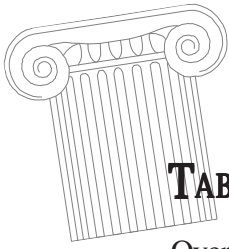


# PARENT RELATIONS MANUAL

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## OVERVIEW

The goal of this manual is to help Triangle chapter leaders develop effective parent relations by considering parents' priorities, interests, and expectations. The manual also offers parent programming tips and sample pieces to use when communicating with parents.



## OBJECTIVES

With the help of this manual, Triangle Brothers will be able to:

- ❖ Strengthen their relationship with members' parents by focusing on their interests and expectations.
- ❖ Organize effective parent events.
- ❖ Discuss new parent programming ideas and opportunities within their chapter.



## PARENTS' PROGRAMMING

Students going to college for the first time have many adjustments to make. Parents and guardians must also adjust to these life changes along with their sons. Whether students are moving into on-campus housing, a new apartment, or the chapter house, new problems, issues, and questions can be expected. Students joining Triangle have additional commitments that will challenge their time management skills, follow-through, and study skills.

Students who are in their second, third, or even fourth year of college also have many adjustments to make. Experienced students are facing the challenges of working with and living with people of varied ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and environmental backgrounds. They are developing their career interests and finding which major best suits them. They are involved in extracurricular activities and supervising their peers in volunteer capacities. While their son is experiencing these challenges, parents are making adjustments also.

While college students have a variety of student services at their disposal, parents are often unaware of the many resources available to them. The chapter can help provide advice and guidance to parents. Chapter members can develop a special relationship with the parents to help them support their son.

Parents have a wide range of questions when their child goes to college:

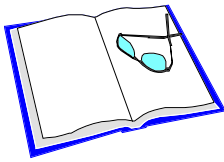
- ❖ What kinds of problems might my first year/transfer son have?
- ❖ What resources are available to my son?
- ❖ What can academic advising do?
- ❖ How can my son best prepare for exams?
- ❖ How can I determine whether or not my son is performing in a way that will meet his life goals?
- ❖ How can I help, without getting in the way?
- ❖ How is my son living within his means and balancing his budget?
- ❖ Is my son taking care of his health?

Since our children are so dear to us, we want the best for them. We want them to achieve, fit in, and make friends. We want them to be successful and have their success recognized. Additionally, we expect them to conduct themselves in a prudent and ethical manner. In order to make all of these things happen, it is wise to put them in the proper environment—an environment which will nurture and support them, as well as prepare them for the future.

If we told you that a fraternity could provide such an environment, would you be surprised? The idea may cause you to have some questions and concerns. After all, fraternities have earned a certain reputation. If chosen wisely, however, fraternity membership does offer many advantages and rewards.

Triangle Fraternity is committed to assisting young men achieve their potential academically, Triangle also offers opportunities to learn about self-governance, leadership, financial responsibility, service to others, brotherhood, and caring for one another. In addition, the longer a member lives in the chapter house, the more likely he is to enjoy the support for academics and opportunities for leadership that the Fraternity offers.

Fraternity membership is a rewarding and invaluable experience. In its simplest form, a fraternity is a group of friends. However, in its truest form, a fraternity is a unique form of friendship—it is a family. It offers a common bond that remains with each member throughout his life. In Triangle your son will find lasting friendship, inspiration, and opportunity throughout his membership. We know that membership in Triangle Fraternity will enhance his college experience.



## TYING PARENTS INTO COLLEGE LIFE

### Academics

One of the greatest concerns of parents is, “Will my son live up to his academic potential?”

- ❖ *What is your chapter doing to promote academic success?*
- ❖ *How are you supporting your members scholastically?*
- ❖ *What type of help are you providing their son?*

Any information you can provide to parents to let them know you and Triangle Fraternity care about their son’s academic development is good. Let them know about the in-chapter tutoring program, quiet hours in the house, reward and recognition programs for the highest or most improved grades, or workshops the chapter provides in the areas of scholarship and career development. They want to make sure their son choose a worthy organization that prides itself on academic integrity and success.



### New Passwords

“The language of the campus has to be absorbed. SGA, CAC, Union, drop-add, 101 vs. 102, preregistration, etc., are among the common ways of talking on campus. The adjustment to this shorthand way of describing things is easy to manage...but not always in the first week or so of school.”

In addition to the shorthand used on campus, consider the “code” words within the Fraternity: pledge, initiation, oath, chapter, national, IFC, Panhel, NPHC, rush. Just like prospective members, parents are unfamiliar with commonly used terms in your organization. Help them become comfortable with the new language of the chapter and they will feel more comfortable with their son’s choice of organization.



