

Malinda's Mailbag 3: Is It Brotherhood?

Brotherhood is many things. At times, it is a warm and happy feeling. That is the feeling that we strive to feel most of the time. At times, Brotherhood is accountability. It is about challenging each of us to achieve the best we can, with the strongest foundation possible.

Brotherhood at its core is action. It is translating our values into daily life.

Often, when I'm asked if something is

"Brotherhood," what I'm being asked is "why are they making me do something?" Brothers hold each other accountable to our Ritualistic promises. Those may not be fun conversations, although necessary to true Brotherhood.

If you have questions, contact me at mmatney@umich.edu. Your work in band today can lead to greater heights tomorrow!

Malinda

How do we build Brotherhood? Where is it in our chapter priorities?

Dr. Matney:

We are having problems balancing service, social, and Brotherhood. We get into arguments about where we are going at each meeting. Our chapter is strong, but I worry. Which is more important?

Strong chapters become weak quickly. They become weak without Brothers recognizing that their chapter is sliding. They see signs that success is happening. Fundraisers make money, ongoing service functions, officers get elected, members are still recruited. However, this is passive, relying on "what we always do." It doesn't speak to cultivating relationships between Brothers, actively encouraging Brothers to take good risks, such as trying for a new leadership role, auditioning for a competitive ensemble, aspiring to their dreams. If a chapter thinks it will probably continue to be strong, it won't.

What you are pondering isn't the work that we can do in one regular chapter meeting. We know that the answer to "what is more important: service, music, or social" is "yes." All five points in our preamble are important, and equally so. That doesn't mean that every week of what we do will equally focus on all five. However, they should be part of the work of every term, of every year.

What I find helpful is to schedule a time (once each year or near the beginning of each term) to do "medium term planning." That is, you aren't trying to make a plan for the next five years, and you are not just planning for next week. You are planning for a year, and looking at all the activities and projects you have in mind. This is a time to think about what activities are ready to be discontinued, and what new projects you would like to tackle. What makes this particularly helpful is that you can label your activities according to what point(s) of the preamble they meet. As you step back and look at a year of work, you can see if you have balance or not. This is harder every week, because at a normal chapter meeting you are addressing the immediate future, and not looking at all you do. In a larger planning meeting such as what I'm describing, you can see everything at once.

The Director and Sponsor can be very helpful in learning this balance. They have a good idea about the needs of the band program and where KKPsi can fit into those needs. This is especially true of the service you provide – it should be the service your bands need most.

This is useful again to think about who you want to attract as members. You can use such a planning meeting to think about what qualities you want in the next members and write them down. This makes evaluating future members much easier. You can hand out sheets of these qualities at the chapter meeting when your chapter votes on who should receive bids.



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Strive for the Highest

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www.kkpsi.org

Does Brotherhood come ahead of career?

Dr. Matney:

Which comes first for you: The title "Brother" or the title "Doctor?"

I have two answers to your question. Chronologically, Brother comes before Doctor by many years, although I can't imagine my life without either now.

That said, many Brothers were part of what made me Doctor. Some helped proofread parts of my writing, some helped format tables, some asked over and over what I was doing (which was helpful in my own ability to talk about my work), some provided inspiration and cheer, and some just kept asking "when are you going to be done." One Brother served as a member of my

dissertation committee -- that doesn't happen too often. Without the doctorate, I would still be a Brother, but it is questionable whether I could have the doctorate without the support of the Brotherhood.

If we are living up to our motto – if we are Striving for the Highest – we will aspire to many accomplishments. These may be in music, career, family, or other areas. As Brothers, our ability to help people achieve their goals, and to remind them not to give up those goals when the work is hard, marks us as better than the average fraternity. It shows us at our greatest strength, using our common bond of music to enhance all parts of future life.

Does Brotherhood hold us accountable for debts?

Dr. Matney:

My chapter wants to expel me. Sure, I owe them money, but Brothers would understand. What kind of Brother wouldn't look past debt? If they really need proof I'll pay them back, I'll write a post dated check.

Ask those who work with family conflict, and they will tell you that money is the source of many problems. It can start so innocently, with people talking about agreements without putting them in writing, or just asking for "a few more days." People forget about these deadlines and agreements, and that is when the fighting starts.

Even within biological families, the families that handle financial agreements easiest are the ones that put them in writing. No agreement is too small to be committed to writing. Making an agreement in writing provides a reasonable timeframe for the chapter to remind Brothers of obligations, and a reminder to individual Brothers to honor their commitments. At this point, the rest of the chapter has proof of whatever the agreement was.

We know that few of us have easy financial situations. When we allow debts to go unpaid for a while, debts tend to grow and our ability to repay tends to shrink. I know of few college students who have much cash at the end of the term – prolonging a debt for these Brothers reduces the ability to repay.

Do Brothers hold each other accountable? Absolutely. It isn't a moment of fun or pleasure when that happens. I don't know of any Brothers who find discipline of other Brothers to be fun. However, we know we need to take care of a larger family. Debts over time add up to large financial headaches for the whole family, whether at the chapter level or the national level.

Financial obligations are just as important as other obligations we take. Certainly as Brothers we do not want to leave our fellow Brothers having to make up for our share of the burden – whether in work or in finance. Brotherhood is both pleasure and duty, a careful balance.