



# THE HUSKER SIG

Alpha Epsilon Chapter of Sigma Chi  
at the University of Nebraska



## SIGMA CHI'S IMPROVED PLEDGE TRAINING PROGRAM LAUNCHED AT ALPHA EPSILON

*Reporting on Preparation for Brotherhood*

Fall 2016 was a big semester for the Alpha Epsilon Chapter, as it was our first semester operating under the new international pledge training program known as Preparation for Brotherhood, or P4B.

P4B puts more emphasis on individual learning. The new program is shorter in length, only eight weeks long, and is structured so that pledges learn everything about Sigma Chi that was included in the old pledge program at a faster pace and in a more concentrated fashion. P4B requires pledges to learn from video presentations about Sigma Chi's history and our Founders. Then, each week each pledge must successfully pass a quiz on the information they learned. Unlike our previous program, the P4B requires that the quizzes are taken online.

This new path to brotherhood has naturally been met with some apprehension by actives and alumni alike, as are many things that require change. "Breaking tradition is always hard," Ty Khubchandani '19, new magister for the spring semester said, "but I think our Alpha Epsilon Chapter has done a fantastic job so far of making that transition."

"With the new P4B, we're now fully aligned with the best practices of the International Fraternity," Carter Deras '18, the fall magister, said. He continued, "Grand Praetor Art Cox, Iowa '75, was instrumental in helping us with this transition."



*Undergraduate brothers gather on the lawn of the Alpha Epsilon Chapter House to celebrate the initiation of 28 new brothers, the largest pledge class in recent years. The Chapter contributes its success to their new recruitment strategies and revamped P4B pledge program.*

Along with a focus on individual learning, P4B provides more opportunities for the active Chapter to get involved with pledgship. For example, the new pledge program provides the opportunity, via ConnΣXtions, for pledges to meet with actives to discuss the material pledges are learning about in a particular week. In fact, pledges are required to have five ConnΣXtions meetings with different actives in the house each week, providing them a broader spectrum of different relational and informational experiences relative to that week's curriculum. Under P4B, pledges have readings every week, as opposed to only during Introspection Week as they have in past years.

The feedback from our first pledge class to go through this new protocol has been quite positive. "Through the readings, reflections, and talking to actives, I definitely think I was ready for initiation," said Jon Camenzind '20, a fall 2016 initiate. "I think most pledges would say that the readings and talking with the actives about it were very beneficial. I love how we had those weekly, not daily, readings, because we could re-read the weekly readings each day and reflect on them."

All in all, P4B has the Chapter's full support and we know that this is the future for young men learning about the values of Sigma Chi prior to initiation.

In Hoc,  
Trevor Wood '19

## Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter Update

Plan to Attend One of Our Events in 2017 for Brotherhood and Fun!

The Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter officers had a preview meeting late last year and a schedule of the core Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter (GNAAC) events for 2017 is in progress. The purpose of this organization is to support the Alpha Epsilon undergraduate Chapter, to continue to build the bonds of brotherhood beyond the undergraduate years, and to promote the ideals of Sigma Chi. We are excited to share the following plans with you for the coming year.

**In April**, we will have our annual Spring Luncheon, which all local alumni are encouraged to attend. Given our past experience, we have recommitted to holding the Spring Luncheon at a downtown location, which optimizes attendance. A specific date in April and the location will be announced separately, as we are exploring our best options.

**In June**, we are considering relaunching a Sigma Chi Alumni Golf event. It would be helpful to have an "electronic show of hands" to determine the level of interest among Sig alumni. If you are interested, please send me a quick e-mail at Curt.Denker@pinbank.com. The more interest we

have, the higher the probability that we will organize an event at one of the courses in Lincoln.

**In July**, we will repeat our successful Summer Rush Showcase at the Lincoln Country Club. The exact time and date will be determined as summer rush begins and we get an indication of the availability of potential pledges and their parents. Be alert for an announcement of time and date in June!

**In October**, we'll plan another Homecoming reception at the Chapter House. The University has not announced which game will be designated for Homecoming, but chances are it will be the Wisconsin game on October 7 or the Ohio State game on October 14. As soon as we have confirmation on the date, detailed Sigma Chi Homecoming plans will be published.

**In December**, we will have our annual Sigma Chi Holiday Party. Date, time, and location are all still to be determined. Look for our announcement

*(Continued on page 2)*

## FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAPTER ADVISOR

**G**reetings, Brothers! I'm excited to provide an overview of the highlights for our undergraduate Chapter as we head into a new year and the spring semester at 1510 Vine Street. My overarching observation is quite positive.

