

Chapter Advisor Manual

As a Pi Alpha Phi Chapter Advisor, you are making a serious commitment to tomorrow's leaders. It's not an easy job, but your position is one that allows young men to flourish while upholding the values of the Fraternity. Many of these young men are away from home from the first time. They are learning how to manage things in their lives that mom and dad used to take care of. Sometimes, the advice will take hold right away. Other times, you will have to repeat it. Over and over. There will also be occasions where you will need to be explicitly clear and exert your authority.

It is no coincidence that the most successful Pi Alpha Phi chapters are the ones with involved Chapter Advisors. The advisory team to a chapter is invaluable. Advisors serve as mentors that can enrich the culture of a chapter, assist in improving chapter operations, and help instill the lifelong brotherhood and lasting friendship our Fraternity is so proud of.

Chapter Advisors are committed to supporting the endeavors of chapter members by serving as role models and providing guidance aimed at improving the fraternal experience.

Chapter Advisors are dedicated to:

- embracing the Pillars, Mission, and Vision of Pi Alpha Phi
- providing personal growth opportunities for all brothers of Pi Alpha Phi
- supporting concepts of accountability and self-governance to ensure a safe and positive fraternal experience
- empowering undergraduate members and each other to reach their full potential as leaders who make decisions based on the values and principles of Pi Alpha Phi
- teaching the applicability of fraternity management skills to post-graduate life.
- Fostering open and authentic relationships between undergraduate members, the host university, alumni, parents, the national fraternity, and all other constituents

Characteristics a Chapter Advisor should have:

1. Maturity.
2. Empathy.
3. Goal-oriented.
4. Have management, time, and organizational skills.
5. Be an effective communicator
6. Be respected.

7. Be a good role model.
8. Hold the chapter accountable for its actions.
9. Provide guidance to the chapter.
10. Attend officer and chapter meetings often (at least monthly).

Being a friend of the chapter is the basis for success as Chapter Advisor. Friend here is defined as one who has gained the respect and confidence of the undergraduate chapter. Members should feel free to approach you for guidance in any matter, personal or fraternal.

Without respect and friendship, your relationship with the chapter may become strained and unproductive. Remember, friendship is more than simply being popular. Occasionally, you may have to act or take a stand on a particular issue that the chapter won't like. It's great to be liked by the chapter, but it's more important to be respected.

A Chapter Advisor does not operate the chapter, but rather helps the chapter become self-sufficient. To be truly helpful to the chapter, you must avoid doing things that they should be doing for themselves. The members will learn more when they take your suggestions and act on them for themselves. This will also nurture a positive Advisor-Chapter relationship.

Chapter leadership changes often, so the Chapter Advisor is the key individual who provides the continuity that keeps the chapter successful. In this sense, the Chapter Advisor is the stabilizing force in the progression toward chapter goals.

After you gain some experience, you will find that problems do not just appear overnight. They appear when you are out of touch with your chapter.

Use warning signs, your meetings with chapter officers, your one-on-one talks, and the Fraternity's resources to make things run smoothly with your chapter.

Qualifications

Who can be a Chapter Advisor?

It is recommended that a Chapter Advisor be an alumnus of any chapter of Pi Alpha Phi. It is not necessary, however, to be an initiated member to be an advisor. The most important quality is the desire to help.

Does the Chapter Advisor have to be an alumnus of the chapter he works with?

No. In fact, many times it is better if he is not a member of that chapter. Many successful and well-respected Chapter Advisors provide guidance to chapters other than their home chapter.

Does the Chapter Advisor have to be male?

No. Once again, the most important quality is the desire to help.

Do the Chapter Advisor and a Faculty Advisor (or Campus Advisor) have the same responsibilities?

No. The Faculty Advisor is a liaison between the chapter and the university administration. He or she is more concerned with the academic performance of the chapter, campus service projects, and public relations projects. The Chapter Advisor, on the other hand, provides guidance and counsel on a day-to-day basis regarding overall chapter operations.

Is there an age requirement to be a Chapter Advisor?

While there is no age requirement to be a Chapter Advisor, it's recommended that the Chapter Advisor has graduated at least three years prior to assuming this leadership role and is at least 25 years of age.

Responsibilities of the Chapter Advisor

Conduct a Chapter Retreat

A chapter needs to periodically review its position and role, both on the campus and within the Fraternity. This is the basis of a Chapter Retreat. As the Chapter Advisor, you may need to coordinate this process to ensure openness as members assess their performance. The Chapter Retreat Guide will help you focus on the following areas:

1. Chapter strengths and how to build on them.
2. Chapter weaknesses and how to turn them into strengths.
3. Short- and Long-Term goals.
4. Strategies to achieve these goals.

Participate in Regional Leadership Conferences and Conclave

Your attendance at these official Fraternity functions also sets a good example for the men you are helping to become leaders. Also, because of your role as the link between the chapter and the Offices of the National Fraternity, your knowledge and involvement with the Offices of the Grand Chapter is vital to your effectiveness.

