



SAMMY EXPANSION

Written by



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Often times the most exciting news I get to report is driven by numbers. Four new chapters installed this academic year with over 65 total new initiates. And while I love to tout the wins in our analytics and data, what can get lost in that are the people behind the numbers. In addition to reporting on numbers, one of the more exciting pieces of my role is working with the Priors of our Provisional Chapters on a weekly basis. In what has been an unforgettable year, my favorite memories come from working with, and even recruiting some of, the Priors at Colorado, Oklahoma, Cincinnati, and West Virginia.

When I started last summer, I was quickly introduced to Arthur Didinsky (Mu Pi, '20) and Logan Rock (Omicron, '21). Both were leading groups excited to be Founding Fathers and bring Sammy back to their campus. As I began weekly coaching sessions, I quickly learned that both were faced with a lot of uncertainty and an uphill battle ahead, but both were committed.

Arthur was originally from Maryland and learned about Sammy during the spring of his sophomore year when a friend from high school recommended him to Headquarters staff during our expansion at Colorado Boulder. The excitement of our return to CU was quickly met with the uncertainty of the pandemic and the men who had decided to join were left with a choice; turn away from Sammy or move forward with resilience facing the challenges that were sure to come.

Arthur and his new friends met regularly throughout the summer building their brotherhood and planning for the fall. Though there was some attrition, the core group remained committed and went into the Fall Semester knowing their small group would need to grow. With the addition of a few new members and the development of chapter operations, during a time of social distancing and facemasks, the men remained committed. The Mu Pi Chapter was installed, and the men were initiated in the fall of 2020 on a Zoom call with Headquarters staff and chapter alumni. Arthur and I have continued our weekly calls as the chapter has continued to advance their vision and grow this year. He is now in his junior year studying Political Science and plans to participate in an internship this summer.

Not only do I inherit some outstanding members to work with, but I also get the pleasure of watching them grow and develop as leaders from the time before they have even signed their bid. Watching someone you personally recruit become a leader in their chapter is truly an indescribable feeling, and I do take great pride in that opportunity. In addition to working with Logan and Arthur, I now also meet on a weekly basis with Caleb York (Sigma Alpha, '20) and Chase Ciliberti (Epsilon Theta, '21). Both were Founding Fathers of their chapter who then became Chapter Priors this year, and I had the pleasure of officially offering each of them their bid for membership.

I met Chase after he was recommended by a friend of his who I was already recruiting. Chase had heard about Sammy coming to WVU and our vision for being leaders and difference-makers in the community. Chase had transferred from UNC Wilmington and was in his sophomore year as a Cyber Security major. Chase was immediately interested in what we were looking to build at WVU. He was excited about the opportunity to be a leader and make an impact on campus and in the community. But he was also interested in meeting new people.

Transitioning to a new school can be challenging, but doing so during a pandemic is even harder. Normal welcome week activities and campus engagement opportunities were virtual or nonexistent and didn't do much to help students get involved and connected on campus. Chase was a big soccer fan and had played a lot, and though he had joined the club soccer team on campus they were unable to practice or hold events so he hadn't been able to connect with many new people that way either. Thankfully because of a common friend, Chase had met Thomas Baehm, and because Thomas met me, Chase did too. Together they both became Founding Fathers and eventually the Prior and Vice Prior of the newly restarted Epsilon Theta Chapter at West Virginia.



Navigating our current environment and preparing for unforeseen challenges, that's what was on the front of everyone's mind as the 2020-2021 academic year approached.

Over the last few years, Sigma Alpha Mu had seen an overall decline in recruitment numbers. This was due in part to the closure of some chapters while other chapters' membership declined on the local level. Though it could be assumed that some would be better off than others, it was fair to say that we all needed to focus our efforts on supporting Sammy's growth while navigating the pandemic.

Our staff, with approval from the Octagon, had already made a strategic move to support recruitment best practices by providing the Phired Up Digital Classroom to our entire membership in the spring of 2020. The first-of-its-kind product provided top-notch, asynchronous recruitment education and training to fraternity members, and even included a section on "virtual recruitment."

However, the most savvy undergraduate recruiter and even the best trained members are only as good as the tools at their disposal. Behind every great recruitment effort is a recruitment system, and every great recruitment system requires the proper technology for execution. In the fraternity recruitment world, that tool is ChapterBuilder.

ChapterBuilder is the best-of-its-kind recruitment software for fraternities, and it also comes from our partners at Phired Up and TechniPhi. In addition to providing a Recruitment Certification program to every member, Headquarters and the Octagon ensured every chapter would be provided with the tool to execute their recruitment plans. Noting the challenging environment of fraternity recruitment coupled with a pandemic, providing the Virtual Classroom and ChapterBuilder were key in ensuring our chapters were best equipped to grow partners this year.

With the number of Certified Recruiters and usage of ChapterBuilder growing throughout the fall semester, we were excited to see a bump in recruitment and initiation numbers. Over 400 new members were initiated into our fraternity in the fall of 2020, which included some Candidates who were carried over from spring of 2020. As spring approached, we were excited to see again how chapters would perform as we eclipsed over 100 certifications and saw the launch of ChapterBuilder 2.0, the system's biggest overhaul to date. The new version, which came with additional training, provided chapters with an updated look and feel, technology enhancements, and better data and analytics reporting.

One of the biggest recruitment wins of the fall was highlighted on social media as the Beta Gamma Chapter at the University of Arizona recruited men all summer via Zoom and initiated 41 during the fall semester. This trend continued in the spring as we saw high-level wins as 22 chapters (50%) outperformed their previous year's recruitment results.

Among those wins was the Sigma Chi Chapter at the University of Maryland having their best spring recruitment since recharting as they initiated 13 new members. A little farther south, the Epsilon Xi Chapter at Emory University had their best spring recruitment to date as they initiated 20 members. And lastly we look to the opposite coast and highlight the recruitment efforts at the Mu Theta Chapter at USC as they added 19 new members in the spring, bringing their total new initiates for the year to 27.

Navigating the pandemic has challenged us all, and the basic operations of Sigma Alpha Mu chapters were no exception. As we look forward at the growth of our organization in alignment with our vision, it's important to celebrate the incredible victories of the last year. In addition to now having over 135 certified recruiters and our chapters recording 45% usage and implementation of ChapterBuilder, these and other recruitment successes would not be possible without the support of advisors and more importantly the commitment of our outstanding undergraduate leaders.