

# The Commanders' Dinner

**Alumni Engagement Series**

# Today's Presenters

- **Todd Denson (Nicholls State)**
- **Bill Geddy (Georgia Southern)**
- **Kyle Lee (Eastern New Mexico)**
- **Kevin Kedzior (Northern Illinois)**



# Today's Agenda

- Overview of the program concept – the why
- The mechanics – start to finish – Theta Kappa & comments
- Overview of Theta Sigma (Missouri State) event – Kyle
- Overview of Theta Eta (Northern Illinois) event – Kevin
- Comments & questions

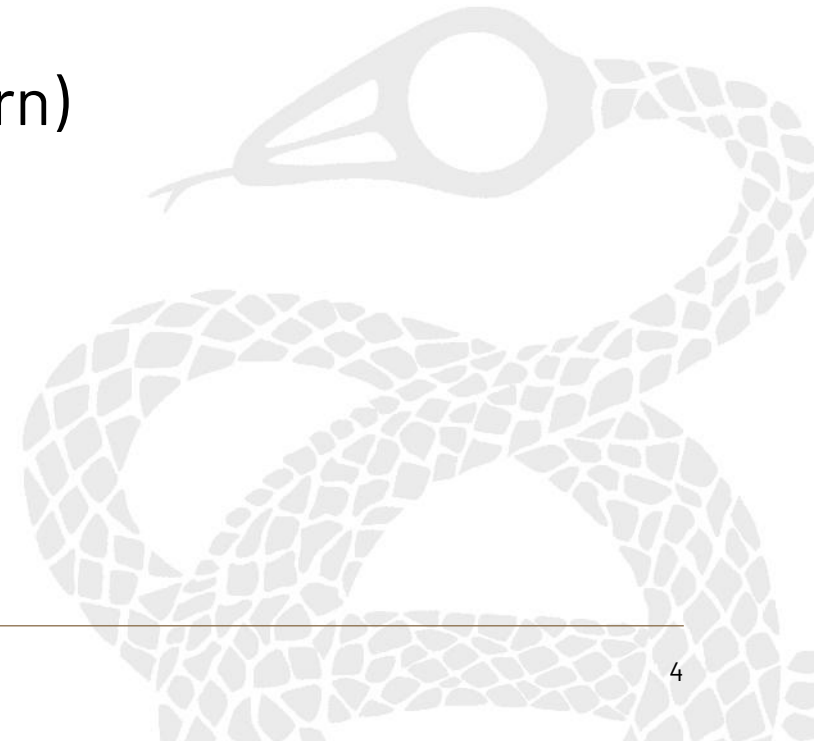
# The Commanders' Dinner

## ... a tradition in the making



Presented by:

Bill Geddy (Georgia Southern)



# Where it all started & why



- Mu Chapter, University of Georgia
- 3 alumni; 1 commander – dining room table
- Start with a handful – grow & sustain
- Engage alumni in a meaningful, memorable way that builds your own tradition
- It is our most sustainable, highest value, lowest effort program that we have
- Real value of dinner – **brotherhood**

# The Why

- Welcome the new commander
- Meet upon the election of the new commander
- Convey the combined wisdom of our experience, our passion for leadership, our willingness to support and mentor him
- Impart the importance of the need to protect the brand and name of your chapter and Sigma Nu
- The need to make the right yet sometimes very hard and very unpopular decisions for the good of the chapter and fraternity.





## More of “the Why”

- Demonstrate Support of Commander & Chapter
- Opportunity for Commander to “Stand & Deliver”
- Opportunity for Past Commanders to Demonstrate Support
- Deliver “State of the Fraternity”
- Demonstrable support for the Chapter Advisor & Alumni Advisory Board
- Follow the vision of “Excelling with Honor.”



## "The When"

- Following the installation of new Commander
- Following College of Chapters
- Once a year is an easy(ier) commitment for all alumni
- January is an easy month to book a room (if needed)
- Book the reservation immediately; send reminders with the follow up email; send reminder 4-6 months prior to the dinner; send final reminder 1 week before the dinner. Make phone calls if helpful.





# Benefits

- Grow a nucleus of members and servant leaders to the chapter and fraternity that will assist in advising and leading the officers.
- Build volunteer ranks of the alumni chapter, the house corporation, and the alumni advisory board plus other volunteer roles.
- Align the needs of the chapter alumni and volunteers with the needs of the collegiate leadership and membership.
- Unify the most active alumni of the chapter in a special event where they can collaborate and network with their peers, meet new generations of members, and connect with collegiates in a slower paced social setting.



