Application preparation guide

Every two years at Conclave, SigEp recognizes its highest-performing chapters with the Buchanan Outstanding Chapter Award. Named in honor of past Grand President Edwin Buchanan, the Buchanan Cup, as we commonly refer to it, represents superior and sustained achievement in our Fraternity. The Buchanan Cup, or "Buc Cup", recognizes the best-of-the-best Sigma Phi Epsilon chapters. Only the chapters that excel in every area of operations and further the Grand Chapter's strategic plan qualify for this honor.

The Buchanan Cup recognizes chapters for their work during the two calendar years leading up to a Grand Chapter Conclave. This means the 2027 Buchanan Cup will evaluate chapters for their activities from Jan. 1, 2025 to Dec. 31, 2026.

How to use this resource

Chapters can and should use this document to proactively prepare their 2027 Buchanan Cup application. It is designed to help you review application requirements, develop responses and gather supplemental documentation in advance. **All final responses and supporting materials must be submitted directly in mySigEp by March 1, 2027 at 11:59 pm**. This document is a preparation tool and will not be accepted as an official submission.

Award prerequisites

As determined by the National Board of Directors in the fall of 2019, chapters are required to be an **accredited** SigEp Learning Community (SLC) to be eligible to earn a Buc Cup.

1. **Chapters with a summer or fall 2026 reaccreditation**
   You must submit your SLC application by November 11, 2026.
2. **Chapters with a spring or summer 2027 reaccreditation**
   You must submit your SLC application by December 16, 2026.
3. **New accreditations**
   You must submit your SLC application by November 11, 2026.

To review your chapter's SigEp Learning Community accreditation status, visit your chapter dashboard on mySigEp. Chapters must earn accreditation or re-accreditation from the SigEp Learning Community committee by the **Buc Cup deadline of March 1, 2027.**

> **Note:** *Chapters can complete the Buchanan Cup application without SigEp Learning Community accreditation. These chapters will receive feedback from the review committee on strengths and areas of improvement in their chapter operations, but will not be eligible for the award.*

Application deadline

All aspects of the Buchanan Cup application inclusive of supplemental attachments, letters of recommendation and question responses must be submitted on mySigEp by March 1, 2027, at 11:59 p.m. ET. Late submissions will not be considered.

Application process

The Buchanan Cup application must be completed and submitted on mySigEp. This will allow you to:

- Easily collaborate with your executive board to complete the application.
- Save your answers as you go, ensuring you don't lose your progress.
- Provide context or color commentary about relevant pre-populated metrics, according to your chapter's data already stored in mySigEp.
- Review responses with chapter volunteers before submitting your application.
- Request letters of recommendation that can be uploaded directly by key volunteers and stakeholders.
- Receive feedback from reviewers on how to continue improving your chapter after Buchanan Cup recipients are announced at Conclave.

The application consists of open-ended questions about your chapter's experience and operations. Do your best to answer honestly and succinctly, as each question has a 2,000-character limit. Pre-populated statistics from the chapter's dashboards in mySigEp will also be assessed during the review process. These statistics are based on self-reported results, actions taken in mySigEp (such as reporting a new member or updating someone's status to "expelled") and Headquarters staff assessments. At the beginning of each section, you'll be prompted to review the relevant dashboard and have an opportunity to provide context or color commentary on the data displayed in the dashboard. If you feel the data does not accurately represent your chapter, use that opportunity to explain why.

Review process

After applications are submitted, they are reviewed by a team of trained volunteers from across the country. Reviewers use the Buchanan Cup rubric to evaluate the information provided in the application, rating performance for each question as: Below Standard Performance, Standard Chapter Performance, Award-Eligible Performance, or Peak Performance (as indicated on the rubric). Each application is reviewed by multiple volunteers, ensuring that every chapter benefits from multiple perspectives throughout the process.

Reviewer ratings are then combined to calculate an overall application score. To ensure every chapter receives a fair and thorough assessment, the review process includes additional safeguards for chapters whose scores fall near award-recipient thresholds. These applications

may advance through additional rounds of review, providing additional evaluation before final recommendations are made.

Based on the results of the review process, a slate of potential Buchanan Cup recipients is presented to the National Board of Directors, which makes the final determination of award recipients.

