

# Working with and Supporting Today's College Students

**Alumni Engagement Series** 



## Today's Presenters

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## Agenda

**Generation Z Snapshot Students in Today's Economy Digital Natives Loneliness and Mental Health Generation Z Skill Deficit Role of SN Volunteers Volunteer Best Practices Resource Review** 

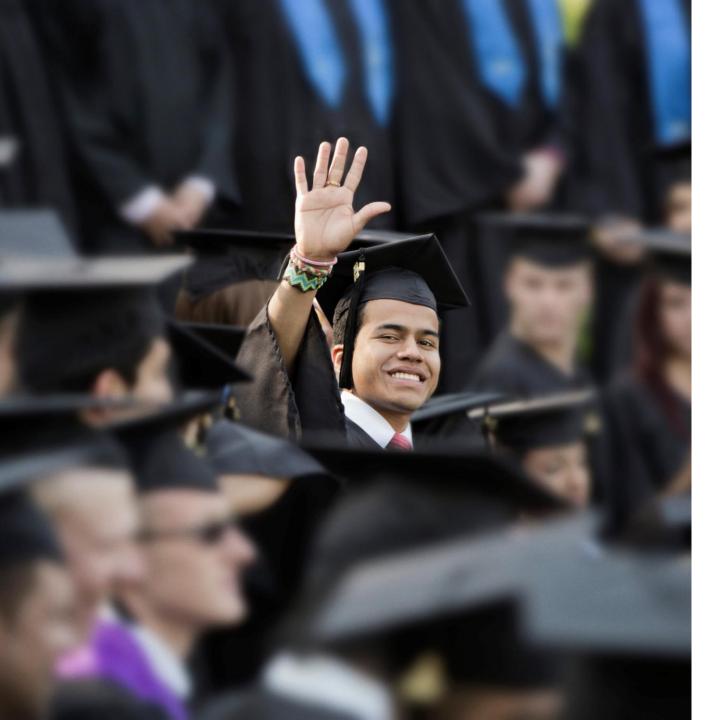


## Ground Rules for Effective Advising

No matter what generation you're working with, you should:

- Show and expect RESPECT
- Hold the chapter to high standards
- Be a Role Model
- Clearly establish your role as an advisor





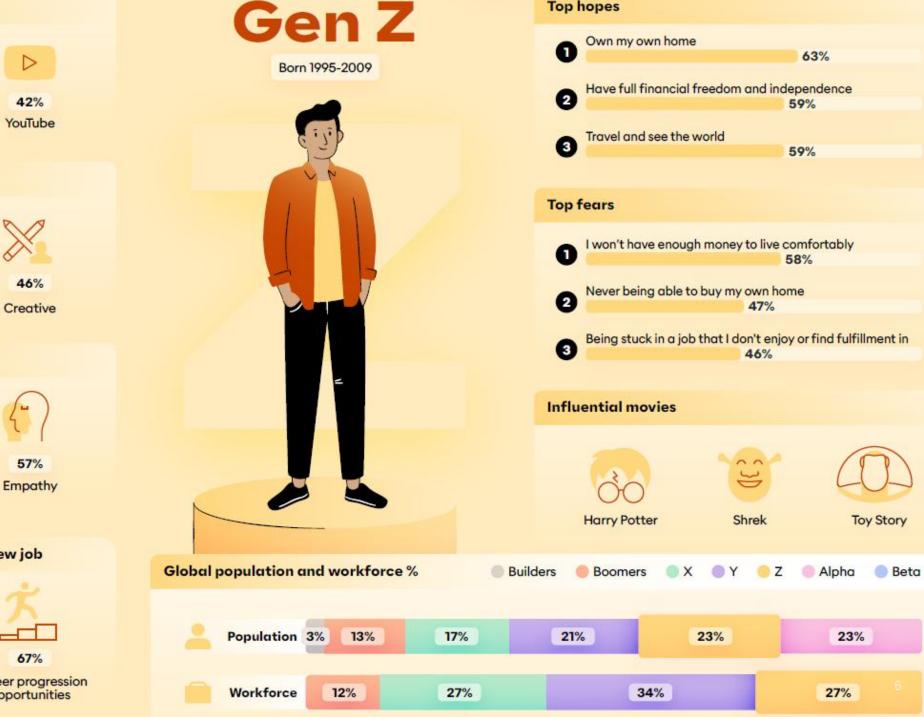
## Gen Z – A Snapshot

Born ~1997-2012

First majority non-white generation (1-in-4 identify as Hispanic)

