



# Sigma Phi Omega Constitution/Bylaws

Updated 2009

# I. SHORT TIMELINE FOR THE SEMESTER

## During the Summer or Winter Break

1. Make sure carrel space reserved and all requirements are fulfilled
2. Make sure all meeting rooms and rush event rooms are reserved
3. Book tables for UC for rush 5 days prior to event
4. Reserve banner space for rush banner
5. Make Calendar and email to TX governor and TX chapter. (Do it early so we will priority of dates.)

## Active Retreat

- consists of workshops covering:
    - o “What is Activeship?”
    - o “What it means to be a Big Sister?”
  - each chair should go over certain rules
    - o ie. Secretary: “When do you get fined? How much?”
    - o ie. Treasurer: “When are Dues due?”, “How Does reimbursements work?”, “What is the Sorority Budget?”
    - o ie. Academic Chair: “What min GPA do I need to stay active? How many hours do I have to take?”
    - o etc...
  - closing:
    - o know the value of sisterhood
    - o who do you appreciate? And why?
    - o Who do you represent? When you are a Sigma, whether you want to or not... you are representing the entire sorority.
- Must contact alumnae’s and ask about alumni advisor – decided in Fall 2004, alumnae’s will choose the advisors for the actives
  - Alumni advisor position is a 1 year term, unless notified by alumni association.

## During the Semester:

- ❖ National Ambassador
  - ❖ Order Traditionals, lavalieres, active pins, crest, wine glasses for Formal
    - Actives should be reminded to show extra support to brother and cousin fraternity at their events – thus, bringing our greek family closer together
  - ❖ Order graduation stoles/sashes: (*Passed on April 1, 2008*)
    - Graduating seniors may receive a sash paid by the sorority if she has served at least 4 semesters as an active and cannot have a maximum balance of \$300 within the sorority.

## End of the semester

- ◆ The Active class will take 10% of the amount left in the treasury to donate to an organization affiliated with their philanthropy, Domestic Violence Awareness.

## II. Amendments to the Handbook

- Proposals to amend the handbook should go through the President.
- If the proposal is introduced to the Active Class, the Proposer should have a detailed proposal and state reasons why she believes the proposal is necessary.
- 80% of the active class must agree in order to change any rules and regulations set in the handbook.

## III. Statuses

### a. Statuses that are automatically earned after graduation:

#### 1. ALUMNI:

- A. Must be active 50% of the semesters enrolled in college after crossing.
- B. In order to achieve alumni status, the future alumni must be active her last semester before graduation (associate status included).
  - i. EXCEPTION: A Sigma may be inactive her last semester before graduation, ONLY IF she has not been inactive before AND you are eligible to be an associate.
- C. If you graduate after your JA semester, you will have to be an “Honorary Active” for one semester after you graduate. *Refer to Honorary Active status.*
  - i. EXCEPTION: If sister graduates after her JA semester and moves outside of the country, the active class will vote on her alumni status, while considering how much that sister contributed during her JA semester.

### b. Statuses that can be declared:

#### 2. ACTIVE:

- A. Must have a GPA of 2.0 or higher at the school that the Sigma is currently enrolled.
- B. Cannot owe more than \$300 in past dues; if a Sigma exceeds this amount she will be forced to be inactive, if she is eligible, or deactive. *Proposed and passed Fall '08 for \$500. Amended Fall'09 to \$300.\**

#### 3. ASSOCIATE:

- A. Must have been at least 4 semesters active (not necessarily consecutive)
- B. CAP on numbers of associate is 10% of the size of the active class
- C. Make sure associates understand their requirements
  - i. Refer to constitution:
    - a. May not Vote
    - b. Must pay half of the dues

- c. Must attend the first meeting of every month
- d. May not take a little sister
- e. May not hold office

**4. INACTIVE:**

- A. *Good Standing*: Must have been at least 1 semesters active and cannot be inactive on good standings for two consecutive semesters
- B. *Bad Standing*: May NOT wear letters; may not claim to be a Sigma – all privileges and such thereof are stripped from this person.
  - i. Can only be inactive in bad standings for a maximum of 2 semesters total.
  - ii. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters, she will be deacted.