- **History**
- **Traditions**
- **Heroes**

**... brotherhood**





**Sigma Nu Fraternity**

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# **Celebrating Our History, Creating Traditions, & Recognizing Heroes** ... the Commanders' Dinner



# Looking start, restart, or re-energize



- Post Covid reset – get people back with something special
- Honor our **history, traditions, & heroes**
- Engage alumni in a meaningful, memorable way that builds your own tradition
- Celebrate the history of Sigma Nu & your chapter as well as saluting your heroes
- Easy to do – you can do your first tomorrow\*

# It's not just a dinner – it's a concept



- Make it a tradition
- Make it work for your chapter
- It's a dinner, a lunch, a breakfast
- Be mindful of your alumni characteristics
- Allow it to change with your needs
- It's about **brotherhood**



# Random Thoughts



- Start **tomorrow** – start the tradition
- **Anything** is fine – it will catch on
- Use as an opportunity to infuse **the Big “F”**
- Make it the **centerpiece** of alumni events
- It’s about **brotherhood**
- Honor our **history, traditions, & heroes**

# Comments from a Commander



- Brings younger generation of leaders in
- Extends generations of chapter
- Created touch points for commander
- First steak dinner outside of Outback
- A stage to practice ... with a new group
- In one setting see a wide array of generations
- Honor our **history, traditions, & heroes**

## Quotes from a Commander



*"It helps the younger generation of leaders stay involved and promotes involvement in the organization post-graduation"*

*"It does the same for ... (everyone), but for the guys right out of college it creates early touch points into the most active and influential alumni"*

*"It provided me the perspective that the job is bigger than just the active chapter and extends generations of Mus"*

*"It provided me a stage to practice professionalism, public speaking, networking and introduced me to the real world"*

*"It sets the stage for the year as Commander and what's expected to succeed (and also what is at stake)"*

# Comments from an Advisor



- It's our chance to showcase the current Chapter, its new leader
- It's an opportunity for the chapter to talk about the chapter and about the university
- Ensure alumni are feeling connected to what is happening on campus & in the chapter
- Dinner can be a megaphone to your alumni
- Honor our **history, traditions, & heroes**



# Some key points to remember



- KISS – Keep it simple
- Make the date predictable
- Make it sustainable
- Make it interesting
- Make it memorable
- Make it enjoyable
- Make it so they are planning on next year's



# Traditions – that last the test of time



- Make it an honor to attend
- Make it valuable (Commander/Chapter/Alumni)
- Make it self-funded
- Make it so others want to attend
- Make it the centerpiece of communications
- Don't Reinvent – Make it your own – Make it Special

# Your first Dinner

Theta Kappa (Georgia Southern) Example



# The Dinner – from concept to reality



- You can start tomorrow – it is that simple
- Welcome reception
- Group photo – professional photographer
- Opening remarks & presentations
- Introduction of incoming Commander
- Other presentations, recognitions
- Advice & Dinner

# The invitation list – Who?

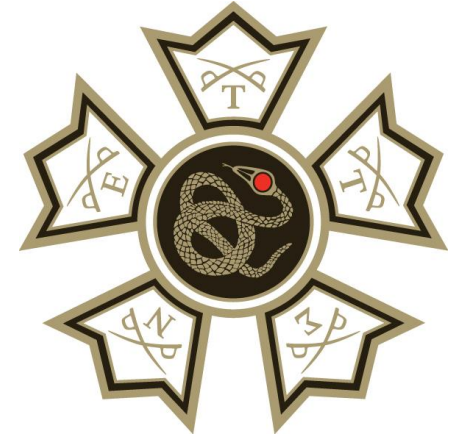
- Commander (to honor) & Lt. Commander from Chapter (Welcome)
- Immediate Past Commander (to recognize)
- All past Chapter Commanders
- All Chapter Volunteers:
  - Alumni Advisory Board
  - House Corporation
  - Alumni Chapter Officers
  - LEAD Facilitators
- Sigma Nu Staff, Division Commander, Foundation, & High Council nearby
- Alumni you want to bestow special recognition





## Save the Date – Pick the Date

- Ensure the collegiate officers can attend
- Make sure your core alumni can attend
- Make it a date that everyone will remember
- Avoid conflicts that will decrease participation
- Make a date that is accessible to travelers, if needed
- Publish a “Save the Date” notification, so everyone marks their calendar
- Ensure that the date is well known before elections each year
- Publish an invitation as early as possible.





