

May 15, 2001

Office of the Executive Secretary
Sigma Phi Delta Fraternity

RE: Report of the Western Province Councilor

I. CHAPTER STATUS

Alpha Active Chapter and Los Angeles Alumni Chapter

Alpha chapter was visited by the Western Province Councilor during the weekend of November 3rd – 5th, 2000. During the visitation, meetings were held with both the Active Chapter and the Los Angeles Alumni Corp.

The most critical issue facing Alpha Chapter at the time of the Visitation was membership level. As reported by the Active Chapter delegates at last year's Joint Province Convention, the past few years had been marked by a rapid decline in membership, with the number of Active members dropping to four in the fall of 2000. The severity of the situation was not lost on the remaining Actives, and they responded with aggressive and energetic Rush efforts in both the Fall and Spring semesters. The result was the successful recruitment of seven pledges over the course of the year (all of whom have now been initiated). The effort required to do this was substantial, and the Actives involved should be commended for it. The chapter has now placed itself on a positive trajectory, which should provide a great deal of encouragement for all involved. Maintaining this trajectory will most effectively be achieved through the establishment of a good rush plan (based on this year's experiences) and diligent execution of the plan with individual accountability in future years.

As a result of both the membership level issues (mentioned above) and some difficulties in the collection of dues and/or rent, the chapter also found itself in a financial position that was less favourable than in the past. The action taken to address this was to involve the local Alumni Corp. directly in the collection of fees from Active members and the management of chapter house renovations. While the system put in place represented a significant change to the status quo and required some getting used to for all involved, it appears to be an effective means to put the chapter back on track financially.

Through meeting with the Active chapter members and discussing the activities in which they are engaged, it became exceedingly clear that Alpha Chapter has a very good attitude towards scholarship. Chapter members clearly take academics seriously, and approach scholastics with a professional attitude.

It was also clear after discussing recent events held at the chapter house that the chapter members engage actively in effecting the risk reduction policy. In fact, the members of Alpha chapter have a strong level of respect for the formal aspects of Fraternity involvement, which is encouraging to see.

Theta Active Chapter and Vancouver Alumni Chapter

An official visitation was held at Theta Chapter during the weekend of October 20th – 22nd, 2000. A meeting was held with the Active Chapter, as well as an informal dinner with both the Active Chapter and the Vancouver Alumni. As the WPC is currently living in the Vancouver area and is able to attend regular Vancouver Alumni meetings, no formal meeting was held with the Alumni Chapter during the visitation.

One key issue that seems to be a recurring one for Theta is communications with the National Office. Recent examples include a miscommunication around jewelry orders for initiates, as well as incomplete initiation records (resulting in initiated members not appearing in the National database for several months). It is possible that Theta's geographic remoteness from the rest of the fraternity lends itself to a "disconnect" between the chapter and National, but it is also likely that communication simply needs to become a stronger part of the culture at Theta. To this end the WPC has made an effort to communicate frequently with chapter regarding operations at the National level. The situations mentioned above have also been solved with a good deal of effort from the Actives as well as National.

Financially, Theta manages to keep itself in relatively good shape through a rigorous division between "Chapter" and "House" funds. Chapter operating expenses and Dues payments are made from the Chapter account, which is managed by the chapter's Business Manager. In-house Actives pay rent directly into the House account, which is managed by the chapter's House Manager. This system has been very effective in preventing undesirable mingling of funds, and ensuring that funds are always available for property taxes (paid through the Alumni Chapter), general upkeep and renovations.

The members at Theta are very involved in the Engineering Undergraduate Society at UBC, and take a great deal of pride in the Engineering education. While the focus on academics could occasionally be stronger, the focus on leadership within the Engineering student body is tremendous.

Risk reduction appears to be a priority among the members of Theta Chapter. Discussions around events held at the chapter house this year indicate that the members are being both intelligent and rigorous in their definition and enforcement of policies at social events.

II. PROVINCE OPERATION

WPC Goals for the coming year include:

1. Providing support to the existing Western Province Active Chapters in maintaining a strong and active membership base.

At Alpha, this will involve helping the Actives to capture the knowledge that they have gained through this year's efforts in the form of a rush plan for the coming year, as well as providing a channels for communication between Alpha and National, as well as chapters in other regions. At Theta, this will involve continued efforts to drive awareness of the National Office and its role among Actives, as well as encouraging regular communications between the chapter and National. In both cases this will depend on assistance from the local Alumni Chapters. Both the Los Angeles and Vancouver Alumni chapters have provided a great deal of assistance to their respective Active Chapters, which will undoubtedly continue in the future.

2. Assisting the Fraternity Expansion officers in their efforts to build the Fraternity.

As the number of positions and resources associated with expansion increases, it can be expected that the level of activity will increase correspondingly (even beyond the unprecedented level seen in the last few years). It is the goal of the WPC to help facilitate communications between identified prospective colonies and existing chapters by working with the expansion officers to put the right people in touch with each other. A second goal is to provide as much support as possible to ease the transition from prospective to colony status and colony to chapter status, including extensive follow-up with new chapters to ensure continuity as they experience their first membership turnovers. Naturally, a significant component of the work involved in realizing these goals will be engaging in an active process of revising operations as the newly created expansion positions are absorbed into the Fraternity.

3. Maximizing the effectiveness of the Province Convention to be held in 2002.

In the coming year the Fraternity will move back to the Province Convention (vs. Joint Province Convention) format, with each Province meeting separately. Delegates at the Western Province Convention will therefore represent Alpha and Theta Active chapters, the Vancouver and Los Angeles Alumni chapters, as well as any new colonies and/or chapters that are formed in the Western Province through expansion. As such, the group in attendance will likely be small in comparison with the other two provinces. This offers the opportunity to achieve a high level of participation and interaction between members from the various chapters. It will therefore be a priority to plan a convention that makes full use of this opportunity with the help of the host chapters (Active and Alumni) as well as the National officers that plan to attend.

III. GENERAL

Several brothers have gone out of their way to extend help to ease the transition into this position over the past months. Former WPC Ben Prins was extremely helpful during the transition period. WPS John Tighi spent his own time and money travelling to Alpha during the November Visit, providing a great deal of useful help in getting acquainted with the Alpha Active and Los Angeles Alumni Chapters. Vancouver Alumni Secretary Edmund Gin did much of the work in organizing and recording the details of the October visit to Theta, as well as providing tireless help in communications with Theta and Vancouver Alumni members.

It has been very exciting to see more Western Province Alumni getting involved at the National Level over the past few months as well. Congratulations to Don Nash for his recent appointment to the position of Deputy Western Province Councilor for Expansion and to Richard Taylor for his recent acceptance of the newly created Canadian Expansion Chairman position.

Finally, it was a distinct pleasure to be involved in the selection process for the Executive Director of Sigma Phi Delta. All candidates that applied for the position should be congratulated. It was truly inspiring to see so many individuals of outstanding reputation and capabilities offering to represent the Fraternity in this position. The organization can only prosper from their continued involvement. A final congratulations to Bob Featheringham who accepted the Executive Director position.

Fraternally,

Kevin Oldknow
Western Province Councilor