taken together, represent.

That is the moral imperative and justification for Sigma Chi as we continue into the future. Sigma Chi gives young men what is, more and more often, their first experience with a set of unchanging values, a code of conduct which doesn't shift from one situation to the next depending upon the circumstances. Sigma Chi gives men the raw material with which to construct their own morality—and through its meetings and ceremonies, provides a forum in which those men can begin to practice that morality.

The practice starts by applying the tenets of Sigma Chi to everyday actions. This means, among other things, actually trying to practice Friendship, Justice, and Learning, trying to understand the thousands of subtle ways—not talking behind another's back, giving others the benefit of the doubt, being open-minded—that those ideals touch everyday action. It means being polite, honest, and true. It means standing up for your own opinions while respecting the opinions of others. It means defending those who can't defend themselves. It means always trying to improve yourself simply for the sake of improvement itself.

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Eventually, this application, if correct and diligent, may lead many to develop their own, distinctive set of tenets, choosing ideas and concepts from a variety of sources entirely independent of Sigma Chi. But it will be Sigma Chi that has led them to that point—and that is exactly the idea.

- Questions
- How does one truly understand the Ritual?
 - Is there a difference between performing and practicing the Ritual?
 - When was the last time you performed the Ritual? When was the last time you practiced it?

Case Study:
A New Life

As a pledge, Matt was extremely popular with the brothers. He liked to have a good time, was outgoing, and always had a great deal of energy. He was also the first one to come to a party and the last one to leave. Several days before I-Week, however, Matt drank so much liquor at one of the chapter's parties that he had to be hospitalized. While he was in the hospital, every brother came to visit him. Luckily, he was well enough to take part in the entire I-Week and was initiated.

When asked about Initiation, Matt said, "I realized that I had wasted my whole life until that point. I thought brotherhood was going out and having beers with the guys. I'm starting to understand it's so much more. I wish I had more than a year left as an undergraduate." Matt gave up drinking and went on to serve as Consul.

- What does "brotherhood" mean to your chapter? Is it having beers with the guys?
- What do you think brotherhood should mean?

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- What does it take to impress an idea on someone?
- How much time do you have left as an undergraduate Sigma Chi?
- It is possible that, with the exception of your family, you will never again have the chance to experience friendships like the kind you have through Sigma Chi. Do you make the most of this opportunity?

How did you feel during your Initiation?

Read the exercise at right and then discuss the questions below:

As a pledge, you were asked on the International Exam how our Ritual impresses Sigma Chi's values on its members for life. While you most likely did your best to answer correctly, you were probably never told the answer. The Ritual impresses its lessons because it is:

- experienced individually by each candidate for Initiation;
- designed to be inspirational and intellectual rather than physically or mentally abusive; and
- based on a commitment to strive for the values of Sigma Chi throughout life.

Exercise

- What part of the Ritual particularly strikes a chord with you? Why? Read it aloud and tell the group why it affects you.
- When you were a candidate, what was going through your mind during each ceremony of Initiation?
- How do you feel now when you participate in or observe Initiation?
- What have you learned from the Ritual that you can use in your daily life?

Case Study:
Two Initiates

Jim and Scott, roommates and pledge brothers, were both initiated last week. After their first chapter meeting, the two discuss their Initiation on the way home. After talking several minutes about a particular ceremony, Jim turns to Scott and asks him what he thought of it. Scott replies, "I don't know. I didn't really think about it. I'm just glad that it's over."

How did you feel during your Initiation?

- How can Jim and Scott have different perceptions if they both went through the same ceremonies?
- What would you say to Jim? To Scott?
- Should Scott's attitude be changed? How?
- Was something missing from Scott's pledge preparation? What?
- Is your pledge program able to convey our values to men of different perceptions?
- Did Scott's chapter lose their best opportunity to affect Scott?

Getting Serious

Read the following paragraph and then discuss or answer the questions below:

Most Sigma Chis, graduates as well as undergraduates, become very self-conscious when the Fraternity Ritual is used “out of context.” For example, when the Ritual is mentioned in an informal discussion, there is a prevailing feeling of awkwardness and uncertainty about what is being done and said. Or, when a phrase from the Ritual is dropped into conversation, even if it is just between Sigma Chis, brothers usually become angry or nervous and immediately miss the point that is trying to be conveyed due to concerns for secrecy.

