

# Fundraising

*Editor's Note: This is a review of the fundraising efforts of one chapter. The amount raised was in the \$250,000 range in the 1998-2002 era.*

Brothers,

In response to a request of the Headquarters staff, here is some information about how the Alabama Chapter of Delta Chi went about raising money to renovate its chapter house.

The most basic fundraising decision made by our ABT - which, for the most part, has been the entity that has planned and guided our renovation program - was to use our alumni newsletter, *THE COUNSELOR*, to mainly reestablish contact with our approximately 1,000 alumni and not as a means for soliciting donations. We have always used separate letters to our alumni to request donations. The point being that we wanted them to receive something (the newsletter) from the Chapter on a regular basis that contained only news of the student chapter and alumni and never asked for money. After the initial announcement and explanation of the condition of the chapter house and its planned renovation, the only mention of the renovation in each issue has been a routine summary progress report that never mentions money.

Having a newsletter in our case has been critical. It is essential that the alumni be kept up to date on the progress and how their donations are being spent. We have been fortunate to have a brother who has been the guiding force behind our newsletter, which received an award from the Fraternity for the most recent school year. And this brother is not an official member of our ABT. In fact he doesn't even live in Alabama. This has been made possible primarily by use of the Internet.

I assume you have a building committee or your ABT to work with you. This is very important because it is really too much to ask of only one or two brothers. We have been fortunate to have a good cross-section of brothers on our ABT in terms of graduation years. We have someone (or two) from

every decade since the 1950s. This makes it possible for each man to take a period of school years to follow up our letters with personal phone calls. As for the letters, they have to be written according to what is happening, and when, in your renovation schedule. Because of difficulty in getting all the money needed with just one solicitation letter, we found it necessary to break our renovation schedule into phases. Right now we are in Phase III, having completed the major portion of the renovation in Phases I and II, each of which took about a year and a half. With any luck at all, we'll complete Phase III by fall 2002, which will see our kitchen completely re-equipped and our living room and house director's quarters completely refurnished.

To date, we have received about \$250,000, about fifteen thousand of which came in the form of furniture (new large screen TV, new TV room and dining room furniture and high quality used furniture for our Alumni Honors Room). We are now trying to raise the final \$15,000 to complete Phase III.

After the completion of Phase II last spring, a member of our ABT computer generated a large, formal listing in color of the names/school years of the Phase I and II donors, grouped by the total amount of money each had given (i.e., \$5,000 and above; \$3,000 to \$4,999; \$1,000 to \$2,999; and up to \$999) and had it nicely framed and hung in our Alumni Honors Room. I expect we'll do something similar for the Phase III donors. It is very important that donors be recognized, particularly those most generous (we had one brother give \$65,000 to Phase II with the understanding that it be matched by another \$65,000 from the alumni - it was!).

A particularly effective special effort was made during Phase II by a group of '70s brothers who conducted a special fundraising to have the 2nd floor chapter office formally dedicated to a deceased brother from that era. He had been a particularly outstanding member in terms of character and leadership (he was "A"). As a result, a plaque is now mounted on the office's door dedicating the room to him.

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Another effective ongoing activity sponsored by our ABT is our annual Alumni Honors Dinner held at a prominent private club in Birmingham each summer. This year nearly 100 guests attended. At it, two alumni of the Chapter, selected by polling the Chapters' alumni, are honored each year by being awarded Jefferson J. Coleman Outstanding Alumni Award trophies. Their framed pictures are also hung on the Wall of Honor in the Alumni Honors Room of the Chapter House. Started in 1998, there are now eight men so honored on the wall. (Jeff Coleman was the Alabama Chapter's first pledge in 1927 and was later the Fraternity's "AA" in 1954-56. He was a leading member of the UA administration for more than 40 year, having the University's coliseum [Coleman Coliseum] named in his honor in the late '80s. His picture is also centrally placed on the Wall of Honor.)

All these things (the periodic alumni newsletter, the annual Alumni Honors Dinner, the Coleman Alumni Awards, and the Wall of Honor in the Alumni Honors Room) have done much to reestablish a relationship between our student chapter and our alumni. This is what has made it possible for us to successfully approach our alumni for donations over the last three-plus years. But it has been a task requiring constant effort and commitment on the part of a core of dedicated alumni.

As to how to identify potential \$5,000-10,000 donors, to tell you the truth we never did arrive at a way to do that. We kind of expected that the brothers, who were successful doctors, lawyers, businessmen, etc., would voluntarily step up and make that kind of donations, but they, for the most part, never did. Mainly we got \$500-1,000 donations.

Initially, after much discussion, the ABT decided to ask that each donor give \$1,000. The reasoning being that if we didn't suggest a donation amount we would get mostly donations of \$100 or less. This was based on the likelihood that the brothers who were going to donate would figure that if all 900-plus of our alumni each donated \$300, the final total donated would be more than sufficient. And it would be if every alumnus gave \$300. But based on my experience from asking for donations to build the house in 1968-70, I knew we would probably get, at most, 15% of the brothers to donate. It's turned out that so far we've done a little better - 17%. With that kind of participation you can't live with \$300 donations. You have to set a minimum

that will, hopefully, result in enough being given by those who do donate. If you throw out our one large donation of \$65,000, our average donation, thankfully, came to about \$1,000.

Actually, without the one brother's \$65,000 donation, our Phase II would have been in a world of trouble. In addition, we had eight other alums who each gave \$5,000 or more. So you can see that almost half our money came from less than 10 donors. The trick is to identify one or more "heavy hitters" that will each give a substantial amount. We were aware of the one big donor, and the other plus-\$5,000 guys just showed up. Every chapter is going to have a certain number of this type that the Fraternity means more to than it does to the average member. You just have to hope you have enough. That's the way it is.

What you have to decide, as we did, is do you ask for a specific donation amount or do you leave that open and let each donor set his amount without any input from your Building Committee. We decided to ask for \$1,000 from each. I still think it was the right thing to do. You may decide differently.

Good luck to you in your efforts. It will require a lot of "blood, tears and sweat," but the satisfaction of seeing it through to completion will be well worth it.

In the Bond,  
**Chuck Carlin**, Alabama '57