

## Using sponsors and directors as allies

I've heard from many students about issues they have with sponsors. I've been a student working to lead a chapter and district. Now, in addition to my role on the National Council, I'm a sponsor and an administrator and faculty member at the University of Michigan. I've seen both sides of this relationship.

In this issue, we discuss tips to help make the relationship with sponsors and directors positive.

The sponsor is asked by our National Fraternity to hold the chapter accountable

in its activities, particularly as they relate to national policies and university regulations. Sometimes, that means the sponsor has to deliver news the chapter won't like. This is not fun. After all, sponsors do not go into these positions to disappoint other people.

If you have questions about your work with your sponsors and directors, Governors can also help you brainstorm ways to create "win-win" resolutions.

Have a great year, and keep those questions coming!

Malinda

### *How do we build positive relationships with sponsors and directors?*

Sponsors and directors do not spend their days creating ways to cause trouble. They are not sitting at keyboards cackling over what might annoy the active membership. They don't have time. Whether directors or not, sponsors spend great energy making professional lives grow (including sustaining many band programs), tending to families, and probably performing other volunteer roles. The first thing sponsors share in common with students is a schedule crammed full of things they must do to keep their lives going.

The best way to improve a relationship is focusing on efficient and timely communication.

- The sponsor needs to be notified of all meetings and events, well in advance. Half a week is not "well in advance." Plan ahead so that your sponsor has every opportunity to attend events.
- Set regular appointments with your sponsor to discuss upcoming chapter issues or possible new projects. Your sponsor has probably seen a lot, and can help you reduce potential trouble or locate resources. Brainstorming early helps you and your sponsor

work together to create something great. Surprising your sponsor in a meeting (or after the fact) with something questionable is not a way to get your sponsor's approval.

- Your sponsor probably has great ideas for you as well. Make sure that you take the time to ask for your sponsor's ideas, as well as presenting your sponsor with your ideas. The creativity can flow well both ways, and you'll have a better idea of what projects would be most helpful for the band program.
- Do not expect sponsors to be available on a moment's notice. This is particularly true of times when you need a sponsor's approval or signature. Plan in advance for national, district or campus deadlines.
- When planning meetings and events, your sponsor's schedule matters. Many chapters wonder why a sponsor won't attend meetings late on Sunday night (or late at all), just because it is "when we can get together." Your sponsor usually will not have the same flexibility of time that students enjoy. Holding late meetings (particularly if your meetings tend to last for a while) sends a message that you don't want your sponsor present.



## Kappa Kappa Psi

PO Box 849  
Stillwater, OK  
74076-0849  
800-543-6505

Malinda M. Matney, Ph.D.  
National Vice President  
for Colonization and  
Membership  
mmatney@umich.edu

*Strive for the Highest*

---

We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.kkpsi.org](http://www.kkpsi.org)

---

### Teaching Tip:

Invite your director or directors to a meeting to describe their careers. This can be a time to learn how your director came to music as a profession. Brothers can understand the director better, and establish positive connections.

Most people want to share about themselves. You and your director can reestablish your common love of music.

### *What are other ways to include your sponsor and director?*

There are other communication strategies and moments that should include sponsors:

- *Include the director and sponsor on all business documents, including all minutes, agendas, and other regular communication.*
- *Your sponsor should be a part of chapter email groups and other regular communication.* This is true even if you tell jokes (often especially if you tell jokes). Sponsors enjoy humor. Really. Besides, if you are writing things over chapter email that you wouldn't want your sponsor to see, should it be on your chapter listserv?
- *Don't blame the messenger.* Chances are, your sponsor did not create fraternity policies or university regulations. Our student membership has created our Fraternity policies. Don't give your sponsor a hard time for enforcing policies he or she is entrusted to enforce.
- *When you ask for advice, listen to it.* Sometimes students ask a sponsor for advice, and then argue over the advice. If you ask for advice, feedback, input, or information in any other way, listen to it. You should discuss, clarify, or brainstorm with your sponsor – a good conversation will help everyone. However, if you are going to take your and your sponsor's time to ask for advice, at least consider what your sponsor has to say. Often, your sponsor sees different perspectives (issues going on in your college, or issues that have happened over time) that can help you shape your next steps on a project and reach success.

### *How can students, sponsors, and directors see eye-to-eye?*

Remember a couple of key things when thinking about your relationship with your sponsor and director, particularly in the moments when the relationship seems roughest.

- *Remember what Kappa Kappa Psi is.* Many conflicts arise when the focus of KKPsi is lost. At the end of the day, we are Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary College Band Fraternity. College bands are the center of what we do. Band honor, band leadership, band service, band fun, band networking are all *parts* of our work, but the center is always college bands. Returning to that focus resolves many conflicts. Most conflicts are the result of losing the Fraternity's focus on college bands.
- *Remember what you and your sponsor and director share.* What attracted your sponsor to Kappa Kappa Psi or to a career in college bands is probably similar to what attracted you to

bands and the Fraternity. Sponsors share a love of music and a desire to interact with students and help you grow. Sponsors love the excitement of a performance done well. Sponsors and directors consider it as a special treat to see students grow over the years to become leaders and accomplish things they previously didn't think possible. If your sponsor is a band director who didn't have the chance to be a Brother during college, remembering what you have in common can help you talk with your sponsor more about what Kappa Kappa Psi means to you, and build that excitement in your sponsor.

It is an honor to serve a Fraternity steeped in college band history. Never take Kappa Kappa Psi for granted. Kappa Kappa Psi is the result of everyone's constant work to keep the standards and performance levels high.