

Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity

Professional in the Chemical Sciences

Office of the
GRAND
COLLEGIATE ALCHEMIST



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Overview:

This has been an eventful biennium for the Fraternity. Challenges at the National Office put some of my planned projects on hold and made coordination with the Supreme Council and the District Counselors more of a priority this biennium. Through this it was important to realize the serving on the Supreme Council is often less dependent on the position one serves but as a working member of a board of directors of the Fraternity. While the GCA is responsible for overseeing the Collegiate Branch, the health of the organization depends on good policies and procedures that effect the entire Fraternity. Development, discussion and deployment of these policies and procedures is extremely important to the health of the Fraternity and is often the majority of the time spent by the SC. Independent and timely resolution of the tasks necessary for the organization to function is a very important factor that I had not fully appreciated prior to my time on the Supreme Council.

State of the Collegiate Branch:

The Collegiate Branch of the Fraternity is strong. With the increase in the number of collegiate chapters as well as increased initiation numbers the Fraternity was in a period of intense growth this biennium. Expansion efforts have been very successful and the enthusiasm our Collegiate Groups and Colonies have for joining the Fraternity has been inspiring. The pipeline for new chapters has decreased so I expect renewed interest in creating new Collegiate Groups in the next biennium to bolster this pipeline. Some chapters have gone through difficult periods of recruiting and retaining members, which is neither unusual nor unexpected, and I have worked with the District Counselor, Chapter Advisor, and chapter leadership to help these chapters when needed.

District Counselors:

The DCs, as a group, have done an excellent job this biennium. Participation in the monthly chats, attendance at Supreme Council meetings and installations, and overseeing the chapters' activities have demonstrated their commitment to the Fraternity and the willingness to work with the GCA and the Supreme Council to improve the Fraternity. The DCs have been the lifeline between the chapters and the National Office during our difficult periods and for that I am extremely grateful.

Larger districts and district committee involvement.

One of my main goals of the biennium was to increase the involvement of district committees in the governance of the Fraternity. With the growth in the collegiate branch the options are to either increase the number of District Counselors and the number of districts or to keep the numbers nearly the same and increase the number of district committee volunteers we have working with the chapters and groups. To this end the number of districts was decreased after the 2016 conclave and districts were changed to accommodate fewer DCs. To properly evaluate the usage of the district committees I gave the District Counselors the task to get their committees expanded to have at least one member assigned to each chapter and get those volunteers involved with the workings of the Fraternity. An added benefit is that an increase in the number of volunteers will help the Fraternity in the future with a greater pool of labor for Fraternity tasks.

Communication plans.

In the fall of 2017 I asked each District Counselor to contact each of their chapters and develop a communication plan to effectively communicate with each chapter in their district. I believe this was a

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useful exercise to determine how collegiate chapters want to communicate with the District Counselor and the National Office. I received reports from the majority of the DCs and looked at common themes throughout. Although chapters are quite different, most prefer email as the major mode of communication. In addition, some helpful communication themes were emphasized such as keeping emails concise with only one topic, asking for a specific reply, and giving deadlines if appropriate. At the end of the exercise we discussed the results in a monthly chat and I hope that it has helped the DCs and their committee members better communicate with their chapters. Since chapter leadership turns over very quickly, I believe this would be a good activity at the start of each school year to set expectations and plans for the most effective communication possible.

National Office Information Technology:

One of the major projects I have been working on is to modernize our National Office IT policies and procedures. Along those lines I have worked with GR Stipp and AGR Busch to accomplish several items. First was to evaluate an independent IT service provider. Several providers were identified, evaluated, and price quotes were obtained. Consulting with the GR, AGR and office staff, a provider was hired to manage our office IT. Over the next several months I have worked with the Office Staff and the GR to make sure we are receiving the service we expect from this provider. We have come a long way through this year to get our IT processes, software, and equipment to a level to make sure we can continue to provide services to our membership. We will continue to evaluate our office operations as well as the IT services we receive to keep our office operations as efficient as possible.

One of the IT policies that was recommended by our legal team was to internalize our Email system so Fraternity email is controlled by the Fraternity and not simply forward emails to personal accounts when dealing with Fraternity business. After much deliberation we are in the process of migrating all Fraternity email to Google G Suite for business. G Suite will allow us to not only bring our email under the control of the Fraternity but will also offer a lot of tools to help us communicate. Over the course of the next months and years we will continue to explore the opportunities a business communication system provides the Fraternity.

Summary:

Despite a difficult biennium the resiliency of the Fraternity has been on full display. Collegiate chapter and colony enthusiasm is very high, District Counselors are working with the chapters and District Committees to monitor and assist the chapters, and the Supreme Council and the National Office are working to make the Fraternity stronger. I appreciate the Grand Chapter's decision to appoint me as Grand Collegiate Alchemist for the 53rd biennium and hope I have set up the Collegiate Branch and District Counselors for future success. Thank you.

Yours in the Double Bond,



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