

Pi Alpha Phi Officer Transition Guide

Does it seem like each officer is re-inventing the wheel each year?

Does your officer transition just passing a box of materials and a wish of “good luck”?

An effective leadership transition requires time, attention, and communication.

“Effective leaders begin with the end in mind” – Stephen Covey

Transition discussions shouldn't start the last month of the leader's term in office. Both you and your students should think about the transition process, talk about it, and plan for it.

Leadership transitions can be tough. You've heard the excuses:

- I've got too much work to do to think about a transition
- I figured it out myself – they can too
- It's not my responsibility! Someone else was supposed to ...
- I lost everything in the binder. Sorry.
- Everything's in my head. I didn't write anything down.

The last excuse is very common. When things get busy, the last thing most people do is think of recording the knowledge they've gained for his successor.

Here is a very simple list that should be in EVERY officer's notebook:

MUST HAVES

- National and Chapter Constitution, by-laws, policies, procedures
- Risk Management and Insurance Documentation
- Current Mission Statement – the Purpose of the Organization
- How to effectively work and communicate with campus's fraternity advisor
- How to effectively work and communicate with volunteers and national officers
- Robert's Rules of Order

OFFICER JOB DESCRIPTION

- List of responsibilities. Preferably general bullet points
- Calendar of important dates (and date-sensitive responsibilities)
- Required paperwork with sample forms
- Historical files
- “Words of Wisdom” to be passed from one officer to next

Office Vision Statement and Goals

- New officer should write his vision and goals for the position. The statements should be consistent with the fraternity's Mission Statement
- SMART Goals setting will help new officers understand progress of goals
 - Specific
 - Measurable
 - Action
 - Realistic
 - Timely

Calendar (based on academic calendar)

- Important school dates
- Important fraternity dates
- Holidays
- Special Events
- Past leadership's calendar of events

Key Contacts (name, position, phone, e-mail)

- Chapter Advisory Team
- University and community resources
- Prior office holders
- National Officers

Officer's Evaluation

- Done by each officer at end of term. Added to notebook. Should keep at least 4 years' worth
- A chapter (or cabinet) evaluation may also be useful
- At minimum, it should contain evaluation of current year's programming and notes on what worked and what did not.

Notes on Specific Events/Functions

- Dates for the next officer training and transition should be documented to get the NEXT set of officers thinking "with the end in mind".

Pertinent Financial Records

Information on how all financial matters should be handled (spending, collections, receipts, budget requests, etc.)

- A complete set of financial records (bank statements, receipts, contracts)
- Sample Forms
- Previous year's budgets

TRANSITION PROCESS

At the beginning of the term, most newly elected student leaders believe more is better. The more information, communication, and “ramp up” time the better. Complete transition packets, retreats, and meetings with predecessors, and a full understanding of the expectations of office will help a new officer feel more confident and capable. He won't feel like a new wheel needs to be re-created or old information hunted down if it is all in one packet.

Some leaders encourage one-on-one conversations between old and new officers. Some simply have informal conversations.

If choosing this format, the following topics should be covered:

- What was the transition like when you began your term?
- How could you have been better prepared?
- What were the biggest successes of your term?
- What were the biggest mistakes and lessons learned from them?
- If I could give one piece of advice to the new officer, it would be...
- If I could do my term over again, I would...

Some leaders choose to do a retreat/lock-in/meeting. If the chapter chooses this option, here are some issues to consider:

When should the transition retreat be held?

After elections and definitely before the new officers are installed.

Where should the transition retreat be held?

An effective transition should take place away from the chapter house. Holding the transition retreat away from campus will ensure that distractions be minimized. It is important to arrange for an environment that is both comfortable and welcoming to help facilitate a productive and focused atmosphere.

How long should the retreat last?

A transition can be ongoing if the old officers are present to answer questions. However, for the meeting-length time, the officers should plan on spending at least 5 hours.

Officer Transition Retreat: Sample Program Outline

The following is a sample outline that can be adapted to meet your chapter's specific needs. There are 3 distinct parts:

1. Opportunity for outgoing and incoming officers to meet to discuss specific officer related roles and responsibilities
2. Discussion on past executive board's term in office.
3. Strategic Planning Session for incoming executive board.

Do not feel like you must plan this all by yourselves. There are many resources at your disposal, including your chapter advisor as well as the Greek Life office on campus.

Introduction – 15 minutes

Lead facilitator (President, Chapter Advisor, or other designee) will begin by welcoming officers to the transition retreat. The facilitator will review key objectives for the retreat.

- Officers will review duties and responsibilities of individual officers and Executive Board as a whole
- Officers will review past officer's term to discuss areas of success and challenge
- Officers will discuss current state of chapter, as well as long-term vision and goals for chapter
- Incoming officers will set goals and a calendar for their term in office.

