

One year ago university student-athletes were given the approval to market themselves and benefit financially from their own name, image and likeness — something the NCAA had previously prohibited. Navigating this new territory is quite complicated. So the colleges stepped in to guide and educate our players at

NEBRASKA

QUARTERLY



INSIDE:
FASHION PASSION
Campus dress codes evolve over the decades.
PAGE 42

LOVE STORY
She walked by the bagel shop, then he couldn't get her off his mind.
PAGE 64



Artist Kelli Zaugg puts the finishing touches on a mural inside the Alpha Gamma Sigma fraternity house in August.

If You Build It, They Will Grow

‘The impediment to action advances action. What stands in the way becomes the way.’

—MARCUS AURELIUS, ROMAN EMPEROR AND PHILOSOPHER

BY RICK GESTRING ('87)

Restaurant Executive; Interfraternity President ('87)

The Alpha Gamma Sigma Fraternity Alumni Association, of which I am a member, was considering a remodel of the existing chapter house on East Campus. The project was being driven by the need to make improvements to the facility and fueled by our desire to keep up with the Joneses (by Joneses, I mean FarmHouse, Alpha Gamma Rho and Sigma Phi Epsilon, all of whom had recently rebuilt their houses). The task seemed simple enough: design it, raise a bunch of money, get a loan for the rest and build it.

Little did we know at the time, the challenges we would face over the next few years. First, we discovered the existing house was not a viable remodel candidate, then COVID swept across the world bringing death and destruction in its wake,

followed by supply chain disruptions and labor shortages. It was no time to be undertaking such a project, and yet it was precisely the right time given the unique learning and leadership lessons that resulted.

Oddly enough, the obstacles we faced, challenged us to think and act differently about the project and our assumed priorities. COVID focused our attention on what matters most, it elevated our sense of urgency to respond to the emerging health needs of the young men in our fraternity whose parents had entrusted us to ensure a safe and secure place to live and thrive. It brought us closer together even as we learned to lead via Zoom calls from a distance. It helped us to bridge the generational divides and led to alumni recommitting to a brotherhood pledge made many years ago. There evolved an appreciation for the range of backgrounds and career experience of our alumni members. The life lessons derived from hard work and a “Git-R-Done” attitude fueled our belief that that we could do this.

We came to realize that in our quest to honor tradition, we had become stuck in the past. As the world was changing around us, what had not changed was our approach to the fraternity experience itself. Specifically, the array of available leadership development resources just a click away, yet not grasped by today’s fraternity leadership programs. We began to ask what students wanted in terms of their living space, academic support and leadership development. We learned that the old fraternity style living arrangement, the strict rules of new member activation, old habits of hazing, and societal pressures were impacting the way in which incoming students viewed Greek life and its relevancy in the fast-paced, social media influenced, individualistic, progressive-leaning, world they were growing up in.

With that in mind, we set out to be more adaptable to the changing needs of each generation. We sought to create a brotherhood experience for the next generation of fraternity men

We quickly learned that our existing house could not be remodeled to meet our needs. We considered the former Lambda Chi Alpha

chapter house on City Campus but decided that even though our membership is currently 40% non-agriculture majors, the move would be a house too far from our East Campus roots. Instead, we set our sights on a multi-use apartment and retail space at 3455 Holdrege St. It provided an opportunity to create a modern living experience in step with the expectations of today’s college students.

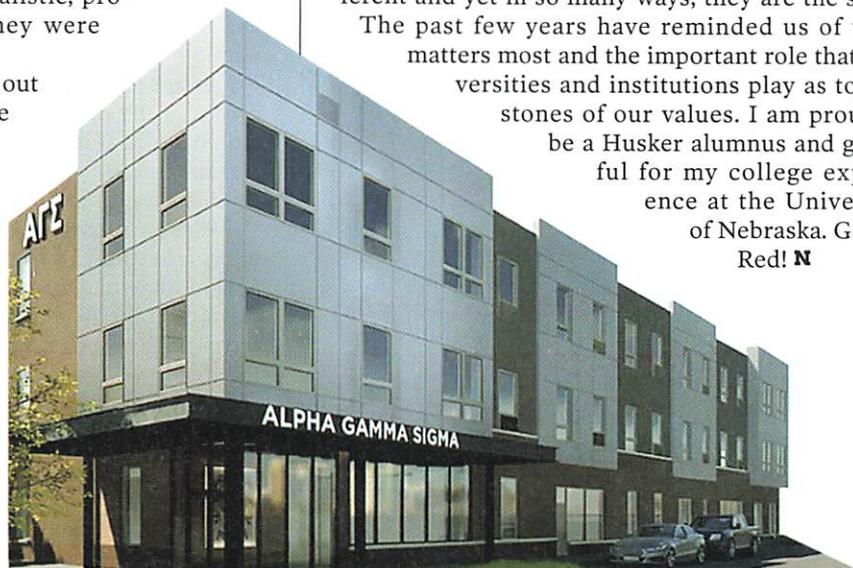
We built a one-of-a-kind fraternity experience that incorporates modern design elements, innovative study and collaboration spaces, an artist painted mural depicting the brotherhood experience, and unique apartment-style rooms. It is a stunning building that stands proudly as a \$6 million investment in the next generation of fraternity men.

The re-imagined facility became the impetus for a broader evolution of the overall fraternity experience. We began to consider how our 13 principles might represent more than just words on an activation board, but instead as leadership competencies to be used throughout life. It was an “aha moment” which led us to think differently about the leadership development we were providing and how to integrate current leadership tools that we alumni have learned in our places of business or on the farm. We sought to create a learning journey that begins as a new member and extends through college and the rest of our lives.

To that end, we established an Alpha Gamma Sigma leadership development program we dubbed “Aspire.” The program is a competency-based, experiential development experience which is web-based, app-enabled and accessed via a single sign on through LinkedIn.

I have come to learn that each generation has its own unique challenges. They are most certainly different and yet in so many ways, they are the same.

The past few years have reminded us of what matters most and the important role that universities and institutions play as touchstones of our values. I am proud to be a Husker alumnus and grateful for my college experience at the University of Nebraska. Go Big Red! **N**



Alumni rallied to build a new fraternity house for the men of Alpha Gamma Sigma.