



Fall 2017 Nominated Officer Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS

Please attach your **current résumé** and **Fall 2017 schedule** (class, work, other extracurricular activities).

This questionnaire is due **no later than SUNDAY April 16th at 11:59 PM**. Please send this document and all supplemental materials to president.apouse@gmail.com and cc webmaster.apouse@gmail.com .

Election Day: Candidates for President and Pledgemaster will have three minutes to give their speeches. Candidates for all other positions will have two minutes.

You may present one slide per position you run for at the time of your speech. Slides are due by **SUNDAY, April 16th at 11:59 PM** to president.apouse@gmail.com. You will not be allowed to pass out additional materials or papers during your speech.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Name: Derek Lin

Year: Sophomore

Major: Communication; Minor: Cinematic Arts, Consumer Behavior, Web Technology and Applications

Pledge Class (Year): Alpha Iota (Fall 2016)

Please mark which elected position(s) you are running for with an X:

☐ President

☒ Pledgemaster

☐ VP of Service

☐ VP of Membership

☐ VP of Fellowship

☐ VP of Finance

☐ VP of Communications

☐ Fundraising Chair

☐ IC Chair

PART II: SHORT ANSWER QUESTIONS

1. What is your vision for APO?

When I first joined APO, it was an organization that I hoped I would slowly fall in love with more and more every single semester. However, this was not necessarily the case coming into my first semester as an active member and being on ex-comm. It wasn't that I disliked it more as an active member, but it was that my perception of the chapter changed significantly. For the most part, I loved APO—whether it be for its values or for its members, but I saw a lot of things that could be changed or improved.

For one, membership retention seemed to be an issue that has faced our chapter for quite a long time. This, as a whole, is a pretty difficult issue to tackle—it deals not only with membership, but also with finance, with service, with every other aspect of APO. It also deals with burn-out, a common theme among the active members. Ideally, I see APO as an organization that doesn't add stress to its members, but acts as a place and community where members can feel relieved, accomplished, and happy. I see APO as a family—not only for a select few of individuals in different cliques, but for everyone. In regards to this, I believe that Pledgemaster has an incredibly important role, if not the most important, in improving active membership retention. This, I will explain more in the fourth question.

Overall, I see APO as an organization that can grow more diverse and open-minded. These are both issues that cannot be simply solved, and will take several semesters to improve. APO is an organization that teaches compassion, and I want that to be something that defines us. APO isn't just about service, it's about family. And I know having that “one big family” cliché is exactly that—it's a cliché. But that's also what makes it so nice, and so ideal. I'm not going to lie—APO is an organization that has drama. With such a large group of individuals, this is naturally going to happen; because of this, it's not that I want APO to be drama-free, but drama-aware. APO can be an organization that is open to change and accepting of one another—for everything we have to offer, good or bad.

2. Why do you want the position(s) you are running for?

I remember the night that I decided to run for Pledgemaster. At first I was hesitant, but as the hours passed by, I got more and more excited—to the point that I could barely control my energy. This was the first time that I've gotten this excited over something in a long time, and I really believe that Pledgemaster is a position that requires a high level of passion and excitement. It is a position that requires a lot of dedication and commitment, and I have that high level of passion that can fuel me through all of the energy-consumption and burn-out.

But what about being Pledgemaster am I passionate about? Being passionate is one thing, but being motivated for the right reasons is another. The reason why I want to be Pledgemaster is because I want to make a difference—I want to change things and makes things better. I don't necessarily believe that any one individual can produce change by themselves, but they can at least push things in a certain direction.

I am someone who absolutely loves people. People, perspective, interactions are what I live for. Being Pledgemaster, I'm going to be in the middle of all of that. And I am completely aware that I'm going to worry; I'm completely aware that I'm going to put my pledges and APO ahead of everything on my list of priorities; but that's something that's naturally going to happen to me. That's also where the fun is going to be. If there wasn't a challenge, if it wasn't difficult, would I really be doing my job correctly? The reason why I want to be Pledgemaster is because I want to be there for people—not only the pledges, but ex-comm, the actives, the associates, APO as a whole. I want to make people's lives in APO better and easier.

