

April 2007

Volume 2, Issue 8

VCMEP

Virtual Continuing Membership Education Program  
Kappa Kappa Psi National Honorary Band Fraternity

Malinda M. Matney, Ph.D., National Vice President for Colonization and Membership

<http://www.kkpsi.org>

This month with Phil Rubin, Chapter Field Representative

## *mmmmMeetings! Making meetings more productive*

Some Brothers love chapter meetings and some Brothers hate meetings. No matter what position you take, one fact is for sure: We're going to have chapter meetings. Phil Rubin writes this month in an effort to help you make meetings as effective and painless as possible.

You can learn a lot about a chapter by the way it meets. Is this an organized chapter, or are things just figured out as they come along? Is everyone involved in chapter

affairs, or do just a handful of Brothers run things? Are people treated fairly and as Brothers, or are some shouted down? Let's examine a few things that might help to make your meetings – and through them, your chapter – better.

If you are preparing an officer transition now, this is a great time to think about how you will meet during the coming year. Best of wishes on finals and the final **Chapter Summary Report** of the biennium!

Malinda

### *Why do we meet?*

Most chapters meet weekly. That's a lot of time to take, so we should understand why we meet. I believe strongly that *chapter meetings are for decisions*. Make a poster, write a song, tattoo it on your forehead – whatever it takes to keep it in foremost in mind: meetings are for *decisions*. Chapter meetings are *not* for hammering out details of proposals; that's

what individual work and committees are there to do.

We also meet to share ideas, feelings, news, and any information that pertains to the Brotherhood. Remember, though, that the business portion of the meeting is vital if we are to be an active and vital organization. Devoting time for Brothers to share news or accomplishments is wonderful, but separate this time from the business portion of the meeting.

### *How do we prepare for meetings?*

Successful meetings need preparation and planning, particularly by the president. We've all heard the phrase, "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail." With meetings, "if you fail to plan, plan to take two-and-a-half hours to do thirty minutes of work." Nobody wants that. Here are some tips:

- **Use written meeting agendas.** These agendas should be very detailed – containing all of the business items you expect to consider during the meeting. If you are a chapter president, go ahead and set a time each week during which you will make the agenda. Let all of the Brothers know how to get their items on the agenda and work to make sure you know all of the topics to be

discussed.

- **Any work that can be done outside the meeting should be done outside the meeting.** This goes along with the idea that "meetings are for decisions." If you need to figure out a good date for an upcoming fundraiser, don't come to the meeting and ask the chapter what would work for them. Instead, look at the calendar, pick 3-4 dates and cross-reference them with the band's schedule, the location of the fundraiser, the chapter's schedule, and the schedules of the key people involved in that event – do that all *before* the meeting. Then, bring a list of dates that will work to the chapter so that they can simply vote on which one they like. Make it standard procedure that anyone proposing a project have done this level of preparatory work.



## 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

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#### Check your CD!

One part of the membership CD each active member has is a quick tips sheet on parliamentary procedure. This sheet can be useful in meetings to quickly navigate tricky business.

## How do we meet effectively?

Preparation is important – vital. Just because you have prepared well doesn't mean that the meeting will automatically go smoothly. Here are some tips on running the meeting:

- **Start on time.** It's a matter of respect and of order. It shows that this is a business meeting and you are taking it seriously.
- **Know the rules.** Parliamentary procedure isn't something we use out of tradition. It is essential for fairness and making sure that all views are heard. Used well, it can be extremely efficient. Whether you are a parliamentarian, a president, or an active member; take a look at a condensed Robert's Rules book. I recommend Webster's New World *Robert's Rules of Order Simplified and Applied* as a resource. The first five chapters of this book are as good a primer as you'll find on parliamentary procedure – and the rest of the book serves as a great reference.
- **The Chair must fulfill responsibilities.** Knowing the rules, keeping discussion on topic (and politely but sternly reminding members when they go off-topic), and stopping personal attacks before they start are also essential parts of being president.

### Final thoughts

When was the last time you thought about the quality of your meetings? How we meet is *essential* to succeeding as an organization. Don't meet haphazardly; think about your meetings. Think about what you want out of the meeting and what a good meeting would look like. Do you plan for your meetings? Do you think carefully about what outcomes you want and why you are meeting? Does your chapter know the rules and follow them all the time? If the answer

You may not have run for president because you wanted to run meetings, but nonetheless, you have a duty to do it well.

- **Bring the essential materials and have a set, appropriate space.** Reserve the room you use through your campus, and try to have a back-up room readily available if your room is prone to being taken from you. Make sure the room is big enough and private enough to use for your meeting. Bring Robert's Rules, the National Constitution, Chapter Constitution, and any other documents you might need. Someone should be responsible for bringing each of these and the chapter's calendar should also be on-hand as well.
- **Meetings are for decisions.** If someone brings something unprepared for a decision, don't spend chapter time arguing details. Send it to committee. You can send something to a committee or an individual, and give a deadline to report back. If you waste ten minutes of time for twenty people, you've wasted over three hours of time. Make it chapter policy that ideas come as complete thoughts, or they go to a committee to be completed and brought back

to these is "yes," then your meetings are probably pretty effective. There's no set "right length" for meetings, but if your average meeting is between 60 and 75 minutes, that's probably pretty good.

Remember this: Meetings can be fun, but not as fun as *not* being in meetings. So get your business done efficiently, fairly, and effectively. Then go do something else together!