

Sigma Phi Epsilon

**“Building Balanced Leaders for the
World's Communities”**



**Guide to Developing a
Parents' Association**

2001-2002

What are Parents' Associations?

Parents' Associations (a.k.a. Parents' Boards, Parents' Clubs) keep parents of undergraduate members involved and informed of Sigma Phi Epsilon events. Parents' Associations help share the SigEp experience with family members, and allow parents to be active in their sons' fraternal experience.

At many chapters, Parents' Associations plan events like Moms' and Dads' Day, Family Weekend Events, Finals Relief activities, and Work Weekends. Some Parents' Associations have a representative on the chapter's Local Housing Corporation, the organization that is the landlord of the chapter facility and mentors the undergraduate chapter.

Please see potential Parents' Association Activities in Appendix A.

What can Parents' Associations do for the Chapter?

Parents' Associations can provide events to fill a need that currently exists within the chapter. This need could vary from an individual parent's time during a facility work weekend to sponsoring a fundraiser for the purchase of an item that is a needed addition to the chapter or chapter facility.

Parents' Associations can be used to match parents with undergraduates for the chapter's mentor program. Like alumni members of Sigma Phi Epsilon, many parents are interested in helping further members' development. Parents work in diverse fields and make excellent mentors and educational programming resources.

Parents' Associations also serve as a vital contact to an important group within Sigma Phi Epsilon. We value the input and involvement of our members' parents. Parental involvement is helpful for the chapter to provide the best possible experience for its undergraduate members.

How do we create a Parents' Association?

- 1) First, find a core group of 3-5 parents who live near campus, and have an interest in starting the Association. This core group will be responsible for sending out correspondence, planning events, and providing leadership for the Association meetings.
- 2) Next, these parents should meet with the chapter's executive board to understand how the chapter would like to benefit from the Parents' Association. The parents should also communicate their desires to the chapter leadership.
- 3) When a core group of parents has committed to startup the organization, and the purposes for the Association have been outlined, the third step is to plan a kick-off event to involve the rest of the parents. The ideal time for such a kick-off event is the campus parents' weekend when a majority of families are already on campus.
- 4) Finally after the kick-off event, the Parents' Association should hold at least two meetings per semester/term. These meetings are important for planning upcoming events, communicating with the undergraduate chapter and Housing Corporation and discussing issues and policies.

Planning the First Event

Gather the names and addresses of all the brothers' parents. With your core group of parents, plan the event and send out the information. Information should be sent out at least five weeks prior to the event. This is important as many working parents plan this far in advance. Ask for replies when sending out your letter to get an accurate count of how many parents will be attending.

Please see sample Event Agenda in Appendix B.

Please see sample Introductory Letter and Event Registration Form in Appendix C.

Two weeks before the event, make final preparations and have undergraduates sign up to help run the event. Purchase all supplies that will be needed, and finish arrangements with caterers, if applicable. The chapter may have to outlay some initial funding for these steps, and parents may have to help undergraduates understand that the initial investment will be well worth the pay off.

The week before the event, undergraduates should call home and remind their parents about the event. Undergraduates should also be reminded about the commitments they made, and all other arrangements need to be double-checked. Everything by this point should be set for a successful event.

Sometime during the event, the parents should meet and discuss the Parents' Association. The core parent group can run the discussion about the purpose, meeting requirements, and any other information. At this point, parents outside the core group should be asked to commit to help the Association. Do not sit back and wait for them to volunteer!

During the meeting, executive officers should be selected and future meeting dates should be set, with at least one meeting per semester/term. It is recommended that a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary be selected. A checking account separate from the chapter's should also be opened at a local bank, or one near the President and Treasurer. The checking account should be established as a dual signature account, so that communication is maximized concerning Association expenses.

After your first Parents' Association event, follow-up letters should go out thanking the Parents for their participation. Included in the letter should be a survey asking for ideas for future events. From this survey, future events will be planned at the next Parents' Association meeting. A representative from the undergraduate chapter, and local housing corporation should also attend the Association meetings.

Finally, the chapter should share their success with Headquarters indicating the officers of the Parents' Association, a description of the event, and a proposed date for the next event.