**5. DEACTIVE:**

- A. No longer a Sigma.
- B. Women that have been inactive on bad standings for more than 2 semesters
- C. Women that have been red-lined from the sorority

**c. Statuses that the actives initiate:**

**6. HONORARY**

- A. Has done everything and more to earn Alumnae status except graduate.
- B. A Sigma that has significantly contributed to the sorority; however, because of unexpected circumstances, she did not graduate.
  - i. Ex. She pursued her life goals that did not involve graduating. Active 5 semesters, extremely active, president, super sigma, etc.
  - ii. She moved to another city to pursue educational opportunities not available her. Active 4 semester, extremely active, etc.
- C. Initiated and voted in by two-thirds (2/3) of the actives.
- D. It is a rare honor for a Sigma to earn honorary.

**7. HONORARY ACTIVE:**

- A. Eligibility
  - i. A Sigma, whom the active class feels has NOT fully earned the right to become a full honorary member, but is not eligible to be an active, inactive, or associate, because of extreme unexpected circumstances.
  - ii. A Sigma that has graduated after her JA semester.
- B. Requirements
  - i. Determined by the active class and
  - ii. Set out in the Honorary Active Contract

\* Only dues starting during Spring 2009 to present are counted. All other dues are still owed, but will never be calculated in this amount.

## IV. Fines/Late Fees

- ✓ You must call THREE people in the event that you are late or not planning to attend an event:
  1. The chair in charge of the event
  2. President
  3. Secretary
    - Fines and strikes will still apply IF you do not talk to these three people
- ✓ You must TALK to these three people; if you do leave a message, continue to call back until you reach these people
- ✓ You are not considered late if you come no more than 5 minutes late to an event held on campus, or if you come no more than 10 minutes late to an event held at a location off campus.

### ABSENCE/LATE FINES AND RULES

1. You must CALL the Officer in Charge in addition to Secretary and Talk to them personally to tell them if you're going to be absent or late to an event/meeting and why. You must call 24 hours in advance. If you talk to anyone else, the fines will still apply.
2. All Excuses are only taken in written form. You must write why you were late, and why you feel that you shouldn't be fined. We will not excuse you by just talking to you. It is up to the discretion of the person in charge of the function/meeting to accept your written excuse.
3. To avoid a late fine and strikes, come within 10 minutes (if off-campus event), 5 minutes (if on-campus event) after the specified time of function.
4. Valid Excuses include:
  - A. Illness
  - B. Flat tire, unfixable car problems
  - C. Severe emotional Ordeals
5. Absent Fee (No call, no show): \$20  
No call w/in 20 minutes: \$10  
Late Fee (Call w/in 20 minutes): \$5.00  
Refer to Secretary for updated fines/rules on absence and lateness
6. 3 unannounced absences (no call, no show) to any event will be equitant to 1 strike. (Proposal voted in on November 25, 2008)
7. If you know you are running late, please call and let us know, however, you will still be fined and striked if you had not call 24 hours in advance or if you don't have a valid excuse.

8. Officers in Charge:

Rush Events:	Rush Chairs
Mixers, Parties, Formal:	Social Chairs
Service Projects:	Service Chair
Fundraiser Events:	Fundraiser Chair
All other Events:	President, Vice President

These rules are not intended to constrain or upset anyone, they are necessary because it is unfair to others who arrive on time to events. Those who are late or absent to functions delay the function/meeting and waste everyone else's time.

Note: It's always better to be early than late, so plan accordingly! =)

## V. **Graduation Stole/Sash Requirements**

- ❖ Graduating seniors may receive a sash paid by the sorority if she has:
  - Served at least 5 semesters as an active (including JA semester)
  - Does not have a maximum balance of \$300 within the sorority
  - Sashing is done by NA at formals.

## VI. **Sigma Songs created at UH**

- A. When You Say Nothing At All – ‘When You Say Sigmas For All’
- B. ‘Never Had a Dream Come True’ – S Club 7

Sigmas started in '49,  
And will last till the end of time.  
Strengths what Sigmas given me,  
That just seems to grow with time.  
There's no use looking back or wondering,  
How could things been, oh might have been,  
Through peace or tears through all the years.  
A sisterhood are we...

