

# A YEAR UNLIKE ANY OTHER

Written by



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**It has certainly been a year, unlike any other, in the history of Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity.**

Despite the setbacks and challenges associated with COVID-19, the Fraternity continues its mission to develop values-based leaders that exemplify our creed. We aggressively developed resources to support chapter operations in virtual, hybrid, and/or adapted in-person experiences this year. These "roadmaps" were designed to provide confidence, and help identify ways to keep our mission focused and chapters thriving. The Octagon invested in new resources to support chapter growth that were relevant to both virtual and hybrid recruitment models. These tools included ChapterBuilder, a recruitment management software, and an online certified recruiter training program. We were thrilled to see our undergraduate members adopt and implement these resources during the past academic year; we will continue to leverage these tools moving forward.

Of all of the things that we had thought to deploy, the most interesting was the bond that connects us all. We converted the 110+ year-old ritual from our "Black Book," into an equally meaningful virtual ceremony; throughout the past year, I had the privilege to preside over dozens of virtual rituals to initiate our newest members. Students participated from across the globe, following their recruitment and candidate education. This student engagement, with international leadership and members from other chapters, would have been reserved only for those lucky enough to be a delegate at Convention or attending Chapter Leaders Day in a normal year, but this past year was anything but normal.

**IT WAS GREAT TO SEE THE YOUTHFUL ENERGY, EXCITEMENT, AND OPTIMISM FROM OUR NEWEST MEMBERS.**

It was great to see the youthful energy, excitement, and optimism from hundreds of our newest members. What a great experience it was for them to connect with other new members from across our active chapter roll. Sure, the experience feels different without being able to pin the octagonal badge on the young initiate's shirt, or to personally shake his hand or offer a hug. There's no mistaking, however, that the words spoken, with meaning true, are as relevant today as they were over a century ago.

In the '20-'21 academic year, the Fraternity installed four new chapters at Cincinnati, Oklahoma, Colorado, and West Virginia returning all four back to the active chapter roll. The ΣAM 2030 strategic plan prioritized growth in a great effort amidst all of this turbulence. Looking ahead, the Octagon invested its limited resources to add two additional growth consultants who will help with chapter expansion and recruitment coaching for active chapters. Since membership is the lifeblood of our organization, we know this investment will yield results at chapter and international levels.

Conduct is always an issue in the fraternity world. In this year of COVID-19, we unfortunately lost several chapters due to misconduct. Despite an abundance of educational resources and training, some chapters were reported for inappropriate conduct and hazing. The fraternity will not tolerate conduct that tarnishes our reputation and values, taking swift and appropriate action when it is brought to our attention.

There is a lot to be hopeful for in the upcoming academic year. We are targeting three new chapters to be opened which include Syracuse and revitalization efforts at Illinois and Northern Illinois.

We know there is strong interest from college-bound students in building relationships and making the most out of their collegiate experience. Sigma Alpha Mu is doubling down on recruitment coaching and risk management training to ensure that our fratres are positioning themselves and their chapters for success.

The Octagon is also investing in the life stages of membership, with the intent being a more-engaged member throughout his life cycle. We hope you will participate in our membership survey to help us focus our resources on items that may be of utmost importance to you. We are also thrilled to partner with Publishing Concepts, Inc. (PCI) to conduct an oral history project. Sigma Alpha Mu Fraternity is made up of people, relationships, and stories. This undertaking will showcase the role the fraternity, its teaching and its connections, have played in our members' lives. To find more information on our oral history project, go to [sam.org/SammyStories](http://sam.org/SammyStories). We look forward to hearing your particular Sammy story.

Fast and Firm,

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