Supplemental documentation

Chapters must submit the following documents with their Buchanan Cup application in mySigEp:

- Chapter bylaws
- Membership agreement
- Photo of chapter's Ritual equipment set up to perform a Rite of Passage
- Chapter's budgets, showing budget vs. actual, for the last two years (*must be uploaded to the Finance Dashboard on mySigEp. If already uploaded, there is no need to re-submit.)*
- Chapter's latest federal tax filing - form 990 *(must be uploaded to the Finance Dashboard on mySigEp. If already uploaded, there is no need to re-submit.)*
- A recent monthly financial report for the chapter (template here)
- An annual finance review of the chapter's finances (template here)
- Chapter's calendar of events. The chapter should include events of all types (BMP, SLC, social, philanthropy, etc)
- Grade reports for each term during the review period (*2025 spring and fall, 2026 spring and fall must be uploaded to the Academic Dashboard in mySigEp. If already uploaded, there is no need to resubmit.*)
- Campus benchmarking data comparing the chapter's size to the sizes of other fraternities on campus (*information must be uploaded to the Campus Information Dashboard in mySigEp for the 2024-2025, 2025-2026, and 2026-2027 academic years. If already uploaded, there is no need to resubmit.*)
- Five photos of chapter events with brothers to be displayed during the awards ceremony. Images must be high-resolution and above 1MB.
- If a housed chapter:
    - Lease
    - House Manager role and responsibilities
    - Facility budget and AR report
    - Capital improvements plan (*if applicable)*
    - Tax opinion letter outlining the amount of educational space within the facility *(contact SigEp National Housing / SigEp Foundation for assistance, if needed)*

Letters of recommendation

Letters of recommendation should be submitted with your application. These letters should help support answers supplied by the chapter and clearly show why the chapter should be considered as

one of SigEp's best. You should submit four letters of recommendation coming from these individuals:

- Fraternity and sorority life advisor or similar university official
- Faculty fellow
- Two engaged volunteers, ideally Chapter Counselor, AVC President and/or Balanced Man Steward

Please note, you will only be able to submit four total letters of recommendation.

Letters of recommendation should be uploaded by the chapter in the *Supplemental Documents* section of the Buchanan Cup application.

Dashboard certification

The first step of the Buchanan Cup application will be the chapter acknowledging the information for the chapter within mySigEp is up-to-date and accurate. Information the chapter will be asked to validate before submitting includes the information displayed on the following mySigEp dashboards:

- Academics
- Balanced Man Scholarship
- Campus Information
- Finance
- Manpower
- Program Attendance
- Recruitment

> **Note:** *It is strongly advised that you log into mySigEp to review your dashboards well in advance of the deadline. This allows plenty of time to ask questions if something looks incorrect. Have questions about a dashboard? Reach out to support@sigep.net.*

Application sections

The 2027 Buchanan Cup application is broken up into 6 sections

- Growth
- Member development
- Chapter operations
- Volunteers
- Finance
- Housing *(only applicable to those chapters with a facility)*

All application questions correspond to one of the sections above. There is also a 'general' section with a few additional questions for each chapter to complete.

Application questions

These are the questions you will see, in mySigEp, on the 2027 Buchanan Cup application when it goes live in early 2027. Please note that each question directly aligns to a line on the Buchanan Cup application review rubric.

Growth

- **Goals / path to largest & best:** Describe the chapter's growth plan, including its manpower goals, revision process and who develops it.
- **Manpower:** Describe how the chapter has achieved, or on track to achieve, becoming the largest on campus. Reference and give context to the data in the Campus Information dashboard.
- **Peak Performance Growth Summit:** Describe each term's Peak Performance Growth Summit, including attendance, facilitation, progress reviewed and changes made to the action plan.
- **Recruitment & sales skills:** Describe the chapter's recruitment and sales trainings, including attendance, facilitation, progress reviewed and changes made to the action plan.
- **Utilizing social media:** Describe how the chapter markets SigEp, generates and converts leads and collaborates with mentors.
- **Balanced Man Scholarship:** Describe how the chapter uses the Balanced Man Scholarship to differentiate itself and recruit new members (or why it does not conduct one). Reference and give context to the data in the Recruitment Dashboard in your response.
- **Year-round recruitment:** Describe how the chapter recruits year-round and how it generates potential new members outside formal recruitment periods. Reference and give context to the data in the Recruitment Dashboard in your response.

