



PI KAPPA PHI

ALPHA RHO
ALUMNI CHAPTER

2020 -2021

Year in Review

To my Alpha Rho Brothers,

As is now customary to mark the anniversary of reorganizing the Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter on August 15, 2015, I am pleased to provide you with a look back on our last year and give you a preview of what to expect moving forward.

This was an extraordinary year. Not in the sense of the achievements, which were notable. But in the true definition of the word- this year was out of the ordinary. COVID-19 hit all aspects of life hard, as all of us know. But it hit Alpha Rho especially hard. We are a social organization built on bonds that are formed and maintained when we gather as Brothers. Societal protocols and an abundance of caution for ourselves and our loved ones prevented us from being able to hold our customary events at Homecoming and Spring Alumni Weekend. Last year, I wrote to you in this address, that we would use technology to gather as best we could in a virtual way. I was pleased to see that so many of you participated in these events that were held throughout the fall and early this spring. But it was no substitute for being together in person with each other, having real conversations with one another about the things we hold dear as friends and Brothers.

My one fear through this pandemic has been what the lasting impact of this crisis would be, for us and for our Student Members. I worry that all the work we have done and the momentum we have built since we reorganized the Alumni Chapter in 2015, would be lost and difficult to regain. Life this past year has rightfully diverted attention away from the joys that our Fraternity collectively brings to us. With this as a backdrop, the past year I tried to focus the attention of the Board of Directors on the task of preparing for a future when we would resume “normal” operations while still meeting the obligations we have as an active Alumni Chapter within Pi Kappa Phi. While this proved to be difficult, I believe we successfully navigated through this very challenging year and are prepared for our future.

I’m pleased to report that we are still operating at a very high level. The Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter was once again awarded Master Champion Alumni Chapter status for exceeding the expectations laid out in the 5 Focus Areas of Alumni Chapter Operations. This is the third year in a row for us to achieve this status and to put this accomplishment in perspective, no other Alumni Chapter has been awarded more than one. I can tell you; we are held in very high regard by the National Staff and the National Council for the sustained excellence we have worked so hard to achieve.

I’m also optimistic about what this next year will bring for us. We will resume our traditional gatherings in Morgantown. First for Homecoming on October 1st and 2nd, and then for Spring Alumni Weekend next April. I’m also excited about some of the projects we’re working on to take the APAC to another level. Finally, as we look to the future, I’m excited for the next group of leaders who will be working with the current Board of Directors through this year and will assume leadership of the Board of Directors after Spring Alumni Weekend. Below are some thoughts on these items.

Alumni Formal Room Project-

As we have been discussing with many of you and raising funds for a considerable time, we are finally close to the completion of our Alumni Formal Room. As you may recall, this room is being created and designed to securely hold our most precious items including our Charters, special composites, pictures, awards and trophies and a section of the room will be set aside to honor and enshrine our Chairman Emeritus recipients so that their legacy is secure. The room will only be opened for distinct occasions such as formal recruitment events, Pre- I ceremonies, and events where Alumni are present such as Homecoming and Spring Alumni Weekend. Currently, the room has been framed, hardwood floors are down, and the walls are prepared for the final phase of construction. Over the next few weeks work will continue with custom crafted woodwork beginning for the lower walls, trophy/ memorabilia cases, and the bar. All of which will include engraved Pi Kappa Phi and Alpha Rho letters and symbols. We are also embarking on a project to collect and create pictures and other memorabilia to use for a unique and special upper wall treatment. Finally, before Homecoming weekend we will put the final touches on the room to include furniture, a fireplace, a special section to honor and preserve the legacies of our four Chairman Emeritus, displays for our Charters, multimedia functionality and special lighting. We will open and dedicate the room at a special event on the Friday Night of Homecoming weekend.

Finances:

This Formal Room project is a joint effort that has been financed primarily by the Alpha Rho Housing Corporation with direct assistance from the Alumni Chapter through an initial contribution of \$9,000 that was completed in May of this year. Due to the nature of the Alumni Chapter operations, budget and fundraising efforts, we could not commit to more. It was decided that in order to help offset the cost the Housing Corporation was earmarking to complete the project, we would create a fundraising effort to help equalize this cost over time.

A fundraising project was supposed to begin last year and had just started when COVID hit. We suspended this effort knowing the financial strain this crisis caused many of our Members. As we look to our future and emerge from COVID, we must begin the effort to raise funds again.

Throughout this year, we will be asking all our members for help in raising funds, not only for the Formal Room project, but to keep the operations of the Alumni Chapter running at the highest levels we have come to demand of ourselves.

