

# Chapter & Alumni News



## The Commander's Dinner

Insight into the implementation of a chapter best practice and how you can make it your own.

By **Bill Geddy (Georgia Southern)**

I am often asked where I came up with the idea for Theta Kappa (Georgia Southern) Chapter's Commander's Dinner. It's easy; it was a Sigma Nu Best Practice that was shared with me by alumni of another chapter. Basically, I took the great idea from our Mu Chapter at the Universi-

ty of Georgia, modified it a little, and made it work for our chapter. That's what best practices are for. Of course, I must give thanks to Vice Regent Michael Barry (Georgia) and Past Regent John Hearn (Georgia), who originally shared the idea with me.

This is Theta Kappa Chapter's 11th year hosting our Commander's

Dinner. The event is an opportunity to celebrate our history, traditions, and heroes - and we do celebrate. We started in 2013, at first a small gathering, and have worked ourselves up to a comfortable crowd. The dinner has become a cornerstone of Theta Kappa traditions.

In the time since we first launched

In early January 2025, brothers from the Theta Kappa Chapter at Georgia Southern University gathered at the Capital Grille in Atlanta for the chapter's 11th Commander's Dinner. The Dinner, a Best Practice for many Sigma Nu Chapters, highlights the chapter's intentional investment in alumni engagement and support of the collegiate chapter.



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Theta Kappa's version of the dinner, many other chapters have joined us in implementing this excellent Best Practice. In 2013, there were two chapters that did this. Now, there are at least a dozen (4 in Atlanta) I know of, with the number steadily increasing. My hope is to see all chapters of the Legion of Honor host their own version of the dinner. It is just too simple and impactful to pass up.

The formula is simple, and the cost is borne by the participants, so no cost to the chapter. We chip in to pay for all

the collegiate participants as we want them there to experience the brotherhood, fellowship, and support of the Commander and chapter. Having collegiate members present also helps to grow affinity and interest in the event among the younger members.

We started our first dinner with nine attendees, of which eight were Commanders (7 past; 1 present; 1 advisor). Since then, the event has grown and now we are at about 30 attendees, of which a little more than half are Commanders.

We invite local Grand Officers and staff each year. For example, this year, we were honored to have Sigma Nu's 68th Regent, Maury Gaston (Auburn), attend. He provided inspirational comments and a charge to the chapter to regain Rock Chapter status.

To make the day even more impactful, this year we hosted a leadership retreat for the chapter officers and the Alumni Advisory Board. At this retreat, the Commander explained the vision, strategy, and goals he developed at the 2025 College of Chapters.

Then the officer-AAB teams further developed strategies and goals for each functional area that will work toward helping the Commander execute his vision.

In 2016, we moved the apostrophe from the end of Commanders to after the “r” (Commander’s Dinner instead of Commanders’ Dinner). The subtle difference and change intend to highlight that we are still razor-focused on honoring the new Commander and showing him the support and network he has, but also to recognize that there are a lot of Sigma Nus that were not Commanders that have had a significant impact on the chapter. At the same time we implemented the name change, we expanded the invite list to include all volunteers, past and present (e.g., advisors, alumni chapter officers, house corporation officers, LEAD facilitators, etc.), past Commanders, and honored guests. We really want to showcase that there is a vast network of brothers interested and invested in the long-term success of the chapter.

I want to thank my mentors in college, Theta Kappa’s 11th Commander, John Austin, our 14th Commander, Jim Walker, our Chapter Advisor, Tony Fair, and others. John helped me get the tradition started and served on our AAB for 10+ years. We recently passed the organization of the dinner to the chapter’s “young guns”, our 43rd Commander, Evan Winebarger and our 46th Commander, Zach Geurin, but they let me stay involved. This is part of our history and legacy, this a great tradition that continues, and all these brothers are my heroes. \*

## Here is the “Why” of this event, The Theta Kappa Commander’s Dinner

**Purpose:** To meet annually upon the election of our new Theta Kappa Chapter Commander. To welcome him. To convey the wisdom of our experience, our passion for leadership, our willingness to support and mentor him, the need to protect the brand and name of Theta Kappa and Sigma Nu, and the need to make the right yet often very hard and very unpopular decisions for the good of the chapter and Fraternity. To ensure that he follows the Fraternity’s vision of “Excelling with Honor” at all times, during and after his term in office.