- Is secrecy the ultimate goal of the Ritual?
- How can we motivate our fraternity brothers to seriously read the Ritual?
- How can we motivate our fraternity brothers to seriously discuss the Ritual?
- How can we motivate the undergraduate chapters to seriously perform the Ritual?
- The Fraternity Ritual is important because it deals with the moral problem of every man—that is, it attempts to explain our two fundamental relationships: our relationship with ourselves and our relationship with others. Is this relationship explained well in the pledge program, the I-Week, and the post-initiation program?
- How can we better explain this relationship?
- By better understanding our Ritual do we do a better job of living it?

Getting Serious

Case Study:
The Hand and the Window

Your chapter initiated your fall pledge class yesterday morning. Last night, during your post-Initiation party, Brian, the Pro Consul, was fairly intoxicated and punched the chapter house's living room window, shattering it. Tonight at your chapter meeting, one of the new initiates stands up and says "Brian, I just want to say that I thought what you did last night was awful." A debate follows, and Joe, a respected junior brother, tells the new initiates that they have to "lighten up."

- Has something like this ever happened at your chapter? What did you do?
- What would you say to Brian? To Joe? To the new initiate?
- What does our Ritual say about this incident?

Our Obligation

Read the essay at right and then discuss or answer the questions that follow:

Is there a difference between discipline and accountability? And do either of these concepts have anything to do with Sigma Chi?

Both discipline and accountability involve a standard or a set of rules. In discipline, the standard is imposed, and is then achieved through enforcement. Rules are developed by a dominant entity—a government, a Fraternity, a parent, a teacher—and punishment is used to ensure that the governed obey the rules. The intent is that the punishment will act as a deterrent, causing the punished, and any observers, to think twice about violating the rules. The key to effective discipline is power.

Like discipline, accountability involves a standard. But contrary to discipline, accountability implies that the standard was agreed to rather than imposed. Accountability suggests holding a person answerable to a code he freely acknowledges. Thus, rather than power, effective accountability relies on empowerment. And instead of enforcement and punishment, accountability assumes trust and responsibility.

Our voluntary obligation

In Sigma Chi, it is strange how often we confuse accountability with discipline. It is stranger still how often we allow attempts to hold one another accountable to our mutual promises to become depicted and perceived as arbitrary and unfair discipline.

Consider the formal Ritualistic start of each brother's participation in Sigma Chi: Initiation. During the climax of Initiation, each of us makes an oath to our brothers, our chapter, the Fraternity, and God to obey, protect, and honor the ideals of Sigma Chi. We pledge that we voluntarily agree to forever interpret those ideals in our character and conduct, in our thoughts and actions. This oath, called the Obligation,

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is the basis of the Ritual’s lifelong guidance and expectations (see page 7, “A guide for life”).

As we all know, Sigma Chis aren’t forced to join the Fraternity. Sigma Chi asks men to join; those men are free to decline membership. But once those men have been initiated, they have been entrusted with a solemn responsibility. In a very real sense, they have promised their lives to the Fraternity. And that, then, is why accountability, and not discipline, is central to the Ritual of Sigma Chi.

Two duties

The Ritual charges brothers with two duties: to hold ourselves personally responsible to our Obligation, and to confront and hold accountable those members who do not. Notice that if everyone were personally responsible, there would be no need to hold anyone accountable to his Obligation—each would do it himself. This fundamental characteristic of our Ritual emphasizes the need to recruit men who understand and are willing to commit to our ideals (see page 15, “Recruitment”).

The difficulties of accountability

But everyone loses their sense of responsibility at times—whether it’s having a few beers too many, relating a crass joke, or cheating on an exam, at one time or another we all need to be reminded of our Obligation. The trick is teaching each other to understand that such reminders are not “uncool” or “unbrotherly,” but are in fact the very thing that Sigma Chi is supposed to be about: striving to improve yourself and your Fraternity.

Unfortunately, accountability as a brotherly obligation is a difficult idea to convey, and an even harder one to practice. Holding people accountable to their promises is not a way to make yourself popular. Most everyone understands the concept of discipline, because

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examples of it are widespread. Parking tickets, prison terms, Formal Warnings, high school detention, teenage grounding—the list is endless. But accountability is harder to spot. Nowadays, few people put themselves in a position where they have to unconditionally promise anything; and even fewer, in this age of bending ethics and political half-truths, believe that anyone will take their promises seriously.

