

As you know, our chapter has been put on notice to be closed for failing to meet minimum Grand Chapter performance standards. For an institution the size of Huntingdon College we must maintain a membership of 25 men or be number one in manpower on campus. Presently, we are neither, we have 14 men returning and Kappa Sigma has a membership at or near 20. As a result, we have one year to increase our membership. How did we get to this point? There are several factors that have hurt us including chapter operations, alumni support, greek life and Huntingdon College.

To start off, our chapter has become complacent. Throughout the 1990's and early 2000's our chapter dominated campus; SGA, manpower, membership development and social life. Huntingdon College was consumed by SigEp. So much so that Kappa Sigma's numbers dwindled down to four members. We got to the point where we could pick and choose who we wanted. We became over confident and did not give some men bids because of minor reasons. As a result, we overlooked some quality men. Those people went to Kappa Sigma and turned their chapter around by getting more man power and better grades. Also, our membership development (pledge education) has declined drastically. Our education program became so disorganized and drawn out that our retention dropped significantly. We may have pledged 11 but we only initiated 3 or 4. After a couple of years of this, our chapter has had very small senior classes that could only fill a few of the leadership roles. That put a lot more responsibility on the younger members who were not ready for the responsibility of SigEp leadership. Lastly, we have finances. We had several brothers get lax on paying dues and their bad habits spread throughout the chapter. This past year, we hired a billing agency that specializes in collecting dues for greek organizations. Hiring this agency has had wonderful results, but for a while, the chapter had trouble paying its bills because of the membership.

From the alumni standpoint we haven't done much better. Our participation has dropped dramatically. Very few of you are returning for Huntingdon College events; homecoming, canoe trip, reunion weekend, football games, etc. Our records are decreasing too. As people move and change email addresses, there are fewer alumni that can be contacted. Even less contribute money to pay for canoe trip, the balanced man scholarship and football tailgates for example. Was your time in the fraternity a phase or did it mean something? How can the actives look to the future if the alumni don't come back? How can the chapter grow if the alumni don't hold them accountable? You might say "we made SigEp a success as actives" and you would be right. But how much more could we have accomplished if we had alumni participation? Our chapter is old enough to have some alumni that can give their time, talents and money to make the chapter better which in turn makes the college experience better.

Across the country, greek life is decreasing. The "frat boy" image isn't appealing to this generation. Nationally, SigEp is the only greek organization that is increasing its numbers. They are doing this by stressing our cardinal principles; virtue, diligence and brotherly love. Social events are important, but this generation wants more. They want good grades, community service projects, interview skills, resume building skills, etc. They want people of respect to lead them to the next phase of their lives. As alumni, we can do that.

We've had our issues with school too. Since I've been involved with SigEp (fall 1989), Huntingdon College has only tolerated greek life. They've never promoted us and for the early 2000's, they put up roadblocks to make our existence difficult. Four years ago, they made us delay our rush week to the third week of school. Three years ago, Huntingdon College implemented a zero tolerance with alcohol. No alcohol is permitted at parties, not even a third party vendor. Also, with the addition with the football team the vast majority of men are athletes. Athletes whose coaches forbid greek life. That meant we had a possibility of rushing 20 to 40 men, depending on the year.

This is how we got here. As you can see there are many reasons why we are struggling. Most of these faults can be fixed with better organization and leadership. As we start this new school year, we are faced with some challenges. First of all, we have a young chapter; of the 14 only 3 are seniors. These men have never seen a successful and great Alabama Zeta Chapter. We also have inactive alumni. I get asked all the time, "How's the chapter doing?" very few of you ask "How can I help?" The best chapters in the country have alumni involvement. Do you want a great chapter? Another challenge is Kappa Sigma. They are hungry. They are better organized and more motivated right now and are becoming a major force. Lastly, Huntingdon College is adding another fraternity. We will be competing against Sigma Nu this fall. You can be sure that their national headquarters is sending their best men and using local alumni for rush!