**Objective:** To grow a nucleus of members and servant leaders to the chapter and Fraternity that will assist in advising and leading the officers of the chapter, the Theta Kappa Chapter and Theta Kappa Alumni Chapter, the Theta Kappa House Corporation, and the Theta Kappa

Alumni Advisory Board for years to come. Strengthen the alumni connection.

**Background:** On Friday, November 17, 1967, a group of men, now Knights in the Legion of Honor, led by Robert G. Williams, our first commander, met to form a new tradition of Sigma Nu Fraternity at Georgia Southern. The Commander’s Dinner continues our traditions and was handed down to Theta Kappa Chapter by the venerable Mu Chapter at the University of Georgia and we have made this dinner our very own. Mu alumni Michael Barry, and John Hearn, both past Commanders of Mu Chapter, are mentors in taking Theta Kappa to the next level and motivating us to implement this new tradition. We remember that our spiritual founder and first advisor was Mu Chapter alumnus William Palmer Drew III, Mu 1287.

## The Formula Simplified

Set the date, invite the group, rally the troops, have the dinner, celebrate, document, and get ready for next year.

### Our Agenda

- 6:00 - 6:30 p.m.**  
Reception and Mingling
- 6:30 - 7:00 p.m.**  
Group Photos, Swearing-in, and Commander’s Remarks
- 7:00 - 7:10 p.m.**  
Order Dinner (Appetizers and Salads Arrive)
- 7:10 - 8:00 p.m.**  
Presentations, Advice, and Chapter News
- 8:00 - 8:30 p.m.**  
Dinner
- 8:30 p.m.**  
After Dinner Comments and Final Remarks

**During the Dinner, Brother Mac Broome was sworn in as the newly elected Commander of the Theta Kappa Collegiate Chapter.**





## Chapter-Specific Traditions We Have Implemented

1. The most senior past Commander swears in the new Commander and provides his advice.
2. The new Commander is presented with an engraved gavel & block for use in his term.
3. The Commander provides a report on the state of the chapter and his vision for the year.
4. We honor the immediate past Commander with an engraved Commander's badge adorned with a chapter president's dangle and a gavel. A gift from the alumni for his service.
5. Any alumnus in attendance is provided the opportunity to offer verbal or written advice to the new Commander. The new Commander's contact information is shared.
6. We honor our brothers who have entered Chapter Eternal with a separate empty place setting.
7. We provide the outgoing Alumni Chapter Commander (formerly the Worthy Commander) with a Com-

mander's badge with an alumni president's dangle and the new Alumni Chapter Commander with an engraved gavel, but we keep the focus on the collegiate chapter Commander.

For the dinner, we publish a dinner "pre-packet" as a welcome package for attendees. Afterwards, we publish an e-book with photos documenting the event for everyone and we send a printed version to the Commander to remember this significant event in the young leader's life.

## Points of Reflection to Share with the New Commander

1. Reflect on the challenges and forward movement of the chapter to provide insight and perspective on doing the right thing and the positive outcome it led to.
2. Reflect on the positive traditions that you had or followed during your time in the chapter.
3. Reflect on another brother who supported and assisted you in your role as Commander (or another officer role) that helped propel the positive direction of the chapter.
4. Reflect on an alumnus or advisor who supported and assisted you in your role as Commander (or another officer role) that helped propel the positive direction of the chapter.
5. Reflect on the experience and impact that being a Commander (or an officer) had on your fraternal experience, your family, your career, and your life.
6. State your willingness to mentor and shape our newest leader to avoid past mistakes many of us made, develop a positive leadership ethic, and sustain the future of our chapter.
7. Share at dinner in one-on-one conversations, and work with our new Commander in the future to positively lead and build a sustainable future for our chapter and the Fraternity.

## Quotes from Commanders

- "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 to generations of alumni."
- "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 what is at stake)."

To find more details and information about this chapter best practice, visit [sigmanugsu.com/commanders-dinner](http://sigmanugsu.com/commanders-dinner). Resources from the General Fraternity, including a recorded webinar on implementing your own Commander's Dinner, can be accessed by scanning the QR Code.



## Additional Advice

- It's not just a dinner — it's a concept — make it your own.
- Honor your history, traditions, and heroes
- With investment, this will quickly become a tradition
- It can be dinner, lunch, breakfast, or brunch.
- Easy to do — you can do your first tomorrow
- Make the date predictable — the same week or weekend every year