3. What are your goals for the position(s)?

Communication is key. This is one thing I really want to emphasize as Pledgemaster. This isn't just in regards to the pledges, this is communication within pledge team, with ex-comm, with the active body as a whole.

Beginning with the pledges, I think it is important that they are aware of what is going on within the active body. Because of this, I want to open up some time in the pledge meetings for the pledge ex-comm to update the class. The logistics would consist of this. Pledge team would have their own presentation as per usual, but they would also share a document with the pledge ex-comm weekly, where they could add things to a slide. Essentially, this would mirror what VP of Communications already does for ex-comm during GBM and EBM. It also seems like a lot of the pledges burn out or stop caring after the finish requirements—seeing them as merely an assignment to complete. Because of this, educating the pledges on why our Chapter does certain things, and of the importance of the process as a whole is something that I want to focus on. I don't want the pledges to go through the process thinking only about the requirements, but I want them to be thinking about what they're doing, who they're meeting, and how they are growing. I want the pledge class to be open to grow and learn from the active body, and the other way around as well.

Communication with ex-comm is also vital. I really don't want pledge team to be seen as a separate unit from ex-comm. Because pledges are the future of the chapter, and they are some of the most involved members, it is important to have open communication with those in charge. This means that working with the other ex-comm members is key to success. Having open, constructive communication within ex-comm is vital, and I want to remain open-minded throughout the entire process. However, I also want ex-comm and the active body to hear from the voice of the pledges themselves, not just from the pledge team. During ex-comm meetings, I want to open up a section of the pledge team slide to PCP, giving him/her/them an opportunity to talk to the active body directly. By doing this, the pledges can speak more directly with the actives about any updates or concerns that they have.

Finally, communication with the active body is possibly the most difficult. Firstly, keeping the Bigs updated is important. I want them to be as knowledgeable, if not more knowledgeable than the pledges about what is going on. This, I believe, can be accomplished through a number of different ways.

1. Sending out a short weekly newsletter to update the Bigs on how the pledge class is doing on a whole. Whether they pass or failed interview checks or quizzes. When interview checks and quizzes are.

Important dates that they need to know. Essentially, another way of doing this would simply be giving the Bigs a copy of the “binder information” that the pledges have.

2. Creating a group chat with the AL Bigs. This would potentially allow the Bigs to voice any concerns or ask any questions they have in regards to the pledges in a quick and easy fashion. However, the only concern with this is that there is a lot of potential for chaos, but it is something that may be worthwhile to consider.

Communication with the non-Bigs is also important. Keeping them updated about not only what’s going on, but why certain decisions are being made may improve the active-involvement. It’s also an attempt to keep things transparent, trying to allow everyone to see what’s going on behind the back doors. I would suggest implementing a form of suggestions, but we already have enough issues dealing with anonymous evaluations as a chapter that something like this may be too optimistic. But I do want to say that I would be open for people to simply message or contact me about concerns they may have—casual, direct communication.

Also, the most important communication is that within the pledge team. Looking forward, I want the pledge team not to be seen as three different individuals, but as a single unit. Working together is one thing, but I’m aware that there will be conflicts and disagreements within the pledge team. This is why I want to make it so that decisions being made are not through majority (2/3), but in order for something to be implemented or “pass”, all three members of pledge team must come to agreement with it. Being a unified pledge team is important, and if even one member doesn’t agree with something that is happening, it can fall apart, and the pledges and active body will be able to see it. I want to somewhat remove the “power structure” of the pledge team as well. Instead of seeing it as “a Pledgemaster and P’auncles”, I want to make it so it’s more simply seen as “Pledge Team.”

