



OMEGA PHI ALPHA

Legislative Agenda for Discussion Convention 2024

Approved by Legislation Committee

Kasey Stevens, Chair (Phi)
Sandy Chen (Phi)
Maddy Fletcher (Alpha Xi)
Rachael Pearson (Alpha Alpha)
Jenna Zielinski (Omega)

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Overview

This document provides detail on all proposed amendments to our national constitution and bylaws. It is important that voting delegates discuss these amendments with fellow members.

These proposed amendments are quite substantive. This means that during Convention, each amendment will be separately considered, discussed, and voted on.

It is important to note that ratification of amendments to:

- the national **constitution** requires an **affirmative vote of three-fourths** of the ballots cast by voting delegates.
- the national **bylaws** require an **affirmative vote of two-thirds** of the ballots cast by voting delegates.

All ratified amendments to the national constitution and bylaws take effect upon the final adjournment of Convention.

Proposed Constitutional Amendments

Constitutional Proposal #1

**Note – this amendment affects the consideration of Bylaws Proposal #1. If Constitutional Proposal #1 is approved, Bylaws Proposal #1 will be automatically approved. If Constitutional Proposal #1 is NOT approved, Bylaws Proposal #1 will not be considered.*

Author:

Kasey Stevens (Phi)

Which portion of the document would be amended?

Article III, Section 13

This section currently reads as follows:

Section 13. All members of Omega Phi Alpha, regardless of gender, are referred to as “sisters” and will respect the preferred pronouns of each member.

The proposed amendment:

The proposal is to strike the section in its entirety.

We also propose to replace all mentions of sister/sisters in the Constitution with member/members.

What is the rationale behind this amendment?

We need to strongly consider the language we use within Omega Phi Alpha, particularly the terms "sister" and "sisters." These terms inadvertently establish a gender norm, which is not in line with our inclusive values.

Article III, Section 13 outlines a policy that applies gendered labels to all members, irrespective of their gender, potentially undermining our commitment to fairness, inclusivity, and respect for diverse gender identities and expressions within our membership.

We can still be proud of Omega Phi Alpha's history as being established for women with ties to Girl Scouts or Camp Fire Girls. But the Omega Phi Alpha of today is a more inclusive organization where members represent a wide array of gender identities and expressions. Notably, Alpha Phi Omega, an organization instrumental in our establishment, has transitioned to a co-educational model, illustrating the potential for organizational change in embracing inclusivity.

As an organization committed to non-discrimination based on gender identity or expression during the membership granting process, it's essential to acknowledge that we are not single-gender. To better reflect the diversity of our membership, we need a shift in our language.

Currently, "sister" or "sisters" appears 32 times in our constitution and bylaws, while "member" or "members" appears 268 times. To align with the various gender identities and expressions of our members, we suggest adopting gender-neutral language and referring to all members simply as "members." However, if particular chapters have adopted alternative language and terminology, they are welcome to use it.

Our aspiration extends beyond merely adhering to the "golden rule"; we are committed to exceeding it by embracing the "platinum rule" — treating others the way they wish to be treated.

To uphold this commitment, our internal language must align with our external communication, championing respect for differences through the use of gender-neutral terms. This cultural shift honors individual preferences while acknowledging the strong bonds of friendship that unite our members as one chosen hive.

Constitutional Proposal #2

Author:

Board of Directors, Nanda Jayaseelan (representative)

Which portion of the document would be amended?

Article III, Section 6 – Add Clause A

This section currently reads as follows:

Does not currently exist.

The proposed amendment:

Clause A. Any disassociated member may petition the National Standards Board to regain membership after a period of 5 years following disassociation. A three-fourths affirmative vote of the National Standards Board is required for eligibility to regain membership. The National Standards Board will provide the eligible disassociated member with written guidelines, including any required dues, for regaining membership.

What is the rationale behind this amendment?

For many years, there was no option within our organization to take a leave of absence. Members who faced hardship, grueling class schedules, or even study abroad were left with no option to take a step back from being an active member, thus disassociating from Omega Phi Alpha. Some members may have left over an internal conflict that with age and experience seem trivial and immature in retrospect.

Omega Phi Alpha celebrates being inclusive and focused on the mental health of our members, among other things. If a former member who still has a heart for leadership, friendship, and service expresses interest in becoming re-engaged in our organization, we as an organization should offer them the opportunity to state their case for regaining membership. We should celebrate the work they've done within themselves as an individual to recognize a poor decision in their past. We should appreciate their dedication to service and not ostracize a service-minded individual who had no opportunity to take a leave of absence, and in turn chose the only option available to them – leaving the organization entirely.

We as an organization have evolved to have more grace when it comes to membership status and taking a break. We should extend this grace to former members who want to be reinvolved and at least allow them the opportunity to plead a case to regain membership.

Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Bylaws Proposal #1

Author:

Kasey Stevens (Phi)

Which portion of the document would be amended?

Multiple.

This section currently reads as follows:

In any articles, sections, or subsections where the term “sister” or “sisters” is used.

The proposed amendment:

Replace all mentions of Sister/Sisters with Member/Members.

What is the rationale behind this amendment?

We need to strongly consider the language we use within Omega Phi Alpha, particularly the terms "sister" and "sisters." These terms inadvertently establish a gender norm, which is not in line with our inclusive values.

Article III, Section 13 outlines a policy that applies gendered labels to all members, irrespective of their gender, potentially undermining our commitment to fairness, inclusivity, and respect for diverse gender identities and expressions within our membership.

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Currently, "sister" or "sisters" appears 32 times in our constitution and bylaws, while "member" or "members" appears 268 times. To align with the various gender identities and expressions of our members, we suggest adopting gender-neutral language and referring to all members simply as "members." However, if particular chapters have adopted alternative language and terminology, they are welcome to use it.

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Bylaws Proposal #2

Author:

Jenna Zielinski (Omega)

Which portion of the document would be amended?

Article VII

This section currently reads as follows:

Add Section 4

The proposed amendment:

Section 4. Each active member is required to serve on at least one committee per semester.

What is the rationale behind this amendment?

This is something we require for the expansions process for new chapters that many of our chapters have kept as a requirement stated in their local constitution and by-laws. Many of our chapters at one point or another have struggled with member participation and involvement. Chapter officers can easily get bogged down and overwhelmed with tasks that need to be completed. It can be easy to feel alone or a task to fall to the wayside.

By having this as a requirement, we can alleviate these issues and potential stress as the officer will have more support and members will be more actively involved with the sorority. Officers will be able to learn how to better delegate and collaborate with members.

Having all active members serve on at least one committee will encourage teamwork and provide more leadership opportunities. This is especially important for the future success of a chapter as a member who serves on a committee gains experience in that area and then may go on to run for that position. During elections, that member is able to then confidently articulate their related experience. Example, "I am running for membership director, this past year I served on the membership committee where I helped with x, y, and z."