### Seeking Direction

“Attending college is one of life’s benchmarks. The first year of that experience tends to be pivotal ... Students expect that at the completion of their college work they will have identified a career. It is fortunate that in the United States there are hundreds of career options from which to choose. Eventually, though, one does have to choose. The greater a student’s ability, the greater the options. This is an enormous challenge for students.”

Parents can provide a realistic examination of career opportunities for your members. They may have selected a different career path than they originally chose in college. They may have changed careers a number of times. They may have stepped-out of the work environment and stayed at home while the children were young. Parents can help their own son, and other members, examine different career paths. They can share stories of good and poor interviews. They can help the members understand what employers are looking for in entry level employees.

Your parent relations program can truly benefit your members. In addition to the various alumni networking opportunities the chapter provides, the chapter can provide a strong networking, career development program involving parents.



### Helpful and Unhelpful People

Parents are curious about all aspects of college life. They will be relieved to know that experienced chapter members are helping their son navigate his way through campus.

Other chapter members serve a critical role for members by referring them to helpful people and resources on campus. Experienced members can help younger members find the right place for the right answers to their questions. They can find helpful administrators and faculty members to help resolve problems and academic issues. Also, let the parents know important resources on campus so that they may follow-up with their own questions.

*(Source: James J. Rhatigan, Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Wichita State University, in “Parents of College Students: A Unique Course to Promote Student Success”)*



## ADVANTAGES/BENEFITS OF PARENTS' PROGRAMMING

As you examine the various issues, challenges, and opportunities that face your members, you will soon see the many benefits of parents' programming. With an effective parent relations program, parents will better understand what their son can expect during his years in college. Their expectations differ widely, for every student brings a different level of experience, maturity, motivations, and values to the campus. In turn, the members can see their organization and their opportunities from a more experienced, parent perspective.

### A Good Parent Relations Program Can:

- ❖ Create good relations with parents
- ❖ Provide advice and guidance
- ❖ Assist the chapter in obtaining parent support and involvement
- ❖ Increase the probability that your members' years at college will be successful and rewarding
- ❖ Assist the chapter in utilizing parent resources
- ❖ Assist individual members with career counseling
- ❖ Supplement the chapter's recruitment program by providing testimonials
- ❖ Provide a more well-rounded chapter experience for members
- ❖ Create opportunities for parents to become more involved in their son's fraternal experience

### Parent Relations Committee Chairman

**Basic Responsibility:** The Parent Relations Committee Chairman promotes positive parent/chapter relationships, fostering goodwill and cooperation between parents and members, and supervises the maintenance of the chapter's parent relations programs.

#### The Parent Relations Committee Chairman shall:

1. Attend parents association meetings as the chapter representative.
2. Promote goodwill and cooperation between parents and collegians.
3. Be responsible for publishing a parents newsletter in conjunction with the parents association (if established) that will be sent to chapter parents at least once a year.
4. Coordinate activities and programs for parents by preparing yearly and monthly chapter calendars, making copies for members as well as the parents (and parents association).
5. Plan a special activity for members and their parents once a year.
6. Work closely with parents to develop a career networking opportunity for the chapter.

#### Communications:

1. Maintain ongoing communication with parents association president.
2. Report directly to the chapter's specified officer.
3. The parent relations committee reports directly to the parent relations committee chairman.



## Parent Relations Committee

The purpose of the committee is to develop a program designed to strengthen interpersonal relationships with the chapter members' parents. If a parents association is developed (or exists), the committee also works to support the activities and programs of the association.

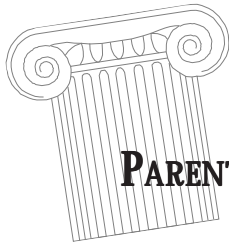
### Some common responsibilities of a parent relations committee include:

1. Develop and maintain a chapter-parent relations program. The program should be designed to strengthen interpersonal relationships with the chapter's parents. With these goals in mind, the committee should develop short and long-term objectives for this area of chapter programming.
2. Establish contact and involvement with parents upon a potential member becoming a pledge and maintain communications throughout pledgship and initiation. Introduce the parents to Triangle along with their son.
2. Plan and organize special parents events (i.e. new parents' orientation, commencement, Parents' Night/Weekend, Senior Farewell, etc.).
3. Present awards to parents who positively contribute to the chapter's experiences.
4. Maintain a parent database including:

- Name
- Address
- Phone
- Birthdate
- Job information
- Nickname
- Significant other/spouse
- Children
- Initiation date (if applicable)
- Special interest areas (allow them to list)
- Triangle connections (relatives, friends already connected to Triangle either at this chapter or others)

5. Assist with the development, printing, and distribution of the parents newsletter.
6. Maintain programming records in a notebook. The Parent Relation Committee Chairman notebook should contain:

- Parent Relation Officer and committee job description
- Updated copy of the chapter bylaws
- Short/long term goals
- Copies of the chapter/alumni newsletter
- Copies of the parents newsletter
- Budget
- Prospective parent initiates
- Event descriptions and program evaluation
- Calendar of events



## PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE ACTIVITY

At one of the first Parent Relations Committee meetings, ask the committee members to participate in this Parent's Perspective Activity. This will help them understand the type of image and lasting impression they want the parents to hold after one of their activities.

