Fraternity Crisis Management During a Pandemic
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We’re bombarded with a wide variety of advertising, social media, and mobile notification distractions. At a time of unprecedented change in fraternity/sorority life, ensuring your organization’s communication is consistent and timely can present a challenge. At Lambda Chi Alpha, we’ve done our best to ensure our most important demographic — our undergraduates — are well informed and taken care of to the best of our ability.

Lambda Chi focused our Office of Administration’s (OOA) communication to be as transparent and supportive as possible. After following our crisis handbook as best possible, noting that this pandemic is a unique, volatile situation, we sought to educate and inform our undergraduates on overall health and wellness advisories surrounding COVID-19, how this pandemic is affecting future Lambda Chi events, and what our OOA has directly done to help our undergraduate chapters.

From the beginning, our marketing team was responsible for the collection and disbursement of all information. Our platforms include social media accounts, the website, blog, and homepage update sections, and briefings given to our Chapter Support Coaches (CSCs). Our CSCs connect one-on-one with the High Alpha (president) of each chapter/colony to review their GS&Rs, or Goal Setting and Review. During this hourly session, our CSCs help each chapter tackle the problems they’re facing now, plan and align their goals, and share important messaging from the OOA. With this model in place since January, we’ve been able to engage each chapter in crisis communication as our current situation evolves.

At the beginning of March, our health and wellness team detailed an advisory message outlining safe spring break tips, potential travel concerns, and health information related to COVID-19. As campuses began to close, we encouraged chapters to follow all college/university directives and to speak with their individual housing corporation, should they have one. The situation was rapidly changing, but we employed a calm, reassuring tone to all messaging and encouraged our CSCs to do so as well. Yes, this is a time of crisis, but Lambda Chi made sure to be the stalwart companion for all undergraduates.

Shortly after the initial advisory, COVID-19 was designated as a full-blown pandemic and our crisis plan shifted to possible long-term effects. With nationwide travel being shut down, this now affected our General Assembly planning, set for late July. Our learning outcomes team worked furiously to shift to a virtual General Assembly should the pandemic continue throughout the late summer, and chapter presidents were advised to update their rosters to ensure all undergraduates receive our communications.
A variety of Lambda Chi staff heard from chapters about their individual and chapter-wide struggles, not only with their mental health, but the reality of physically being away from their campus and shifting to a virtual education model. To help our undergraduates stay connected, the OOA subsidized Zoom licenses for each chapter to stay connected, conduct business, and try to relieve some stress together virtually. To coincide with this, Lambda Chi began creating programming that gave virtual updates from our CEO, Troy Medley, and a tips and tricks series to help our undergraduates utilize their Zoom subscriptions and adjust to a virtual undergraduate experience.

As March ended, we saw more had to be done, specifically for our graduating seniors. These men had some of their best time stripped away from them at the last moment, especially those with internships or other educational opportunities. Lambda Chi created a job board for alumni to populate and undergraduates to utilize. While in its infancy, we hope this will be a long-term solution for any undergraduates looking for their first step into the professional world.

The Lambda Chi Alpha Educational Foundation also kicked off a major initiative to help the fraternity and our undergraduates. Led by Dan Hartmann, the foundation created the Anchor Fund, an emergency relief fund giving financial assistance to support the men of Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity. While created in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, this fund will continue for all brothers in need during times of disaster. As this fund is in its infancy, our foundation staff are currently utilizing social media, email, website, and grassroots efforts to grow the fund for undergraduates to apply and utilize.

It’s amazing how fast changes come in a crisis. The entire Lambda Chi Alpha Fraternity and Educational Foundation teams came together to do everything possible to help our undergraduate men know a sense of stability in a volatile situation. Our staff found great success through transparent updates and timely communication across all platforms. Should another crisis arise, Lambda Chi Alpha and our undergraduate men are well-prepared for it.

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Matt Hornyak is graduate of Ball State University and is a tried and true advertising and marketing man with a strong background of brand building and client experience. From large to small, private to non-profit, and even local to international, he has assisted brands with a wide variety of needs across diverse audiences. Matt has experience in nearly every medium of advertising from simple print ads to integrated, data-driven campaigns with budgets exceeding $3 million. Additionally, his branding efforts have been successful for a wide variety of clients, regardless of creating a brand from the ground up or updating an existing brand.