Sigma Chi promises to be Sigma Chi

But Sigma Chi do promise something: Sigma Chi promise to be Sigma Chi. Kicking in windows, defaulting on dues payments, and throwing up on the carpet, however well executed, are not part of the Sigma Chi Ritual. Responsibility, courtesy, and respect are. If we are all voluntary members of an idealistic organization, we shouldn't get upset when someone asks us to live up to our word.

Still, some brothers do, and have constructed an entire vernacular to express their dissatisfaction. “You're taking this whole Fraternity thing too seriously.” “You've got to lighten up.” “This is completely unfair.” “I don't understand why they're coming down on us.” “They're just on a power trip.” And of course, the old standby: “We're not any worse than anyone else.”

Forget the concept of discipline. In Sigma Chi, what we call discipline is actually accountability. Phrases like “disciplining a Sigma Chi” or “punishing a Sigma Chi Chapter” would only make sense if those members and chapters were forced to be a part of Sigma Chi. They are not. They have voluntarily joined Sigma Chi, and have promised specifically and without reservation to uphold the ideals of the Fraternity in their character and conduct. When they do not, it is only responsible to compare their actions with their words and then hold them accountable.

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It has nothing to do with discipline. It has something to do with bringing people to a higher level, something to do with trust and personal responsibility.

And it has everything to do with the Ritual.

- Questions
- The word “discipline” has several different definitions. Which is meant in the above essay?
 - Does Sigma Chi really expect more of its members than the world expects of others? What? Why?
 - Do you expect more of Sigma Chis than of other people? Why or why not?
 - Have Sigma Chis ever let you down or disappointed you?

Case Study:
Paying Bills

For several years, Omega Alpha Chapter has had a problem with members not paying their bills; sometimes as many as 20 of the chapter’s 60 brothers are delinquent. At a recent party, John, the Quaestor, saw one of the delinquent brothers, who is known for having plenty of extra spending money. John immediately ordered the delinquent brother to leave the party, at which point another brother intervened, saying “Hey John, take it easy. Brotherhood is more important than money.”

- Who is right?
- Have you ever had to hold a brother accountable?

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- Have you ever been in a situation where you should have held a brother accountable but didn't?
- Can you hold friends accountable for their actions and still be a brother? How? Why?

Recruitment

Read the essay at right and then discuss or answer the questions that follow:

Sigma Chi is an organization of people. It doesn't take much reasoning to figure, then, that Sigma Chi as an organization is only as good as the people in it. These two aspects of Sigma Chi—the quality of the organization, and the quality of its members—are not only intimately intertwined, but they feed upon and perpetuate one another: If the quality of our membership declines, the quality of the organization declines, which in turn makes it harder to attract good members. Luckily, the reverse is also true: the better the members, the better Sigma Chi; and the better Sigma Chi, the easier it is to attract good members. This 'membership quality cycle' is both the bane and the salvation of the Fraternity, for it means that the Fraternity can change rather quickly, for better or for worse.

Can the Fraternity change?

Or can it? How can the Fraternity change “for better or for worse”? If the Fraternity as a whole is simply a collection or reflection of its members, then how can the aims and goals of the Fraternity be different than the aims and goals of the membership? How could the Fraternity, composed of thousands of brothers, possibly change qualitatively with a change in that brotherhood, who in themselves define the Fraternity? In other words, doesn't the nature of the Fraternity—and thus the Fraternity's sense of good and bad, positive and negative—naturally shift as the views of its members shift?

In Sigma Chi, the answer is no. Sigma Chi's Ritual is a firm foundation that transcends its temporal membership. While this foundation can be, and has been, tinkered with by a particular slice of members at a particular time, the main goals have been the same since 1855—cultivating a lifelong devotion to the ideals of Friendship, Justice and Learning. Unlike many clubs, companies, and gatherings, Sigma Chi does not seek members who are interested in changing or restructuring its mission. Rather, Sigma Chi says “This is what we are

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about. If you are about the same things, or would like to be, come join us, learn from us, share with us.”