Self-report being online near constantly

Pandemic Effect – occurred while in high school or college



48%

TikTok







46% Instagram

YouTube

#### Words used to describe themselves

Used to learn new skills (daily)



Independent





48% Determined

46%

Creative

#### Qualities valued in a leader



Approachable





Clear

communication



57%

#### Most important when considering a new job



75%







Accessible and approachable leadership

Learning and development opportunities

Career progression opportunities

## Student's in Today's Economy

#### **Overall Statistics**

56% are First-Generation college students

39% in 1980

51% financially independent

#### **Grants and Aid**

35% of today's students are Pell Grant recipients

26% in 1980

32% of today's students are receiving Emergency Aid

#### **Housing and Food**

48% experience housing insecurity

39% experience food insecurity

Cost of tuition, fees, and room & board rose by 32% since 2003

## Changes in Campus Life

Millennials brought a consumer focus to higher education

 Suite-style dorm rooms and new recreation centers

Gen Z is more focused on financial security and value which leads to favoring support services over campus amenities

 Academic Advising and Career Services



## **Digital Natives**

Can fact check everything and will withhold trust if advice is easily disprovable

Look for expertise online instead of looking to individuals in their lives

Create relationships with significant others or friends through an online space





# Loneliness: The Search for a Group

15% of men under the age of 30 report having 0 close friends

• 3% in 1990

Three major reasons men join Sigma Nu

- Sense of brotherhood
- New social opportunities on campus
- Networking

## Creating a Sense of Belonging

#### **Leadership is Connecting**

- Great leaders focus on bringing people together not just enforcing rules
- There is a need for more connection and less oversight

## Smaller groups are the most effective way to connect

 Chapter success reflects member experiences. If many members struggle, the chapter struggles as well

#### **Sigma Nu Application**

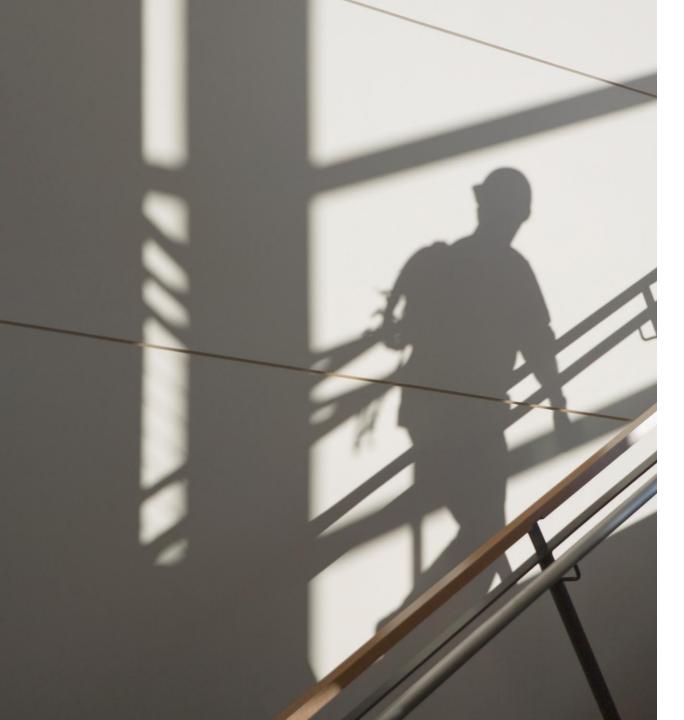
- Use committee systems to develop members and create a sense of belonging
- Consider doing smaller scale brotherhood events instead of entire chapter brotherhood events
- Encourage brothers to develop friend groups within the chapter outside of their normal circle



# Creating a Sense of Belonging

Welcome people as they are Connection before content People care about what they create

If the fraternity doesn't create a strong community, other (less positive) communities will take its place



# The Cost of Fitting In

Slang terms such as "Alpha," "Beta," and "Sigma" lead to self-doubt and low self-esteem

Young men feel a need to maximize everything and prove their worth

Hazing culture thrives when people assign value rankings to others

Good news: 74% of Sigma Nu brothers disagree that hazing builds brotherhood

### Gen Z Skill Deficits

#### Social

#### Reading

- Standardized testing encourages reading passages not novels
- Bad note takers and trouble studying
- Lack of male teachers in secondary education

#### **Motivational**

- Ease of cheating with Al
- Bad habits from the pandemic
- Short-form social media has impacted attention spans

#### **Solutions**

Working with a Faculty Advisor on campus.

