xxx Atherton Hall
University Park, PA 16802
July 6, 2000

The Brothers of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity
xxx South Fraser Street
State College, PA 16801

Dear Brothers:

Contained within this packet you will find a feasibility report concerning possible solutions to the professionalism issues that we were facing at the end of the Spring 2000 semester. This report, entitled *Fighting Apathy and Fostering Professionalism at Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity* has been written to specifically address and suggest ways in which the fraternity can go about changing our problematic level of professionalism. I have evaluated several options for improving professionalism and fighting member apathy against a definite set of criteria. The report concludes with my suggestion for which of those options, or combination of options, would best suit our organization.

The research I completed for this report focused on the membership of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity, past and present. I administered surveys to all available members of the chapter in an effort to get a generalized feeling of the severity of the problem, and the current overall attitude of the membership towards the organization. Alumni were also interviewed to get their feelings on the condition of the fraternity now, as compared to when they were active members. Officers of other professional organizations were also contacted in an effort to find effective ways of implementing professional events, and encouraging similar behavior in the year 2000. I would also like to thank the Brotherhood in general for having the vision and mature ability to recognize that a problem exists within our beloved organization, and for being willing to do something about it. Without your help and suggestions, this report would not have been possible.

I believe in the future of our organization, and in the competence of our Brotherhood. Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity will overcome these issues that are hindering us today. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions to add to my finding, please feel free to contact me at (814)-999-9999. Thank you once again for your guidance.

Fidelitas, Amor, et Artes,

Brother Matthew M. ***
Fighting Apathy and Fostering Professionalism at Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity

Prepared for:

The Brothers of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity
Vitruvius Chapter, The Pennsylvania State University
State College, PA

Prepared by:
Brother Matthew ***

July 6, 2000
Executive Summary

Lack of professionalism at Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity has become a growing concern among the brotherhood over the past several years. The Spring 2000 semester served as a warning signal and alerted us to several deep and very troubling professionalism issues that are affecting our Brothers, Pledges, and any future members. APX is not living up to its full potential. The purpose of this report was to research, develop and evaluate possible solutions to our professionalism problems.

Research for the project involved the gathering of information from several different groups of individuals. Brotherhood surveys were distributed to all available members. Alumni and members of other student professional organizations such as CCSG and SSAE were interviewed for ideas and input. Fraternity enrollment numbers were also researched to determine trends in membership over the past 10 years.

During the process of writing this report, several possible remedies to the APX professionalism problem were identified. In an effort to determine which solution would work best, the following criteria were applied.

- Any solutions must be cost effective.
- Professionalism must be increased at chapter meetings
- Rush must begin to show a more professional side
- Professional and social aspects of the fraternity will be equally represented
- The solution must be able to be implemented
Three solutions were considered and evaluated for implementation. These solutions included a one time PDP held on a Saturday or Sunday, a five-week series of PDP’s held after weekly chapter meetings, and a weekend long Labor Day retreat at the cabin.

While all solutions faired well against the criteria, the most probable and effective idea was a combination of the five-week PDP and the Labor Day retreat. These two concepts together form a very strong and tolerable program that allows Brothers a chance to be social while learning about ways in which the fraternity needs to grow and change. I recommend the implementation of this solution, and hope to see Alpha Rho Chi advance and prosper in the very near future.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>i - ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Research Process</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluative Criteria</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview of Possible Solutions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Solutions Against Criteria</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Recommendations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The strength of any organization is based deeply in the beliefs and attitudes of its membership. As the Brothers of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity carry the Vitruvius Chapter at The Pennsylvania State University into the next millennium, changes within the organization are sure to take place. These changes, although necessary, are difficult to make. Our love and fidelity is rooted within our shared past experiences, and to change or erase those commonalities is like leaving a part of ourselves behind. As we progress into the New Year, however, we must recognize that times and attitudes are changing. If we are to continue to grow and prosper as an organization, we must learn to stay current with the needs and special demands of each and every future member.

At the closing of the Spring 2000 semester, Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity was in the process of recognizing and understanding problems that exist within our organization. Over and over, as individual issues were brought up and discussed, one reoccurring theme was evident: PROFESSIONALISM. That very word is the key to the past and future success of our beloved fraternity and was the founding ideal of our organization. It is what separates us from all other fraternities. It is the foundation that makes us unique and attractive to those select individuals who are looking for more than a social experience. We have so much to offer for those who are willing to learn about our organization.

