

# Sigma Phi Society

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## *Looking For a Few Outstanding Men*

**Each year, Sigma Phi chapters across the nation seek a few outstanding young men who are willing to make a lifetime commitment to our Society. We seek the kinds of men who are serious about what they do – students, athletes, musicians, among others. Most will become campus or community leaders. Many are combinations of all of these. All will strive to be the best and the brightest.**

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No one is excluded from our consideration. Since our founding in 1827, Sigma Phi has never had any religious, racial or other barriers to membership.

These new men will have similar qualifications and characteristics to the graduating brothers they replace, but have yet to experience the permanent transformation from youth to manhood that will occur in the setting that Sigma Phi provides. Their intellects will develop muscle, their moral values will deepen, and their understanding of brotherhood will become the standard by which they will measure all behaviors. They might never again be surrounded by others who will care about or give as much to their character development.



Their brothers will be the young men who will lead by example now, and who aspire to be leaders in the professions and corporations, leaders in careers of public service, teaching and the clergy – leaders in all endeavors. The new brothers will live in close contact with

an intentionally small group of men they might not otherwise



have met. And because of our small chapter size, the impact and contribution of each new man will be keenly felt. They will encounter diverse backgrounds and in the process develop enduring respect for each other's individuality. Their friendship will grow to the point that whenever they meet, they will be able to take up where they left off without noticing the passage of years. They will eventually meet Sigs from other chapters and find an immediate acceptance and warmth that can only come from sharing common bonds. They will become part of our tradition of lifelong affiliation.

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## History

The first social fraternity in the country, Kappa Alpha Society, was founded at Union College in 1825. Sigma Phi, Union's second fraternity, was founded on March 4, 1827, when four undergraduates recognized their need for a companionship more intimate than the one comprising the college's entire student body. Shortly thereafter, they widened their circle and admitted a select group of their fellow students who had similar qualities of good mind, lofty character, and cordial manners. They determined to make themselves not a short-lived group of happy young men, but a Society dedicated to friendship that would last not only through college, but through life.

Nine thousand men have followed the four founders. The Society's attitude toward expansion has always been conservative, although Sigma Phi was the first fraternity to expand to a second chapter. That first expansion, effectively becoming a "national" fraternity, took place in nearby Hamilton College in 1831. Other new chapters were founded at Hobart, Vermont, Michigan, Lehigh, Cornell, Wisconsin, California, and Virginia. Many of our chapter houses are architectural classics; two have been recognized as national historic landmarks. One even has a squash court! Some college administra-



*"Teakwood Towers": The Sigma Phi Place in Berkeley*



*The Pepper Box of Sigma Phi at Union College*

tions, feeling fraternities are relics of a bygone era, seem intent on taking houses over to control them as residence units. While that has happened to the Society in the past, our ability to survive as a vibrant organization does not depend upon the presence of a chapter house.

## Benefits and Expectations

What can a young man expect from Sigma Phi beyond its core values of Friendship, Love and Truth? He will have mentors and role models from the upperclassmen who can provide support and guidance in scholastics, social behavior, loyalty, honor, and individuality. The chapter provides numerous opportunities to develop integrated skills. A Sig will be expected to:

- Maintain higher-than-average grades
- Participate in extra-curricular activities
- Participate in volunteer work in the college/ university community
- Learn how the chapter is managed
- Participate in the business management of the chapter

In addition, he will be expected to meet his financial commitments to the chapter as he progresses through school.

A Sig will participate in activities that build links between Sigma Phi and the rest of campus. Some



chapters help bring nationally known speakers to campus. While the faculty and the entire student body are invited to hear the speaker's presentation, only Sigma Phi members benefit from having the speakers stay and eat at the house (when possible) and interact with the actives. Chapters have receptions and dinners to foster frequent contact with faculty members, Sigs at each campus will be expected to work hard on their chapter houses; sharing "pride of ownership" is the best way to maintain these structures. Sigma Phi's reputation for closeness and devotion of its members is well justified. The bonds made during undergraduate years with classmates, faculty, and the local community give Sigma Phi alumni even more reason to return to the house after they have graduated.

