

# BIG BROTHER PROGRAM

## INFORMATION FOR THE INDUCTOR

### Big Brother Program Overview

Big brothers play a significant role in the overall success of the *Brotherhood in Phi Sigma Kappa* program and the education of associate members. When the big brother program functions effectively, chapters will generally see a higher percentage of associate members initiated and associate members are more involved and engaged in the chapter. In fact, the big brother can be the single most important person in shaping the fraternal development of an associate member.

The purpose of the big brother is to be a mentor—not to be a best friend. Associate members should receive their big brother early on in their associate member experience to allow time for the big brothers to mentor their little brother prior to the Ritual for the Initiation of New Members. It is suggested the big brother/little brother reveal occurs within the third week of the associate member program. This may seem early, but research across fraternities and sororities shows that an earlier big brother/little brother process sees higher retention rates and more involved members as alumni.

### Implementing the Big Brother Program

In order to effectively implement the big brother program, you will need to create a schedule in advance, as part of your Associate Member Education Plan that includes the following:

- Big brother application and selection process
- Interviews with associate members and big brothers
  - The big brother interview, selection, and matching process should be discussed at one of the first two associate meetings, preferably the **Expectations** of Phi Sigma Kappa or **Founding** of Phi Sigma Kappa meetings. Inductors should provide expectations and guidelines for interviews, sample interview questions provided on page 41, and a list of eligible big brothers.
- Matching big and little brothers
- Big brother reveal and retreat
  - This should occur early in the associate member's experience, preferably by the third week of the associate member education program, to allow the big brother to mentor his little brother throughout his associate member experience.
  - The big brother reveal and retreat can occur during or after a meeting, and essentially is a brotherhood event that is exclusive to current associate members and their big brothers.
  - This should be a substance-free event.

### Big Brother Interviews

Associate members should interview potential big brothers to get to know them better before submitting preferences of big brothers. Potential big brothers should

submit their little brother preferences along with their application but can make adjustments after the interviews are completed and prior to the Inductor matching.

Associate members should use interview questions provided on the handout “Big Brother Interview Questions” to conduct interviews of potential big brothers. Inductors should distribute these at the meeting they discuss the big brother program.

Associate members should NOT be required or asked to interview every brother just to “get to know them.” Interviews of potential big brothers for the purpose of selecting a big brother is an approved part of this process.

### Selecting Big Brothers

The following optional requirements should be considered before pairing big and little brothers.

- All initiated members wishing to become big brothers and who meet the standards determined by the chapter, should submit to the Inductor a copy of the “Big Brother Application” describing his experience, his reasons for interest in being a big brother, and a list of two to five associate members (in order of preference) he would like as a little brother.
- Executive Boards should consider the benefits of requiring big brothers to be third- or fourth-year students, have a certain level of involvement with the chapter, or other additional requirements beneficial to being a good big brother. These additional requirements could ensure that big brothers are mature and experienced members of the chapter and will serve as a positive mentor to their little brother. Using older brothers could help maintain a higher level of involvement and interest of older brothers and help diminish “senioritis.”

In order to improve the possibility of a close relationship between associate members and big brothers, care should be taken to match intentionally. Some of the factors to consider:

- **Personality and leadership ability:** Avoid personality conflicts if they are predictable. You don’t want a little brother to be overwhelmed by a domineering older brother or for a little brother to dismiss a big brother who is one of the quieter members.
- **Academic major:** If brothers are pursuing the same major, minor, or are in the same college/school, they may work well together. This can also contribute to the scholarship of the little brother, because the big brother can help with course selection and tutoring.
- **Interests:** Individuals that enjoy the same kind of activities, whether athletic, musical, etc., will already have something in common.
- **Their preference:** Your goal is to try and match the little brothers and big brothers based on their preferences. However, don’t put so much pressure on yourself to make perfect matches. Matching big and little brothers is a puzzle, and it may not end up perfect. Keep in mind that big brothers are mentors, and they can do that with any associate member they get paired with.

## BIG BROTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

### HANDOUT FOR BIG BROTHERS

The big brother can promote healthy attitudes and personal leadership in the associate member. The following are requirements of the big brother:

- Stays in good standing with the chapter
- Mentor the little brother through their associate member experience and beyond
- Cooperate with the Inductor in accomplishing the goals of the *Brotherhood in Phi Sigma Kappa* program.
- See that his little brother lives up to and meets the expectations of him as an associate member
- Spend time frequently with the little brother to cultivate the relationship
- Contribute to the planning of, and participation in the following big brother/little brother events:
  - Big brother/little brother reveal
  - Good Samaritan service project, led by associate members
- Attend the following associate member meetings and events, dates set by Inductor:
  - **Solidarity** in Phi Sigma Kappa meeting
  - Ritual for the Initiation of New Members
- Be a good friend and a good brother to the little brother, upholding all values of the Fraternity and role modeling good membership in the chapter.

