**HELPING NEW MEMBERS WITH ACADEMICS**

The new member period is one of extreme importance because it is a time when they are in a very impressionable stage of their lives. If an effort is made at this time to instill in the new members the desire to do well scholastically, chances are that there will be a good response. The best single tool that can be used to encourage new members to do well academically is, of course, the setting of good examples by the members of the chapter .

There are other ideas that can be used as well.

Many students, especially freshmen, attend college without really having mastered the skills of a good student-how to take notes, study, prepare for exams, and write papers. Most acquire these skills sometime during school, but others graduate without ever having developed these abilities. Emphasis should be placed upon helping freshmen develop these skills as soon as possible. Even if they are unable to use the ideas that are proposed to them in this

relation, they may develop useful techniques of their own because of exposure to the ideas. The scholarship chair should establish a study program geared to help the new members, including the following basic topics:

1) The technique of study: organizing study time, developing a productive environment, following an appropriate study pattern, increasing comprehension, and minimizing study time.

2) Techniques in preparing for and taking examinations.

The program should provide informative ideas on the development of techniques, giving new members the opportunity to develop their own potential. All the scholarship chair can do is offer help to individuals who are interested in using that help. The effort must come from the new members. No one can study for them, nor tell them when to study. Because of this, study halls, which generally prove to be ineffective, should not be required. Personal encouragement is a far better incentive than requiring a person to spend two to three hours in a noisy room with twenty other people. Direct them to the links labeled Academic Confrontation Tips and Study Tools found at <http://www.missouristate.edu/activities/23430.htm> to help them develop a healthy studying plan and to assess their academic progress.

From the beginning of the new member period, the scholarship chair and the new member educator should emphasize the importance of personal academic achievement. They should attend the first new member meeting and inform the group of the chapter’s view on scholarship. The biggest task that a scholarship chair has in working with the new member class and the chapter as a whole is instilling within the members a desire to “make their grades” It is crucial to chapter success.

In building a scholarship program that involves freshmen, a chapter must take into consideration the following factors:

I. A student's first semester in college will usually be the most difficult one. The chapter must give him/her a great deal of assistance and encouragement.

2. A freshman often has difficulty in adjusting to the difference between high school academics and college academics.

3. A freshman needing scholastic assistance will seldom admit it until the need becomes urgent.

4. A freshman will often become "infatuated" with Greek life and neglect his/her academic life.

**CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IDEAS:**

1. Obtain the current GPA of new members at mid-term. Then identify potential problem individuals and discuss their situation with them.

2.Have new members complete a list of the classes they are taking and the dates of their major exams. Identify peak periods for tests. Then:

a. Lighten your demands on their time immediately prior to these peak periods.

b. Consider doing a test-taking or stress management workshop near a peak period.

c. Share the individual's schedule with his/her big brother/big sis, and ask them to offer

 encouragement in time management.

3. Have new members complete a weekly schedule of their time; then make sure that an adequate amount of study time is allotted.

4. Develop rewards/incentives for individuals earning good grades. Set a chapter GPA goal and establish a reward if they meet that goal.

5. Keep the new member program flexible in adapting to individual needs and interests. Allow for periods in which the new members may be excused from chapter obligations so that they may catch up on their studies. Always be sensitive to requests for more study time.

6. Create an atmosphere in the chapter that encourages personal achievement. Give new members respect, show them that they are accepted, and reward their accomplishments.

You can also find more ideas under the For new members section on the Promoting Academic Excellence link found at http://www.missouristate.edu/activities/23430.htm.