Ask one committee member to set the stage and then read the Parent Relations Chairman script:

### *From an Undergraduate Point of View*

*Setting:* Chapter meeting; committee reports

*Parent Relations Chairman:*

"Thanks Pat for bringing the hot-dogs and the bread for the reception. The bread worked but next year, I think buns would be better. We tried having a nice sit-down dinner but we couldn't afford it this year. We had a pretty good turnout, over 50 people.

"I did notice that a few parents weren't drinking much or having that great of a time, maybe next time we should try and keep their glasses full.

"Finally, I have an award to give to Cory, who consumed six hot-dogs before we ran out."

Ask another committee member to set the stage and then read the Parent Relations Chairman script:

### *From a Parent Point of View*

*Setting:* Home of a parent

*Parent (on the telephone to son):*

"Well, that was an interesting event. I'm not sure if I should be embarrassed, angry, or disappointed. I thought it was important to go to campus for this parents weekend event even though I just got the invitation last week.

"As a parent I felt out of place and unwelcome. I didn't know any of the parents when I arrived and you, as well as the other members, didn't seem to make it a priority to introduce us to the other parents. One member kept coming up to me asking if I needed another drink.

"Oh, do all of you have the manners of that Cory kid? It was bad enough that you ran out of food without one of your own members cramming hot dogs in his mouth."

### **Issues to discuss:**

1. How do you think parents feel when they come and visit our chapter? Do they know any of the members? Are they welcomed?
2. How does this scenario relate to the perspectives of parents?
3. How can we target the needs and interests of parents?
4. Now that we've thought about various parents' perspectives, what can we do to make sure we have a classy parents event?



## **PARENTS ASSOCIATION**

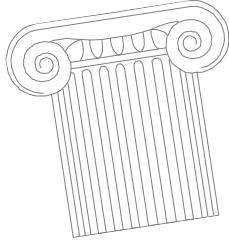
An affiliate organization can be a terrific involvement opportunity for the parents of your members. Your parent relations program should be solid before accepting the challenges of starting a new organization. Parents are concerned about the future of their son. They also want to help support the university and chapter to help their son meet his goals and objectives. In order to provide needed resources, services, and activities for parents, a parents association can be a terrific asset to strengthen your chapter's programming.

Some parents associations meet on an annual basis after a parents night/weekend program. They discuss issues of mutual interest to the chapter and the association. Many plan a Work Day where parents work alongside their sons to make minor home repairs, work on the yard, and develop the landscaping. Some chapters host a Life Skills Workshop in which parents teach the members how to cook, balance their budgets, and find their first apartment. Others hold fund raising events for a particular chapter house enhancement such as furniture or equipment.

Whatever direction the parents association takes, the chapter should be very clear in its shared expectations statement so the chapter and the parents association always work in conjunction with each other. Parents should have a full understanding of how chapter and complementary parent organization decisions are made. A model constitution is included in this manual for your convenience.

### **Characteristics of Those Willing to Serve**

1. They believe their time and service is wanted.
2. They feel there is a need.
3. They feel they are able to contribute in some productive way.
4. They have a reasonable structure within which to operate.
5. Not too time consuming.
6. They enjoy the companionship of others also engaged in the activity.
7. Their willingness to volunteer is celebrated or noticed.



## Model Constitution

of  
the \_\_\_\_\_ Chapter Parents' Association

Concerned for the future of the \_\_\_\_\_ college/university and higher education in general, and wishing individually and cooperatively to assist the university and chapter to the best of their ability in achieving its aims and objectives, the parents of students enrolled at the \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ chapter, with full authorization and encouragement of the President of the Alumni Advisory Board, do hereby found an Association of all parents and guardians and ordain this Constitution as its charter.

### Article I

The name of this organization shall be the Parents' Association of the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter of Triangle Fraternity, whose governing body shall hereinafter be referred to as the \_\_\_\_\_ (chapter) Parents' Council.

### Article II

The aims and purposes of the Parents' Association shall be as follows:

1. The promotion of a close liaison between the chapter on the one hand, and the parents and students currently enrolled in the college/university and in good standing with the chapter on the other.
2. To assist in promoting the educational, social, cultural, moral and professional advancement of the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter, its members, and alumni.
3. To coordinate such activities as this Association may promote, with chapter approval, for the benefit of the institution, the students, and their parents.
4. To assist the chapter in recruiting quality students and supporting its alumni.
5. To conduct an annual fund raising appeal.

