

CRISIS RESPONSE AND MEDIA SUPPORT

CAMPUS ACTIVISM

This resource serves to prepare chapters on campuses currently experiencing or with a history of activism on how to balance members' free speech rights with expectations of membership within Beta Theta Pi.

ACTIVISM LIFE CYCLE

Activist efforts on each campus differ slightly, but one commonality is a three-part "life cycle" that can provide chapters guidance weathering the storm:

- ▶ **Phase 1: Protest** | Activist demonstrations, either through digital channels or in-person events, demand action and response on a current affairs topic.
- ▶ **Phase 2: Pressure** | Chapters and members are presented with a binary choice to join in or be on the wrong side of history.
- ▶ **Phase 3: Resolve** | After an initial wave of emotion and panic subsides, councils, chapters and administration come together to respond and develop action plans.

MY CAMPUS IS EXPERIENCING THIS RIGHT NOW. WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

- ▶ File an [incident report](#) to make the Administrative Office aware that these efforts are underway on your campus and use [this resource](#) to begin creating your chapter's crisis plan. A team of professionals will work with you to discuss concerns, response tactics and safety precautions.
- ▶ [Alert the chapter at large and your advisors](#) to the situation, offering an important note of caution: Engaging in any protest activities might result in future activities being directed toward the chapter, its members or property.
- ▶ Emphasize that, while the Fraternity supports a member's right to organize, any behavior is expected to remain in line with Beta's Ritual – "[urbane in deportment, courteous in expression, and steadfast in friendship](#)" – and [should not include public displays of Beta's brand](#) that could confuse individual beliefs with chapter-wide stances and bring unwarranted attention to the Fraternity.
- ▶ Clarify that the [chapter president should be the chapter's sole spokesman](#).
- ▶ Breathe. Every day of continued protests may further create angst for chapter leaders and members, but [don't let pressure lead to tension within the brotherhood or a hurried public response](#). Temporarily turn off tagging/comments on social media profiles if it helps minimize stress.
- ▶ The chapter president and/or IFC representative should [work with the council](#) on a response plan that is aligned with NIC standards.

HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH POLITICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN OUR CHAPTER?

Beta Theta Pi maintains a tradition of being apolitical. Pater Knox said in 1840:

- ▶ "[When we come together as members, all political differences are dropped – all our political feelings are forgotten. We are no longer politicians, but friends; no longer candidates, but brothers, and we are ready to give the 'All Hail' of welcome, the open hand of friendship, to all who wear the badge and bear the name of Beta Theta Pi.](#)"

Born of literary societies where debate was expected, Beta chapters are encouraged to promote an environment where differences and individuality are welcome. However, chapter leadership's focus should always remain on the safety of members and guests. Any discussions should remain respectful, be approached with an open mind, encourage positivity and engage a trusted advisor. Looking at the Fraternity through the lens of brotherhood is what Beta Theta Pi is all about.

▶ MEDIA PROTOCOL

The Administrative Office is available to assist chapters with managing media requests in a responsible and timely way.

If a media inquiry is received, [don't panic](#). The following steps will help to navigate the media engagement process for the chapter president:

STEP 1: ACKNOWLEDGE THE REQUEST

Within minutes, acknowledge the reporter's request and thank them for their inquiry. Request time to gather your thoughts before making an official statement and determine the reporter's:

- ▶ Name
- ▶ Media outlet
- ▶ Contact information
- ▶ Deadline

Request to receive their questions in writing, if possible.

STEP 2: CONTACT THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Immediately contact Chief Communication Officer [Justin Warren](#) (214.909.4849) with details of the inquiry. He will promptly work with you to craft an official statement or interview response.

STEP 3: PLAY BY THE RULES

The Fraternity has one goal in media engagement: ensuring the safety of our members and protecting the operation and reputation of the chapter.

To do this, spokesmen should abide by the following rules of engagement:

- ▶ Be quick. Be helpful. Be honest.
- ▶ Decline on-camera, telephone or live interviews, unless approved by the Administrative Office.
- ▶ Never answer a question with "no comment." It's perfectly acceptable to say "I don't know" (if it's true).
- ▶ Do not draw conclusions, speculate, lay blame or admit liability.
- ▶ Avoid mentioning names.