Never had a dream come true,  
Till the day that I found you...  
Even though I pretend that I've moved on,  
You'll always be my sister...  
I never found the words to say,  
Thank you for the strength you give each day.  
And I know no matter where life takes me to  
A part of me, will always be with you....

Sigma Phi Omega  
Will last till the end of time

And tomorrow we'll still be here  
Cause your strength is all that fills my mind  
There's no use looking back or wondering  
How could thing been oh might have been  
Through peace or tears, through all the years  
A sisterhood are we...

### **Chorus**

You'll always have the strength that fills my head  
Yes you will, say you will, you know I will Sigmas...  
You'll always be the sis I know I'll never forget...  
There's no use looking back or wondering,  
How could things been oh might have been  
Through peace or tears, through all the years.  
A sisterhood are we....

### **Chorus**

#### ***Sigma Cheer***

- \* "United we stand, Divided we Fall  
Sigmas for one, and one for ALL!"
- "Brrrr..Its cold in here,  
there must be some sigmas in the atmosphere"
- "UUUUHHHHH!"

***YEEEEHAAAWW!!!***

*Hey hey Sigmas, UH sigma sisters,  
Sexy sigmas, C'mon and show your pride!  
Sigmas, Sigmas, UH  
Sigmas, Sigmas, 9 5  
Sigmas....holler back...whoo whoo  
hollerback...whoo whoo  
Siiiigmaas! YEEHAAW*

## **VII. Sisterhood EVENTS:**

- They can range from dinners to pool parties to clubbing:)
- From past experience, it is healthy for the sorority to spend time together, away from meetings and events.
- Older actives have learned the hard way, without the bond among the active class, things will begin to fall apart.

#### Events Planned for Fall 2001:

- Readings at weekly meetings
  - Composing a “Chicken Soup for The Sigma Soul”
  - Active Retreat for a Weekend
  - Sisterhood Workshop
    - With the Active class growing so large, Its hard for all the girls to be close and feel respect and love for each sister
  - Goals For each Active (Organized by the VP)
  - Different Programs ie. “ 4.0 GPA” that can be open to both actives
  - Events to emphasize our HISTORY – why we began at UH? Or even, disclose the HARD times in which our chapter has experiences ie Spring 2000.
- Vice President often initiates the Events

#### Thanksgiving Dinner (Fall 2008)

- This event is often held during the last meeting of the Fall semester in conjunction to nominations for open positions.
- Dinner can either be pot luck or catered depending on the budget of the sorority.

#### ANNUAL Christmas PARTY:

- it has become tradition to have a Sigma Christmas PARTY
- often it is potluck
- Exchanging gifts have been done many ways: secret Santa, or pulling numbers and the further you go down the line, you get to exchange the gifts with the people who have already chosen
  - White Elephant gifts with max of 2 steals per gift has also worked well.
  - Fall 2008 white elephant were valued \$15-\$20
- Event is usually in conjunction with installs and election in the fall semester

## VIII. **Lavaliere/Greek Letters:**

### **Lavaliere**

- A symbol of a woman’ ACTIVE status in the sorority
- Presented to the neophyte during Formals by Big Sis
  - NA orders the lavaliere
  - Big Sis buys the necklace
- If a new active deactivates before serving one full term of active duty, she must return her lavaliere to the sorority
- As the constitution states, “Full membership is contingent upon one full term of active standing. Those not fulfilling this requirement must forfeit their lavaliere and affiliation with the sorority.”

## **Greek Letters**

- ❖ Wearing Greek Letters is a PRIVILEGE given only to actives
- ❖ At formals, Big Sisses give their little sisses the Traditional sweatshirt and a gift.

## **IX. Goals/Evaluations**

- Every Semester VP is responsible for developing a Goals Sheet.
- Depending on the VP present, she can adopt any form she pleases. For example:

Active Name:

Goal:

Three things you plan to do to implement the goal:

- VP may assign an active buddy to help the active throughout the semester
- VP may assign weekly buddies in order to help sister bond with one another one on a more personal level.

