

Chapter 5: Brothers Teaching Brothers... Sisters Teaching Sisters

Chapter Tutoring Programs

One of the benefits of fraternity life is the opportunity for members to share their talents to help their brothers/sisters. Since the promotion of academic excellence is one of the primary missions of the fraternity; chapter tutoring programs are at the heart of what fraternity/sorority life is supposed to be about.

Two key points need to be made about chapter tutoring programs. First, they should supplement, not replace, existing resources on the campus. In many cases, the best way for the fraternity to assist its members is to encourage the use of tutoring services available at the college or university. Second, tutoring programs and services are not just for those with serious academic difficulties. While it is critical that students in danger of failing courses seek assistance, tutoring services can also be beneficial to average or good students who need a little extra assistance in order to achieve their academic goals. The chapter should promote an atmosphere that encourages all members who would benefit from tutoring to seek out such services. There need be no stigma attached to asking for and receiving academic assistance.

Utilizing Members as Tutors

At the beginning of each semester, the Scholarship Committee should distribute Academic Support Volunteer Forms to the members to identify those with special skills that they are willing to share with other members. The information should then be compiled by the Scholarship Committee, broken down by area or discipline (mathematics, biology, accounting, history, etc.), and be distributed to all actives and new members. If the chapter maintains academic profiles of each member (see Chapter 4), the Scholarship Committee can also prepare and distribute a list of members who have received an "A" or "B" in various courses as potential resource persons.

Brothers who volunteer their time as tutors should be acknowledged and rewarded. At a minimum, they should be publicly thanked at chapter meetings, and should be given certificates at the end of the semester in recognition of their services. A plaque or other award should be considered for the brothers/sisters who contribute the most time to the tutoring program. Giving tutors a dues rebate is another appropriate way of rewarding them for their time and effort.

Tutor Referrals

In many situations, members will need the assistance of an experienced and/or specially trained tutor. The Scholarship Committee should maintain a file of tutoring services available on campus. Free tutoring clinics may be available at the learning skills center or other offices. Many campuses have tutoring labs that specialize in a particular topic, such as mathematics, writing, accounting, and computer programming, and are staffed by graduate students. In addition, academic department offices will usually have a list of private tutors. The chapter may wish to keep its own file of private tutors, complete with descriptions of their services and rates, with evaluations by members who have used their services.

The Scholarship Committee should consider using part of its budget to subsidize private tutoring for members in need of such assistance. If aiding the academic progress of the members is a priority for the chapter, then there is no better use of financial resources. It is suggested that the member be reimbursed for one-half of the cost of private tutoring. A policy should state a maximum hourly rate that will be reimbursed and a total amount that can be reimbursed to an individual member per semester. Having the member pay for half of the cost will minimize any abuse of the system and will encourage members to make effective use of the tutor's services. A fund, supported by alumni contributions, can be used for those who need financial assistance in order to receive tutoring. No member should be forced to forgo private tutoring because he/she cannot afford it.

Study Partners

The Scholarship Committee can also coordinate a program to match up members to study together. Two criteria should be used in matching study partners. First, they should have similar academic programs -- same major, similar number of units completed, some common courses this semester, etc. Second, those with higher grade point averages should be matched with those with lower grade point averages, to facilitate informal tutoring. The effectiveness of the study partner program can be reinforced by creating competition among the teams to see which team can achieve the highest grade point average during the semester.

Utilize the Scholarship Bulletin Board

Establish a special "Help Wanted" section on the chapter's Scholarship Bulletin Board for members to request assistance with particular classes. To encourage use of the board for this purpose, print up some "3x5" cards with blank spaces for the member's name, telephone number, class and topic he needs help with, class instructor, and comments.

Another use of the Scholarship Bulletin Board is to post a listing of free tutoring services available on campus. Be sure to describe the type of services available, hours of operation, location, telephone number, and other applicable information.

Term Paper Critiquing Service

A valuable service the chapter can provide is a term paper critiquing service. Often times, it is hard to be objective when proofreading one's own work. Upper division students proficient in writing can volunteer their time to proofread and critique the term papers of other members. The readers can enhance the quality of papers by identifying grammatical and spelling errors and by suggesting structural revisions. The list of available readers should be categorized by majors; this will enable readers to also evaluate the content of the papers. As with tutors, readers should be recognized and compensated for their work.

Special Workshops

The Scholarship Committee can organize a series of special workshops for small groups of members who need particular kinds of skill development. Potential workshop facilitators are professionals or graduate assistants from the campus learning skills or counseling centers, the chapter's Faculty Advisor, and Scholarship Committee members who have been trained in a particular area. Ideas for workshops include: test preparation and test taking skills, improving

reading speed and comprehension, writing skills, time management, effective note taking, study methods, research and term paper writing, and concentration and memory techniques. An excellent resource in preparing the workshops is *How to Study in College*, by Walter Pauk (Third Edition, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984), available in most campus libraries and bookstores.