### Article III

All parents and legal guardians of members of the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter currently enrolled at the \_\_\_\_\_ college/university, as well as parents of alumni members who contribute to the Association are members of this Association in good standing.

### Article IV

Section 1. The affairs of the Association shall be directed by the Parents' Council, which shall be composed of the President, President-Elect, and Secretary-Treasurer. Members of this Council will ordinarily serve as long as their son is actually enrolled at the \_\_\_\_\_ college/university and remains in good standing with the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter.

Section 2. The three officers of the Parents' Association shall be duly elected by vote of the Parents' Association at the annual fall meeting, and they shall serve for one year with eligibility for re-election to a second term, provided they have a son who will actually be in school and in good standing with the chapter during their term of office.

Section 3. The selection and duties of the officers of the Association shall be provided for in the Bylaws of this Association.

Section 4. This Constitution shall be deemed effective when it has been approved by the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter, and by the Parents' Council of the Association.

Section 5. This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended upon the concurring vote of not less than two-thirds (2/3) of the Parents' Council membership at any regular meeting.

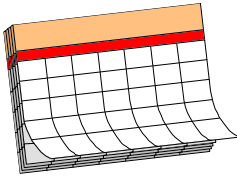
**Article V**

Any funds raised by the Association for carrying out its aims and purposes as stated in Article II, and as delineated in the Bylaws, shall be disbursed only by direction of the Parents' Council through the Secretary-Treasurer.

**Article VI**

A simple majority of the Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of Association business.

*(Adapted from the Wichita State University Parents Council Constitution and Bylaws)*



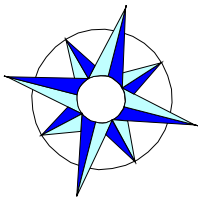
## PARENT PRIORITIES

Parents of your members have numerous commitments at home in addition to their son in college. Consider the demands on their time as you develop your calendar of parent activities.

1. Family
2. Job or profession
3. Spiritual
4. Local community activities
5. Personal leisure
6. Your chapter

Since parents are often unfamiliar with and somewhat disconnected from all of the members of your chapter, their priorities will lean toward those most pressing in their lives. One of the committee's challenges is to help parents see the benefits of involvement with your chapter. You should be able to answer the following questions as a committee when planning for the parents' programs:

- ❖ What will they get out of the experience?
- ❖ Is the location of the event/activity convenient?
- ❖ Is it affordable?
- ❖ Is it valuable?
- ❖ Is appropriate advance notice given?
- ❖ Will their efforts be appreciated?



## **PARENT INTERESTS**

### **A desire to develop friendships with other parents**

Parents hear about their son's friends and are naturally curious to know more about their families. One of the most important responsibilities of the committee is to help create a friendly environment at their activities and help facilitate the introduction of parents to one another. The committee members should be extra-sensitive to serving as hosts at their chapter's parent programs.

### **An interest in the status of the chapter**

Since their son is investing a great deal of time, energy, and money into this organization, parents want to know more about the chapter's activities. What are the accomplishments of the chapter? What are the accomplishments of the leaders in the chapter? How is my son doing academically and what is the chapter doing to support his scholastic endeavors? Parents are interested in enhancing their son's fraternal experience.

### **An interest in the institution**

A great number of parents of today's college students did not have a college experience. Not only is the college experience new to them, but fraternity life is also new to them. They are eager to know more about the college/university and their son's place at the school. Some chapters teach their parents the fight song so they can sing at sporting events!

### **A desire to see their son on special occasions**

While parents enjoy seeing their son at any time, they also enjoy special occasions and special events. Whether you plan a Parents Night banquet, informal cookout, special college/university theater production or sporting event, or recognition event for seniors, most parents of members enjoy seeing their student and their friends for a special occasion. Parents will appreciate the chapter's efforts, going out of its way to plan especially for them.

### **Gaining intrinsic rewards by watching young people mature**

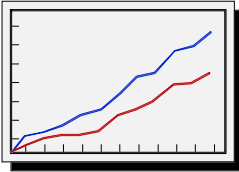
To get the best feel for how parents feel about watching their son grow and develop, talk to some parents of the senior members. They will reminisce about the years when their son just joined the chapter and can think about the following year's activities which involved parents. They will have a sense of pride and fulfillment in the fact that the chapter helped their son become a better person.

### **Enhancing loyalty to the chapter and to the national organization**

Think about your first year in the chapter. It was full of exciting times, meeting new friends, developing a mature appreciation for the chapter, and opportunities to help strengthen the chapter. Parents listen to stories of the student's experiences and feel a natural devotion to this organization to which their son feels so strongly connected. The parent relations committee can help develop that sense of connectedness for parents to your chapter.

