

CHAPTER SECRETARY'S HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! You have been elected Chapter Secretary. The responsibilities assigned to the chapter secretary fall into two categories: recording and corresponding. Some chapters elect a single Chapter Secretary to handle both of these roles; others have chosen to divide these duties into separate positions. Please read through this guide and pick out those portions that apply to your position, as defined by your chapter's bylaws.

Regardless of which approach your chapter has adopted, it is important to remember that the Secretary is a key leadership position. You must work closely with all other chapter officers to insure the smooth operation of your chapter. An effective Secretary makes chapter administration easier, plays an important role in communications, and helps preserve the record of chapter activities. By doing your job well, you will contribute to the chapter's success and sharpen your leadership skills.

The booklet won't even attempt to tell you how to do everything your job entails. Instead, we are providing some guideposts as you plan your term of office. This booklet should give you a better understanding of your role as the chapter's Secretary.

It is recommended that during the term of your office you work on creating a supplement to this handbook to assist the future Secretaries of your chapter. This supplement should include the following information:

- Chapter Bylaws
- Contact information for the current Section Chair, Region Director, and Advisory Chair
- Sample chapter minutes
- Order forms for supplies
- Sample roster
- Last year's schedule of chapter events
- Schedule of general events throughout the school year
- Print or Electronic back up copies of Chapter minutes from current and previous years.
- "Same Page" guide

Throughout your service as Secretary, remember that you have chapter advisors and a Sectional Chair (and staff) who are willing and able to assist you. Use their talents and experience.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the Secretary are varied. For purposes of this handbook, they have been divided into two areas described below:

Recording Secretary

- Record and distribute minutes of Executive Committee and Chapter meetings.
- Manage print and electronic internal correspondence.
- Order supplies in cooperation with the chapter Treasurer.
- Maintain an accurate and up-to-date file of membership records.

Corresponding Secretary

- Handle and keep accurate records of chapter correspondence.
- Distribute *Torch & Trefoil* to Brothers and Advisors.
- Distribute mail received from the National Office to the appropriate chapter officer.
- Make sure the annual chapter membership roster (AAMD) is sent in to the National Office by November 15.
- Encourage communication with other chapters in your Section and Region, including the sharing of chapter newsletters.

THE RECORDING SECRETARY

Taking Minutes

Minutes provide an accurate history of the policies, decisions, and activities of the chapter through chapter and executive meeting notes. They should be a concise record of actions taken, rather than a running account of all dialogue at the meeting. Minutes should include:

- Introductory statement: who opened the meeting, what time, where, the names of those in attendance (you may want to attach a sign-up sheet which is passed around during the meeting), etc.
- Summary of each officer's report
- Pertinent items from committee reports
- Names of those who make and second motions, favorable results of any votes or motions.
- Items tabled for future consideration
- Closing remarks and a calendar of future activities

While a record of minutes should be kept, it is not necessary to read them at subsequent meetings. A brief summary can be read, although the best method is to distribute a copy to each Brother in advance of the next meeting and ask for corrections at the meeting. As an alternative, you may post the minutes in the chapter office, on an available bulletin board, or to the chapter's email list. You will then be ready to submit the minutes for approval at the next meeting. It is recommended that you save all minutes in a binder for later reference.

If you would like more information on minutes The American Institute of Parliamentarians has a small booklet called "Modern Methods Pertaining to Minutes" which is available through their website at <http://www.aipparlipro.org/>

Chapter Directory

The chapter directory is an effective tool that enhances internal chapter communication. The directory should list at least the name, address, email address, and telephone number for each Brother and Advisor. It may also include a short biographical sketch of each Brother or "fun facts" such as date of birth, Big Brother's name, major & expected year of graduation, or favorite food. Publish the directory at the beginning of each semester, and distribute it to all Brothers and Advisors, Sectional Chair, Regional Director, and local and chapter alumni associations. Also, include a copy when your chapter submits its annual active membership dues (AAMD's) to the National Office in the fall.

Chapter Meetings and Attendance

A Brother who misses a meeting is at a great disadvantage in learning about plans for projects and other activities. The attendance report can identify Brothers who might be losing interest in the chapter and who will need to be motivated to remain. Those names should be passed on to the Membership Vice President. The percentage of the Brothers attending on a regular basis will also reveal how important and effective the chapter meetings are perceived to be.