The problem of lacking professionalism within our organization is not without a solution. While any improvement would be welcome, the best way to address the issue is through a
highly structured and interesting Professionalism Development Program, or PDP. The purpose of such a program is to address specific issues that the fraternity has recognized as being problematic and discuss them in small, more digestible pieces. This report has been constructed in an effort to research and decide which manner or series of programs would be most effective for our organization. Research has included the gathering of Brotherhood feelings on the topic, suggestions from other professional student organizations, APX chapters, and Alumni. All possible solutions have been evaluated on the basis of a definite set of criteria that address the unique needs of the Vitruvius Chapter of the Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity. This report concludes with my final recommendation for which PDP or series of PDP’s best suits the criteria, and therefore would most benefit our fraternity.

The Research Process

Research into the professionalism issues began with the distribution of surveys (see Appendix A) to all available Brothers of the fraternity. These surveys were a necessary step in determining the current attitudes of the Brotherhood so that I could better tailor a program to fit our needs and beliefs. These surveys provided me with many important points to consider, both positive and negative, and gave me a real feeling for what I needed to address in my further research.

The second piece of research I completed was examining APX membership numbers over the past 10 years. Records of new members and total active chapter membership are
kept in our fraternity library. Looking at these numbers was a necessary step in
determining if our decreased professionalism and increased social activities has resulted
in higher membership. I compiled the membership information into a line graph (see
Appendix B) to give the numbers more visual effect and meaning.

The next piece of research I completed was the APX Alumni interviews. At our annual
house fix-up weekend June 10-12, 2000, I had the opportunity to interview several of our
Alumni. I interviewed a total of three Alumni whose years of membership spanned the
past ten years. These informative interviews focused on a few primary questions (see
Appendix C) and were intended to give me a feeling for what APX was like
professionally in years past. Further questions focused on the general attitude of the
fraternity, types of professional activities held in the past, and what they felt current
problems with the fraternity may be. All three interviewees were very enthusiastic and
willing to offer suggestions and help in any way possible.

I next held a forum among the Brothers who were in State College for the summer. This
discussion focused on the now clearly identified problems and possible solutions
concerning the professionalism issue. This forum served as a proving ground for several
of my ideas and allowed me to gain feedback from those who are most affected by the
problem. About 25% of our total membership was available to attend this discussion.
While this may have seemed like a relatively small amount of individuals, I felt that the
intimate size and relaxed nature of the discussion fostered more participation and
volunteerism from those Brothers present. The small size of the meeting also cut down

3
on confusion and communication loss that often occurs at larger meetings when several people are trying to talk at once.

Next, I met with the organizational heads of two professional student societies. I interviewed Brandon Harwick of the Student Society of Architectural Engineers and Benjamin Gerald of the Commonwealth Campus Student Government. These two students gave me a realistic perspective about which of my ideas are most or least likely to work at PSU today.

Finally, I checked out the Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity National web page, where the professional and social activities that each chapter holds are listed. This allowed me to get ideas for professional programs that work at other chapters, and should in theory work in ours.

**Evaluative Criteria**

- **Cost effectiveness**

Given the current and usual monetary situation at our chapter, I tried to choose the cheapest yet most effective solution for our problem.

- **Increase professionalism at chapter meetings**

At the close of the Spring 2000 semester, our weekly chapter meeting had grown into unruly and unenthusiastic events. I feel that whatever solution is implemented must deal
with our meeting format specifically. Chapter meetings are the only opportunity for fraternity business to be taken care of. These meetings should reflect our professionalism in any and all ways possible.

- **Increase professionalism in the rush program.**

This criterion is the most crucial to our organization. New members are vital to the future of APX. Any changes to increase the professionalism within the chapter must not affect the quality of the individuals whom we select to give bids. We must remember that quantity is not what we are after. The success of our fraternity is dependant on the condition of those that we choose to become members of APX.

- **Professional and social aspects must be equal.**

Any satisfactory solution must recognize that social aspects of APX are a necessary and enjoyable element to our fraternity. In NO way should the professional share more of an importance than social. The duality of our organization recognizes that both professional and social functions should hold equal levels in everything we do.