Attend Officer and Chapter Meetings Frequently

You should attend a meeting of the chapter at least once a month. You however, may want to attend more often. This will allow you to be well-informed and be present for your input in important issues.

Make it a practice to give a report of any new policies or issues that may affect the chapter. You should also make sure that all correspondence that is received by the chapter is read at the chapter meetings and later e-mailed for all to read. Having a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure to provide assistance in the smooth running of a chapter meeting is essential.

Your presence for advice and support is particularly crucial during times of rush, new member installation, officer installations, and for the planning of major events. An informal drop-by is also a good way to gather information on the chapter's direction by just talking with members. Your presence for informal, as well as formal, events is equally important.

Disciplinary Matters

You must be thoroughly aware of the judicial process of the fraternity at both local and national levels. Keeping confidences and treating every situation with respect for all concerned, with the ultimate welfare of the chapter in mind, must be your primary concern. Have an open mind. Do not jump to judgment based on rumours. Use common sense to make decisions. If a major disciplinary issue should surface, first gather all of the facts, discuss your options with the officers, and make a decision. If in doubt, you may always refer to the Risk Management Guidelines, or a national officer.

Membership Recruitment

You will want to attend a few recruitment functions. Adult presence says a lot about the chapter to a prospective new member, and you can be on hand to answer questions and concerns. Encourage other members of the Chapter Advisory Team and Alumni Association to attend these functions as well.

Work with the membership recruitment committee to ensure they understand the basics of membership recruitment. You may also need to provide occasional motivational talks to keep them going forward with full energy.

Many free recruitment resources can be found at <http://www.phiredup.com>

Assist and Guide Chapter Operations

The areas where you will want to be knowledgeable in order to aid the officers are:

- **Academics** - You will want to be sure to encourage the chapter to maintain a good scholarship record, one that is equal to the All Men's Average and preferably better. The chapter should consistently strive individually and

collectively to achieve the best possible record. Collaborate with the Greek Advisor in strengthening the academic program of the chapter.

- **Finance** - Ensure that a budget is prepared to guide the chapter for the ensuing year. A budget template can be found at the Downloads page at <http://www.pialphaphi.com>. Many students have difficulty with budgeting. Good financial practices will ensure the chapter has a successful year. You will want to make sure the chapter remains current in its obligations to the National Fraternity: Annual Membership Dues, Risk Management Fees, and Convention Savings Plan. Be certain too that the corporation, however it is organized, files the appropriate state and federal paperwork.
- **Campus and Community Involvement** - You will need to be aware of "who's who" on the campus, especially the Fraternity and Sorority officials. A good professional relationship with them is essential to effective guidance of the chapter. Encourage active participation by the chapter officers and members in all campus life.
- **Social Programming** - You can do a great deal to assure a successful chapter by insisting on a social calendar that complies with current Risk Management guidelines. To avoid overemphasis on the social aspects of membership, members must realize that a social program complements other programs of the chapter. "Social events are the gravy, but the chapter must make sure it has the meat and potatoes"
- **Risk Management** - The attitude of the chapter leadership towards Risk Management is invariably reflected in the attitude of the members of the chapter. Help them understand why the Risk Management Guidelines are important. Knowing the answers to these frequently asked questions will help. Any chapter, large or small, that attempts to stop incidents without a definite guiding policy--one that is planned, publicized, and monitored--will find itself continuously reacting to situations rather than being in a position to prevent them before they have a chance to occur.

Sample Situations and Responses

Situation #1:

The chapter you advise is unmotivated and unorganized. Apathy is obvious at during periods of membership recruitment and the chapter is having a hard time recruiting new members. You have decided to talk to the entire chapter at this week's chapter meeting.

The following is an example of an unproductive Chapter Advisor response:

"If I had not seen it, I would have never believed it. Only 50% of you guys even showed up for the event. You are an embarrassment to the Fraternity. If you don't step up, this chapter is going to fall down around you."

Now here is a more productive Chapter Advisor response:

"This chapter has always been known as one of the best on campus. We have got to work to keep it that way. So, let's set some goals that will help us to remain one of the best fraternities."

Situation #2:

It has come to your attention that the chapter is providing alcohol at rush events even though that is clearly against Fraternity policy. No one in the chapter will come forward "officially," so you need to confront the officers and, later, the entire chapter.

How not to deal with that problem:

"Listen guys. I know it is pretty unrealistic to expect you not to provide alcohol at rush when everyone else on campus does. But, it is a rule."

There are many problems with that kind of response. First, and foremost, you must always represent the Rules and Bylaws of Pi Alpha Phi as fair and equitable. Second, even though you should be a friend of the chapter, you cannot establish a "them" versus "us" situation by referring to national policy as unrealistic. Third, and this is a crucial point, you must never disregard the potential legal problems in a situation.

