

Alpha Epsilon of Chi Psi Re-Founding Capital Campaign FAQs

Why did we take the Alpha dormant in 2016?

As we had previously communicated, Epsilon traditions surrounding in-Lodge life had been degrading for a number of years. After several attempts by the local alumni and Central Office to engage with the undergraduates on a joint plan to turn things around, it was reluctantly concluded that there was no interest on the part of the undergraduates in the Epsilon experience and that a fresh start was required.

Why are we choosing to re-found the Alpha at Michigan given what occurred there in 2016?

Several years have passed, which has allowed our alumni brotherhood to reflect on what caused the dormancy, and how a new Alpha Epsilon can be structured to avoid those mistakes recurring. After intense evaluation both locally and nationally, we have concluded that a successful re-founding on our time-honored principles is possible now.

Has the environment for Greeks improved at Michigan in the last few years?

There has been a wide-scale re-evaluation of the Greek culture at Michigan, both at the University level and amongst the alumni and undergraduate organizations that comprise the Greek System. There is a broad recognition that a more restrained and responsible Greek System is necessary for its own survival, and certain actions of self-regulation have been instituted toward that end. In addition, the restraints on social activities created by the COVID Crisis have caused an unexpected re-evaluation of past social behaviors and practices, which may have a lasting impact.

What is the University's view of our effort?

In terms of the Office of Greek Life, they have been supportive. They have long viewed Alpha Epsilon as an exemplary Greek organization on-campus, and our alumni are well-respected for our thoughtful approach to dormancy and re-founding.

How is the re-founding being organized?

For the past 18 months, representatives from the Central Office, working with local alumni, have been living at the Lodge and quietly recruiting a new "founding class" of men. That class, which now numbers 8, was granted official "colony" status in April 2021. Assuming this colony continues to grow over the next year, it is possible that Epsilon could return to Active Alpha status by 2022.

What are we planning to do this time around that is different? Will the Lodge be dry? Will there be a zero-tolerance policy for drugs/alcohol?

While part of the solution will involve strict limits on social events (involving alcohol and non-Chi Psi guests) within the Lodge, the approach is not to simply ban activities, but to develop a membership agreement with the undergraduate members designed to foster Epsilonian traditions. Most notably, Actives will be required to live in the Lodge through their senior year, and to take meals together nightly. In addition, only upperclassmen will be able to hold certain key officer positions. Further, the Lodge will be overseen by a live-in adult Lodge Manager, responsible for ensuring that the undergraduates maintain respect for the Lodge and its traditions.

Explain more about the live-in Residential Manager.

This is a role that exists in over half of our Lodges across the country and is increasingly returning to the Greek System. It is a modern take on the "House Father" of the mid-20th Century. In fact, the Lodge benefited from two such individuals- Holgar Rasmussen and Jerry Rachey- who, combined, oversaw the Lodge for nearly 70 years from the mid-20th to early 21st Century.

How will funds raised be used to support these goals?

Firstly, through a combination of improvements to the physical Lodge itself to ensure that it is a first-class living environment well into the 21st Century. Secondly, for funds to support scholarships and other academic support within the Lodge in order to encourage full participation within the new Lodge operating model and to ensure that no young man who wants to participate in Chi Psi does not due to lack of financial resources.

What physical improvements are necessary at the Lodge?

While the main floor, bathrooms, and exterior of the Lodge are in excellent condition due to the generosity of past campaigns, there are significant deferred capital improvements necessary, most notably a complete overhaul of the Lodge's electrical, heating, and cooling systems. In addition, there is a need to provide modern amenities for study, exercise, collaboration, and gathering in order to compete with newer living facilities off-campus. To achieve these ends, a large-scale renovation of the basement is planned.

Are my contributions tax-deductible? Can I split my gift between the Lodge renovations and the Educational Endowment?

Gifts to the Educational Endowment are deductible, and dividing gifts is also welcome.

Can I make a planned gift?

Yes, you can. Gifts can be made over 3-5 years on terms you designate. Gifts may also be made through bequests in trust or will documents.

Are there naming rights available?

This is something we are giving serious consideration to, particularly for larger gifts. This may include the naming of key living spaces within the Lodge, as well as individual sleeping rooms.

Are contributions to the Endowment being used to support educational goals at the Lodge?

Yes, they are. This includes both scholarships and improvements to and maintenance of educational facilities and resources within the Lodge itself.

What role does the Chi Psi Educational Trust play in supporting Epsilon?

The Trust works hand-in-glove with the effort at the local level, by allowing donors to the Trust to designate gifts for the benefit of Epsilon as well as providing matching grants for the work our campaign is doing. It is also providing access to legal resources to assist us in structuring our campaign so as to maximize the benefit to the Alpha and the Lodge.