

COLLECTING MEMBERSHIP DUES

As the old American Express commercials stated, “membership has its privileges.” By definition, a privilege is “a special advantage, immunity, permission, right, or benefit granted to or enjoyed by an individual.” Part of being granted the privilege of being a member of Sigma Phi Epsilon is each individual member’s commitment to pay his share of the burden of chapter operations, as in your membership dues.

When our members fall by the wayside, the chapter needs to intervene swiftly and fairly. In an ideal world, all members would pay in full and on time. This will not happen. Therefore, it is important for you to have policies and procedures in place to compensate. If you are unsure of your chapter’s policies and procedures, review the chapter’s bylaws or speak with your AVC treasurer.

Many people believe it is unacceptable or not brotherly to remove a non-paying member when, in fact, it is a direct violation of our principles of Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love for him not to pay. Why?

- Joining an organization means making a commitment to live up to its purpose and obligations. When our members do not pay and go unpunished, they fail to learn an effective life lesson. Can you not pay your rent? Your credit card bill? Don’t let people slip through the cracks. It is not a virtuous trait to unfairly benefit from the work of others.
- Members paying on time must see the benefit in doing so. If non-paying members can participate in all activities, why should other members pay?
- The chapter must operate on a cash basis. No factor has as much effect on a chapter’s financial stability as the collection of members’ accounts. The chapter must have money in the bank in order to meet its expenses.
- Even a small minority of members owing money encourages non-payment by the rest of the chapter. This can quickly become a large problem.

There are many methods to ensure prompt dues collection. Some of the most frequently used are:

- Make bills due and payable on the first day of each term.
- Use a membership agreement to outline the financial obligations of membership.
- Share a list of brothers who have not paid at each chapter meeting.
- Implement a 10% fine the 10th day dues are late.
- Send a letter to brother’s parents on the 20th day with a copy of the delinquent bill.
- Automatically suspend the brother from all activities on the 30th day.
- Expel the brother if dues are not paid within 60 days of the due date.

According to Section E, Paragraphs 15 through 17, of the Grand Chapter Bylaws and Administrative Policies and Procedures, the chapter or its Alumni and Volunteer Corporation can carry out suspensions and expulsions for indebtedness. Offering a choice between payment and loss of membership usually works. By enforcing this policy, your chapter will increase the benefits to the members paying on time and will decrease the benefits to members owing the chapter money.

Payment plans are often looked to as solutions for late payment. This tool should be used on a limited basis and must be established before the due date for membership dues. When establishing a payment plan, it is critical to keep a written record of the agreement signed by both parties. A promissory note fulfills this purpose. Additionally, the payment plan should stipulate that any missed payment cancels the plan and the entire outstanding balance is immediately due.