

## Step One: Say “Yes”

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If someone would have asked me ten years ago, as I began my journey as a Leadership Consultant for Alpha Delta Pi, about where my career would go, I would have never pictured it the way it is today. I have said “yes” to many opportunities along the way, even the big and scary ones. Saying “yes” to opportunities can be a fun adventure offering challenges and lessons with much room for growth.

Saying “yes” to the nomination to serve on the board of directors for the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors was certainly one of the more intimidating opportunities in my career, but also, one of the easiest. Agreeing to the possibility to be on any board is not one most take lightly. Knowing I was nominated because someone trusted me to contribute to conversations about the strategy of our association felt like a huge vote of confidence, a humbling challenge, and an obligation to my colleagues.

It also brought up a case of the INGEs (ing-ghees). I was taught a while ago about these — the I’m Not Good Enoughs — better, and more intellectually, known as imposter syndrome. Would I succeed if selected to be on the board? Was I qualified? Did I know enough? So. Many. Questions. In spite of the swirling thoughts and doubts about myself, I said yes. There was really no question about whether I would say yes or not, the question was more about how I would prepare myself to rise to the occasion.

As I went through the process of applying and interviewing, I continued to be challenged. As the process continued, the stakes felt like they got higher and higher. I felt honored to be given this opportunity at this particular moment in the association’s history. It was never personal because it felt bigger than me, and it still does. That’s what service should be, no? No matter the role or capacity: contributing to something larger than yourself for the greater good.

While I cannot explain the why behind other people’s yeses, I will share that being a woman in the field and a member of the LGBTQ community compelled me to think about the perspective I would bring to the table and the identities I could highlight — not just my own, but others not represented — and more importantly, to push for more diverse representation. I have been increasingly more critical about the way whiteness is centered in our field (the association is no exception) and having the chance to vocalize that at this level of the organization was and remains important to me.

My top strength (think StrengthsQuest) is “Includer.” My goal continues to be the integration of this strength during my time on the board. The more diverse set of perspectives we can include, the more robust outcomes we can bring to our communities. This is not a novel idea, but one we can certainly do better. Early in my career, I remember when it hit me that we seemed to be having the exact same conversations year after year at the Annual Meeting, with no real change. I wondered if this was ever going to change — same big issues, no real solutions. While I didn’t have solutions, I was certain I didn’t want our members to continue experiencing traumas without us trying to dig into the root issues of the challenges plaguing the industry. I still don’t know all the answers, but I am proud to be able to challenge the status quo around our educational programs, the voices invited to the table, and the systems that uphold the worst aspects of our communities.

Thus far, being on the board has been an exercise in both vulnerability and critical thinking. I have learned it does not matter where a person is in their career, nor whether they’ve been on 18 boards previously or none, there is a learning curve to the job. It has been important to be fearless in asking questions that may seem simple and adding opinions to the dialogue that may be unpopular. Through all of this, I have seen colleagues come together around the common purpose of growing our profession, creating spaces for our peers and future leaders to grow, and recognizing we all still have a lot to learn.

A decade into this career, I continue to do the work because I know that when fraternity and sorority is done right it works. I commit to do this work unless I come to a time when I no longer believe that to be true. My hope for my time on the board is to continue to bring new voices into the fold and to spend less time spinning our wheels in repetitive conversations. This will allow us more room to critically think about how to do this fraternity/sorority thing differently — to enhance our relevance. The same practices have not been working. We need to adapt and change, and perhaps even revolutionize our work. I strive to help our membership transition beyond “what we’ve always done” and realize the ways true and open collaboration can pave the way for a safer and more worthwhile community experience. I am grateful for this opportunity and for those who continue to trust me to do this work. I hope folks will continue to show up and say “yes.”

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