



*The Fraternity of  
Alpha Kappa Lambda*

National Headquarters  
354 Gradle Dr. Carmel, IN 46032, 317-564-8003 / [www.akl.org](http://www.akl.org) / [nhq@akl.org](mailto:nhq@akl.org)

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To: Our Campus Partners, Chapters and Volunteers  
From: Jeremy Slivinski, Executive Director and Don Enstrom, National President  
Re: Elimination of New Member Education Status/Pledgeship

Friends and Brothers,

A thoughtful, deliberate review of our history reminds us that our eleven Founding Fathers never had to pledge Alpha Kappa Lambda. Men that started our individual chapters never had to participate in a traditional pledge program; these Brothers have been among the most committed, involved, and loyal of our fraternity. Their service and commitment has been life-long, both locally and nationally. All of our members are entitled to the same life-changing fraternity experiences our founders had.

The new year brings a new opportunity for our Fraternity. We know our current membership model is starting to fail us. The student population is dramatically different compared to any other time in our history. The students' needs and wants are shaped by technology, politics and identity changes that are reshaping campuses and higher education. To see Alpha Kappa Lambda through our second century, we must change with it.

After careful research, consideration, and some emotional conversations, the Fraternity of Alpha Kappa Lambda will be eliminating our new member program in its current form effective immediately. This program, commonly referred to as pledgeship, is no longer allowed.

The decision to change our new member program does not mean joining and being a member of Alpha Kappa Lambda now becomes easier. We are resetting the expectations of our members. We will be reinstating continuous member education. Our members will not just be asked, but will be expected to prove that they are living our Five Ideals on a daily basis. We will not be afraid to separate ourselves from those that do not align with our mission or try to further themselves in our Ideals.

Undoubtedly, this membership model change is significant and requires discussion and direction. To help our members understand this change we have created a Frequently Asked Questions sheet that you can find attached to this letter. This FAQ should provide

you any answers to questions you may have and/or the details needed to move your chapter forward. As always questions can be sent to our office via email at [info@akl.org](mailto:info@akl.org).

We have served on the national staff and National Executive Council for almost two decades. We have made decisions for the purpose of business and for the purpose of our mission. However, the most important decisions are the ones that are directly related to the safety and wellbeing of our members. Moving in this new direction we believe is vital for the safety and wellbeing of our members and also for our Fraternity.

Sincerely,



Jeremy D. Slivinski  
Executive Director



Don Enstrom  
National President

# **FAQ Regarding Alpha Kappa Lambda's Elimination of New Member/Pledgeship Program**

## **Why is Alpha Kappa Lambda making this change?**

Over recent years the new member programs run by many of our chapters have been more detrimental than positive. Despite expanded education and resources hazing incidents have increased substantially. Retention rates have also started to drop. Academics reports for new members tend to be lower than the chapters. Eliminating pledge programs should significantly reduce many ills our chapters have been experiencing.

## **How will this affect our recruitment process?**

All designated recruitment activities will continue to be alcohol free. Chapters will recruit via events, participation outside of the chapter and through introductions as they always have. Recruitment is encouraged to happen 365 days a year. A recruit is defined as any man eligible for membership that is or may be interested in joining the Fraternity.

## **How will this affect our ability to recruit high-quality new members?**

Chapter's recruiting the right way should see no difference. When a qualified man is identified he is simply offered membership. This does expand traditional recruitment to a true 365 model in which a man can join at any time. This also may serve as a significant incentive for some men to join.

## **What's the process once a new member accepts a bid?**

With this new process, a bid is extended as a membership invitation. Upon acceptance of a bid a man will become a neophyte, or brother waiting to be initiated. This period will last no more than 120 hours.

In this time period, the neophyte will create his record in Compass (our database system). He will make a payment of at least \$200 towards his membership fees. He must complete GreekLifeEDU, attend nationally prescribed fraternity education sessions, and be assigned a Chapter Mentor (formally Big Brother.)

The education sessions will be done over three nights. They will focus on risk management, chapter management, fraternity obligations and our Ideals. These sessions will be able to be taught by multiple members of the chapter to make it easy to host them regularly as needed.

The full process will be unveiled at our Officer's Academy the weekend of January 12, 2018.

## **How can we ensure the quality of members without a pledge process?**

The chapter's recruitment process should include sufficient introductions, events, interviews, etc. to meet all potential new members. Before extending a bid as an invitation of membership, the chapter should be confident in the ability of a potential new member to uphold the Creed and Ideals of our fraternity. Many of our highest performing chapters also utilize an application process so that they can obtain all critical information about the PNM prior to him joining – the National Headquarters is happy to provide an example of an application.

It is important to remember that men joining our organization commit to our Ideals for their lifetime, not just eight weeks. We shouldn't be offering bids to men we are not confident about regarding this expectation.

## **What if a new member is initiated before they complete the neophyte process?**

While it's possible for a chapter to perform ritual involving a member that has not completed requirements for membership, the initiation report submitted to National Headquarters will not be processed until completion of requirements is verified.

Additionally, for every member "initiated" without completing GreekLifeEDU, the chapter will be fined \$50 per member per semester until it is completed. If it is known ahead of time that a member will not be able to complete all requirements within the allotted window of time, then the chapter president is required to contact the National Headquarters immediately with an explanation and request for time extension.

**What if a newly initiated member wants to drop or we find him not upholding our ideals?**

Alpha Kappa Lambda understands that sometimes what looks like a good fit may not be so. In cases where this occurs, new members may ask for their release within the first four months of membership. The member understands that all debts must be paid and there are no refunds. The National Executive Council will vote to expel those men that request a release. The chapter may expel members at any time per our governing documents assuming they have just cause.

**How will assigning a big brother work? How can we track families?**

During the initial 120 hour period following the acceptance of a bid before initiation, neophytes will be assigned a Chapter Mentor (formally Big Brother or Pledge Dad.) Families can still be tracked the same way.

This aspect should be run like a business where Chapter Mentors are reported to the National Headquarters on OmegaFi. Chapter Mentors must be an older member of the chapter who is in good standing (current on dues and meeting the 2.5 minimum GPA requirement.) It is a privilege to be a Chapter Mentor not a right. Additionally there will be no creative "reveals" in this process.

**What about pledge and membership pins?**

There will be no pledge pins. Membership badges will be mailed out after an initiation report is submitted and approved. Certificates will be mailed as soon as they've been printed.

**What happens if a chapter runs an "optional" pledge program?**

Running any new member program outside the prescribed process will be considered a policy violation and potentially hazing. An optional continuous education model is being developed that will provide members the opportunity of bettering themselves personally and professionally. The Alpha experience will be revised to align with this new model.

**If done right, how will our Fraternity change?**

First and foremost we hope that our chapters reinforce that our members, whether newly initiated or as alumni, are expected to live according to our identity of Men of Character Committed to Making a Difference. This means continually modeling our Five Ideals. Currently many of our chapters require this of new members/pledges but not of their active brothers.

Recruitment and Retention should improve. The generation coming to college is used to immediate access and results. They have numerous opportunities to join clubs, associations and other groups without having to complete a trial period. This should encourage more men to join. The opportunity for hazing, over programming and other issues should be greatly reduced. These problems lead to significant retention issues. By reducing them our retention should increase.

If a chapter does the following things well the general experience will at least be the same if not improve:

1. Hold every member accountable.
2. Provide positive educational and social opportunities for all members.
3. Serve each member and the community around it.
4. Create a homestyle atmosphere that nurtures and grows the bonds of brotherhood.