Chapter Supplies

You should maintain, in conjunction with other officers, an adequate stock of necessary chapter supplies, including:

- Chapter letterhead (stationery)
- A file for Torch & Trefoil
- Applications for pledges, actives, advisors, and honorary members
- Transfer forms
- Life Membership applications
- Pledge Manuals
- National Bylaws
- Pledge and Service pins
- Questions and Answers booklet and other brochures
- Complete set of Leadership Series handbooks
- Advisor's Guides
- Fraternity merchandise and supplies order forms

The Chapter Office

A chapter office can be very helpful if used effectively. The office should serve as a focal point of chapter communication as well as a gathering place between classes. It should contain adequate file capacity for your membership records, correspondence, history, and service project evaluations and reports. A bulletin board and calendar of events are important.

There should be a mailbox for each Brother, or at least for each officer and project chair. If you do have a chapter office, it is your responsibility to maintain it in accordance with your chapter's needs and your school's requirements. If your chapter does not have an office, encourage the Executive Committee to actively seek appropriate office space. An office can be a tremendous boost to a chapter's spirit and communications.

At the very least, until you locate an appropriate office, the chapter must have an easily accessible bulletin board or other method of sharing information with Brothers. At some schools, this method may include a website, or an email or phone chain. Be creative, but be sure that there is a well-known and understood system for communicating. Select a system that works best for your chapter.

CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

The Corresponding Secretary is responsible for receiving the mail and distributing it to the proper chapter officers. When you receive mail from the National Office, you should carefully review the materials to see who should receive it in the chapter. You may have to photocopy items that are needed by more than one person.

Each chapter is required to maintain a permanent mailing and email address. It is your responsibility to insure that the Sectional Chair, Regional Director, and the National Office have the accurate addresses. Mail is the only direct method of official communication with your chapter that is regularly available to these volunteer leaders and to the professional staff in our National Office. Prompt distribution of the chapter's mail will insure that everyone is informed about such events as the Sectional or Regional Conference, National Service Week, and chapter programming workshops. Equally important, the Chapter can communicate with the National Office via email and the web site www.apo.org.

Correspondence

You are responsible for your chapter's communications with the Sectional Chair, the Regional Director, and the National Office. This means that, in addition to distributing such mail, you should insure that there is a prompt response from your chapter. You should also see that the H. Roe Bartle Award/Annual Chapter Program Review form, Annual Charter Reaffirmation form, and other materials required by the National Fraternity are distributed to the right people, completed, and returned.

Always retain copies of your correspondence to provide accurate records for the future. Send a copy of important correspondence, such as new officer lists and requests for assistance, to both your Regional Director and Sectional Chair.

Inter-Chapter Communications

The Corresponding Secretary is also responsible for communications with other chapters, especially those within your Section and Region. Be sure to send these chapters copies of your chapter newsletter, project schedules, and announcements of any major chapter events. Work with other officers of your chapter, including the Membership Vice-President, Service Vice-President, or Sectional Representative, to plan joint projects or road trips with nearby chapters. Also, be sure to share correspondence that you receive from other chapters with your Brothers.

Another way to communicate with other chapters, both near and far, is through email.

National Publications

There are a variety of publications which the Fraternity sends regularly to all chapters. These include *Torch & Trefoil* (our national magazine), the Chapter Bulletin, promotional materials for National Service Week and Spring Youth Service Day, and registration materials.

The *Torch & Trefoil* is published four times a year, and copies will be sent to your chapter. If you would like more copies contact the National Office, so that every

registered Brother and Advisor can receive a personal copy. Make sure to keep an extra copy in your file for future reference.

The Chapter Bulletin highlights important dates and other details for Sectional Conferences, Leadership Development opportunities, and the National Convention. One copy is sent to the chapter president. The information is for all Brothers, and you should work with the president to develop a program to share it with the chapter.

CONCLUSION

Whether your elected position covers both secretarial roles or just one of them, your role is essential to an effective chapter. Through your leadership and efforts, you can influence the effectiveness of others in your chapter, foster good communications, and improve access to important chapter resources.

It should be clear by now that we have not attempted to provide you with an answer to every question, problem, or crisis. Your chapter believed enough in your leadership ability to elect you its Secretary. To be effective you must share that confidence.

Finally, remember that when your term of office is over, your responsibility to the chapter does not end. You will have learned a great deal about what the chapter expects from its Secretary and what the chapter needs. When you plan your officer transition retreat, share this information with your successor. Make sure he/she knows you will be around and willing to help.