Finding the men we need, not taking the ones we get

This distinction is critical when one begins to examine recruitment. Currently, Sigma Chi does not always say what it should. Instead of searching for men who share our purported beliefs, oftentimes we choose men based on wholly different criteria and then try to paste our ideals on top of them. We rush people who want to have a good time. We have socials, mixers at bars, and events with sorority women to attract future Sigs. We consciously look for face men, jocks, and partiers. We try to find men who we think are “good guys”—and who probably are. But what we don’t do is consciously search for men who have a chance or desire to understand our teachings.

And as a result, rush becomes a crap-shoot. It’s a gamble, because we’re not sure which of our recruits are going to “get it” and which aren’t. Luckily, some of the people attracted by booze and fun end up learning and appreciating the deeper messages of Sigma Chi. But many do not. Many want from the Fraternity the only thing that attracted them in the first place—entertainment. And who can blame them? Certainly they didn’t misrepresent their intentions; they didn’t say they would change for us. We are the ones that handed them beer and told them about intramurals. Then, we scratch our heads a year after Initiation, when the entire chapter comes to the Saturday night party and only a third show up for chapter meeting the next day; we struggle to understand why our brothers punch holes in the wall, steal from one another, or never pay their house bills. These members widen the gap between the original purpose of the Fraternity and its present position.

In that sense, then, the recruitment pool is tainted. As a Fraternity, we need to change the way we look at recruitment; we need to look for the best beyond the traditional pool. In its most fundamental sense, rush is

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the way we perpetuate our Ritual and our Fraternity. Notice that the Ritual and the Fraternity come first. We fit the members to the Fraternity, not the Fraternity to the members. If we expect people to believe in and follow our Ritual, we cannot recruit people who are not fundamentally supportive of our values.

Rushing the Ritual all year long

Therefore, the Ritual always needs to be in the back of brothers' minds during rush. In fact, they also need to rush the Ritual itself! That doesn't mean going out in the street and showing people the black book. Instead, it implies that the brothers understand the purpose of rush and strive to recruit men who fulfill and are willing to dedicate themselves to the Fraternity's teachings. It means actually measuring men against the Jordan Standard and rejecting those who fall short. It means setting a chapter criteria—defining additional traits that the chapter feels are important for its members to possess. When we say “Rush the Ritual,” then, we mean that brothers must use our teachings as both a rush tool and a measuring stick.

How? Talk about values, about leadership, about friends. Talk about all the things you say to defend the Greek system when people say, “All you do is party.” Talk about living with people who can help with school and career decisions, about literally having a home away from home. Talk about hands-on life experience in making right decisions. But there's a catch: you can't talk about these things if you don't offer them.

“Rushing the Ritual” also means doing all of these things all year long. There is no possible way to find men worthy of the Sigma Chi Fraternity in only a week. We need to search constantly, remembering that one of the best forms of rush is simply doing what we say: living up to our ideals. Set an example of excellence and people will want to be part of it.

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No one is saying that Sigma Chi isn't fun. Sigma Chi is incredibly fun. But entertainment is a celebration of our friendship and brotherhood, not the cause of it. Fun is not our central purpose, and should neither be the central way we recruit men nor the central quality we search for in those men.

In our modern world, you hear a lot of talk about "changing things," about "being different" and "standing up for what you believe in." Sometimes those comments are less a way of expressing personal ambition than a way of whining about perceived unfairness in the world. We are living in a society that, more and more, seems to be composed of people who think it is easier to complain than to act; people who believe that success should come from entitlement rather than work; people who curse as unfair anyone asking them to holding themselves to a higher standard; people unfettered by ideas, unchained by ethics, and unchallenged by struggle.

Sigma Chi needs fewer of these people. What we need are men of good character, students of excellent ability, men of ambition, congeniality, good morals, high honor, and deep personal responsibility. After all, doesn't our Ritual exist as a guide for our members?

Or does it exist in spite of our members?

- Questions
- Why did you join Sigma Chi?
 - Do you know more about Sigma Chi now than you did when you were a prospective member?
 - When you were rushing Sigma Chi, did any brothers talk to you about Sigma Chi's beliefs and values?
 - Are there things about the Ritual with which you don't agree?

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- Has the Ritual ever consciously guided your actions? Unconsciously?

Case Study 1: Two Prospective Members

Paul and Dan are both freshmen whose names have been mentioned in your bid meetings as possible Sigma Chi material. Paul is well-liked by the brothers and will almost certainly get a bid. He is always hanging out and is fun to party with. Dan, on the other hand, is interested in the chapter, but does not know very many brothers. In high school, he was captain of the football team and president of the student body. His full academic scholarship requires him to study frequently, so he hasn't been able to attend many rush events.