Please see Chapter Brag Sheet in Appendix D.

Sample Events Sponsored by Parents' Associations

Auctions

Auctions are one of the most popular Parents' Association activities. This can be an annual event to raise money to purchase items on the chapter's wish list. The auction is made of donated items from the parents of undergraduate members. Popular auction items include baked goods, free laundry at a local family's home, Sigma Phi Epsilon items and sportswear, tickets to a sporting event, etc.

Our Indiana Gamma (Ball State University) chapter raised \$3,000 during one of their Parents' Day auctions to purchase a new flag pole and fence.

Our Ohio Kappa (Bowling Green State University) chapter often raises over \$5,000 for house improvements every year from their auctions.

Benefits of Brotherhood

Parents may talk to the chapter about the importance of brotherhood, and how membership in a fraternity or sorority lasts for a lifetime – not just four years. Please remember that the Greek experience continues to evolve and telling stories about “the good old days” may not be the best way to accomplish this. Instead, parents should tell stories about brothers or sorority sisters that were in their weddings, have helped them in their businesses or during times of personal trouble, or who they enjoy spending time with having good clean fun.

Career Development Night

Parents and friends of undergraduate members have jobs in a wide variety of fields. Some Parents' Associations sponsor a Career Fair or Development Night where the men of the chapter have the opportunity to interact with individuals from a variety of professional fields. These individuals inform the men about graduate school requirements and programs, resume and interviewing tips, as well as guidance on what different positions are available within their field of interest.

Dads' Day (Moms' Day)

Dads' Day (or Moms' Day) can incorporate any number of activities. Ideas of activities could include going to a professional sporting event, hosting a brunch at the chapter facility, getting tickets to a performance on campus for a certain weekend, etc. The options are endless, like a dad-son softball game, etc.

Our Kansas Gamma (University of Kansas) Parents' Club organizes a Dads' Day where house repairs are made that afternoon, and then they have a cookout later that night.

Our Kansas Theta (Pittsburg State) Parents' Club organizes a Dads' Day where the brothers and their fathers go hunting in the morning, make house repairs in the afternoon, and have a hog roast in the evening.

Educational Programming

Parents can serve as a vital resource to the chapter with regard to educational programming on a variety of topics from time management to legal liability. Some Parents' Associations develop a resource listing for the chapter of individuals who would be willing to present educational programs for the chapter and on what topics. This is a great opportunity for parents who are not local to get involved with the chapter.

Finals Relief Activities

The Parents' Association can provide Finals Relief by cooking and serving dinners during finals for the men of the chapter.

Kansas Eta (Wichita State University) Parents' Association makes lunch and dinner for the chapter during finals week.

Golf Scramble

A golf scramble is a great activity to organize Moms and Dads, and can also provide a special opportunity to involve alumni in the event. Have an annual Golf Scramble that involves parents, alumni, and undergraduates in partner teams and play best ball or a scramble.

Helping Hands Day

Service projects are becoming increasingly important to fraternities, and what a great way to involve the parents in a positive effort to better the community. Invite the parents to help with the chapter's annual clean up day or other community service project. Parents can also be helpful in helping with sponsorship for large philanthropy projects.

Involvement on the Local Housing Corporation

The chairperson or president of the Parents' Association should look into a representative role on the chapter's Local Housing Corporation. The Housing Corporation provides direction and decision making for the undergraduate chapter, and would value the input and involvement of a representative of the Parents' Association.

Ohio Kappa (Bowling Green State University) currently has a Parents' Association representative sitting on their Local Housing Corporation.

Journal of Sigma Phi Epsilon – the SigEp magazine

Inform other chapters of the value of a Parents' Association through the update section in the Journal. This will provide great publicity for the chapter, and may give another chapter a great idea so they can start their own Parents' Association.

Kick-Off to Fall

Parents can come over and help landscape, rake leaves, and get the outside of the chapter facility ready for all the fall activities of recruitment, homecoming, alumni events, and other important chapter sponsored activities.

Li'l Sibs Day

Organize a special weekend just for the siblings of the chapter members. The Parents could help organize all the transportation for the siblings, and the chapter could plan and execute a variety of activities especially for their younger brothers and sisters.