Let's take a look at a more appropriate way to address that issue:

"I know you have heard it before, but let me read you the Fraternity's risk management policy on alcohol and open parties."

One of your goals should be to generate enough respect among the members so that you can reprimand them, when necessary, without alienating them. You will have to express yourself forcefully and feel confident in doing so. But, you have to know when it is necessary to reprimand them and when it is not. If you come down on the members all of the time, they are going to ignore you all of the time. And, you can't afford to be ignored when you are dealing with situations that involve legal liability.

The main thing to remember regarding legal liability is that as long as you and your chapter obey Fraternity, Federal, State and Local laws, you will be covered by the Pi Alpha Phi insurance policies. But, if the Risk Management Guidelines are not followed, the chapter may no longer be protected. If you, as Chapter Advisor, knew beforehand that a violation was about to occur, you may not be covered either. Now you know why it is so important for you to be sure your chapter is following the Risk Management Guidelines. You cannot allow a few people to jeopardize the entire Fraternity.

You cannot possibly be there all the time to see everything that goes on at the chapter, but you should be aware of your chapter's plans. Work with the individuals to make sure they understand the dangers involved, especially with events that involve alcohol or when hazing could be involved.

Situation #3:

Some of the members have made comments about Hell Week. You think there may be some sort of hazing happening behind "closed doors." No one is willing to come forward, nor should you be asking them to. You need to reaffirm the Fraternity's position on hazing. A typical response from the chapter might be: "Come on. We have always had hazing. It's tradition." "Yea, other fraternities have hell week."

Here is the wrong way to react to a statement like that:

"Ok. Ok. You all have to do what you have to do. Just don't let me hear about it."

And here is the right way:

"If that is the way you feel about it, then you have to understand that you are putting the whole chapter in jeopardy, as well as yourselves, the chapter and the National Fraternity. It is that kind of attitude that land people in court. So, if you have to have Hell Week, then you no longer have the privilege of membership in this Fraternity."

You should not be afraid to talk to your chapter like this. Some situations cry out for confrontation, especially those where lawsuits are waiting to happen.

Pi Alpha Phi is rolling out a new non-hazing membership development program for the fraternity. The goal of the new program is to create a positive membership experience while limiting unnecessary risks to the safety and well being of its members.

Situation #4:

One of the members has come to you. He said that an open party with alcohol is being planned by four of the chapter's leaders.

This is how you should not approach the problem:

Upon finding the names of the members planning the party, you go to one of their rooms to confront them. "Hey guys, listen. Joe tells me that you are planning an open party and there are going to be kegs present. I don't have time to talk now because I am late for a meeting, but all I can say is that you had better not do it. See ya!"

First of all, you never want to betray a member's confidence. Telling the guys that Joe says you are planning a party is going to make them upset with Joe. Don't divide the chapter into factions. You have to be very careful to preserve the members' trust in you. Second, you must always take the time to explain why the chapter can't do something. If

you don't have time to talk now, set up a meeting when you do. Using vague threat like "all I can say is that you had better not do it" is ineffective. Use facts, not threats.

Here is an appropriate way to respond to the situation:

"I have come to you guys because you are leaders in this chapter and the other members tend to follow your example. I know there is talk about an open party with alcohol. I have to remind you of the legal consequences of doing something like that. If you have a party and let anyone come, and believe me everyone and their brother will come, you lose all ability to control that event. And yet you are going to remain responsible for whatever happens to any one of those people.

Your insurance will not cover you because you are breaking University, Fraternity and possibly even State laws. So, if someone decides to sue because their underage child drank beer here, got drunk, got hurt, you are going to pay out of our own pockets."

A typical response would be:

"But we will lose popularity if we don't have open parties."

Your response should be along the following lines:

"There are a lot of other ways to become popular without having open parties."

Members:

"Well, what do you suggest we should do to keep visibility on campus?"

You:

"I suggest we get really involved in campus intramural athletics, chapter scholarship, and other campus activities. Lets have social events for members and their guests that revolve around something other than alcohol. Let's challenge our social committee to come up with a list of functions that this chapter could sponsor without alcohol."

Finally, when all else fails, remind them one last time of the seriousness of their actions. Of course, you won't always have to deal with such difficult situations, but it is important to know what to do should they arise. You don't have to handle them alone. You can always turn to the national officers for advice and support.

Warning Signs

To help you identify the early signs of possible problems, we have listed some of the more obvious clues.

- Elections that are not contested and are a popularity contest than anything else
- Chapter meetings lasting more than one hour
- Lack of communication between chapter and Chapter Advisory Team

- High percentage of uncollected dues
- Poor record-keeping
- Strained or non-existent relations with local alumni
- Social activities that rely on alcohol
- High de-pledge rate

These are some of the more obvious signs of a struggling chapter. Many of you will also be able to notice other telltale signs of a chapter in trouble. If you spot any one of these signs, discuss it with the chapter's executive board to determine the cause. Feel free to contact the national officers to receive assistance.