During tonight's bid meeting, one of the brothers talks about Dan and suggests that a few brothers go to his room. He says Dan is someone "we have to have." In response, a junior stands up and angrily says that "We're Sigma Chi. We don't have to ask anyone to join us. If Dan won't come to us, then we don't need him."

- Has anything similar ever happened in your chapter?
- Who do you agree with? Why?
- What is each prospective member likely to contribute to the chapter?

Case Study 2: Two Ways to Recruit

Formal rush is currently under way on your campus. At tonight's smoker, Andy, one of your senior brothers, noticed Rick, a new initiate, talking to several "cool" freshmen. He overheard Rick saying "We're about a lot more than just parties. This is a Fraternity for life." Andy hurried over and said, "But we have the most fun of any house on

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campus.” Later, he pulled Rick aside and said, “Man, you’re going to scare people off if you keep talking about that stuff!”

- Have you ever been worried about “chasing someone off”?
- Should you talk with prospective members about our values? Why?
- How can we convey the values of our Ritual to non-members? Why should we?
- What kind of prospective members will be turned off by talk about our values?

Ordeals

Read the essay at right and then discuss or answer the questions that follow:

As much as we like to think that hazing is an isolated problem, it occurs on a daily basis. Its frequency, in fact, depends entirely upon your definition.

For a long time, hazing was defined rather narrowly to mean physical abuse. That was later expanded to include harsh mental tests. Now, however, many observers of the Greek system realize even that definition is not very useful, because it excludes thousands of trials to which pledges are subjected daily. These “ordeals”—defined as severe trials or experiences—range the gamut from physical hazing to subtle, perhaps even well-intended, acts of intimidation and second-class citizenship. Often, remarks made in even an off-hand way can cause anxiety and anguish on the part of our prospective members. And unfortunately, these ordeals occur dozens of times a day, in dozens of different forms.

The question is, “Why?” The case against ordeals is clear from any angle. As a motivational tool, ordeals are counterproductive and ineffective, producing intimidation and fear instead of loyalty and respect, a formula which leads to member apathy instead of member dedication. From a legal standpoint, ordeals have equally harsh effects, as hazing is a felony in almost every state and carries with it severe penalties.

Finally, and most importantly, ordeals are counter to every teaching and tenet of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. Our ideals and values, grounded in friendship and brotherhood, leave absolutely no room for any activity in which humans treat other humans with anything other than respect. Note that this definition applies to all behaviors, in or out of the chapter, rather than outlining a specific set of prohibited activities. The essence of Friendship, Justice, and Learning is that we educate ourselves to the point where we can treat others better than we treat ourselves.

Ordeals

Make no mistake: If your chapter is conducting any activity that violates the ideals of the Ritual, or the Statement of Position Concerning Pledge Training, you are not truly a Sigma Chi Chapter. You may be engaging in a proud local tradition, or continuing a long history of abuse, but those acts in themselves do not make you a member of the Sigma Chi Fraternity; in fact, they deny you genuine membership. The irony is that the events that some believe to be the most integral part of their Sigma Chi experience are in fact the very events that contradict what the Fraternity should be all about.

The curious thing about an ordeal—whether hazing, second-class citizenship, or personal abuse—is that it very seldom occurs out of ignorance. However, some are insidious; sometimes, we don't even know the effect of what we're doing or saying.

However, as an adult college student, you know when you are doing something wrong, you realize when you are treating someone in a way you should not. The difficulty is learning to shoulder the twin burdens of maturity: responsibility and accountability. As a Sigma Chi, you must be responsible enough to listen to your own conscience. If you know you are doing something that could be done another way—whether in regards to your pledge program or not—change your behavior and the behavior of those around you, or get help from someone who can. Improve yourself and your chapter, and in the process move Sigma Chi back to where it should be.

It is easier solicit a short-term result with ordeals than it is with intellect. However, long-term dedication to a principle requires intellectual commitment—and that commitment can't be created through an ordeal. Free thoughts must replace blind obedience; discussion must replace silence; understanding must replace awareness; true introspection must replace ceremonies and activities.