### **Gaining leadership opportunities with the Parent Association**

Most parents would be willing to serve the chapter within certain conditions. Clear cut definitions of volunteer responsibilities must be determined before involving parents in this type of organization. They will want to know how much time they need to devote to the chapter in order to best support the organization. They will want to know how many other people are helping in this endeavor. They will want to know how their work will be appreciated. Your committee should be prepared to tell them the challenges as well as the opportunities in working with the parents association.



## TRENDS WITH POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS FOR CHAPTERS

### **Perceived leisure time is shrinking, we are generally busier**

Implications: Chapter members must inform parents of activities and events at least four months before the event. Young parents may need to get baby-sitters, parents may have to juggle personal schedules, or they may have to work with their employers to make time for your chapter event. Parents will be interested in helping the chapter out with projects or activities that have a specific beginning and ending date. Since individuals are busier, they hold a higher premium on enjoying their volunteer work. Give them the opportunity to choose their volunteer capacities.

### **Change is accelerating, volunteers must become lifelong learners**

Implications: People want to learn something from their volunteer experiences. They don't want to create more work for themselves. Parents will be interested in building their own skills and learning from this volunteer experience.

### **Technology is now at many people's fingertips**

Implications: Desktop volunteering, on-line bulletin boards, and conference calls are replacing in-person meetings. If your campus is far from most members' homes, help the parents work together in the most efficient ways possible. Many families have home computers and may even be able to work with each other via e-mail.

### **People increasingly feel out of touch or unable to control a situation**

Implications: People want to be involved in planning, organizing, and gaining control. For these busy parents, it will be beneficial to them as well as the chapter to have job descriptions, and clear parameters for their decision-making, and event planning.

### **Maturing society and life expectancy**

Implications: Life expectancy is climbing and people want to remain more active in later years of life. Consider involving older parents in long-term projects and goals. Since they have considerable professional and life experiences, their insights into activity planning and program development will be very useful.

*(Information above is taken from Strategic Volunteerism.)*



## HOW TO MAXIMIZE THE TALENTS OF PARENT VOLUNTEERS

### **1. Develop carefully defined projects with a beginning and clear end**

Think about the ideal parent relations program. What are some immediate activities that come to mind? What are the various ways the chapter can communicate with parents? Is your chapter programming strong enough to support a parents association? What are your short term projects that could be implemented this year? What are some longer-term projects that would benefit the chapter as well as the parents?

### **2. Develop job requirements, descriptions, restrictions, expectations and definitions**

One of the developmental challenges of college students is to develop autonomy. If the chapter decides to involve parents as volunteers, remember that you will be supervising their efforts. The members will have a different role than some parents are accustomed to. By developing specific job descriptions, definitions and shared expectations, the chapter leaders will feel more comfortable working with the parents of their brothers.

### **3. Provide an orientation**

Just as new students have an orientation to the university to help acclimate them to their new college/university environment, an orientation for parents will also be helpful. This would be a good time to share the mission of the national organization, the Code of Ethics of the Fraternity, the role of the volunteer, how to work with the chapter and an overview of how decisions are made in the chapter.

A strong orientation program will help parents understand their role and responsibilities to the organization. Be sure to identify key resources on campus and in the community to help them serve your chapter effectively.

### **4. Help them utilize the skills they use in their profession**

Parents have a wealth of personal and professional experiences. They will naturally be drawn to activities and volunteer opportunities in which they can utilize the skills they already have. They will also be looking for opportunities that are challenging, interesting, and personally fulfilling.

### **5. Always say thank you**

Remember that you can not thank your brothers' parents enough. Just like your alumni volunteers, these individuals have given their time and talents to help you have a better fraternal experience. If you want to continue to strengthen your parent relations program, you should continue building your base of parent volunteers. Whether it's a hand-written thank you note or a nice gift, make sure your thank you is sincere and timely.



## IDEAS FOR CHAPTERS

### Personal Letter from Big Brother/Pledge Father

Ideally, this letter should be sincere and hand-written. While the sample letter in this manual could be used as a guide, feel free to write your own heart-felt words throughout the letter. You may want to include the chapter's financial commitment papers, recruitment brochure with chapter facts, Parents Association invitation, etc. (see sample letter).

### House Tour

After a thorough all-chapter cleanup, take out all the old composites, scrap books, and memorabilia for parents to peruse after their house tour.



### Membership Map

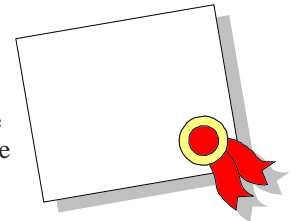
Many chapters have a permanent display with a large map of the United States in their chapter house. Put tiny flags with members names and attach to straight or push-pins into the place on the map where each member lives. This is a quick and visual way to help parents see where other members live. (You could also add special pins to show the location of other chapters.)