- **Can we implement the solution?**

As with any solution, implementation is the key to success. Any proposed solution must be able to be feasibly applied to our organization. It must recognize the hectic and sometimes stressful lives of the Brotherhood, and be able to adapt to those needs.
Overview of Possible Solutions

Given the current condition of the fraternity, any effort to address the professionalism issue would be better than leaving it as is. The following solutions are very similar in their composition, but differ in the length of time over which the Professional Development program is held. Each of the solutions will involve the following sections:

- **Part #1: Social vs. Professional**

  Within this section of the report, we will address what events are social, what events are professional, and what appropriate dress and behavior is for each. The current trend of the chapter to partake in more social activities than professional will be analyzed, in addition to what we as a brotherhood value about APX. We will also discuss the format of the weekly chapter meeting, how and where we sit, the way we run the meeting, and Brother conduct during the meetings.

- **Part #2: Brothers and Rushes**

  During the rush period held once a semester, we have a chance to recruit new members. We must remember that we do not need to feel desperate for new members. Brothers must hold themselves in a respectable and admirable manner. Rushes should see us not as being elite or exclusive, but on a higher, more respectable level. We should appear together as a close family, who cares for each other and is proud of our organization. We will also be reassessing at this point in the PDP how we decide to give out bids, and what criteria exactly we want to look for in our future brothers.

- **Part #3: Brothers and Pledges**

  As Brothers, we need to be role models to our Pledges. We must show them our respect and willingness to be a part of their lives if we wish them to become part of ours.
Through the institution of a more professional attitude and behavior, pledges will have something more to look up to. Within this section of the discussion, we will also be discussing the topic of dating. Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity is a co-educational Fraternity, and with that comes special challenges and rewards. We must learn to respect those nearest to us, and it isn’t always easy to do that when deep feeling or relationships exist between Pledges and Brothers. Finally, we will look at the idea of relearning the pledge information about our chapter and fraternity along with every pledge class that comes along. This will help us stay true to our objectives, and really demonstrate a true knowledge of the material if and when Pledges ask us about anything.

- **Part #4: Bigs and Littles**

Discussion here will focus on the fact that Bigs are intended to be a role model and mentor, not necessarily a friend. Dialogue on the possibility of changing the current process of Bigs choosing Littles will be held, and recommendations for Big/Little activities and involvement will be taken. Past Bigs will speak on their successes and failures, and new Bigs will be trained on what exactly becoming a Big Brother to a Little Brother means.

- **Part #5: Pledge Master and Pledges**

This section of the PDP will center on the relationship between the Pledge Educator and the Pledges. The Pledge Master is perhaps the biggest role model to the pledges, because he or she spends the most time with them. We will also talk about the process by which we decided who the new Pledge Master is each year, and what criteria he or she should be able to meet.
**SOLUTION #1 – ONE - TIME PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

A one time Professionalism Development Program would involve the gathering of the Brotherhood for discussion of the aforementioned five points of concern. This would be a one-time meeting, and would most likely take place on a weekend afternoon when five to six hours can be made available for the program.

**SOLUTION #2 – FIVE PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

The second option for the program is to spread the five focus areas out over the span of five weeks. These discussions would be held after the chapter’s first five weekly meetings of the Fall 2000 semester, and would last approximately one hour each.

**SOLUTION #3 – PROFESSIONALISM DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM LABOR DAY RETREAT**

The Labor Day retreat would be held the fraternity cabin near Lancaster, Pennsylvania over Labor Day weekend, 2000. This retreat would last from Friday until Sunday, and would focus on the same 5 sections as the previously mentioned solutions. Attendance at the cabin would be made mandatory. This would be a weekend of Brotherhood bonding also, where the distractions of university life are far away, and we could focus on the upcoming year.
This section of the report is very straightforward for the simple fact that the only variable between the possible solutions is the duration of the PDP meeting times. All three solutions satisfy the criteria of making professional events equal to social, and increased professional behavior at chapter meetings and rush events. The three solutions do vary against the other two criteria.

