

Alpha Chi Sigma Fraternity

Professional in the Chemical Sciences

Office of the

GRAND
MASTER OF CEREMONIES



Dr. Jason S. Ellis
391 Rolling Meadows Dr.
Ann Arbor, MI 48103
gmc@alphachisigma.org
(573) 673-2262

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Brothers,

This year, our world has changed in ways that we never expected. We, as a Fraternity, have also had to adapt in a number of ways. One of the most striking is how we perform our ceremonies, especially the Pledging Ceremony and Initiation. A year ago, the idea of virtual Initiations or Professional Induction Ceremonies would have been considered far-fetched. I am happy to say that our collegiate chapters have risen to the occasion and shown remarkable adaptability and creativity. This was a “make it work” year when it came to ensuring that our new Brothers were welcomed into the Fraternity in the fashion that they deserve.

Immediately after Conclave in July, the Ritual committee chair Kathryn Cavanaugh and I began working on a set of guidelines to help our chapters conduct both in-person and virtual ceremonies safely while maintaining the secrecy of the Ritual. We started by expanding a draft proposal created by the previous GMC, Sean Pawlowski. Then, the full Ritual Committee was asked to give their input and further refine the plans. We made every effort to preserve the ceremonies’ meaning and impact as much as possible, given the circumstances. The Ritual Committee members are Kathryn Cavanaugh (Chair), ACDC Stephanie Bates, Alexis Brissette, Sean Burke, PR Don Cole, Jillian Genova, Christina Grigoropoulos, Cora Lind, Mike Raffay, CDC Matt Senter, Olivia Thomas, and Jonathan Webster. Five of the twelve members of the Ritual Committee were collegiate members at the time. Their input as Brothers who would be carrying out the proposed changes was invaluable. While work on the guidelines was being finalized, I had a series of meetings with chapter officers and DCs of the chapters planning to have Initiations early in the semester. On August 29, 2020, the first three virtual Initiations took place. Delta Mu at Kettering University started the day, followed by Alpha Theta at the University of Iowa and Gamma Xi at North Carolina State University. The ingenuity of the Brothers at these chapters, especially the MCs, was terrific.

The next challenge was how to deliver the guidelines to the chapters. The wide variety of restrictions at the chapters’ home institutions meant that most of our collegiate Brothers (and many chapter advisors) had no access to their regular campus mailing address. I made the decision to send two copies to each chapter; one copy went to the Chapter Advisor and another to the Master of Ceremonies. Another hurdle was that the rapid closure on many campuses in the Spring understandably led to some out-of-date officer lists. Additionally, lockdowns and campus restrictions meant that many MCs were no longer living at the addresses we had on file. I would like to thank the District Counselors for their efforts in getting updated mailing addresses and officer lists for the chapters under their care.

The wide variety of state, local, and institution-specific restrictions that our collegiate Brothers were under created many unique challenges for chapters. The speed of campus closures in the

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Spring meant that many Chapters had pledges still in need of Initiation when the Fall semester began. Most chapters had smaller than regular pledge classes. As a whole, about half the usual number of new Brothers were welcomed into the Fraternity. Very few chapters were able to hold in-person Initiations. Many chapters took advantage of the ability to hold Initiation virtually. To help chapters plan their ceremonies, I held a series of 16 GMC Q&A Forums to discuss the guidelines and the many chapter-specific hurdles they faced. In addition to these group Forums, I held more than 13 meetings with individual chapters and their DCs.

It has been a pleasure to once again serve as Grand Master of Ceremonies. As the pandemic continues, we will meet the next set of challenges head-on. I would like to thank the Ritual Committee members, especially the chair, for all of their hard work, and I would like to applaud all of the chapter MCs. They had this challenge thrust upon them but still found a way to “make it work” while respecting our ceremonies and providing a meaningful Initiation experience.

Yours in the Double Bond,

Dr. Jason S. Ellis, Delta 1997
Grand Master of Ceremonies
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