### Directory

Pull together a professional directory of members, including their campus and permanent addresses. Be sure to include the names of their parents in the event that parents want to connect with each other after the chapter activity.

### Parent Appreciation Night

Invite parents back for a special recruitment event in conjunction with a Parents' Night/Weekend. Feel free to invite the parents of prospective members, as well. Parents whose sons are having a positive experience will be credible resources. Be sure to give them factual information about the chapter in the event a parent or prospective member asks them about the chapter.



### Birthday Cards

If the parent relations committee has good records with the birthdates of all parents, send birthday cards. Nice hand-written notes are always more personal than pre-printed cards.

### Educational Programs

Invite parents to educational programs that the chapter sponsors. Consider utilizing the professional and personal experiences of your members' parents as well. They may be well-known resources in their field and could provide an excellent workshop for the chapter.

### Talent Night

Many campuses hold a college/university-wide talent competition. If you have members performing or competing, this would be an ideal activity for parents. If the chapter has a great deal of talent in its membership, consider showcasing their skills during a special parents program.



### Interfraternal Events

Many chapters hold traditional activities that develop school spirit and pride. Some campuses provide educational programs and conferences for the members. Some chapters have large philanthropic events raising money in a creative manner. Consider inviting parents to these programs to help them get a feel for the campus in addition to your chapter environment.

## Scholarship Night

If your chapter has a strong scholarship recognition program, this is an ideal opportunity to recognize your members as well as promote your members' academic abilities. Parents would enjoy seeing who has the most improved grades, highest grades, scholarship recipients, and dean's list honorees. They will better understand and appreciate the Fraternity's commitment to academics at this type of program.



## Commencement Activities

Hold a special reception for graduating seniors and their parents. If your chapter has a special non-ritual alumni ceremony, invite parents to watch their sons commit themselves to life-long dedication to the Fraternity.

## Alumni & Parent Career Night

Invite your alumni and parents to an event for juniors and seniors. Ask parents what current employers are looking for in a strong candidate. Members will benefit from seeing both male and female professionals in their chosen fields. They can ask candid questions which relate specifically to their field.

## Little Sibs Program

In addition to traditional parents programs, consider developing a weekend with the younger brothers and sisters of members in mind. Many universities host Little Sibs Weekends to recruit younger brothers and sisters into the college/university. For younger brothers and sisters thinking about entering college, give tours of the campus, library, and recreation center. Introduce them to various student activities. For much-younger brothers and sisters of members, develop age specific activities.

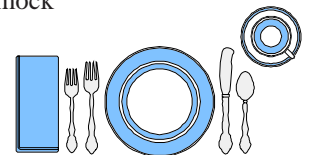


## Holiday Cards

Send holiday cards to parents prior to the winter holidays. Wish them a happy new year and thank them for the support they've given to your members.

## Etiquette Lunch/Dinner

Members should utilize the vast experiences of the parents of their brothers. They can offer advice on job search strategies, review résumés (especially for members who are in their professional fields), and conduct mock interviews for the seniors. Just as alumni can support the undergraduate members in this manner, parents can provide similar resources. Consider hosting a business etiquette program during the meal so your members are prepared for luncheon or dinner interviews.



## Annual Giving

If your chapter has an established scholarship program, parents can be solicited to support the scholarship fund. Remember, the chapter should have a strong parent relation program before asking for any money.

## House Gift Program

In addition to or as a supplement to an annual campaign, chapters often hold fund raising events for a particular chapter house enhancement or piece of equipment/furniture, invite parents to participate too. Just like any donor, parents will want to know exactly how the money will be used to enhance their son's fraternal experience.



## Work Weekend

Many chapters plan a Work Day where parents work alongside their sons to make home repairs, work on the yard, and develop the landscaping.

## Life Skills Workshop

Host a Life Skills Workshop in which parents teach the members how to cook, balance their budgets, buy or lease a car, discuss health insurance, and find their first apartment.

## Softball/Volleyball Game

Any type of informal team sporting event could be a fun way for people to get to know each other. Some groups play “walley-ball.” It doesn’t matter if you’re a good athlete to play the game, it just gives members and parents the chance to play and have fun with others.



## Founders’ Day/Chapter Anniversary

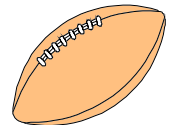
Special chapter occasions are excellent opportunities to involve alumni, parents, community, and university representatives. Consider activities that will help the attendees appreciate the work of the founding fathers and how the chapter has developed over the years.

## Golf Tournament

This is an event that involves the whole family. Set up a scramble tournament mixing pairs of fathers/sons. Think about various awards that could be given during the course of the tournament: longest drive, closest to the pin, lowest score, highest score, etc. Provide Fraternity memorabilia to the award winners.