Our Alumni Advisory Committee is deliberately—and with confidence—slightly loosening our management grip on the affairs of the undergraduate Chapter. The reason why is simple. Our undergraduates have consistently proven themselves to be ready to own who they are, what they are called to do in the best of Sigma Chi values, and what they want their reputation to be on campus and in the community. We have our culture “right” and it is gratifying to witness and to give these guys the well-earned opportunity to move to more self-governance. Here are a few key points that I wanted to share.

**We are up to 76 members.** We are vetting possible new members quite rigorously and selecting quality young men with the right values—and the results are showing. One fine example of this is that 28 out of 31 members of our last pledge class were recently initiated.

**We have strong team continuity.** While we are losing Chapter Advisory Member **Brad Staskiewicz '10** as he relocates to Minneapolis, I am continuing my role in leading the Advisory Committee. Al Cooper, our house dad, has proven to be a valuable asset—admired and respected by the undergraduates. Al is moving into his second year with us and, given his path to earning his Ph.D., will likely be with us for several more. Stacey, our all-purpose cook/house mom/relational glue is now in her fourth year (a modern record for us!) and revered by all, not just for her great cooking, but her care as well. I want to personally thank Brad for his tireless, insightful, and valuable work with our undergraduates over the years. He has been nothing short of superb and we wish him well as he embarks on this next chapter of his life.

**Our renovation has proved truly worthy.** We have a great physical plant and have learned how to improve some things during this “shakedown” period. For example, we converted, at the request of the undergraduates, the old study room into a “brotherhood” room with more seating, television, and sound system. We then converted the quieter downstairs area to be the primary study area complete with improved Wi-Fi capacity.

**We are building Sigs for Life.** I am highly optimistic that the clear shift in culture has created the kind of “stickiness” in terms of lifetime commitment to Sigma Chi. Our culture has shifted in a positive, values-driven way, that stresses personal accountability and care for one another. It is great to witness! This bodes well not only for the undergraduate Chapter today, but for the future leadership of the Advisory Group as I am confident we will transition a number of our graduates to serving in advisory capacities following graduation.

**We are growing stronger financially.** We are in the process of converting our current line of credit into a long-term amortized loan, which will systematically reduce our debt obligations and free up cash flow. We are getting close to full occupancy status as well and our plan is to sustain those levels year in and year out, which also bodes well for debt reduction.

All in all, I think Alpha Epsilon has come a long way in the last five years, and we will continue on a path of success.

In Hoc,  
**Trey Pittenger '01**  
Chapter Advisor  
trey@pittand.com

## Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter Update

*(Continued from page 1)*

in the next *Husker Sig* and via separate e-mail to alumni members.

All in all, this looks to be an ambitious and fun 2017 for Nebraska Sig alumni in the Lincoln, Omaha, and surrounding areas.

Additionally, the GNAAC is in sound financial health. Our bank balance of \$15,089 can be attributed to a successful collection period for annual dues and the inclusion of dues requests directly in our newsletter. Your dues support alumni activity throughout the year and the publication of *The Husker Sig*!

In Hoc,  
**Curt “Woody” Denker '77**  
President  
Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter  
Curt.Denker@pinnbank.com

## ALPHA EPSILON CONTINUES UPWARD TRAJECTORY

**L**ooking back over the last four years since Sigma Chi was reinstated, it is gratifying to see the arc of our growth. At the time of the reinstatement, we had pared down to “a few good men” who were determined to do three things well. First, to live out the Sigma Chi values fully. Second, we were determined to build a culture that would turn out true leaders. And, finally, we wanted to grow in numbers and influence, without ever compromising values or the desire to build leaders.

We owe a great deal to the handful of Sigs who, with determination and optimism, planted the seeds for the “right kind of growth” five years ago. Led by Consul **Alex Moore '15** and seven other brothers at the time, we have now grown our membership numbers to 76. We dare say that no other fraternity house on campus has grown more in terms of numbers during this period of time.

The Alpha Epsilon Chapter is growing, for sure. But it is growing based on solid, foundational principles set by the National Fraternity.



*Alpha Epsilon brothers gather in the living room for a Secret Santa gift exchange prior to the holiday break.*

Paradoxically, it is also growing because we have chosen to focus only on engaging quality young men who have the potential to become leaders and to attract other leaders. The idea is that quality begets quality and that, together, a culture of accountability, success, and leadership is built.

We, as a Chapter, owe what we have today to what the men in 2012 did in keeping the house running and on campus. Many people at that time would have chosen to join another house instead of Sigma Chi, but those few guys believed in the house and chose to light the path for the brothers to come. A telling outcome to their faithfulness and vision is that every man in the Chapter House proudly wears letters around campus and consistently strives to better the house day by day. Any member in the Chapter House would tell you how proud they are about how far the house has come, and they will also say Sigma Chi will only continue to grow, and get better.