Hazing

Resources do exist to help you improve; the Model I-Week, the *Norman Shield*, and this packet are several. In addition, your Assistant Executive Secretary, your Chapter Advisor, and your Grand Praetor are only a phone call away. If you have further questions, contact the Director of Undergraduate Services at Headquarters, (847) 869-3655. You do not have to give your name or chapter if you feel uncomfortable, and information will remain confidential if you so desire.

And if you do not face your responsibilities, remember that your inaction is a choice like any other. You will be held accountable for it, maybe not by the General Fraternity, maybe not by your college or university, maybe not by the state or federal authorities—but trust that you will at some point be held accountable...this is the burden and the privilege of being a Sigma Chi.

- Questions
- Do you agree with the essay? Why? Why not?
 - When you were a pledge, was there ever anything that bothered you about your pledge program? Did your attitude change when you became a brother? How?
 - How would you define hazing? How would you define second-class citizenship?

Case Study:
Motivation

Your pledge class is currently going through I-Week. Last night, the pledges began joking around, and several of them were talking and laughing. Kevin, the Assistant Magister, finally got frustrated and yelled “If it’s up to me, none of you will get Initiated!” One of the pledges got upset and walked out of the house.

Ordeals

- Was Kevin's tactic effective?
- Do pledges have to "earn" Initiation?
- What is the difference between a brother and a pledge?
- What is the overall tone of your I-Week?

The Challenges Facing Sigma Chi

Read the essay at right and then discuss or answer the questions that follow:

It does not require much time to identify the specific problems currently facing the Greek system, and more specifically, Sigma Chi—most have been documented and discussed rather extensively in recent years. Alcohol policy violations and underage drinking are rampant, second-class citizenship and general poor pledge programming are ubiquitous, scholarship is largely mediocre, personal responsibility and respect for others are generally on the decline, and alumni involvement is marginal at best.

But why is the Greek system fighting so many battles? Finding the underlying cause of these problems is slightly more difficult than identifying them. For years, the Fraternity addressed each of these shortcomings separately, publishing an anti-hazing policy here, instituting an alcohol education program there. Unfortunately, this approach of well-intentioned but unconnected actions has done little to address the challenges. In some cases, in fact, these individual remedies have served only to exacerbate the problems.

The problems are related

However, we do not believe that these problems are unrelated. We believe, in fact, that the problems are fundamentally intertwined. And we believe that by addressing this basic link, we have the best chance of truly ameliorating the entire gamut of problems. The shortcomings of Sigma Chi exist for one reason: We have failed to stay true to the ideals upon which we were founded.

Sigma Chi, like all Greek organizations, has, over a period of more than a hundred years, shifted its focus. At the basic undergraduate level, Sigma Chi has changed from a Ritual-centered organization to an entertainment-centered one. What started as a small group of men desiring to nurture their uncommon friendship and literary acumen has become, for the most part, a social outlet. This gradual shift has taken the Fraternity further and further from its fundamental values.

The Challenges Facing Sigma Chi

In other words, our problems are no accident. They are not random, not unconnected, not the result of a new breed of college student or lack of parental guidance. Rather, our problems derive from a lack of grounding in our basic teachings. If you doubt this, take a moment to reflect upon the often hypocritical conduct of Sigma Chi brothers. If we believe in Learning, why do our members fail classes and leave school? If we ascribe to personal responsibility, why do brothers drink themselves into oblivion weekly? If we champion respect, why do we constantly battle insensitivity and assault? If we hold Friendship sacred, why do we harass our potential brothers? If we truly believe in a lifelong commitment, why do our members drift away after graduation? And if we are truly sincere and honest in the Oath we take at Initiation, why do we have any problems at all?

The real problem—and the real solution

We believe that the answer is that many Sigma Chis have not dedicated themselves to these ideals—not because they do not want to, *but because they are ignorant of the true purpose of the Fraternity*. They have been taught to view Sigma Chi as a social, fun institution that also has a neat secret ceremony—instead of as a value-centered, demanding, idealistic organization that expresses itself through personal interaction. Most undergraduates have little more than the vaguest knowledge about our Ritual. The average chapter's Ritual performance is mediocre at best; it is not uncommon to encounter chapters which regularly omit sections of the chapter meeting. The average brother has little real knowledge about the meanings of the Initiation ceremony. This unintentional disregard of our Ritual is the greatest single tragedy of our Fraternity today, not only because of the secondary problems it causes, but more importantly because it is evidence that our organization has forgotten its mission.

