



Report of the Rabirius Alumni Association to the 61st National Convention of Alpha Rho Chi

2008 marks the 4th year of the Rabirius Alumni Association of Alpha Rho Chi. We are still young, but slowly and surely we are maturing as an organization—hosting events, developing and maintaining initiatives, and figuring out who we are and what we want to be.

Our 2007 annual meeting was held at the 60th National Convention in Memphis. We did a lot of brainstorming and elected new officers. Our officers until the 2009 Annual Meeting are:

President-Jason Kasparek
Secretary- Lori Beth Wilson
Treasurer- Joe Henderson
Directors-at-Large: Mike Shoup, Alex Estill

Our first official act of the year was to plan and host a graduation ceremony for the graduating brothers of the active chapter. It was a small formal ceremony held at the house, open to friends and parents of the graduating brothers. We had a small congratulatory speech, and presented them with a gift of an Alpha Rho Chi business card holder and their first year of alumni association dues free. We felt this would be a great opportunity for the Alumni Association to support and thank the brothers of the active chapter for their hard work over the years. We also feel that small acts like this can help new graduates become engaged early on in the Alumni Association.

In January, a large number of alumni returned to the chapter for the chapter's initiation of the largest pledge class since the chapter was installed. It was a terrific time to meet the new initiates, reconnect with the active chapter, and spend some time with alumni we haven't seen in a while.

For the second year in a row, the alumni association has run a small scholarship competition for active brothers, and will be rewarding a \$150 scholarship to one active brother for the spring quarter. This has become one of the primary services the alumni association offers the active chapter, and our hope is that we can continue to grow the amount of the scholarship.

It is also evident that the chapter may occasionally have some need for some financial support for various professional programs – this year the chapter hosted a series of

lectures by Disney Imagineers, and the chapter could have used a little extra money for to take them out to dinner, etc. Two years ago they took a trip down to New Orleans to help the rebuilding effort, and they also requested some money for that effort. Thankfully, several alumni made personal contributions, but in the future it would be nice to have some money set aside at the beginning of each year to help the chapter in professional and service endeavors.

The Alumni Association's major event for this year is still to come -- we have planned an alumni cabin trip retreat for early May. No business will be involved -- it is just a time for brothers to get back together, reconnect, and remember how much we enjoy each other's company. The hope is that alumni brothers will find great value in the cabin trip and encourage them to be more active in general participation. We envision that it will be the first in a series of services and events that alumni can derive personal value and satisfaction out of—once alumni see that the association can provide something to them, they will be more apt to provide time and effort into the association.

While these activities and initiatives have been terrific, there are some significant challenges on our plate. Primarily, the alumni association is struggling with limited participation in official association business. This is not to say there is a general crisis in participation – we have had a number of alumni show up to initiation and other events at the chapter, and many alumni are willing to engage in informal alumni association business conversations directly over the phone. In spite of this, very few alumni are paying AA or national dues, and hardly any participate in topical discussions or questions sent out via the listserv. Thus, the Board of Director's main goal over the coming year will be to increase alumni participation. While we have not yet officially codified an approach to this problem, we have already begun implementing what could be described as a three-pronged approach to the problem:

1) Build relationships with new alumni. As the most recent graduates, the newest alumni have some of the strongest ties to the active chapter and usually retain a great deal of enthusiasm for the fraternity. Relationships with these new alumni should be carefully cultivated in the hopes that they will become strong participants in the alumni association. We started this initiative last year through the graduation ceremony, which we will continue this year.

2) Reconnect and increase outreach to older alumni brothers. We have begun contacting older alumni by phone in order to re-engage them in alumni association activities, but we have a lot more work to do in this area. As mentioned previously, we will also be having an alumni retreat in early May. We envision that it will be the first in a series of services and events that alumni can derive personal value and satisfaction out of—once alumni see that the association can provide something to them, they will be more apt to provide time and effort into the association.

3) Make participation easier and more accessible. One of our biggest realizations this year has been that not everyone can or should contribute to the organization in the same way. While some alumni will want to help out at initiation, others aren't really comfortable with it. Some alumni want to contribute to the scholarship fund and others don't. Our goal will be to explore and promote many new ways that alumni can feel comfortable contributing to the Alumni Association and the chapter itself. If people don't have comfortable and appropriate ways to participate, they won't. Additionally, we will be considering changing the annual meeting time and place to be in Cincinnati rather than at National Convention, which will hopefully result in higher turnout. We also want to explore technologies that would allow us to have open regular meetings that could be joined by alumni from any location. We have tried IM meetings in the past, but this format is not really conducive to open discussion.

It is our hope that these strategies will help us build a stronger, more active alumni association.

It has been an interesting year for the Rabirius Alumni Association, marked by both good and bad signs for our still nascent organization. Even as our programs and events have expanded and more alumni are getting involved in official alumni association and chapter events, the number of alumni paying dues and participating in discussions via our listserv has fallen to a new low. The majority of our alumni base is now several years out of school and much of the fresh-faced enthusiasm of the first few years is gone, obscured by the immediacy and urgency of our personal and professional lives. However, now is the time when we can set the stage for the coming years. Now, as our older graduates develop their professional networks and establish their careers and our newer graduates remain excited and connected to the active chapter, we have more to offer each other and the chapter than ever before. We have worked hard on our plan for the coming year, and through careful its careful implementation we hope to find our voice as an organization and live up to the potential we all know is before us.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jason Kasperek
President, Rabirius Alumni Association