## ***Local Alumni Support***

Alumni are always welcome to visit any chapter of Sigma Phi. They often return with their families to where they spent their undergraduate days. Active brothers' families are similarly encouraged to visit chapter houses. Each chapter has a local alumni association that meets with undergraduates to interact with the actives, providing assistance and broadening friendships. Most chapters have their own local newsletter. Each chapter has a chapter advisor, often an alumnus brother or sometimes a university administrator, who is in constant contact with the undergraduates. Some chapters have mentors or graduate student Sigs selected by the national office to assist undergraduates in their daily routines.

## ***National Support***

To support undergraduates and local chapters, Sigma Phi has over forty men in voluntary leadership roles at the national level, 100 at the local level, and almost 6,000 living brothers living world-wide. The National Society has various scholarship and endowment funds presently available to assist in many ways. Some chapters have their own local scholarship funds.

The national Viele Scholarship makes grants available (over \$180,000 to 40 men in 2006-2007, two-thirds of whom were undergraduates) to brothers who have proven scholarship and need as well as a demonstrated commitment to Sigma Phi.

In addition to the foundations, the National subsidizes leadership training workshops at the national convention. Held annually at rotating chapter venues, the convention offers a unique to interact with undergraduates and alumni from across the country.

The Sigma Phi Educational Foundation, supported by alumni giving, provides a variety of programs, including educational awards to individual chapters, sponsorship of guest speakers, and sponsorship of the Hicks Oratorical Contest at our annual convention.

Although the national and local chapter organizations are small, all volunteer leaders have a powerful commitment to preserving the Society and building the complete collegian, as Sigma Phi has been doing without equal for more than one hundred and eighty years.



*Alumni and Wives Gather for a Sigma Phi Reunion Event.*

## Ideals and Traditions

Below are excerpts from a letter sent to a March 4th Founding Dinner (reunions held every year in several locations around the country) in 1935 by distinguished Sig Elihu Root, Nobel Prize winner and former Secretary of State under Teddy Roosevelt. His letter speaks eloquently of the ideals and traditions of our Society:



Dear Brothers of the Sigma Phi –  
Dear Boys, Old and Young.

No human institution lives long unless it meets a human need. It is this quality which has carried our Society into its second century, full of life and vigor, which justifies an old man of ninety to write ...

If a young fellow entering college is to become an effective, valued force in his own community, if he is to gain the durable satisfactions of life, he must develop a side of his nature to which the college curriculum does not and cannot pay very much attention. He must achieve capacity for sympathetic understanding of his fellow men and for genuine interest in them. He must acquire a habit of kindly consideration and regard for the rights and feelings of others. He must be exercised in the practice of friendship, in a sense of proportion and of humor, in good fellowship and in feeling for the joys and sorrows of others. These are the qualities of character, and upon the development of character along these lines, civilization must depend for international peace and for domestic liberty and order more than it depends on statistics and argument (taught by the college).

The Society which a century ago undertook to supplement the intellectual training of the college course by the training of character through self-devotion to the cult of friendship and human sympathies was not a mere social incident. It was an expression of the better part of human nature. The collective body joined in this expression became superior to the limitations upon human life, it acquired the mysterious gift of spiritual expression, so that you, a century later, share in the spirit that moved its founders, and inherit their title to honor and affection, and it became the mother of happy memories that warm all our hearts – even the oldest....

## Choose Wisely

Our ideals and traditions have withstood the test of time. The simplicity of our calling may be a challenge to those who do not yet understand Sigma Phi's purpose. In terms of personal growth and significant friendships, the satisfaction can be enormous. We hope this information will assist you in your decision. As you consider membership in our Society, we recommend that you choose wisely, for your choice will undoubtedly influence your entire life.



For more information, check the Sigma Phi Society website at [www.sigmaphi.org](http://www.sigmaphi.org)