Push for in-person work over e-mail, text, or video calls.

 AAB Meetings, Executive Committee Meetings, Chapter Committee Meetings, etc.

Encourage students to set boundaries with technology such as "Do Not Disturb."



### Gen Z Mindset

Highly cynical due to economic stress and social pressure to appear perfect

- There is a belief that institutions could make change Skepticism shaped but choose not to
  - Leads to mistrust
  - Also makes them feel they are failing since they too are not changing things
- Experienced Events –2008 financial crisis, increase in school shootings and violence, disclosures of government monitoring (e.g., Edward Snowden)
- Impacts of Experienced Events #MeToo Movement, pandemic, George Floyd protests, 2020 & 2024 elections

# The Pursuit of Perfection

Instead of seeing actions as personal choices, many students view their decision to "play along" as the only decision

Perfection is a performance – failure isn't an option

Behavior is modified to fit external expectations



## So Where do Volunteers Come In?

Many students do not react well to being called out and will see it as a threat to their future success

Understand the struggles and help transition from performance to genuine success

Students do not just need advice on running a chapter. They need mentorship on manhood and real-life success



## **Best Practices For Volunteers**

#### Functioning Alumni Advisory Board Alumni Networking

- Host a once a semester Zoom call with alumni from multiple fields
- Have students join individually and then sort into breakout rooms based on field of study or interest

#### **Mentorship and Guidance**

- Know whether to help them as an officer/member or whether to help them as a person
- Set up Alumni "Big Brothers" to serve as mentors to the Executive Committee

 Have alumni be a present part of the chapter experience. Join for dinners, chapter meetings, pre-arranged brotherhood events, etc.

#### Help them find their "Why"

- Alumni have a vision of the chapter that the members don't have the benefit of.
- Tell students about the shortcomings of past recent versions of the chapter and help guide them toward better decisions. Don't spend time talking about "the way it used to be."
- Don't be surprised if they still make similar mistakes. Part of the experience is they must learn to must and problem solve on their own.

#### **Function as a Liaison**

Be a Role Model

### Successful Habits of Alumni Advisors

Make yourself available for consultation

Increase your knowledge base

Be familiar with policy (University and Sigma Nu)

**Build on an officer's strengths** 



### Successful Habits of Alumni Advisors

- Ask for input
- Be cautious about talking about the past
- Work most closely with the chapter officers
- Support officers in decisions they have jointly reached
- Exemplify the ideals and standards of the General Fraternity and the Grand Chapter

- Allow mistakes to be made
- Explain your rationale
- Help members set expectations early on
- Help them participate in accountability





## Sigma Nu Resources

#### **Collegiate Officer Manuals**

• <u>sigmanu.org/officerresources</u>

#### **Alumni Best Practices Library**

sigmanu.org/alumnibpl

#### **Collegiate Best Practices Library**

sigmanu.org/bestpractices

#### **Behind Happy Faces**

• sigmanu.org/behindhappyfaces

The program includes five (5) 15 to 25-minute lessons, with four (4) optional add-on lessons, to facilitate with your chapter to help your brothers understand mental health, learn coping skills, and talk to a brother who may be experiencing a mental health challenge. Each lesson includes facilitator notes, a short video (except Lesson Four), and an accompanying PowerPoint presentation.



- 1. Lesson One Understanding Mental Health
- Lesson Two Your Mental Health
- 3. Lesson Three Changing Ineffective Coping
- 4. Lesson Four Talk to a Brother
- Lesson Five Before the Breakdown

#### Four optional add-on lessons:

- 1. Lesson Six Acute Stress vs. Chronic Stress
- Lesson Seven Good Stress and Stopping Procrastination
- Lesson Eight Sympathy, Empathy, and Compassion
- 4. Lesson Nine Neuroscience of Happiness

If needing to facilitate a lesson virtually, review the Behind Happy Faces Virtual Facilitation Tips.

Lastly, consider using the Behind Happy Faces Weekly Check-In Prompts to facilitate a short conversation checking in on the mental wellbeing of members.

## Behind Happy Faces

#### Peer-led student program

 Nine (9) lessons, plus weekly check-in prompts

#### **Officer & Advisor Series**

 Five (5) short online modules (5-10 minutes)

sigmanu.org/behindhappyfaces

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## Questions?



### Thank You!

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