

# Guidelines for FarmHouse Alumni Newsletters

A goal of every chapter (and association) should be to maintain a continuous flow of contact with its alumni. If such a flow is developed, the groups will interact much more favorably. This will create greater support and brotherhood at all levels.

Probably the most effective tool used to maintain such contact is the chapter newsletter. The newsletter is one of only a few ways to reach large numbers of alumni at minimal expenses. In fact, when used properly, the newsletter should more than pay for itself in benefits to both undergraduates and alumni.

Chapters and colonies are **encouraged** to seek the involvement and assistance of alumni in the production of these newsletters. Some chapters even designate a chapter editor and alumni editor to aid in the publication of newsletters. However, in order for the chapter to be considered for the Outstanding Newsletter Award, undergraduates from the chapter must do the majority of writing, editing and design of the newsletters.

The production of newsletters should be a joint effort between the active chapter and association. Again, alumni advisors or editors are strongly encouraged to assist in the production of these newsletters. The following guidelines are to help you develop an effective and quality newsletter program.

- A. **Frequency:** A pattern of at least two newsletters a year is recommended as being the most effective. Establish a schedule and remain faithful to it. Continuity in a publication causes a considerable increase in the chances of a favorable response. Supplement the newsletter with a one-page, typed letter containing important information. One such newsletter supplement between each newsletter is optimal. (Alumni can play a huge role in making sure that a pattern is followed.)
  
- B. **Alumni articles:** Always include features on alumni. One or two longer "profiles" and several shorter "news notes" are good. Inform alumni of their peers' new jobs, recognitions, appointments, awards and other data. People like to read about themselves first and people they know next. Don't disappoint your readers (the alumni). Include as many names as possible in each issue without losing readability. Always remember that the newsletter is for the alumni, not the brothers living in the house - they already know what is happening. (Some associations enlist a Newsletter Chair or Alumni Editor as an additional contact for gathering and coordinating alumni news. Contacting alumni is an excellent new member education activity.)
  
- C. **Special invitations:** Include special features about Homecoming, Founders' Day, etc. The coverage preceding the event should at least equal that of the follow-up. Build up the function with details and encourage attendance. "Sell" it as being sure to be entertaining, a good time to renew old friendships, an exercise in brotherhood, etc. The invitation in the newsletter must be timely, preferably at least four weeks before the event. If an alumnus receives a newsletter inviting him to an event after the date of the event or just the week before, the attitude is conveyed that you did not really want the alumnus to attend. The newsletter is often your only mode of contact before an event - make it worthwhile and timely.

- D. Features:** These are interesting ways to provide continuity within the newsletter. A series on various graduating classes is a good example. Others that have worked are a "Back on the Farm" series; a series including alumni from each decade; a "Do You Remember?" series; and a "Guess Who is in the Picture?" series. Remember, the more interesting a newsletter is, the more likely that alumni will look forward to the next one. Once that pattern is established, the strong support of chapter programs is sure to follow.
- E. Photos:** People like to see themselves and their friends even more than reading about them! Photographs are attention getters. A quality picture with a good caption is extremely effective in "drawing in" a reader. Always include the name with the photo. Use a lot of photos -- often an alumnus will browse through the newsletter and look only at the pictures (but be sure not to run them too small). Try to draw him into the articles by using an effective photos. Pictures of the "old days" are always good, but be sure to describe "who and what". If it is a good photo and you don't know who is in it, try the "guess who" route!
- F. Listing lost alumni:** Each newsletter should contain a list of all lost alumni and their last known address. Alumni are probably the best source for locating their lost brothers.
- G. General chapter news:** Remember that the newsletter is for the alumni. All too often the only items in a newsletter are "**FH wins second in basketball**", "**Dance held with Kappa Delta**", and the like. These articles only bore alumni. Officer by officer accounts of what happened lately do not excite alumni either. Alumni do like to know who was pledged, initiated, and elected as officers. A simple list will suffice; however, names alone often mean nothing. Always include parents names and/or hometowns to help the reader place the individual.
- Worthwhile chapter projects and major events do merit coverage. Awards won, high scholarship, campus recognition, individual honors, and the like deserve mention. Just don't overdo it at the expense of alumni coverage!
- H. Biographical form for alumni:** Include a biographical form in each publication. Design it in a way that encourages alumni to fill it out and return it to the chapter or an alumni editor. Asking for information such as present occupation, comments, or criticisms could lead to interesting ideas for future issues.
- I. Outside news:** From time-to-time important events occur outside the Fraternity that alumni should be made aware of. A common example would be a new Dean of Agriculture or President of the University. Remember that your readers are not only alumni of the chapter, but of the university or college as well.
- J. Recruitment:** Alumni are the best source available to provide names of potential brothers. Capitalize on this by seeking help from them through the newsletter. Most brothers will not hesitate to submit the names of good men -- they only need to be reminded occasionally!

- K. Fundraising:** Unless a special need arises, the newsletter itself should not be used to generally solicit funds. It is to entertain and to renew the Fraternity spirit. That alone may be enough to encourage donations. If any appeal is included, make it a small and non-obtrusive one. A good means to accomplish this is a small block stating, "This newsletter is provided to you as part of our chapter's ongoing alumni relations program. Contributions to offset the printing and mailing costs would be greatly appreciated." Of course, with the association's help and planning, a more direct appeal may be warranted!
- L. Reader appeal:** Has your newsletter been toned to create the feeling that the publication is FOR, ABOUT and TO your alumni? Is it tasteful? Remember, you are communicating with all of your alumni. (An Alumni Editor or Alumni advisor can make a major impact here.)
- M. Journalistic quality:** This includes quality of reproduction and readable type size. Use photographs with captions, artwork and layout to highlight the publication. The newsletter should be grammatically correct, creative and pleasing to the eye while focusing on professionalism. Do not use slang, or over use different typestyles or artwork. Model your newsletter after one produced by the university's alumni relations department.