

International Fraternity of Delta Sigma Pi

COVID-19 Best Practices Guide to Pledge Education

OVERVIEW

A successful Pledge Education Program is essential to the foundation of our chapters. This task will present new challenges and opportunities, due to the uncertainty caused by the presence of the COVID-19 virus and how it will impact our ability to meet face-to-face. This guide outlines some recommendations and ideas for your chapter to use through the 2020-21 academic year.

BEST PRACTICES

Main priorities:

- Conduct the Pledge Education Program and make sure the VPPE is familiar with the Pledge Education Guide.
- Support and mentor pledges through successful completion of the Pledge Education Program.
- Work with the chapter's Executive Committee, National leaders and Central Office staff to go over the program in August and address issues early.
- Whether meeting in person, virtually, or both, it is important that – as brothers – we are supportive of our pledges' and our current brothers' comfort level in attending events. It is important to offer safe, informative, and fun events while following university and local/state government guidelines.

Meetings held online, in person or hybrid:

Pledge meeting format should mirror what the chapter is doing, even if the pledge meetings are smaller and, therefore, have different options. For example, if the chapter is having chapter business meetings virtually, the pledge education meetings should also be virtual.

Fully online:

- Lecture format with allotted time to unmute and have conversation.
- Use chat functions or poll options to keep people engaged.
- Have local National leaders (DD and RVP) aim to attend at least one pledge meeting.
- Invite your Chapter Advisor and other faculty brothers to attend pledge meetings and welcome new pledges (or “pop in” at a designated time for a brief introduction and conversation).
- Maximize use of available support and resources, such as Educational and Leadership Consultants and National leaders (DD, RVP, etc.)

Hybrid:

- Be prepared to rotate some in-person and some online.
- Online lecture format with allotted time to unmute and have conversation.
- Be aware of university guidelines and local/state/national regulations on social distancing.
- Be clear about the guidelines for social distancing at the meetings (communicate ahead of time and announce at the beginning of each event).
- Have safeguards in place that are known by all attendees (regarding masks, distance, handshakes, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.) as required by your campus and local/state guidelines.

- Virtual meetings are a great time to invite other officers, faculty brothers, DD, RVP, etc. to join meetings and introduce themselves.
- Plan your budget to buy extra personal protection equipment, such as masks, to provide to pledges and brothers at meetings in case they are forgotten. Buy or make masks well in advance due to potentially having high demand and/or short supply and possible shipping delays.

In Person:

- Be aware of room capacity rules and other university guidelines and local/state/national regulations on social distancing.
- Be clear about the guidelines for social distancing at the meetings (communicate ahead of time and announce at the beginning of each event).
- Have safeguards in place that are known by all attendees (regarding masks, distance, handshakes, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.) as required by your campus and local/state guidelines.
- Plan your budget to buy extra personal protection equipment, such as masks, to provide to pledges and brothers at meetings if they are forgotten. Buy or make masks well in advance due to potentially having high demand and/or short supply and possible shipping delays.
- Plan one or more meetings to be held outdoors (if practical) to reduce contact and spread of germs; collaborate with District Director if you have concerns about the topic being discussed in public.

Pledge Engagement and Big Brother Program:

The chapter needs to evaluate the attendance policy and be adaptable to social distancing. Whether meeting in person, virtually, or both, it is important that we are supportive and understanding of our pledges' and our current brothers' comfort level in attending events.

Fully online:

- Encourage virtual game nights (trivia, word search, etc.)
- Virtual "Get-To-Know You" events with discussion questions and breakout rooms.
- Include pledges on chapter committees to engage with brothers around specific projects and events, and to better understand chapter operations.
- Encourage Big Brother outreach more than once a week.
 - Regular communication (social media, text, phone, video call, etc.)
 - Each Big Brother or the chapter may wish to mail a letter, card, or postcard to their Little Brother/pledge class.
- Invite pledges to participate in chapter activities, such as Brotherhood One-on-Ones (see Appendix A) and chapter events.

Hybrid:

- Plan for maximum attendance caps at all in-person events.
- Organize some chapter events outdoors to allow for greater social distancing and to decrease the spread of germs.
- Virtual events for larger "Get-To-Know You" events.
- Divide in-person events into smaller groups in separate rooms (ex. divide group by major, birthday month, first initial of middle name, randomly, etc.)

- Include pledges on chapter committees to engage with brothers around specific projects and events, and to better understand chapter operations.
- Invite local volunteer leaders, faculty brothers, etc. to attend virtual events since space will not be as limited.
- Invite pledges to participate in chapter activities, such as Brotherhood One-on-Ones (see Appendix A) and chapter events.

In Person:

- Be clear about the guidelines for social distancing at meetings (communicate ahead of time and announce at the beginning of each event).
- Have safeguards in place that are known by all attendees (regarding masks, distance, handshakes, disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, etc.) as required by your campus and local/state guidelines.
- Plan your budget to buy extra personal protection equipment, such as masks, to provide to pledges and brothers at meetings if they are forgotten. Buy or make masks well in advance due to potentially having high demand and/or short supply and possible shipping delays.
- Have chapter events be a mix of on- and off-campus events with a more relaxed attendance policy (to allow those not comfortable at venues to still participate as much as desired).
- Include pledges on chapter committees to engage with brothers around specific projects and events, and to better understand chapter operations.
- Invite pledges to participate in chapter activities, such as Brotherhood One-on-Ones (see Appendix A) and chapter events.

APPENDIX A: BROTHERHOOD ONE-ON-ONES

Fostering One-on-One Brotherhood through Personal Connection:

VPPE/SVP leads and all brothers and pledges need to opt in to partake in the weekly (or can appoint a chair to help lead this). While this is not directly related to recruitment, this should be implemented at the beginning of the term along with the recruitment activities.

Possible Initiative Names:

- Brunch with the Brothers
- Coffee Chat
- Dates with Deltasigs
- Chance encounters

Program Overview:

Random weekly pairings (pledge with pledge, brother with brother, pledge with brother) for pledge class and brothers who *willingly* opt-in. This program must run the entire semester/quarter starting before the pledging ceremony, and continuing past initiation. All pledges will have the opportunity at the beginning of their pledging process to *volunteer* to partake in the weekly brotherhood dates that are already happening within the chapter. The President, SVP and VPPE will then foster the pairings, or appoint a chair position to do so. The President, SVP, VPPE, or Chair will email brother pairings out every week after the chapter meeting to have their connection complete before the next meeting.

Examples of topics to discuss:

- Something you don't know about them and find something that you have in common
- Sharing future career goals and networking opportunities
- Favorite class so far and hardest class so far/ Sharing information about different majors
- Share excitement about upcoming Delta Sigma Pi experiences
- Mentorship opportunities

Timing: We would like this to be a beta test for fall 2020 and if successful, we would like it to become a best practice for chapters moving forward.

Additional sub-initiative:

- Mental Health Check-In/ Wellness Check led by Vice President-Scholarship and Awards

Group brotherhood building activities:

Full chapter ideas:

- Majority rules using Zoom polls or similar tool
- Cabinet Battle: Debate between brothers about an either/or topic (brothers pick a side to debate) Ex: Dodgers vs Angels, Michael Jordan vs LeBron James, TikTok vs Snapchat, and then brothers pick a side after each new argument is presented

Small group ideas:

- Netflix/Hulu watch parties
- Alumni panel by major (more intimate)
- Alphabet game (pick topic, then name in order of the alphabet)
- Jeopardy
- Open study room
- Virtual game night (ex. Jackbox Games)