Communication, Collaboration & Now, Next, Later: Alpha Chi Omega’s Response to COVID-19
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The work of our Alpha Chi Omega Enterprise team in response to COVID-19 is significant — this new coronavirus has disrupted our organization, members, and professional staff in many ways, not unlike the rest of the world. The Enterprise is comprised of the Fraternity, Foundation, National Housing Corporation, and Pearl Stone Partners; although all separate corporate entities, they have a tremendous working relationship which time and time again proves to be optimal as we work together to serve Alpha Chi Omega. Our efforts related to COVID-19 are no different.

Our teams quickly pivoted on day-to-day responsibilities to respond to the pandemic. The health, safety, and well-being of our sisters were and are of great concern, as well as the long-term economic impact on our members and organization. Three areas centered our response to supporting members, chapters, and stakeholders: collaboration, communication, and establishing a framework to respond to the urgent needs and long-term implications of the new coronavirus.

Communication. Communication to various audiences with information related to COVID-19 began in the beginning of March and quickly turned into a more intensive response mid-March as the situation rapidly changed. From the beginning, the team identified key stakeholders with whom to share messaging, including collegiate chapter officers and advisors, alumnae chapter officers, operational and governing board volunteers, local house corporations, Pearl Stone Partners’ employees deployed at chapter worksites, fraternity/sorority advisors, and our membership at large. Our goal was, and continues to be, to share information transparently and as quickly as we are able. Further, we worked to customize the most relevant information to each of our many constituents, recognizing the information our local house corporations needed was different from what our collegiate chapter officers might need. Establishing a webpage to maintain updates and communication was a critical step to helping create an organized space for members to access communication and information. We continue to make updates to this website as new information is shared and new resources are created.

Collaboration. Across the Enterprise, the professional staff, volunteer ranks, and members working together was a priority. As colleges and universities began to announce various decisions related to moving to online instruction, our staff mobilized to track the responses of all 146 colleges and universities with Alpha Chi Omega collegiate chapters — each campus with its own unique approach that continually changed throughout March. Our Fraternity collegiate experience department, National Housing Corporation staff, and Pearl Stone Partners staff
immediately set up one-on-one consultations with every collegiate chapter to discuss and review its specific campus situation, what to do if it has a chapter facility, and how to work with Pearl Stone Partners if there were employees deployed at the chapter worksite.

Our education and engagement team supported external communications efforts, worked with alumnae and alumnae chapters, coordinated the cancellation of national events and programs, and created programming resources for chapters as they moved their experience virtual. The Foundation team promoted the member assistance grant for members facing financial difficulty due to life-changing circumstances and worked to identify opportunities to grant funds to support collegiate chapters for educational and philanthropic purposes to offset some of their other costs.

Now our staff is hosting another round of one-on-one consultations for every collegiate chapter to specifically discuss chapter finances, budgets, and refunds. Every staff member jumped to do their part to support the response to COVID-19 and to collaborate and identify solutions for these unprecedented times. The time spent working one-on-one with each collegiate chapter’s officers and advisors is invaluable as each chapter has its own unique circumstances; this is also extremely time consuming if considering the magnitude of our staff team meeting with each of our 146 collegiate chapters at least twice, if not more for follow-up conversations. Collaboration and support for one another throughout has been paramount.

Now, Next, Later. Establishing a framework to triage and evaluate the multifaceted problems COVID-19 has presented our organization is critical. Our National President and chief executive officer continue to frame our thoughts around what must be done now, what we should be thinking about or doing next, and what should be on the list to address later. Our team is tackling the now while also looking to later to consider the future state of sorority. In any given day across the Enterprise, teams may be working on immediate and urgent needs while also preparing for the next steps to support our membership down the road. There are more questions than answers for many things related to forecasting the impact of COVID-19 on the sorority experience, so tackling issue by issue while also ensuring our nimbleness to respond to an unknown future is imperative.

As we continue to navigate this pandemic and the associated impact, the Alpha Chi Omega Enterprise will continue to communicate, collaborate, and work to frame the needs of our members and organization now, next, and later.

For more information related to Alpha Chi Omega’s COVID-19 response, visit our website.
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