**Solution #1** would be very cost effective, because it wouldn’t involve any outside expenses, other than the sacrifice of a Saturday or Sunday. Implementation of the solution, however, is not necessarily a possibility. In checking availability of a date for this meeting, I discovered that the first three weekends of the semester are already booked with rush or Alumni events. Football games also fall during this time of the year, making this solution somewhat undesirable.

**Solution #2**, the five different meetings after chapter on Sunday evenings, also satisfies the criterion of cost effectiveness. This solution is more likely to be implemented because of the fact that in the past, it has been easier to get the brotherhood together when it’s convenient for most people. Brothers are required to attend weekly chapter meetings, and therefore having everyone available to stay afterwards would be very possible.

**Solution #3** is the only solution that would require spending money in some way. A trip to the fraternity cabin typically costs $10.00 a person for food and other expenses. Brothers would also have to make driving arrangements and would be forced to purchase
gasoline for the trip. This option would also be a big time sacrifice for any individual who wanted to spend the holiday weekend with other friends or loved ones. Implementation of this solution would definitely be an issue because of the general “social” nature of the cabin. Alcohol is most definitely a part of any visit there, and would almost certainly hinder any attempts at serious conversation. The environment may be too relaxed for some, and keeping the attention of inebriated people just doesn’t happen.

**Recommendations**

It is my recommendation that the brotherhood of Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity implement a combination of solutions 2 and 3. I believe that a weekly meeting that lasts approximately 1 hour would be more tolerable and therefore more effective for those involved. If brothers are aware that each week will have a different area of concentration, they won’t come into the discussion with such an overwhelmed and frustrated feeling. The idea of the Labor Day retreat should also be implemented in some form. The duration and focus of the weekend, however, would be completely changed from its earlier description. This optional weekend would involve bonding between brothers, and would hopefully foster a sense of excitement and motivation for the year ahead. A retreat of this sort would get the brotherhood out of State College, and would allow ties between our members to be strengthened. Through the implementation of a solution such as this, the business of the PDP would be addressed while the equally important side of social activity within the brotherhood is encouraged.
Conclusion

The Spring 2000 semester and Pledge class opened our eyes to some of the deeper issues that are troubling APX. This report has informed you of my research into the topic, noted where problems exist, and suggested possible solutions to address those problem areas. Through the implementation of a 5-week PDP and Labor Day retreat, I believe the brotherhood will be able to genuinely make improvements in its attitudes towards APX and all of its counterparts. It is my sincerest wish that we grow and live up to our full potential this year and into the future. Join me in making Alpha Rho Chi Fraternity live up to all it has to offer.
Appendix A: Brotherhood Survey

When did you become at Brother at APX?

What was the size of your entering pledge class?

What was is exactly that attracted you most to the fraternity?

Do you feel that there was a higher professional attitude among the members of the fraternity in past years as compared to recently?

Please explain briefly.

If you do feel there has been a change in the general attitude of the fraternity, what do you think could be done to change it?

Do you feel that member apathy has become a problem at APX? Why or why not?

What would you like to see more of at APX in a professional sense?

Are there any things in particular that you dislike about APX (meeting length, formalities, etc.)?

If so, what would you like to see done about it?

Have you ever considered becoming inactive for a semester?

If so, were your reasons related to APX directly?

Where do you see this organization several years down the road?

What do you feel takes precedence more at APX, social or professional?

Is this necessarily a bad thing?

Additional comments may be written on the back of this sheet!

Please return all surveys to Matthew *** by June 1, 2000. Your opinion is important to the future of our chapter. If you have any questions or comments about this survey or care to speak to me in person about concerns you are having, don’t hesitate to contact me at 814-999-9999, or email me at xxx999@psu.edu.

Best,

Matt
Appendix B: Membership Trends Over the Past 10 Years

**Number of Active Brothers**

- **1990 - 2000**
- **# of Active**
- Ranges from 0 to 35

**New Member Numbers**

- **1990 - 2000**
- **# of New Members**
- Ranges from 0 to 16
Appendix C: Alumni Interview Questionnaire

What was it like to be a Brother of APX when you were here?

Was the professional side of APX a big part of the fraternity, or did social activities take precedence most of the time?

What types of professional activities were held at APX when you were here as an Active Brother?

What do you feel to be major problems facing the fraternity today?