## Major College/University Sporting Event

Not only are parents becoming more connected to your chapter, they are developing a great sense of pride in your institution. Group tickets could be purchased for a special parents event. Help identify your group with signs and banners at the game.



## New Member Orientation

Think about how special your chapter made each new member feel when you extended a bid to him. He was excited to join your chapter and felt strongly about the decision he just made. Some parents were skeptical. Some parents were wary. Some were not supportive of their son’s decision. This is an opportunity for the chapter to show the parents of new members how they had made the right decision. Let parents know the rights and responsibilities of new members. Start changing their perception of your chapter to a positive, productive one. In addition, inform them of the community service, academic development, leadership, social, recreational, and educational aspects of the chapter. Give them the most accurate and well-rounded picture of your chapter.

## Spring (or Fall) Weekend

If you dedicate a whole weekend to your parents programming, consider a variety of activities. They may enjoy a tour of campus and the chapter house. They may appreciate a tour of the library and student services departments on campus. A special banquet recognizing all of the chapter’s accomplishments, chapter leaders and scholars, and unique chapter activities are a nice way for the chapter to recognize as many brothers as possible. All parents enjoy hearing others brag about their son. Create as many opportunities to thank individuals as possible (outstanding freshman, sophomore, junior and senior; most improved grades; outstanding committee; most involved on campus; most active “active”; recognize all resident assistants, orientation leaders, etc.).



## Recruitment

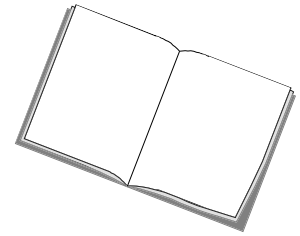
Why not involve parents in the recruitment process? One way to involve parents is to ask them to share their enthusiasm for the college/university and the chapter and share it with others. Members and parents always gives the most effective recommendations.

## Thank you

Remember to thank parents association volunteers and other parents who have contributed significantly to the chapter. Be sure to publicly thank any parent who gives money or helps the chapter in a special way. Examine your budget and consider giving special parents pens, plastic cups with your letters, towels, key chains, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or lapel pins.

## Newsletters

At minimum, the chapter should send out one newsletter a year. This should be a fairly easy task if the chapter has a strong alumni relations program. The information you gather for the parents newsletter could be similar to the alumni newsletter. There is some basic information that should be included in a good alumni and/or parents newsletter. Consider these recommendations and then examine the special considerations for a parents newsletter.



### Basic information to include in your chapter newsletter:

#### Chapter Update

How many members does the chapter boast? Who are the new members and what are their home towns? What events has the chapter sponsored? How does the chapter rank academically?

#### Significant Chapter Accomplishments

What are the special recognitions the chapter has received this year? Has the chapter won any university, or national awards? Has the chapter been recognized by the university or community for special work? Are there unique individuals who have won accolades on behalf of the chapter? Is this an anniversary year?

#### Significant College/University Activities

Alumni are very interested in the state of their alma mater. Update them on new buildings, new scholarships, changes in administration, new faculty members, performing arts, major gifts to the university, sporting events, major campus speakers, etc.

#### Questionnaire

Take this opportunity to allow the alumni or parents to provide you an update. This gives the chapter updated work/home addresses and phone numbers for the database and gives them an opportunity to communicate with the chapter. Think about the type of information you would like to gather and be sure to provide a questionnaire in each newsletter.

#### Chapter Enhancement/Fund Raising Activities

Recognize all individuals who have given their time and talents to the chapter. Be sure to recognize every single individual who gave an in-kind or monetary donation to the chapter as well.

#### Community Service

Helping others in need is a value of all fraternities. Inform the readers of your chapter's involvement in the community and the services and resources you've provided to philanthropic organizations. Hands-on community assistance is equally valuable to fund raising for a good cause. Show the readers how the chapter has provided help to others.

#### Seniors

Help the seniors network by providing a short profile on each senior with his major, career objectives, and city/state he wants to work. Readers may be able to connect them with other individuals in their field, review their résumé, or even help them find a job. Update the reader on the number of alumni the chapter has.

### **Statistics**

You can provide a quick snap-shot of your chapter by providing:

- The number of members
- The number of associates
- The number of pledges
- Total initiates
- Percentage of initiates from the previous group of new members
- Chapter grade point average
- All fraternity grade point average
- All university grade point average
- Rank by grade point average

### **Significant Alumni**

Show the life-long commitment your alumni have to the organization. Be sure to recognize 10, 20, 30 year members. Consider highlighting a special alumnus in each newsletter informing all alumni and members of his accomplishments.

### **Intramural Sports**

Some readers may be interested in the chapter's involvement in campus recreation. Give an update on individual and team competitors.