Member development

- **Chapter calendar:** Using the chapter's calendar, describe how activities are sequenced, who has access, how volunteers and campus partners contribute and how participation data informs changes.
- **Ritual:** Describe how the chapter practices Ritual, including when each ceremony was last held, member participation, Ritual studies and the condition of the chapter's Ritual equipment.
- **Academics:** Describe how the chapter prioritizes academic success and improvement. Ensure that academic data has been uploaded to the Academic Dashboard for the duration of the review period and give context to that data as necessary.
- **BMP activities:** Describe how the chapter has improved and delivers the Balanced Man Program, including its alignment with SigEp's values, member participation, facilitation, campus traditions, chapter-wide core experiences, challenge activities / meetings and accountability.

- **Retention rate:** Describe how the chapter keeps members engaged and reduces resignations, including why members left and why changes were made as a result. Reference and give context to the Manpower Dashboard in your response.
- **Senior experience:** Describe how the chapter engages seniors leading up to graduation to ensure their continued involvement in the chapter, including recognition, participation expectations, mentorship, alumni and volunteer support and preparation for continued involvement after graduation.
- **mySigEp registrations:** At the time of completing your Buchanan Cup application, how many outstanding member registrations exist based on your chapter's roster? How does the chapter drive completion and keep the roster current? If the chapter is not at 100% completed registrations, please explain why.

Chapter operations

- **Member safety:** Describe the chapter's education and support around member safety. If the chapter has experienced any incidents or investigations in the past two years, describe how the chapter responded, learned and changed.
- **Transition retreat:** Describe the chapter's most recent executive transition retreat, including the agenda, attendance, facilitation, performance review, goals and follow-up.
- **Bylaws & membership agreement:** Describe how the chapter's bylaws and membership agreement are reviewed, when each was last updated, the expectations they establish, and the percentage of members who have signed each document.
- **National programs:** Describe how the chapter funds participation in SigEp leadership programs, prioritizes program attendance and applies what brothers learned. Reference relevant data from the Programs Attendance dashboard and explain how it reflects the chapter's approach.
- **Accountability / standards:** Describe how the chapter uses its standards board, including meeting frequency, cases, educational outcomes and expulsions. Reference and give context to data in the Manpower Dashboard in your response.
- **Standards / celebration:** Describe how the chapter recognizes members who demonstrate SigEp's values, including the actions and achievements celebrated, how often recognition occurs and the roles alumni and volunteers play.

Volunteers

- **Alumni communications:** Describe the AVC's alumni engagement strategy, including newsletters, biography updates, digital and personalized outreach, annual fundraising, Founders Day of Giving participation, and how these efforts strengthen alumni involvement and chapter performance.
- **Volunteer & mentor engagement:** Describe how the chapter's mentors support its executive officers, including how often officers meet with their mentors, how mentors coordinate with one another, and how volunteers lead retreats, transitions, and BMP and SigEp Learning Community programming.

Finance

- **Payments:** At any point in the past two years, has the chapter had an invoice to the Grand chapter more than 30 days past due? If so, what happened and how was it remedied?
- **Taxes & annual review:** Describe how the chapter manages its financial reporting and oversight, including how and when it files its 990, how often the Vice President of Finance updates the chapter and the AVC, and how the AVC reviews budgets, taxes and spending throughout the year.
- **Budget & collections:** Upload budgets for each year of the review period showing budget vs. actual and confirm each officer has a line-item budget. What percentage of dues were collected by the end of each term?

Housing (*skip if unhoused*)

- **Occupancy:** How does the chapter coordinate with the AVC and, where applicable, SigEp National Housing (SENH), to establish house capacity and occupancy goals and what percentage of that capacity was filled each term during the review period?
- **Housing documentation:** What are the top three needs of the facility and how does the chapter and AVC plan to address them to keep the facility a desirable place to live and work?

General

- What are the chapter's three greatest accomplishments over the last two years?
- Did your chapter apply for a 2025 Buchanan Cup? If so, how did the chapter adjust operations based on the feedback provided? If the chapter did not apply, what led you to apply this year?
- What makes your chapter stand out from other SigEp chapters and why should your chapter be awarded a Buchanan Cup?
- If your chapter is selected to receive the Buchanan Cup at the Balanced Man Celebration during Conclave, a walk-up song will be played as your representative comes to the stage. Please list one or more songs (title and artist) you'd like considered. Songs should be high-energy and appropriate for all audiences. Please note that requests cannot be guaranteed.

Contact

If you have questions, please reach out.

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