

Graduate Scholarship Submission

Prompt: Discuss what brotherhood after graduation from the University of Illinois means to you, the benefits of continued brotherhood after graduation, and how you have demonstrated and/or encouraged brotherhood after graduation.

Brotherhood After Graduation by Danielle Swanson

Brotherhood after graduation from Illinois means so many things to me. It is a continued sense of connection to the University of Illinois through this small group of family I love, and most of whom at this point I have never met. I know I always have a place within our APX family, even without a house. I have kept in touch with friends I met in the chapter for 20 years now, as right about now is when I started pledging in 2001, and have made new friends each year with the new pledges and actives. There is such a strong bond within our chapter, and Alpha Rho Chi in general, and being a part of the brotherhood means an extraordinary amount to me. I recruited my cousin to be an Anthemian. My very best friend is an Anthemian, her husband is an Anthemian, our group of friends are Anthemians. We are all very close due to our connections through Alpha Rho Chi.

The benefits of brotherhood after graduation are immeasurable, especially in this digital age. I have a network of brothers across the country on whom I can call for anything. When I moved to Denver, I connected with two older brothers from Anthemios who started an architectural firm in Denver many years ago. We met for lunch just to talk about life in the Denver area and connect to someone new. Extending brotherhood past Anthemios, I married a brother from Daedalus whom I met while he was Grand Lecturer and I was a new alumni. I have multiplied my friend group exponentially through him and my numerous national contacts and positions, and have a web of brothers ranging in age from 80s to 18. I keep in touch with our new brothers from Anthemios so I can be a resource to them as they move through their time at Illinois and beyond. I have a handful of close contacts I've made throughout the years by choosing to remain in touch with our brothers. I've shared my experience and thoughts on how to work through issues or creatively solve problems, and it has kept my mind fresh to learn about what the chapter is going through and working on now.

Being a brother of Alpha Rho Chi has been one of the most influential things on my life and its trajectory. I was a very active collegiate brother, participating in and leading committees, holding board positions, and engaging our membership to be better brothers and community members. One of the events I started was called Rock For Humanity back in the mid 2000s. Our chapter

was looking for ways to get more involved with Habitat for Humanity, and instead of holding a regular fundraiser and handing the money over, I created Rock For Humanity. I was a newer alumni at the time, but I helped organize the chapter, design tee shirts, source the bands, and secure the event venue. Though I did most of the planning, I coordinated with and taught the active chapter how to host this type of event. The national board eventually asked for me to share my expertise with the national brotherhood and this How-To Guide was the result.
<https://www.alpharhochi.org/documents/2014/03/how-to-stage-a-charity-concert.pdf/>

Post graduation, I took one year off from holding a position. It turned out that was the year we had one semester of no pledges. I was appalled that our strong chapter got no recruits, so I took it upon myself to write a new recruitment manual for Anthemios. I started giving workshops to our chapter on how to recruit new members. Our pledge classes jumped into the mid-teens immediately and every semester for years following. The national board caught wind of what I was doing and asked me to adapt the manual for national use, and I became the National Recruitment Director. I traveled across the country to present to other chapters on how to recruit. The manual can be found here:
<https://www.alpharhochi.org/documents/2014/03/recruitment-manual.pdf/>

While working in Virginia, my coworker's daughter started college at Virginia Tech, home to Metagenes. She would visit the office often, and I saw a lot of myself in her so I would spend time with her while she was in the office. She was an architecture major, so I spoke of Alpha Rho Chi. Through our chats and my encouragement, she chose to become a brother of Alpha Rho Chi in the early 2010s.

I am the National Historian, and have been preserving our national history for the last decade. Through this project I have strengthened my connection to Alpha Rho Chi by continuously questioning us, our purpose, and our strengths and failures as I read documents written by brothers during times of both difficulty and prosperity.

As the National Historian, I also have access to the database of all members, and with permission I collected the Denver area brothers in a database and started the APX Denver alumni group. For two years I planned and promoted events, contacted brothers to start new friendships, and made connections with new brothers as they moved to the area. I passed the torch along after I gave birth to my daughter, and it has fizzled. I plan to reactivate it in the future.

Alpha Rho Chi is a solid part of my world and is partly responsible for the person I am today. Without it, I truly can't imagine where my life would be. With it, I have an endless supportive brotherhood who is a mix of personalities, backgrounds, religions, perspectives, and interests, many of whom I would never have connected with if it were not for this fraternity. I am ever-indebted to Alpha Rho Chi and I hold her forever in my heart, and on my body with my very-popular-in-the-2000s back tattoo.