## **X. Facts Every Sigma Should Know**

- a. Green Represents “strength” and yellow represents “character”
- b. All Actives must maintain a cumulative 2.0 GPA and be enrolled as a full time student ( 12 hours) → actives may end the semester with 9 hrs
- c. Grounds for Active Dismissal:
  - i. Stealing
  - ii. Prevaricating
  - iii. Continuous absences from mandatory events without excused reasons as deemed by the cabinet and or the sorority
  - iv. Conduct which does not reflect the best interest of the sorority
  - v. Violation of the Secrecy Oath
- d. Only active members who do not owe the sorority more than \$300 in debt shall be eligible to vote.
- e. 2/3 of the active members shall constitute a quorum
- f. 1/3 (incl alumns) of the chapter must be present at convention
- g. 80% is need to amend the handbook.

## **XI.**

## **Contracts**

- A. Strike Contract – should be signed by all actives at the first meeting, and it informs the actives of the Strike Policy.
- B. Strike Acknowledgement – should be signed by the active receiving the strike, the officer in charge of the event, and the president. This is to acknowledge to the active that she has received a strike.
- C. Honorary Active Contract – This status is given on a semester basis and should be reviewed by the active class at the beginning of the semester if there are sigmas eligible for this position. The stipulations are determined on a case-by-case basis and can be changed accordingly.
  - a. Distant – The Sigma lives more than 2 driving hours away and less than 5 driving hours.
  - b. Close Proximity – The Sigma still lives in Houston and its surrounding areas.
- D. Sigma House Tenant – This is an overview of what is to be expected if Sigmas were to live in the Sigma House.
- E. Payment of Old Dues Contract – defines the guidelines and stipulations of actives that owe past semester dues to the sorority treasury
- F. Late Fee Contract – should be signed by all actives at the beginning of the semester. It defines the required procedures regarding active attendance and tardiness.

## Strike Contract

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to all terms and conditions under the strike policy where throughout the semester, I have a maximum of five strikes. Upon receiving the first two strikes, I will be warned and fined. Upon receiving the third strike, the privilege of attending formal will be forfeited and I must inform the social chairs before April 13, 2006 to get reimbursed. Upon receiving the fifth strike, I will be unable to wear my letters and my activeship will be in question.

Listed below are reasons why an active would receive a strike

- Not attending service or social events
- Behavior that dishonors the sorority

The active class has the right to strike an active if they feel necessary, with a majority vote.

As an active of the Epsilon Chapter of Sigma Phi Omega, I understand that our special tradition is what makes our organization unique from any other. Therefore, I \_\_\_\_\_, do solemnly swear to secrecy, any part relating to the sorority's activeship, and to honor the passing of our traditions to my sisters only, and not to anyone outside the sorority.

Active Signature

Date

President Signature

## Strike Acknowledgement

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am hereby notified that I have received a strike, as a result of my violating of one of the guidelines, \_\_\_\_\_, under the strike policy, in which I signed and agreed upon at the beginning of the year. Upon receiving this strike, I understand that I am obligated to pay a \$10 fine because of my absence or a \$5 because of my tardiness or another amount depending on the president, officer in charge of the event, or secretary's discretion, as long as the amount is reasonable.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Active

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Officer in Charge

\_\_\_\_\_  
President

## **Honorary Active Contract Distant Location**

Honorary Active Status is a sub-level of the honorary status in which a Sigma, whom the active class feels has not fully earned the right to become a full honorary member receives. Therefore, as an honorary active member, she has stipulations in which she has to fulfill. The stipulations are to be determined on a case by case basis, in which the active class deems necessary.

It is thereby understood, that it is a privilege, not a right to be awarded the honorary active status. As a result of this, if the active class feels that the stipulations have not been fulfilled to their satisfaction, the active class has to right to terminate and change the status of the honorary active member.

Listed below are the stipulations in which the honorary active has to adhere to:

- She is to attend 3 sister chapter events (only one of them can be events from the closest chapter).
- She is to attend 1 service and 2 social events of the closest chapter.
- She will not be able to hold a position within the chapter.
- She is not eligible to take on a lil sis.
- She is to pay her past dues.
- She is to pay 30% of the current semester dues.
- She is to follow the guidelines and rules stated in the sorority's constitution.
- She will uphold the image of the sorority.