Over the years, a small but extremely generous group of Members have kept our finances in shape. This year, we must broaden out the number of contributors. We will be calling on everyone to make the financial sacrifice needed to continue long into the future.

Operations:

As I wrote to you last year, this is the final term for the current Board of Directors. This Board has largely stayed intact since the reorganization in 2015. We will be transitioning many, long-serving members off the Board to enjoy life as a Brother without the responsibilities that their respective offices called for over these many years. I'm so excited to welcome a new group of young Alumni members who will work the remainder of this year with our Board and will take over important offices next April. Dom Ragussa, Noah Irving and Brandyn Snyder are all Brothers who we can be proud have stepped up to serve and continue to live their lifetime commitment to Pi Kappa Phi.

Over the next few months, we will also fill out the other positions for the next Board of Directors and begin work on helping them understand and take on the mission the Alumni Chapter set forth in 2015. This type of succession planning is crucial for our legacy. No one person and no single Board of Directors can sustain itself in perpetuity. We must always be identifying new leaders and fostering their desire to serve our Chapter. We have done a good job at this in recent years and I'm confident the new group of men who have chosen to serve Alpha Rho will be successful.

I am also very pleased to announce to you that Andrew Dunn, AP 288 our Executive Vice President will succeed me as President-CEO of the Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter. I have been fortunate to call Andy a Brother since December of 1989. We were Pledge Brothers and learned the love of this Chapter and our Fraternity under the guidance of our Warden, Brother Brent Webster, AP 219 who we credit with so much of our success as a Chapter. Andy has been my most trusted advisor on Fraternity matters since our Student Chapter days. He has also been one of my best friends in life. We've celebrated many years of friendship during mostly happy times as well as comforted each other through some difficult times. And while he would never say so, his advice, guidance and temperament on fraternal matters has allowed me to lead from the front for all these years. Recently, I have been fortunate to be recognized with some individual awards for the service I've given to Pi Kappa Phi and our Greek system at WVU. None of these awards I take sole credit for. They came because of the hard work and sacrifices of others that I just happen to be recognized for. And no one has worked harder and sacrificed more for me personally than Andy Dunn. For 32 years, he has stayed true to the Ideals of our Founders. I can think of no one who is more capable of leading the Alumni Chapter going forward than Andy. Some people have commented to me that the next President-CEO of our Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter has big shoes to fill. I disagree! Andy certainly does not because he's walked with me step by step in our Journey in Pi Kappa Phi so there are no shoes to fill, he already occupies them! It is now time for Andy to lead us. He will do so not in my shadow or with any of the burdens of comparison. He will do so with my full support and knowledge that he will succeed. Please take some time to send Andy a note of congratulations and encouragement at Gazoo041288@gmail.com

Conclusion:

The Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter continues to operate at an exceedingly high level. I am so proud to have led this Alumni Chapter for so many years. What we have done together in the past several years is remarkable. Everyone has played a role in our success, even those of you who have not stepped foot back on campus in decades. You all shaped and formed this Chapter and made us what we are today- The good, the bad and even the ugly.

This is the last time I will be addressing the State of the Alumni Chapter to you as President- CEO. Over the next 10 months, I'll be having more "lasts". This is both difficult and exciting for me. It's difficult for me because I've spent the last 32 years in continuous service to Alpha Rho in some form, and I am still as passionate about Alpha Rho and Pi Kappa Phi as I've ever been. On the other hand, it's exciting for me because I know that the best way for me to serve Alpha Rho going forward is in support of our next group of leaders. We talk about "transcending personal selfishness" in the Student Creed. Transcending personal selfishness is understanding that no one person or their personal desires are more important than the Fraternity. I recognize that I'm just a Brother living the Member's Oath I took at my Ritual of Initiation back in 1989 where I swore to "Strive earnestly to uphold the ideals of Pi Kappa Phi.. For the whole of my life...". I've done this to the best of my ability and always tried to lead in a way that would allow Alpha Rho to be on the campus of West Virginia University forever. It's been my distinct pleasure to serve each of you as President-CEO of OUR Alpha Rho Alumni Chapter. It has brought a special joy and meaning to my life.

As I often say, I have served Alpha Rho for very selfish reasons. I have built so many meaningful friendships in my time in the Chapter. All have a special significance to me. Seeing you in Morgantown for our events, enjoying the time we spend with each other in Brotherhood, gives me this selfish drive to want to do this year after year in hopes we'll continue to gather. May we all be "selfish" this year and in coming years!

Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving you in Pi Kappa Phi this past year as well as all these years! The best days of Alpha Rho and Pi Kappa Phi are ahead of us!

In the Bonds of Brotherhood,

Thomas J. Begley- AP 284
President- CEO