In Hoc,  
**John Schmitt '19**

# Sigs Cook Up More Philanthropy

*Alpha Epsilon Brothers Raised More Than \$12,000 in 2016*

The Alpha Epsilon Chapter has always prided itself on the success of its philanthropic efforts, and we are proud to report that tradition continues. At the end of last year, we successfully executed our second annual Chicken and Waffles benefit. With help from the brothers of Sigma Chi and our friends from Phi Mu, we were able to raise over \$2,600 through ticket sales, donations, and the selling of raffle tickets.



*The banner for the second annual Chicken and Waffles philanthropic event at the Chapter House.*

**Zach Lewis '19**, the philanthropy chairman for fall 2016, said, "All of our guys had a great time working the event, and with a growing Chapter, I'm excited to see all the opportunities that will come our way as far as philanthropic events and other fundraising events." All of the funds from the Chicken and Waffles event will support the Huntsman Cancer Foundation.

Earlier in 2016, our Derby Days events raised over \$10,000 for not only the Huntsman Cancer Foundation, but also a fellow Greek sorority member in need of financial help in her battle with cancer. Derby Days allowed the participating women to take part in eight different events, including a dance competition, relay race, and a home run derby. We had an impressive 14 teams participate, with Alpha Omicron Pi achieving the overall win.

Alpha Epsilon's new Derby Days chairman for 2016-17, **Zach Kohut '19**, has been working with his committee since September to make sure Derby Days 2017 continues our successful tradition of philanthropy and fun.

Additionally, we are excited to announce that Alpha Epsilon will have a second philanthropic event this spring after Derby Days. We feel there is an opportunity to go further in our philanthropic efforts and that these programs help bring our brotherhood together. **A.J. Abrevaya '19**, Alpha Epsilon's incoming philanthropy chairman, will be the mastermind behind the spring philanthropy.

The undergraduate members of Alpha Epsilon hope to continue our ongoing efforts to support the Huntsman Cancer Foundation, and, in the process, work our way to winning the Peterson Award for the third consecutive year—something that has not been done before.

In Hoc,  
**Tony Holloran '18**

# EARLY AND OFTEN

Alpha Epsilon Sigs Get Involved on Campus and Beyond

Sigma Chi's vision "to become the preeminent collegiate leadership development organization—aligned, focused and living our core values," has become more and more clear in the last few years at 1510 Vine. We are happy to report that Alpha Epsilon brothers have taken leadership roles at various registered student organizations across campus.

During recruitment over the summer of 2016, when we were evaluating the majority of candidates for membership, an interesting discussion came up. Specifically, when is the appropriate time for relatively new undergraduate students to assume positions of leadership in the house and, for that matter, on campus?

While there is probably no foolproof one-size-fits-all answer, the general trend is that younger undergraduates are getting more and more involved in leadership positions earlier in their collegiate experience. We like that trend; in fact, it is manifesting itself within Sigma Chi. Here are some of the leadership roles Alpha Epsilon brothers are involved with:

- **Connor O'Dell '19**: past vice president and current president of Ad Club
- **Trevor Wood '19**: executive position in Ad Club
- **Scott Ayers '19** and **Ky Veeny '17**: members of University Program Council

- **Reagan Bergan '17**: president of the on-campus a cappella group Rocktavo
- **Treyton Merwick '19**: treasurer of Rocktavo
- **Nicholas Courtney '19**: member of the Environmental Leadership Program
- **Michael Kleine '18**: founder and president of the International Business Club (IBC)
- **Ty Khubchandai '19**: member of IBC's executive team

Closer to home, four members of the fall class were selected to important Chapter positions in last fall's elections:

- **Kasey Smith '19**: IFC representative
- **Andrew Ruboyanians '20**: assistant quaestor
- **Luke Holman '20**: intramural chairman
- **Caleb Howland '20**: historian

Following the ideals of the Fraternity, Sigma Chi at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is actively seeking out leadership opportunities for its members with renewed enthusiasm and creating a culture of excellence within its walls. After winning a second Peterson award this past summer, Alpha Epsilon looks forward to continuing the trend upward as not only a leader on campus, but as an emerging leader of the Fraternity nationwide.

In Hoc,  
**Johnny Keeley '18**

## ALFONZO "AL" COOPER SETTLES IN AS HOUSE DAD

For decades, many fraternities on campus, including ours, have engaged a "house mom" to fill a supervisory need and a gentle touch in the Chapter House. But over the past several years, the Alpha Epsilon Chapter has taken a different approach, employing a "house dad." Since being reinstated on campus in 2013, Sigma Chi has hired young men in this role who have had recent and exemplary undergraduate Fraternity experiences, successfully graduated, and are at work on graduate degrees.

