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The Role of Delta Sigma Rho Chapters

by JOHN KELTNER, *Executive Secretary*

Delta Sigma Rho is an honorary organization. A candidate who is selected for membership in the society is chosen because he represents certain standards of *achievement* in forensic activity. Once selected, what is his responsibility to the local chapter and to the national organization? This question has arisen several times in the past and more recently in respect to some of the newer chapters. Let's see if we can suggest several directions that the member and the local chapter may take.

One way of looking at the matter is to assume that once elected to the society sufficient recognition has been made and nothing further needs to be done. The local chapter that views its position as a recognition society is not out of step, but it may be missing some very important and valuable opportunities to contribute to the life of the campus.

Let's assume that the above position represents the *least* that a chapter can do. What are the other factors or activities that can be developed by the member and the chapter? Here are some suggestions (not necessarily in the order of importance) of how chapters can serve the school and the society.

1. The local chapter may sponsor special forensic events on the campus. Many schools have DSR sponsored extempore contests, tournaments, special school assemblies, etc., during the course of the year. These events are managed and organized by the personnel of the local DSR chapter. They may be a part of the total forensic program of the school that is solely in the hands of the society.

2. Some schools have organized their whole forensic program through the local chapter. In these cases the DSR chapter members are placed in the position of policy makers for the forensic program. At one of the spring meetings the chapter considers very carefully the coming year and the program to be recommended to the director of forensics or the administrators responsible for the program. In many cases this kind of responsibility has served to assist the directors and administrators in planning a program that fitted the student situation.

3. Some chapters assume the role of "trainers." They take it upon themselves to prepare the novice and the freshman for advanced forensic work. Various members of the chapter take responsibility for new students and neophytes to the program. Sometimes this takes the form of a "big brother and sister" type of an arrangement. Other times small training squads are organized under the direction of the senior chapter members and the sponsor.

4. There are some chapters that arrange and develop a program strictly for the members of the chapter. Their meetings include speakers and discussions concerned with problems that face the advanced forensic student. Chapter activity then becomes an advanced training business in the areas where the members' interests fall.

Other chapters become essentially a social organization where the members meet occasionally for a short business meeting and then spend the bulk of the time in social and recreational activities. This may be pleasant but we feel it is hardly the best use of chapter time. Of course, there should be considerable social programming in the activities of a good chapter. On the other hand, a proper balance of the light and the heavy makes for the better quality chapter activity.

These are some suggestions that may help to clarify the role of the chapter. Actually it is pretty much what the members want it to be. I've seen some chapters that have moved into school policies and student activities with a vigor and a skill that made them powerful agencies on the college campus.

The most important thing, however, is that at whatever level the chapter wishes to operate, its function should bring respect to the society. There may be much that the local chapter can do to raise the standards of forensics and to increase the value and the strength of the program. So long as the members and the chapter units strive to *raise* the level of activity . . . to improve on what they have no matter how good it is . . . then I believe that the chapter is playing its most vital role.