# The invitation

- Publicize widely – website, Facebook, LinkedIn, email
- Email a calendar invite to everyone
- Create an RSVP means (Evite, Eventbrite, RSVPify)
- Create a call to action to RSVP – you need a headcount
- Publish multiple times
- Consider a printed & mailed invitation – arguments for & against
- Consider having the chapter call the invitees
- Reminders, reminders, reminders



# Preparing for the Dinner

- What do you need for the dinner
  - Out-going Commander's Badge
  - Gavel & block
  - Any awards or certificates
- Prepare the Commander
- Composite, awards, displays for the dinner
- Contract with a photographer
- Building & printing a program



# The Day of the Dinner

- Send a last-minute reminder out
- Consider sending a list of attendees
- Get there early
- Make sure the collegiates are there early
- Be prepared for last minute cancelations
- Have a great time!
- It's about the **brotherhood**!



# Welcome Reception

- Make sure you get someone there early
- The bar area is usually perfect
- Early entry to the room works as well
- Have handout from chapter & HQs
- Get your casual photos
- Professional photographer is worth the money
- Get the little things knocked out
- Alumni Update forms to fill out



# The Group Photo

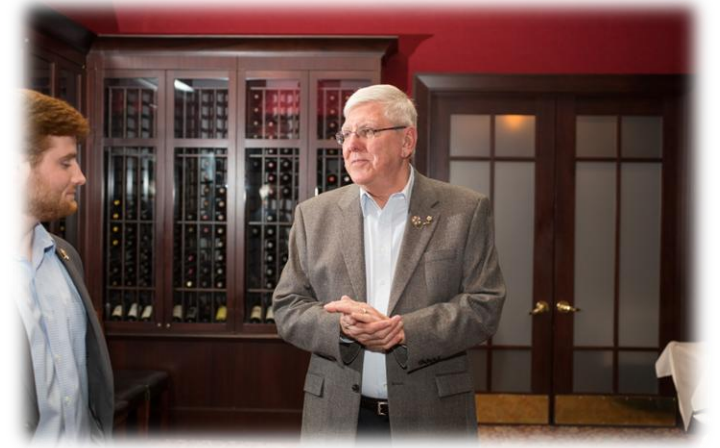
- A professional photographer is worth it
- Maximize number of members are present
- Make sure the lighting is good
- Arrange so everyone is visible
- Do it right – this is what will bring others
- Consider specific group shots





# Recognitions

- Recognizing Chapter Eternal
  - Empty Table/Place Setting
- Reenactment of Oath of Office
  - DO IT again – DO IT in front of peers
- Passing of the Chapter Pin to new Commander
- Presentation of Gavel & Block
- Recognize Outgoing Commander, Pin, and very brief comments



# The Commander's Report

- Commander's opportunity to "stand and deliver"
- Requires thought, practice and dialogue with prior Commanders to be most effective.
- Provides a stage to practice professionalism, public speaking, networking and an introduction to "the real world".
- It sets the stage for the year as Commander and what's expected to succeed (and also what is at stake)
- The job is bigger than just the active chapter and extends generations.
- Cover the basics on number of members, prior rush, number of initiates, and what is going on in chapter & university



# Advice for the Commander

- Welcome the newest commander of the chapter
- Follow the vision of “Excelling with Honor.”
- The need to protect the brand and name
- Convey the wisdom of our experience, our passion for leadership, our willingness to support and mentor him
- Choose the harder right over the easier wrong, and “these men” will stand with you.
- Keep it positive, professional, and upbeat – keep it moving



# The Dinner itself – it's a wrap

- We place our order after the group photo
- Invocation – plan ahead; have someone prepared
- Thank all attendees – have a great dinner
- Keep the event moving, don't let it drag, keep people engaged
- After the dinner send a thank you to everyone
- A personal note from the honored commander is a nice touch
- Set the date for next year





# **“Rinse & Repeat” – you’re ready!**



- **History**
- **Traditions**
- **Heroes**



# Theta Sigma Commanders' Luncheon

Presented by:

Kyle Lee (Eastern New Mexico)





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# Sigma Nu Theta Sigma Chapter Missouri State University

*Commanders' Luncheon Overview*



# Theta Eta Commanders' Dinner

Presented by:

Kevin Kedzior (Northern Illinois)











# Questions?

**Let us help you get started and create this tradition for your chapter – see our contact data next.**

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# Thank You

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**[Commanders' Dinner Sample Documentation](#)**