### Tips for Big Brothers

Associate members need more than just meetings and events we provide for them as part of the Phi Sigma Kappa experience. Each associate member needs a sense of value as an individual brother, a balance between friendships, academics, and Fraternity responsibilities, the opportunity to meet and share some time with all the brothers, and a feeling of belonging to the Grand Chapter where brothers care about one another. In Phi Sigma Kappa, there are no classical “pledges”; your little brother is a brother since his participation Ritual of Association. He already has rights and a voice in the Fraternity but still needs guidance to help him get to the Ritual for the Initiation of New Members.

Every associate member needs a good friend to show him the way, a brother who can act as a guide, friend, challenger, and perhaps even confidant – a big brother. He is an invaluable part of your local chapter and the Fraternity’s continued progress. Big brothers should be chosen because both the chapter and the associate members feel they have the qualities to be a model for others. Here are some ideas to help you be an excellent big brother:

- Reach out to your little brother consistently throughout this associate member experience.
  - Ask him to hang out, invite him to hang out with you and other older brothers, or ask if he wants to study together.

- Make sure to work with his schedule and respect his commitments, his need to work on schoolwork, or if he wants to hang out with other friends.
- The *Brotherhood in Phi Sigma Kappa* program is focused around genuine conversations among associate members so your interactions with him should mirror that.
  - Ask your little brother questions about his life, work, family, classes, or interests.
  - Talk about interests and life experiences you have in common. This could include family, academics, experiences outside of Phi Sigma Kappa on campus and fun things to do in the area.
  - Share your own history and involvement in Phi Sigma Kappa. Talk to your brother about your own initiation and associate member experience. Tell your brother what brotherhood means to you, why the Fraternity is important to you, and how you experience good times and support from other brothers.
  - Ask him about his associate member experience so far. How did he become interested in the Fraternity? Does he feel comfortable as a brother? Has he gotten to know many associate and older members? Is he having any difficulties with the associate member program? Has he been able to balance Fraternity responsibilities with other commitments? You don't need to have all the answers for him but sharing your personal experience as a brother and providing him guidance will make him feel validated.
- After you get to know your little brother, make sure to continue building a stronger bond with him and challenging him to be the best Phi Sig he can be.
  - Appreciate your brother as an individual. Your job is not to make him into what *you* think a Phi Sig should be, or to mirror yourself.
  - Serve your brother. Help him with classes that are difficult. If your major is different than his, introduce him to someone who might be of assistance or inform him of resources on campus that can help such as a tutoring center. Show your little brother around campus and the local community to make him feel at home.
  - Challenge your brother. Check up on his academics and offer to study with him. Don't let him slack off and rely on the same study methods he used in high school. Encourage him to get more involved in the Fraternity by joining a committee and make sure he is aware of future leadership opportunities such as committee chairmen and Executive Board positions.
  - Introduce your brother to people both in and outside of the chapter. This is especially important if he is new to the campus and area.

If you have been a good big brother, your little brother will find it easy and exciting to go through his associate member experience. Also, chances are better that he will grow as a good brother of Phi Sigma Kappa and an excellent big brother for future associate members.

**BIG BROTHER APPLICATION**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year in School \_\_\_\_\_

Phi Sigma Kappa Positions (current or previous, if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

Phi Sigma Kappa Committees (current or previous, if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

Credit Hours this Semester \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_  
Cum. GPA \_\_\_\_\_

Extracurricular Activities

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Interests

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Have you been a big brother before? Yes  No

Name(s) of current little brother(s) (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to spend time each week with your little brother?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you able to fulfil the obligations outlined in the "Big Brother Responsibilities"?

\_\_\_\_\_

Are you in good standing with the chapter? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend chapter meetings regularly? \_\_\_\_\_



## **BIG BROTHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### ***FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERS***

#### Basic Information

1. Full Name
2. Year in School
3. Major
4. Hometown

These questions do not need to be asked in any particular order, as the goal of the interview should not be to ask as many questions as possible. Rather, these questions should be used to spark organic, productive conversation to learn more about the potential big brother.

#### Sample Questions

- Why did you join Phi Sigma Kappa?
- Why did you decide to attend {name of college or university}?
- What do you like to do outside of school and Phi Sigma Kappa?
- What positions have you held or committees you've served on in the chapter?
- What committee or position could you see me participating in?
- What is your favorite Phi Sig memory?
- How has Phi Sigma Kappa challenged you to be a better brother?
- How has Phi Sigma Kappa challenged you to be a better student?
- How has Phi Sigma Kappa helped you develop your leadership style?
- What made Phi Sigma Kappa stand out to you compared to the other chapters on campus?
- How has the chapter helped you to become a better person?
- In what ways have you changed since joining Phi Sigma Kappa?
- What are your plans after college?
- What are our chapter's greatest strengths?
- What are our chapter's greatest weaknesses?
- What was the biggest challenge our chapter has faced in the past year, and how did we handle it?
- If you could change one thing about our chapter, what would it be?

## Interview Notes