Another goal I have as Pledgemaster is to *be prepared*. And I am fully aware that this sounds strange—of course I’m going to try to be prepared, who would say otherwise. But the point I’m trying to make is that I want to be cautious. This means planning in advanced, and having everything set before summer is over. Having dates set, having ideas in place, having binders done. But being cautious also means having backups. This means I want to plan with the expectation that things are going to go wrong, that things aren’t going to work out. Let’s say I set DTA to be on the Friday after initiation. In the back of my head, I would “predict” that this plan wouldn’t work out, and have 1 or 2 other potential dates or locations. That being said, I also want to be aware of the fact that even the backups may not work out. At this point, it becomes a matter of being adaptable, of being open-minded. I’m an incredibly open-minded person, so I’m always up for and willing to change. I know for a fact that the pledge team is going to have to change things next semester. Not everything is going to go completely smoothly, but that’s fine. The point is that it’s fine, and going into the position with that sort of mentality. It’s not that I expect the worse—it’s that the worse wouldn’t be unexpected.

Finally, there is a fine line between being lenient and being strict for Pledgemaster and pledge team as a whole. It’s really a matter of balance. I want there to be a sense of urgency and respect, but there should also be a willingness to be compassionate. Being understanding, making the pledging process as seamless, painless, and enjoyable as

possible is important, but at the end of the day the pledges are still pledges. At a certain point, somebody has to lay down the law, because we have these requirements and rules in place for a reason. They aren't something to be taken lightly, but they aren't something to be taken as set-in-stone either. As I said, it is an incredibly fine line, and the most I can possibly do is go into the position knowing this and playing it by ear. It's going to be a matter that is discussed thoroughly by the pledge team as a whole. But, most importantly, it is something that pledge team needs to play case-by-case. Every situation and instance is different, so completely setting that line in stone isn't necessarily something that is completely possible.

4. What new ideas can you bring to the position and organization as a whole? Please provide examples.

Firstly, I want to put this out there. In regards to the organization as a whole, specifically e-board, I want to rewrite the application for these positions (this application). There seems to be a lot of overlap for a number of these questions, and it is something that I believe should be re-written by the next ex-comm as a whole.

For the most part, I don't believe that APO (especially in regards to Pledgemaster) is missing things. Instead, it is a matter where our chapter already has a lot of different things implemented, but we simply do not focus on them enough to make them useful.

APO is an organization I deeply care about, and our Chapter is one that specifically has a strong focus on our pledges. Because of this, when members aren't pledges, Bigs, or on ex-comm, they often feel left-out or uninvolved. One of the main reasons why I want to be Pledgemaster is because I think it is an essential role in improving active membership—it does this in two ways:

1. By reimagining the way the rest of the chapter interacts with or influences the pledges, the semester-long process can become more involved for the active and associate members. This can be done through a number of different ways.
 - a. For example, placing a larger emphasis on the mentor-mentee program that we use. By doing this, active and associate members who are not Bigs can play a larger role in the pledging process. Whether this be through making mentor-mentee "study dates" mandatory or just simply by weighing it more heavily during the semester would be up to the discretion of the pledge team as a whole.
 - b. Also, as of now, it appears like the majority of pledge membership events are during the rushing period. The issue is that by the time we have pledges, the majority of actives have fulfilled their pledge membership requirements, and the number of pledge membership events also goes down. Because of this, I believe it necessary to work with the co-VPs of Membership and see about the possibility of creating more pledge membership events throughout the semester. This way, active members have the opportunities to directly interact with the pledge class throughout the semester.

- c. Another issue regarding membership retention is in regards with associates. Oftentimes, it seems like associates are almost ignored. Because of this, it may be of interest to also place an “associate interview requirement” on top of the pledge and active interview requirement during checks. For example, the first interview check would require a total of 10 interviews (at least 5 from the pledge class and at least 1 from the associates). This way associates can be more involved with and get to know the pledge class better.
2. Right now, the problem is membership retention. This is an issue where our chapter continually attacks the effect. However, by targeting the pledges during the pledging process, it may be possible to dwindle this problem by tackling the cause instead. The “cause” in general obviously isn’t something straight-forward and simple—it is the result of a number of different things (bad or not) that come together and form the problem as a whole. The way we deal with pledges may be one of these causes. Whether it is or not—it wouldn’t hurt to try. By making the pledging process a positive experience, it is more likely that these future actives would be inclined to stay around.