Part 1 – 1-2 hours

This section will provide the opportunity for incoming and outgoing officers to meet and discuss specific officer information. Officer notebooks as well as essential materials should be transferred during this time.

It is critical that outgoing officers be provided with an opportunity to impart their wisdom and experiences to incoming officers. Allowing officers to say "goodbye" will provide for closure and allows all involved to reflect on their experiences. Additionally, this eases the transition process and keeps outgoing officers engaged as active members.

There are several questions that should be discussed between officers. Prior to the retreat, the facilitator can create a handout which provides such discussion prompting questions:

- What was the outgoing officer's transition like when they took office?
- What information did the outgoing officer wish he knew when he took office?
- How could the outgoing officer have been better prepared?
- Where did the officer succeed in his position?
- What were the greatest mistakes and lessons learned during the officer's term?
- What paperwork is required of the specific officer.
- What supplies are necessary for the officer to succeed in his position?
- What items/programs/projects are still outstanding?
- What role did the outgoing officer play in the chapter's leadership?
- What key relationships did the officer build? Which relationships still need to be built?

Part 2 – 1 hour

The second part of the officer transition will provide an opportunity for the outgoing executive board to share information about their term in office. In particular, this portion of the officer transition will focus on how the executive board functioned as a team.

In addition to addressing any specific questions posed by the incoming executive board, the facilitator should be prepared to ask specific prompting questions that can include the following:

- What are the current issues facing the executive board?
- What projects or goals have not been fulfilled? What is the status of these projects or goals and what are the next steps for fulfilling them?
- How did the executive board function as a team? What specific best practices or approaches allowed the executive board to function at their best?
- How did the executive board members support other executive board members?
- How did executive board members hold one another accountable to the organization's standards and goals?

At the conclusion of this session, the outgoing executive board should be directed that they should leave the transition retreat. Prior to doing so, recognize the outgoing officers for their service and hard work. In addition to expressing thanks and gratitude, the facilitator may consider incorporating an activity to provide closure. For example, the facilitator can lead a "gavel pass" where the executive board members can share final words of wisdom to the incoming officers.

Part 3 – 2 hours

The final part of the officer transition program will focus on the incoming executive board. This section will focus on goal-setting for the executive board as well as setting a calendar for the upcoming semester/quarter.

The following program can be implemented by the facilitator to lead the group in a goal setting session:

The facilitator begins by asking the group their definition of goals and why goal setting is important to chapter operations.

The facilitator should gear the conversation towards how goals provide direction, describe success, provide challenge, create common tasks and purposes, create expectations, etc.

Goals help us focus our efforts. They are a specific statement of what is most important. They allow you to break down big plans into manageable parts that keep you from getting overwhelmed.

Facilitator should introduce the idea of SMART goals:

Specific – Specific goals state exactly what you want to accomplish

Measurable – Measurable goals state what you want and when you want it. They enable you to see the progress at any point along the way.

Action – Action oriented goals indicate how they will be achieved. They specify WHAT you need to do to reach your goals.

Realistic – Realistic goals are possible. They are attainable, considering the resources and constraints relative to the situation.

Timely – Timely goals allow reasonable time to achieve them, but not so much that you lose focus or motivation.

Facilitator instructs the group to envision in their minds that it is the end of the semester and poses the following question:

What do they hope has happened in their chapter?

Allow 1 minute of silent reflection or to take notes on what they hope has happened. Ask students to list and explain the things they want to be able to say the executive board and chapter has accomplished.

Facilitator writes each idea on the individual sheets/dry erase board. Each participant should be sharing multiple accomplishments or achievements. Facilitator should work to try and keep similar ideas together.

After all participants have shared ideas, facilitator should instruct the group to decide on their TOP 3 GOALS to focus on for the upcoming term.

Once the group has decided on their top 3 goals, the facilitator should provide the designated recorder with the Goal Setting Worksheets. The facilitator should explain that the worksheet is intended to allow the chapter to establish specific goals and objectives for their respective members.

The group should work through the Goal Setting sheets, completing 1 sheet per 1 goal. The facilitator should work in keeping the group on task in responding to the posed questions. The group should respond to all questions.

Upon completion, the chapter should keep the original copy of the Goal Setting Sheets. Copies should be made and shared with the chapter advisory team, national officers, and campus advisor so that those stakeholders can provide support throughout the term.

References:

The following resources were enlisted and consulted in creating this Guide.

- *Officer Transition Guide, North American Interfraternity Conference*
- *Transitioning Old & New Officers, AFA/Karyn Sneath*
- *President's Manual, Phi Kappa Theta*

CHAPTER ACTION PLAN

Issue to address _____

Brainstorm possible ways to address the issue

GOAL STATEMENT: In addressing this issue, what do you hope to accomplish?

PLAN OF ACTION

Steps	Specific Action	Who?	Due Date
—	_____	_____	_____
—	_____	_____	_____
—	_____	_____	_____
—	_____	_____	_____
—	_____	_____	_____