### **Legacies**

Fraternity is a family of Brothers. Most people are very interested when a family member chooses to join the Fraternity. It makes the chapter even more special when younger family members become involved. Some families build a family tradition of fraternity membership and this tradition can be highlighted in the newsletter.

### **Member Profiles**

Highlight the accomplishments of current members. However, remember that alumni want to know about their peers. What has the class of '78 been doing since graduating? This is a terrific opportunity for the chapter to reconnect alumni Brothers back to their chapter.

### **Calendar of Events**

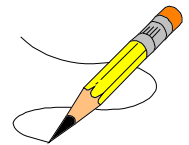
Provide a yearly calendar of chapter events. Mark special activities and events to which others are invited. Be sure to include homecoming, Founders Day, and other special chapter events.

Not only is a chapter newsletter a good communication tool for strengthening alumni and parent relationships, you can update others such as community leaders, administrators, Greek advisor, the alumni advisory board, regional volunteers, and national headquarters office.

### **Special Considerations for Parents Newsletters:**

#### **Names, names, names**

Parents love boasting about the accomplishments of their children. People love to see their names in print. The more names you can insert in your newsletter the better. Whether you're recognizing a member, a parent or simply thanking a committee for its good work, be sure to include as many names as possible.



#### **Communicate the Parents Program**

Consider unfolding the entire listing of services the chapter is providing to parents. They will appreciate the fact that the chapter is thinking about their needs and interests throughout the year. Be sure to include dates of special events so that families may plan accordingly.

### **Recruit Volunteers for the Parents' Association**

If the association is new, or simply looking for additional help, inform the parents of their opportunities to serve. Again, remember that they will want to know what time commitments you are asking of them. Provide clear written job descriptions and estimated time involved to help them make an informed decision.

### **Look at Activities from a Parent's Perspective**

Chapter members are experts when it comes to knowing the interests of their members. Since you will be planning for a different audience, be sure to develop a well-rounded program and then ask for feedback from a few parents to make sure you and the committee have developed an interesting activity with convenient dates and times. Ask the committee to mentally walk-through the entire event and look at it through the eyes of parents who are unfamiliar with the chapter and its members. Remember, they may only know their own son, so create an environment which will make your guests feel comfortable.

### **New Members & Big Brothers**

For many parents, having their son join a fraternity is a new experience. Most may be unfamiliar with fraternity life. They may have low expectations of your chapter based on silly movies and unrealistic television portrayals of Greek life. Help educate this core support group for your newest members. Consider giving them the Big Brother program description so they know that one key individual in the chapter is looking out for the welfare of their son. Provide descriptions of the new member activities so they have a good feel for what their son will learn from his fraternity experience in the next few weeks and throughout his membership. Provide an outline of expectations the chapter has for new members so parents understand what their son has committed to the Fraternity.

### **Parents' Association Highlights**

If a parents' association exists, be sure to include the work and accomplishments of the volunteers. Again, use as many names in the article as possible. Public recognition of the chapter's appreciation for the members' parents is important and worthwhile.

### **House Corporation Highlights**

If the chapter has a house, include major home repairs and enhancements. Parents are very concerned about the environment in which their son lives. They want to make sure that the living conditions are positive and safe and the noise level is conducive to studying.



## SAMPLE LETTER FROM BIG BROTHER

Dear Mr. & Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a member of the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter and I have recently been paired with \_\_\_\_\_ as his Big Brother. I am very proud to be his mentor in Triangle Fraternity. Triangle has meant a great deal to me during my undergraduate years and I know that your son will have a meaningful experience like I had.

Your son has made his an important decision to join our chapter. Membership in Triangle is a lifelong experience that will continue to enhance \_\_\_\_\_'s life. Our Fraternity was founded in (year) at \_\_\_\_\_ college/university and boasts \_\_\_\_\_ members. Our chapter at \_\_\_\_\_ college/university was founded in (year).

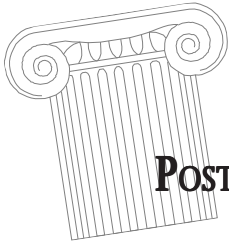
We are proud of our Brotherhood, academic background, leadership in student organizations, and our alumni achievements. We welcome you to our annual Parents' Weekend program held on \_\_\_(date)\_\_\_\_\_. You will have the opportunity to meet the rest of my brothers at that time as well as their parents. I look forward to meeting you in person someday very soon.

Your son will learn a great deal about Triangle, the campus, and our Fraternity ideals in the next few weeks. If you have any questions I would be happy to answer them for you. I'm available at (phone number) at any time. I am very proud to call your son a brother of mine.

Sincerely,

Name

Enclosure



## **POSTSCRIPT**

Information in this edition of the Parent Relations Manual was generated from work done by Like Minded People.