Mentoring

Sigma Phi Epsilon has incorporated a mentor program into their ideals for membership education and expectations. Parents would be an outstanding resource in this capacity, and could serve as mentors to all ages of Sigma Phi Epsilon members.

New Member/New Member Parent Orientation Night

The Parents' Association would be the perfect group to host a New Member or New Member Parent Orientation Night. This could be an informational session and reception to welcome the new members and their parents to Sigma Phi Epsilon, as well as recruit future Parents' Association members and leaders.

Open House during Family Weekend

The chapter, in conjunction with the Parents' Association, can host an open house for members, parents, and other family members. This event could highlight all of the achievements of the chapter in the past year, and could be combined with an annual auction or sporting event. This could serve as another great recruitment opportunity for both the chapter and Parents' Association.

Parent Move-In Teams

The move-in process every fall is always complicated, and with an organized Parent Move-In Team, the process could be easier. If the chapter has a chapter facility, the parents could help with the moving in of personal items. If there is a parent in the Association who works in the computer industry, this individual could help with the set up of personal computers, if there are any technical problems. Parents can also help with the arranging of furniture, set up of stereo and television equipment, etc.

Questionnaire

Conduct an annual survey of parents' perceptions of their sons' fraternity experience. This valuable input could provide some insight into ways the chapter can better communicate with parents about their activities, goals, and expectations for the year.

Recruitment Recommendations

Sigma Phi Epsilon is looking for the best and brightest young men to become members. The parents of current undergraduate members could be a valuable resource in recommending young men to the chapter for possible membership. This recommendation should include such information as high school activities and interests, hometown address, and any other relevant information.

Our Tennessee Alpha (University of Tennessee – Knoxville) chapter has a parent sit in on each Balanced Man Scholarship interview to help answer parents' questions.

Study Breakers

Mid-term and finals study breakers are a great way to give back to the chapter at stressful times in the lives of students. Make goodie bags for the members or send over baked goods for the study breaker.

Missouri Alpha (University of Missouri – Columbia) Parents' Association brings snacks over to the chapter facility every night during finals.

Tailgate before the College Football Game

College football games are a great time to host a Parents' Association event. The chapter could organize a cook-out before the game as a tailgate event, and then the chapter and their parents could get tickets together to enjoy a great day at the game. If the College does not allow tailgating before the game, then have the cookout at the house or at a nearby park and still come to the game together.

UIFI – Undergraduate Interfraternity Institute

The Parents' Association could annually sponsor a scholarship for an undergraduate member to attend a leadership development workshop such as UIFI or the Sigma Phi Epsilon Conclave. UIFI is a five-day living-learning community development experience where Greek undergraduates from across the country receive leadership training on the predominate issues in fraternity and sorority life.

Vacation House Duty

For those undergraduate chapters that have a chapter facility, the local parents could help fulfill a need during extended vacations where there is no one in the chapter facility. The parents could occasionally check on the facility to make sure that a water pipe has not broken, that all the chapter property is in tact, and that the facility is in good condition. This would be a significant help to the members of the chapter's Local Housing Corporation.

Work Weekend

A work weekend could have several purposes: house improvement, house renovation, landscaping, building an outside addition such as a deck or porch, etc. Parents could work with the undergraduate men during the weekend of building, painting, or whatever the job might entail.

Xerox

One of the major chapter expenses is often photocopying of important materials for all chapter members. Chapters photocopy chapter calendars, membership contracts, minutes, financial contracts, bills, etc. A local parent could offer the use of their work photocopier once a week for chapter purposes or the Parents' Association could use one of their fundraisers to purchase the chapter a Xerox machine.

Yard Sale

A great way to get rid of all that old stuff in the homes of many parents, and raise money for the undergraduate chapter at the same time. A Sigma Phi Epsilon yard sale can incorporate the donations of the chapter's families and their personal belongings as well.

Zollinger House Tile Purchase

Each Parents' Association can also purchase a tile for the new entryway to Zollinger House where the Sigma Phi Epsilon National Headquarters is located in Richmond, Virginia. Please visit www.sigep.org for more information on this program.

