

Living Up to the Promise: Suggestions to Increase the Employability of Students in Fraternities/Sororities

Joseph Gebbie, M.S.Ed & MPS, Franklin & Marshall College
Board Member, Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity

Choosing the right fraternal organization can be a very challenging feat for any college student. Many years ago when I looked into joining a fraternity, I shopped around for the right organization. Each organization brought their best attributes to the forefront. The members talked about high academic achievement, community service, brotherhood, and important alumni members. One of the most impressive attributes of many fraternal organizations is their impressive alumni base. "Did you know that Steve Wynn is a member?" This was usually followed by the line, "When you graduate our extensive alumni base will help you get a job!" This was a promise made during my "rush" experience then slowly forgotten throughout the crazy days of college. If you're going to make such a vital promise, I believe you should follow through on that promise.

I challenge fraternal advisors to hold their fraternity/sorority communities and organizations to these promises. In the current state of the fraternal movement, the topics of risk management, financial obligation, and membership recruitment are first in the minds of everyone. Yet, we have to step back and think about the whole student including incorporating or refocusing other aspects of development related to the fraternal experience. That recruitment promise of networking with influential alumni/ae lets the student see the potential career opportunities that every organization offers. Therefore, fraternal advisors should incorporate career related topics into the fabric of fraternity/sorority life.

Some suggestions are as follows:

Alumni Networking - Every organization has an alumni base, even new chapters. I know that the topic of risk management comes up when bringing "non-matriculated" individuals onto the campus. Yet, fraternity/sorority campus-based professionals who have networking procedures in place in conjunction with national offices limit liability and encourage opportunities which can foster employment potential.

Career Services - Every institution has a career services office of some type. It is important to give that office face time with the fraternity/sorority community so that students know the service exists. Start out by having new candidates go to the career center for resume development or have juniors connecting with career services for internships. The possibilities are endless and it just takes a phone call to set something up.

Alumni/ae Career Panel - Let the students hear the career success stories from the alumni/ae themselves. As part of your programming, maybe during homecoming or Greek Week, invite some alumni/ae members to do a panel discussion on how being a fraternity/sorority member has affected their job prospects. This will help the fraternity/sorority community see that we are all in this together, even after graduation.

Incorporating career services into your programming right next to those other important topics aids students in the realization that fraternity/sorority membership is not just a four year endeavor. Career dialogue, in my opinion, impresses responsibility on students. Experiences from a student's time in college, especially fraternity/sorority membership, can absolutely impact employment prospects in the future. The promise is made every day to prospective members that connections are part of the fraternal culture. Make sure the promises are upheld and watch the positive promotion and good welfare of the fraternal movement continue to move in a positive direction.

