

# Strategies for a Positive Chapter Environment

*While there are no “cookie cutter” rules for creating a vibrant, enthusiastic and growing chapter, there are practices that are repeated again and again by successful chapters. Here are a few tips collected from surveys, reports and informal research.*

## **Plan for Success**

- Choose 2 or 3 areas and make a plan to fit your chapter’s needs. Consider assigning specific action items and scheduling follow up that includes encouragement as well as accountability.
- Establish goals for the biennium (or longer).

## **Chapter Communication:**

- Create a strategy for reminding all members about events, including meeting dates, times, deadlines for dues or applications, committee and board meetings, etc.
- Communicate with members in multiple ways, including but not limited to print, website, email, text, phone calls, mail, personal visits, and social media.
- Create a phone tree/messaging strategy for gathering and sharing information with all members. Designate one person to gather information and report back to the chapter president concerns or identified needs.
- Send birthday greetings to members.
- Create a database of family contact information to enable you to reconnect with members if they unexpectedly change residences.
- Publicize the Society through projects and activities that receive newspaper coverage as well as school and community recognition.
- Spotlight members’ accomplishments through recognition at meetings or through chapter newsletters. Recognize members’ professional achievements both inside and outside of DKG. Through recognition, members will learn more about each other and value the contributions of each member.
- Announce upcoming events and report on past events for all levels of DKG.
- Include Society mission and vision statements on all publications and newsletters.
- Assume members want to know about the breadth of the Society and be sure they do.

## **Engage all Members:**

- Support a variety of one-time and on-going projects that actively engage members in the areas of mentoring/collaborative connections; fund-raising and volunteer efforts; scholarships and grants-in aid; community initiatives; the legislative process; and others, including international projects.

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- Encourage chapter members to serve on a chapter committee and participate in chapter projects physically or fiscally.
- Offer benefits and services that members cannot get elsewhere, including chapter scholarships, grants, interaction among a diverse group of educators, friendship/camaraderie, and service to community.
- Promote personal and professional opportunities at the chapter, state, and international levels.
- Engage members that have received scholarships, traveled, etc. to speak about their experiences at a chapter meeting.
- Use the Re-Orientation presentation, *Sustaining Pride in the Big Picture*, to remind members of the Purposes of DKG and the benefits of membership.
- Ask members attending meetings/projects infrequently how they would LIKE to contribute to the chapter.
- Inform members about the benefits of membership (scholarships, insurance discounts, travel, publications, using technology in personal and professional life, networking, educational grants).
- Maintain and encourage active participation in workshops, conferences and/or conventions at all levels for all members not only officers.
- Provide opportunities for members who do not attend events beyond the chapter to know about those meetings and to assist members who do.

## **Nurture Member Relationships:**

- Include a social/fellowship time at meetings that do not include a meal.
- In addition to the 4 required business oriented meetings, plan for a few social events in order to allow members to interact socially.
- Encourage members to listen and respect all members' ideas and viewpoints and consider all views with an open mind.
- Invite members to attend area, state, regional, and international events together. Plan to travel together and provide financial support when possible.
- Assign a member or group of members to reach out to members who are not attending meetings to let them know they are missed and make sure they are well.
- Provide extra support for new members, AND transferred and reinstated members. Consider assigning a sponsor/buddy for each of these members.
- Develop a strategy for including members who can no longer attend meetings regularly:
  - Help members attend virtually, using Skype or other virtual meeting options.
  - Hold a meeting or event at the assisted living/nursing facility where a member resides.

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- Visit on holidays to deliver a small gift or flowers.
- Plan a ride to meetings for members who can no longer drive.

## **Recruit and Retain Members**

- Use the Membership Recruitment Plan found at [dkg.org](http://dkg.org).
- Hold orientation at a separate meeting before initiation.
- Have a functioning chapter membership committee.
- Remind all members to recruit new members.
- Ask area schools/universities/colleges for recommendations of potential members.
- Explore community centers/religious organizations, where there are educators for potential members.
- Invite members from other organizations such as AAUW or Retired Teachers groups to learn more about and join DKG.
- Hold initiation more than once a year.
- Invite past members to meetings and to reinstate their membership.

## **Develop Chapter Leadership:**

- Begin planning for the next president as soon as the current one is installed! In other words, plan for the future leadership of the chapter (in every position).
- Develop a strategy for supporting new officers. For example, assign mentors. Plan for the immediate past president to mentor the new president.
- Offer incentive(s), e.g. partial expense reimbursement, for travel to DKG meetings beyond the chapter level. Use this to help officers attend professional development workshops, conferences, meetings, arts retreats, and leadership training.
- Consider holding executive board meetings (when appropriate) at times when all members can attend. In this way future chapter leaders can develop an understanding of chapter operations and will be more comfortable stepping up to serve.
- Seek member input before finalizing executive decisions – develop inclusive and collaborative membership teams.
- Designate experienced/long-term members to mentor newer members.
- Designate newer members to assist older members in attending meetings.
- Encourage all members to present a program/workshop at a chapter meeting or at a special event.
- Involve different people to be a part of the meeting (be a greeter, provide inspiration, distribute handouts, report on DKG news and deadlines, etc.).

## **Celebrate Membership**

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- Implement initiation and installation ceremonies.
- Send certificates, cards, or an email to recognize membership anniversaries.
- Plan the chapter birthday to honor founders and early members in your chapter.
- Celebrate the mission, vision, and purposes of the society on Founders Day.
- Include a “Recommitment Ceremony” with orientation or initiation events.
- Recognize one or more members for professional service and/or service to DKG at chapter meetings, in your newsletter, and/or with a chapter achievement award.
- Nominate members for state organization committees and awards.

## Meaningful Meetings

- Have open meetings and activities that welcome non-member guests.
- Hold 4-6 well-planned, quick-moving business meetings per year.
- Have a greeter and include introductions at each meeting.
- Survey, formally or informally, members to determine the best meeting days/times, programs of interest and communication preferences. Repeat as necessary and include results in planning to flexibly meet members’ needs.
- Meet at varied times, days, and places convenient for working members.
- Meet for approximately 1 ½ hours in length, excluding meals.
- Provide a wide variety of high-quality, interesting programs and speakers, including programs that highlight community initiatives and those that use members’ talents/expertise.
- Partner with other chapters within your chapter’s vicinity for a project, program, special event, officer training, orientation, combined initiation ceremonies, or Founders Day event.