Appendix B

Sigma Phi Epsilon (Chapter Name) Parents' Weekend

Example agenda of events

Friday, March 24

- 7:45 p.m. - Arrive at the house for evenings activities
- 8:00 p.m. - Introduction to the Fraternity
- 8:30 p.m. - Dessert Reception
- 10:00 p.m. - Ribbon Heart Ceremony

Saturday, March 25

- 11:30 a.m. - Cookout @ the house
- 1:00 p.m. - Basketball Game (name teams here)
@ University Arena – Gate 4
- 5:45 p.m. - Return to the house for evenings activities
- 6:00 p.m. - Business meeting and officer elections
- 7:00 p.m. - Spaghetti Dinner
- 8:30 p.m. - Slide show or Brotherhood video
- 9:00 p.m. - Parents' Auction

Sunday, March 26

- 10:00 a.m. - Breakfast @ the house

Sample Introductory Letter to Parents

January 15, 2001

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Adams:

As you may have heard from your son, this year has been a very successful one for our chapter. We are proud to announce that last semester we were recognized as _____ on campus in academics out of _____ fraternities and above the all-campus average. The average member of SigEp is smarter than the average student on campus. In addition, the chapter worked to increase our participation in community service and philanthropy activities. Members of our chapter have also been selected to serve in leadership positions for other organizations such as Student Government Association, the Student Activities Council, Student Ambassadors, and the Interfraternity Council.

In an effort to celebrate our chapter and member accomplishments, we would like to invite you to the first annual **chapter name** Parents' Weekend. The weekend's activities will begin on Friday, March 24 and end on Sunday, March 26, 2001. Please see the enclosed agenda for times and locations of the different activities.

One of the events of the weekend will be the Parents' Auction on Saturday evening. The chapter is requesting that each parent bring an item to be auctioned off in an effort to raise money in order to purchase needed items for the chapter on our wish list. Popular auction items include baked goods, free laundry at a local family's home, Sigma Phi Epsilon items and sportswear, tickets to a sporting event, home decorations, etc. We will have one of the undergraduate brothers act as the auctioneer, and with your support and participation, it should be a huge success!!

If you are interested in attending our first annual Sigma Phi Epsilon Parent's Weekend, please complete the enclosed form. The chapter has reserved a block of rooms at the local Holiday Inn for \$50.00 a night. Please call the Holiday Inn to place a room under your name. The phone number is (555) 234-4567. In addition, please indicate on your registration form how many tickets you would like for the Saturday afternoon basketball game. We will all be sitting together for the game!!

If you have any questions about the weekend, please do not hesitate to call Jon Smith at (555) 225-1901. We are looking forward to an exciting weekend and to sharing the brotherhood of Sigma Phi Epsilon with our parents.

Sincerely,

Jon Smith
Parents' Association Coordinator

Sigma Phi Epsilon 1st Annual Parents' Weekend

**March 24-26, 2001
Sigma Phi Epsilon House**

Mom's Name: _____

Dad's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Number attending weekend events: _____

Accommodations: Holiday Inn Room Rate: \$50.00 a night + tax

Number of Rooms _____
Number of Nights _____

Saturday: Number of Basketball Game Tickets Needed: _____
(Please do not include your son)

Will you be bringing an item for the Auction? Yes _____ **No** _____

Description of the item: _____

Please return to Jon Smith by March 1, 2001

Jon Smith
Sigma Phi Epsilon House
1901 Ryland Hall
Anywhere, USA 11901

Appendix D

Sample Chapter Bragsheet

Name of Chapter: _____

Name of Officer Completing Report: _____

Date of Parents' Association Event: _____

Title of Parents' Association Event: _____

Description of Event: _____

****Please include the invitation, itinerary, or any correspondence with your bragsheet****

Date and description of next Parents' Association Event: _____

Parents' Association Officers:

Please include name and daytime telephone number

President: _____

Sec/Treas: _____

Please send this to Headquarters so your chapter can be recognized. It is best to send no more than two weeks after the event so that information may be shared with other chapters in a timely manner.