We believe, therefore, that to solve the Fraternity's problems, we must teach members about the Ritual again. When we talk about the Ritual,

The Challenges Facing Sigma Chi

we do not mean simply the Ceremonies of Initiation performed twice a year. Rather, we mean actually applying these teachings to our lives—using Sigma Chi as a guide for our actions. Many do not understand that the Ritual of Sigma Chi is not meant to be seen or read, but to be practiced and lived. We must move Sigma Chi back to the point where members understand that they have made a commitment during their Initiation.

If every brother in Sigma Chi actually lived by what the Ritual asks, Sigma Chi would not have any problems. So, all we need to do is convince every current and future brother to do what they have promised! A daunting task, to be sure...is Sigma Chi worth the effort?

- Questions
- Do you believe that the General Fraternity is facing any challenges? What are they?
 - Is your local chapter facing any challenges? What are they?
 - Is the Greek system on your campus threatened? Why?
 - What would you do to address these problems?
 - Should Sigma Chi be a purely social institution? Why or why not?
 - Are your friendships with your brothers different than your friendships with people from high school? How? Why?

Case Study 1: Meeting with the Trustees

The Board of Trustees of your university has recently been discussing the problems of your Greek system. They are concerned that Greek groups are not enhancing the academics interests of the school.

The Challenges facing Sigma Chi

Because of these concerns, they have tentatively decided to disband the Greek system next fall.

A formal hearing is going to be held next week to discuss the proposal. You have been invited to speak on behalf of your chapter.

- How would you state your case?
- How do indiscretions of other Greek organizations affect you?
- What promises do you make?
- What action do you take?

Case Study 2: The New Initiate

Your chapter is preparing to initiate its fall pledge class. One night during I-Week preparations, Scott, the Consul of your chapter, is talking with David, who was initiated three months ago. Scott tells David that seeing Initiation as a brother for the first time is very inspiring. David says, "I'm just looking forward to spooking the pledges!"

- What can you say about David's pledge experience? What can you say about Scott's?
- What would you say to David? Was something missing from his pledge education? What?
- Did the chapter miss their best opportunity to affect David? Was he cheated by the chapter?
- How can you better prepare you prospective members for pledgeship? How can you better prepare your pledges for

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Initiation? How can you better prepare your brothers for a lifelong commitment to the Fraternity?

Case Study 3: The Split Class

Omega Zeta Chapter is three days from the start of I-week. The chapter has a good, constructive pledge program. However, the pledge class has become troubled by what they see as hypocrisy in the brothers. They know that many brothers don't attend chapter meetings, and witnessed several breaking bottles on the basement floor. The pledges have an informal meeting among themselves to discuss the situation, with the majority considering dropping before Initiation. Eventually, two members of the ten-man class depledge.

- What would you say to the remaining members of the pledge class?
- What would you say to the two members that depledged?
- What would you say to the chapter? Is it appropriate to ask certain brothers not to participate in pledge and Initiation activities?



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Afterword

Whether you have read *Ritual Resources* cover to cover, completed some of the exercises, taken part in one discussion, or simply leafed through the pages, you have taken a step on the lifelong journey of understanding the Ritual of Sigma Chi. If you are interested, the next step is contained in the Ritual itself. Read through the book—all at once, a bit at a time, or just pick your favorite part—and reflect upon the words and symbols. Then, come back to the questions in this packet. Have your answers changed?

Like most potentially rewarding experiences, understanding the Ritual of Sigma Chi takes time, energy, and dedication. Unlike many things, however, the rewards far exceed the investment. The Ritual is worth your attention—give it some, and watch it unfold before you.

Best of luck to you as you continue on your quest.

For more information

If you have questions about—or suggestions for—*Ritual Resources*, contact Jeff Shuck, Manager of Fraternal Initiatives, at (847) 869-3655, extension 222, or via e-mail at jeff_shuck@sigmachihq.org. Or, send your written comments to *Ritual Resources: Attention Jeff Shuck*, Sigma Chi Headquarters, 1714 Hinman Avenue, Evanston, Illinois, 60201. We'd like to hear from you.

Credits

“What is a Ritual?” was adapted from material by Grand Historian Douglas R. Carlson.

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