**Jack Erhke, FarmHouse '12**, a member of FarmHouse Fraternity and a UNL graduate, was first to serve in this role. He was succeeded by **Isaac Moore, FarmHouse '13**, also a member of FarmHouse and a UNL graduate. Both left an indelible impression on Sigma Chi and both have moved on in their careers. Our third official house dad, **Alfonzo Cooper Jr.**, is now in his second year.

Al is a 27-year-old doctoral candidate in music from Waynesboro, Georgia, and a graduate of Georgia Southern University. He is an opera singer and remains deeply involved with his two fraternities: Phi Mu Alpha, which is the music fraternity, and his social fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi.

When asked about his interest in the position, Al said, "Honestly, I was optimistic and enthusiastic because I have had a really good experience in being in a fraternity chapter as an undergrad. I have a pretty good understanding of how fraternity life works. That understanding is why I applied and interviewed for this position."

Al's busy schedule outside the Chapter House includes volunteering with Greek Affairs. "I see a connection between the two. I can be an effective liaison, sharing my experiences with the men of Sigma Chi, which benefits Greek Affairs, while making Sigma Chi aware of the positions and policies adopted by Greek Affairs," Al said.

*(Continued on page 4)*



## Visit AE Online

We publish a hard copy of *The Husker Sig* twice a year with support from your annual dues to the Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter. We hope you enjoy it. Remember to “fill in the blanks” between the printed editions of *The Husker Sig* by visiting our website, which is dedicated to undergraduate and alumni interests alike. We’re working on getting better and faster at posting news, and the more you use it, the better we’ll get! Visit Alpha Epsilon at [www.unsigmachi.com](http://www.unsigmachi.com).



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## ALFONZO “AL” COOPER SETTLES IN AS HOUSE DAD

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Asked what “life advice” he gives to his undergraduate charges from Sigma Chi, Al said, “Never take no for an answer. Learn as much as possible. Value each and every opportunity. Understand that there will sometimes be unwelcomed and inaccurate stereotypes associated with men in fraternities. Don’t fall into those stereotypes, but be a real leader on campus and lead with the principles the Fraternity teaches. You only have one life, make the best of it.” That advice is music to our ears.

In Hoc,  
Scott Ayers '19

**Attention:** This newsletter is intended for alumni and parents. If your son is still attending the University of Nebraska, he will receive a copy at the Chapter House. If he has graduated, please send us his permanent address. Thank you.

## BROTHERS AND FAMILIES REUNITE FOR HOMECOMING 2016

*The Weekend Featured the Presentation and Pinning of Half-Century Sig Pins*

Homecoming 2016 rocked. The alumni couldn’t have asked for much more. The welcome given to returning Sigs, wives, and families was superb throughout the weekend.

On Friday, September 30, the Greater Nebraska Area Alumni Chapter hosted a reception at the N Club for about 60 Sigs from far and near. The views, the food, and the hospitality set the tone for the weekend.

On Saturday morning, October 1, the undergraduate Chapter hosted a very special pre-game reception at the Sig House. About 80 alumni, wives, and family members were in attendance to witness a fine Homecoming display created by the undergraduates (they took second in the campus-wide judging and were miffed that they didn’t get first!).

Each new pledge had the opportunity to stand up before this august crowd to introduce themselves and suffer the requisite ribbings by their classmates. Also on the agenda was the presentation and pinning for the Half-Century Sig pins by the undergraduates to their alumni brothers who have been members of Sigma Chi for over 50 years. Believe it or not, some 25 brothers from around the country were also there to receive their pins in a very touching ceremony.

Another poignant presentation took place at the house as Mary Drago, the widow of Brother **Mick Drago '64**, gifted a large, beautiful, handmade



*The 2016 Sigma Chi Chapter House Homecoming display won second place. There’s No Place Like...the Sig House at Homecoming.*

piece of furniture to the house, shipped in from San Diego. The piece, which had been part of the Drago household for over 30 years, was designed by Mick, carved out of teak, and featured the Sigma Chi Coat of Arms. It now stands in the main living room of 1510 Vine Street with an appropriate brass plaque acknowledgement attached to it. The presentation was made all the more meaningful as a number of Mick’s contemporaries were in attendance. This gift to the Chapter House comes on top of the generous lead gift of \$250,000 the Dragoos made to the Chapter during the capital campaign drive.

Capping off a perfect day, the Huskers came back from a first-half deficit and ripped Illinois on the last quarter heroics of Tommy Armstrong and Terrell Newby, 31-16.

A footnote: the Sigs of the Sixties got together that evening for their every-other-year dinner at Wilderness Ridge. These old chaps, of whom I am one, continue to amaze as they celebrated another Homecoming with some 50 Sigs and their wives in attendance. A reminder to you young guys that “once a Sig, always a Sig.” Happy Homecoming!

In Hoc,  
J. Steve Davis '67