All the date of events will be stated at the beginning of the semester in the semester calendar; therefore, there should be no discrepancies with the date of events.

The honorary active will uphold this status, until the active class feels that she has earned the right to become a full honorary member. The active class holds the right to change or add stipulations to this contract if they deem necessary.

I have read the Honorary Active Contract in its entirety and understand and agree to all the terms and conditions that are stated above.

Print Name

Date

Signature

President Signature



## **Honorary Active Contract Close Proximity**

Honorary Active Status is a sub-level of the honorary status in which a Sigma, whom the active class feels has not fully earned the right to become a full honorary member receives. Therefore, as an honorary active member, she has stipulations in which she has to fulfill. The stipulations are to be determined on a case by case basis, in which the active class deems necessary.

It is thereby understood, that it is a privilege, not a right to be awarded the honorary active status. As a result of this, if the active class feels that the stipulations have not been fulfilled to their satisfaction, the active class has to right to terminate and change the status of the honorary active member.

Listed below are the stipulations in which the honorary active has to adhere to:

- She is to attend 1 service and 1 social events of the closest chapter.
- She has to attend 1 meeting a month.
- She will not be able to hold a position within the chapter.
- She is not eligible to take on a lil sis.
- She is to pay her past dues.
- She is to pay 50% of the current semester dues.
- She is to follow the guidelines and rules stated in the sorority's constitution.
- She will uphold the image of the sorority.

All the date of events will be stated at the beginning of the semester in the semester calendar; therefore, there should be no discrepancies with the date of events.

The honorary active will uphold this status, until the active class feels that she has earned the right to become a full honorary member. The active class holds the right to change or add stipulations to this contract if they deem necessary.

I have read the Honorary Active Contract in its entirety and understand and agree to all the terms and conditions that are stated above.

Print Name

Date

Signature

President Signature

## **Sigma House Tenant Contract**

I understand that I am fully responsible for the rent of the Sigma house for one lease term. If for any reason, I plan moving to a different location before the lease is up, I know that it is my responsibility to find another sister to move in the house in my place. If I cannot find another sister to take my place, I understand that I am still obligated to pay my part of the rent until the lease is up or until I find someone to take over my responsibilities.

I have read and agree to the terms and conditions above in the Sigma House Tenant Contract.

Signature

Date

## Payment of Old Dues Contract

I understand that I am legally responsible for any dues in which I have accrued throughout the past. Therefore, I agree to make payments in accordance to all the guidelines listed below:

- Pay 10% of the balance or a \$100 maximum limit, during the due date of roll over dues.
- I understand that there is no latitude on the payment day or the payment amount for the first two payments.
- After the third payment, on the conditions that I have abided by the rule stated above, I have one leeway opportunity for the next two payments.

Payment dates for any old dues will be stated at the beginning of each semester in the semester calendar; therefore, there should be no discrepancies with due dates. And it is the responsibility of the active to contact the treasurer of the balance on the account, and not vice versa.

The conditions stated above are in no ways biased towards any one particular person. It is just a precaution to ensure that the every person is paying an amount in which will keep the sorority's treasury stable and healthy. If there are any terms or conditions stated above in which are conflicting, please contact the treasurer and president.

I have read the Payment of Old Dues Contract in its entirety and understand and agree to all the terms and conditions that are stated above. If for any reason I do not abide by the rules of the contract, which are legally bond upon my signature and the treasurer of Sigma Phi Omega's signature, then I may be forced to deactivate or inactive myself from the sorority.

Active signature

Date

Treasurer

## **University of Houston Clauses**

### **Anti-Hazing Clause**

This organization will not initiate, participate in, or be witness to any act that inflicts or intends to inflict physical or mental harm or discomfort or which may demean, disgrace, or degrade any person, regardless of location, intent, or consent of participant(s).

### **Non-Discrimination Clause**

As a Registered Student Organization at the University of Houston we adhere to the University of Houston's Non-Discrimination Policy. The University of Houston is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity institution. The university provides equal treatment and opportunity to all persons without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, genetic information, disability, or veteran status except where such distinction is required by law. Additionally, the System prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.