

2009-2011

# Grand President's Report

52<sup>nd</sup> Grand Chapter Conclave  
Phoenix, Arizona





## Brothers,

Two years ago we met together in Orlando and charted our course for the future.

For many of us, in fact probably for most of us, SigEp has always represented not only a glorious past, but also the potential for a future of unending possibilities.

I hope SigEp means the same to you.

In a world that delights in publicizing failure, SigEp focuses on success. And in an era when the whole universe seems to be dumbing down, SigEp celebrates smarting up.

Together our potential is unlimited.

Together our growth and success can advance not only higher education, but also the Greek system across our country.

Each year, thousands of parents watch their kids leave home for school. Together they worry and wonder how their sons will manage the responsibilities that come with their new independence and their new environment.

My hope is that their sons find SigEp ... a home away from home, a safe and healthy place with undergraduates who are equally talented and driven to succeed. I hope parents will see a SigEp chapter with volunteer mentors who know that the collegiate years represent the most transformative time of a young man's life. And that they see local and national programs that help their son develop both his Sound Mind and his Sound Body.

I know that building a welcoming SigEp home and a great SigEp chapter is not easy. Resources, time and tenacity are required. I became Grand President at a very challenging time in our country. The stock market had just plummeted, and companies tightened their belts.

In that environment, I was determined to work with the staff and our volunteers not just to keep our undergraduate programs and services running, but to work even harder to improve them. I also wanted to improve our communication, technology, and information management platforms. I believe we accomplished what we set out to do...

With fewer financial resources, we restructured our staff to put an additional regional director on the road, increased the number of staff members focused on alumni and volunteer services, and built a communications team that scrapped the band-aid approach to technology and managed to bring SigEp into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We've found our way onto Linked In, Twitter, and Facebook. Thousands of you jumped onto our official SigEp sites. And for the past eight months we've been merging our disparate databases into a single database that lives on *the cloud*. Today we use a database where phone calls are logged, and official correspondence is not only attached to a member's record, it is retrieved with the click of a mouse. This means less time repeating yourself to new staff members and more time achieving our mission.

Later this fall, you will see more tangible changes on our website. It will become more of a central touch point with the national Fraternity. And the information you enter there will go right into our database.

You'll have a more personal interaction with SigEp, as more information is captured and shared. Equally important, the staff is becoming a better steward of data, and over time the quality of our data will improve, resulting in better decision making and better service for you.

Service is a general term, but SigEp service means something very specific: knowledgeable, committed and focused people delivering the programs and support that make the Fraternity great. I hope you've seen and felt a difference in the staff's approach to programs and service the past two years.

I've always felt that collaboration among undergraduates, volunteers, and staff drives the best results. If that is true, the numbers tell me we're doing a better job working together.

For the first time in the Fraternity's history, the average member has achieved a 3.10 GPA. As our chapters' competitive spirit increases, so does our academic performance. Almost half of our chapters are above the all-campus average, an increase of 10 percent over two years.

And we're seeing this increase in academic achievement as more and more men join our Fraternity.

In 2009-2010, SigEp underperformed with respect to recruitment. With 5,872 new members nation-wide, we were well below the Fraternity's three-year average of 5,973. In response, we focused on proactively supporting chapters in recruitment through services and programs.

We overhauled our regional directors' summer development program and refocused priorities. We created a more experiential Carlson Leadership Academy that included a recruitment track for non-chapter officers. Chapters succeed when they have a dedicated volunteer mentoring the vice president of recruitment and his committee. For the last two years, we have worked to increase the number of volunteers committed to this role. Today, 64 chapters have an active recruitment mentor. Over the past two years, we have spent dedicated time helping our chapters implement the Balanced Man Scholarship on their campus. Today, 160 SigEp chapters offer an annual Balanced Man Scholarship. Last academic year 6,401 undergraduates joined Sigma Phi Epsilon, almost a 10 percent increase over the previous year and the first time in 18 years that we reached that mark.

In my acceptance speech I said ... "sales" is not a dirty word...if we have a product that we believe in, that we are proud of, then we should be confident enough to sell it. The Balanced Man Ideal and continuous development are a powerful offer. It's what makes SigEp different on campus. When we live Sound Mind and Sound Body, and provide a continuous development program, we are the dominant student organization on campus.

In my travels as Grand President, I have heard many of you express your concerns about our undergraduate development programs. I'm concerned as well. Too many of our upperclassmen are leaving SigEp.

We struggle to provide value to and retain our juniors and seniors. These men should be our chapter leaders. Their presence is invaluable to the younger members of our chapters. In a few years, they should be our key volunteers and donors.

Their development needs are significantly different. Internships, jobs, future career plans, relationships, and other leadership opportunities often give them reason to leave Sigma Phi Epsilon. We must make these things a reason to stay.

To that end, I have asked a task force to investigate the reasons behind our junior and senior attrition and recommend a program that addresses upperclassmen concerns. The board has also allocated a portion of this year's budget to support future programming for juniors and seniors. We also allocated more of the Fraternity's annual revenue to our existing leadership programs, resident scholars, and Residential Learning Community growth.

By June 30, 2011, almost 16,000 undergraduates were a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon. To give you some perspective, our undergraduate rolls have grown by 11 percent over the last five years.

Neither leadership program participation nor funding is growing at the same rate. During the 2010-2011 fiscal year, roughly a third of our members participated in a Leadership Continuum program. We need to expand our reach to deliver our programming to a higher percentage of our members. Our programs inspire members to raise the bar at their home chapter and, in many ways, set the tone for the Greek system.

Our goal is, and should always be, to keep chapters open and thriving. Over the past year, I can proudly say we have not closed a single chapter. We've come close a few times, but each time we've been surprised by a chapter's ability to make difficult decisions that address concerns and put the chapter on a path to success. I want to congratulate Kent State, Southern Mississippi, and East Carolina for setting the precedent of appealing directly to the National Board of Directors. I hope other chapters are able to follow their example in the future.

In 2009, I spoke about the need to have more volunteers engaged at the regional and national level. Today, we have more than 200 individuals serving in one or more of these roles. Many are members of the more than 30 committees and task forces asked to address certain areas of the Fraternity's operations. These groups have recommended programming changes, refined our Residential Learning Community agenda, shaped our approach to Conclave and influenced our approach to recruitment and volunteer engagement.

SigEp continues to move forward because of the commitment from its volunteers. These men and women support local chapter operations, mentor undergraduate members, provide safe housing, and ensure regular, professional communication to alumni. Our leading chapters continue to thrive because they have a strong network of alumni-volunteer support.

When we begin our next academic year, we have more than 2,500 volunteers supporting our chapters locally. This may seem like a lot, but we need more. We have an incredible opportunity to engage young alumni who can share positive and very relevant experiences with undergraduate members as they leave college and enter the professional world. Over the past two years, we have increased communications to graduating seniors, promoting the Resident Scholar program, and pushed the recruitment of balanced man stewards and recruitment mentors, positions well suited for young alumni with a strong chapter experience.

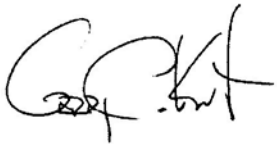
There is so much to be proud of and, yet, so much untapped potential. It has been an honor to serve you the past two years.

I believe that together we have made major strides.

Each of you – undergrad, alumnus, volunteer, and staff – should be extremely proud of the impact you’ve had on our Fraternity.

It’s great to be your Brother.

And it’s great to be a Sig Ep.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cory - [unclear]". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font.