

Three Reasons Your Chapter Needs More Sponsors

By Dr. Trisha Yarbrough, Executive Director

If your chapter is like most, it needs new leadership. Not *instead* of you, in *addition* to you. Too many Alpha Chi chapters function with just one sponsor, and quite a few others function with only one cosponsor. Especially considering the “do more with less” ethos prevailing on most campuses, this practice is bound to create frustration and burnout in faculty sponsors who find their increasing workload leaves little time for the effective student engagement they envision.

Increasing the number of cosponsors creates three important advantages:

Greater Student Access—choosing cosponsors in each of your college or university’s academic units allows you to increase the visibility of Alpha Chi across the campus and to give students in those units easier access to a knowledgeable faculty member. If your cosponsors across campus will make certain that Alpha Chi posters and flyers are displayed, that Alpha Chi events are mentioned at department, club, and other honor society meetings, that Alpha Chi students from those departments are recognized appropriately in class or at unit-specific events, everyone benefits. When students are invited to membership, they are more likely to approach faculty members in their academic area with questions, especially on large campuses, so having those cosponsors visible and identified throughout the year should increase your campus acceptance rates.

Creative Load Distribution—choosing cosponsors who each assume a limited number of key responsibilities assures that no one is overwhelmed with responsibilities while all important aspects of chapter life receive faculty oversight. Recruiting cosponsors is easier when you (or the students who recruit them) can assure your colleagues that their workload will be clearly defined and limited in scope. Each chapter should decide how to divide the year’s activities among the cosponsors, since sponsor personal strengths, time commitments, experience, and administrative expectations will all factor in.

Insightful Succession Management—choosing cosponsors assures a group of trained, knowledgeable faculty members who will be natural appointments to assume Alpha Chi leadership when you decide to step down or be available to advise the academic administrator who will appoint your successor. At the very least, they will know the value of Alpha Chi and can advocate for its continuation on your campus. On far too many campuses when a sponsor retires, is reassigned, or accepts a position elsewhere, the Alpha Chi chapter languishes. Even though the sponsor had served for many years, and the chapter had been a thriving member of the campus community, adding value to students’ lives and the campus and local culture, once that lone, key faculty sponsor was gone, the chapter was simply rudderless. When a chapter falls into this state, the national office has great difficulty generating a response from the university administration. You will do great service to future generations on your campus if you will select cosponsors now who will be high profile, vocal, and enthusiastic chapter leaders.

Bylaw No. 10 states that a chapter may have one official sponsor, appointed by the President or chief academic officer and **two** additional faculty sponsors elected by the members of the chapter annually. These three sponsors may vote on chapter business. The official sponsor may also appoint up to **three** sponsors who attend to chapter business but who are considered non-voting assistant sponsors. This allows each chapter a total of **six** sponsors to increase Alpha Chi visibility across campus among faculty and students, share the workload, and prepare for any changes in leadership down the road. If your chapter doesn’t already have a robust roster of chapter sponsors, it’s time to see this happens on your campus.