We do have some positives entering the year. We have a young chapter ready to succeed and turn this thing around. The actives performed the ritual for the alumni and put on a beautiful memorial ceremony for our fallen brothers at reunion weekend. They can get things done with proper leadership. We have virtue, diligence and brotherly love that we can share with new members. We have some alumni to teach the membership development. We have an alumnus willing to advise and hold accountable the Vice President of Recruitment, and he'll do that via emails and phone calls. As a result of the letter from SigEp headquarters, we have alumni willing to give financially and personally, but we need more. The Huntingdon College male population is about 510 and this year will be the largest on campus population ever, about 850 (60% male and 40% female). Most importantly, the new Dean of Students, Dr. Frank Parsons, is actively promoting greek life. He and his staff have sent out mailers to all incoming freshmen and met with incoming students and parents at orientations with the goal to increase greek life. This is the first time since I've been involved where Huntingdon College has said they want us here and they want us to grow! He has been meeting with the coaches to allow athletes to go greek. We can easily get 11 men this year. This is the time to be involved.

What are the priorities? First is recruitment. Rush week is September 8th through the 12th. I'm not sure of the specific times yet, but we need as many alumni to come to the events as possible. Second is membership development. We need to educate and initiate these new men by January to keep their interest and involvement. Lastly, we need to develop programs to help transition these young men to life after college.

How can you get involved? The possibilities are endless. Call a perspective student and take him to dinner. I can provide you with names and phone numbers. We need some people to update our addresses and email lists. We need some people to advise and hold accountable

Executive Counsel positions, especially Vice President of Finance and Vice President of Recruitment. Our alumni website hasn't been updated for quite awhile and someone could start a facebook or myspace page. As you may know, composition and eloquence are not my strengths; I need someone who can get effective messages to the alumni. We need some people to make phone calls and fundraise for all activities: canoe trip, homecoming, reunion, tailgates, chapter room updates, scholarships, etc. Some of you could teach a class to the chapter such as; money management, time management, resume building, interview skills, graduate/law/ medical school advice, risk management, investments, or anything else you can image. We can use people to hold rush workshops or administer goal setting retreats. Even you out of towners can sacrifice a day of work to impart some wisdom and the chapter would love it.

Donate money. I know that most of you can't get to Montgomery very often, so donate. I've heard from a lot of you that you don't want to send money because the chapter may spend it on something frivolous. Give to the Alumni Board instead and ear mark it for whatever you want (canoe trip, balanced man scholarship, Fall/Spring bill, composites, Carlson Leadership Academies and Conclaves). Each February, SigEp holds a regional meeting called the Carlson Leadership Academy (CLA). A CLA is two day high intensity personal development program for SigEp chapter offices including alumni. This would be a wonderful time to see what is possible for SigEp and to develop our young men into productive adults. I would like to send as many actives to it as possible. This year's CLA will be in Atlanta on February 20 – 22. Last February, I asked for funding and you donated \$1,100 to help send our men to this event. The simple act of giving money to the men started to get the chapter motivated again. Thank you to Matt Tompkins, David Hudson, Sam Schjott, Scott Hayes, James Robinson, Wayne Knupp, Shaun Carroll and one more (sorry), for making that trip possible. Next August, SigEp will hold its Conclave in Orlando, FL on August 12 – 16. That is the time SigEp reviews and amends its by-laws and offers other goal setting and leadership experiences. It's not just for the actives; they have a lot of events for alumni. This is an amazing event that benefits all who attend. I would like to send as many people to that as well.

As you can see, we have a challenge ahead of us; a challenge that the chapter and the alumni need to pull together and accomplish. I'm not asking much from you individually, I know you have busy lives with families and careers, but I also know that you can sacrifice a little time to the chapter; and don't tell me you can't afford \$100 to give to the alumni board. Collectively, through face-to-face meetings, email, phone calls, text messages or facebook, your time and money will add up to make a tremendous difference. I know the actives will work hard to see this through, but they need our help.

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