Another thing I want to reimagine for the pledging process is enrichment points. As of now, it seems like something that goes ignored for the majority of the pledging semester until the 3rd to last week, where everyone realizes that they’re in the negatives. At this point, everyone panics, pledges and pledge team alike, and pledges have to figure out enrichment points through any means. I think the biggest issue with enrichment points right now is the way we look at them. They are simply an extension to what the pledges have to do, as opposed to something that is involved in the process. I want to make enrichment points something meaningful, something that is more involved. Emphasizing to the pledges that there are several ways to earn enrichment points (other than taking lead) is highly important, as it solves many of these issues. I believe some of the “enrichment point goals” can also be revamped to be more ongoing. For example, instead of giving four enrichment points for getting 100% on all the quizzes, giving one enrichment point for getting 100% on a single quiz. Also, actively updating enrichment points weekly would be essential for this to be successful.

In regards to Big/Little pairing... I honestly don’t know what I want to do with that yet. This is really going to be a matter of playing with what others’ have experienced. This means communicating with not only the past Pledgemasters, but the past pledge teams, the past ex-comm, the active members who have picked up in general. It is physically and logistically impossible to get feedback from every individual and satisfy everyone’s’ desires. Everyone wants and likes something different, which is why this entire process is something that is so very controversial within our chapter. The most one can do however, is listen. And that’s what I intend to do as Pledgemaster. I want to listen, listen to what people have to say and think—but I want to go beyond this. Listening isn’t enough. I want to understand. Only with that sort of communication do I believe that the pairing process can go more smoothly. It is something that will naturally never be perfect—it can’t be, but it is something that we can try to get as close as possible to.

5. What relevant experience, if any, have you had working in committees or other organizations for the position(s) you are running for? Please be specific.

I haven't had any direct experience in regards to Pledgemaster, but I have been involved in leadership positions for a number of different organizations. Because of this, I am comfortable and accustomed to working directly with other members in organizations, which is incredibly important for the position of Pledgemaster. Although SAA isn't necessarily a position that has a large number of clearly assigned tasks, I tried to be as involved with the ex-comm as I possibly could. Being part of ex-comm, I have grown familiar with many of the processes that go on, and I would be comfortable working in it again.

Outside of APO, I have also been in a number of leadership experience. This includes being in Building Government for the past two years, being in Undergraduate Student Government for the past two years, and being Treasurer for the Slam SCene for the past two years. These, though not directly relating to the position of Pledgemaster, has allowed me to experience leadership positions on a variety of different teams. Because of this, I have experience working with a number of different people.

Finally, being an RA, working with people is what I do on a day-to-day process. I am comfortable and familiar dealing with a variety of situations, no matter how good or bad. Being an RA has also allowed me to learn about setting boundaries and about balance. This balance comes to a number of different things. Firstly, it has taught me how to manage my time in regards to scheduling and people. It has also taught me how to balance being strict and lenient—it is an ongoing struggle for RAs, and it is always a case-by-case decision. Because of this, I also have experience with adapting myself to different situations, circumstances, and personalities. I am able, and have experience with communicating with people of all different characters.

6. What other time commitments will you have next semester (i.e. other student organizations, work, research, etc.)? How do you plan to balance APO executive board duties with those commitments?

Aside from APO, I'll still be involved with Trojan Pride, American Red Cross Club, ASL Club, and possible USG. These are all organizations that I've been involved with since my first semester Freshman year, so I'm used to balancing my time around this. Aside from that, they are also organizations that won't necessarily require a large time commitment, because I won't be on the executive committee for any of their boards.

Apart from these, I will also be a Resident Assistant in the coming year. As a returner RA, I am already familiar with scheduling around this, and with the time commitment this requires. Also, because I am likely to be put with upperclassmen next semester, it shouldn't be as time-consuming as this year.

Finally, I specifically scheduled my classes next semester to only have classes on two days. Because I only have class on Tuesdays and Thursdays, I should have plenty of time to focus on being Pledgemaster, being aware that it is a position that requires an incredibly large time commitment.

It might seem like I have a lot of other commitments, but my schedule next semester is significantly lighter than it has ever been—whether it be with outside organizations or class. I have much less class, I already dropped three orgs, and my RA role will likely have less of a workload. I'm used to being busy, so everything should work out fine.