

We're all in this Together

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In the world of student affairs there are so many areas we must be knowledgeable about in order to remain current in the field. As a campus-based advisor, one of our main roles is to maintain the operations of the fraternity/sorority community and to ensure we are helping to develop the members on our campuses. To do so, it is not uncommon to spend a great deal of time in meetings, seminars, and conferences to continue to gain expertise and to stay on the cutting edge of best practices. We do this because it is our job to make sure chapters are compliant with their inter/national headquarters, with the local council, and with the college or university. Unfortunately, this can take up a great deal of our time, leaving little time to truly focus on the development of our community members. This is when it is most important to remember we are not alone; this is where our volunteer advisors—our support system—come into play.

As advisors, we develop a network of support whether it is with colleagues from our own campuses, fraternity/sorority professional staff from other campuses or inter/national headquarters, or members in alumni chapters who work with our students. Having the support of your peers in the community is beneficial when it comes to implementing new programs or processes for the fraternity/sorority community. Fraternity/sorority advisors rely heavily on volunteer advisors: our faculty and staff advisors and our alumni advisors. Between these two groups and ourselves we can offer students our experiences as a member of a Greek-letter organization, as well as the training and knowledge we have in certain areas that have shaped our abilities to perform our professional duties.

This is a perk in particular when you have volunteer advisors on your campus. Faculty and staff at your institution who support with the fraternity/sorority community and the values-based learning that happens within our area are invaluable allies.

When faculty and staff become advisors to a chapter, they help foster values into our students with a different influence than we as advisors can. This is not in their job descriptions, but these chapter advisors become just as important for some chapters as the campus advisor. They provide expertise in academics, event planning, fundraising, etc. These faculty and staff members become a staple figure in the overall operations of the fraternity/sorority community. There are faculty/staff advisors who have been with one particular chapter their entire tenure at a university, and there are those who are new and eager to start building relationships with the students. Having this type of support on your campus not only is beneficial for the students but for us as advisors as well. When we engage with our students we do not have all the answers all the time, and it is important to have colleagues who have values that are congruent and constructive to the growth of the fraternity/sorority community.

Faculty and staff advisory involvement varies depending on the chapter. Alumni advisors are an asset to us as campus professionals because they allow us to have a greater understanding of the undergraduate chapter and how they will perform on campus. The relationship between campus professionals and alumni have all too often become an “us” versus “them” relationship. Instead, we all should remain

aware that without both parties the students are the ones who suffer. It is important to keep that at the forefront of what we do as advisors.

Being the main contact point for an entire fraternity/sorority community, no matter the size, can be exhausting, and we depend on our chapter and alumni advisors to help mediate and continue the lessons we are teaching about leadership and life. As the campus professional working in fraternity/sorority life, there are opportunities provided to us to maintain a level of efficiency when it comes to taking care of the duties and responsibilities that are required. I find it all too common that similar opportunities are not provided for our volunteer advisors.

We are all in this together, and it is essential for us to recognize the support available to us and to strengthen those lines of communication. When working with volunteer advisors it is important that as professionals in this field we are providing them with tools to be as efficient and effective as they possibly can be. This will benefit all parties involved as well as build your network. Advisors should establish with the chapter what their duties will consist of at the start of the partnership. Having annual meetings with campus professional to discuss best practices and how they fit within the campus structure and/or with the inter/national organization. We have to do our part and maintain open communication with staff, faculty, and alumni; having them as a liaison for not only the fraternity and sorority life office but for the chapters' overall wellbeing. It is vital that the relationships with the students are the focus of what we do as advisors, whether it is a volunteer or paid position. We are here to educate the whole student and do our part to ensure that the college experience is the very best we could offer them.