

July 2020



Greetings Circle Officers,

As I began to draft the 2020 July Officer Updates, my first thought was that if you were trying to find the license number of the truck that just hit us, it is COVID-19.

The 2020 fiscal year is definitely one for the history books. The year began with high hopes. We completed the merger of the Society and Foundation and were planning for the first annual National Leadership Conference. Additionally, we made major changes to our membership system, improved the Circle Officer Handbook, were fully staffed, and had just completed a year of record year fundraising.

As the fall progressed, we saw the trend of low membership rates continue. We were concerned that FY 2020 could be another year like FY 2019. Then, the pandemic hit, and the bottom fell out for everyone.

ODK responded by reinventing how we do business. We worked directly with circles to complete the recruitment and initiation process in a virtual world. We developed virtual initiation ceremony scripts, graphics, and protocols. We conducted two National Virtual Initiation ceremonies for more than 1,100 new members and 50+ circles. We mailed more than 1,200 packages with membership certificates and pins directly to members since circles could not deliver them in a timely manner with campus closures. In a dire time, our circles still initiated a total of more than 6,000 new members or 71% of our original goal. We consider that a major success.

The other area of surprising success was our fundraising, especially the National Day of Giving. The outpouring of support for scholarships and the work of the Society was truly amazing. With these increased funds, we will expand the Gift of Membership program, including additional funding for underrepresented populations, and offer Clay Grants specifically targeted to diversity, equity, and inclusion programs.

This year resulted in two major changes for our Society. The Board of Trustees approved the inclusion of sophomores for the first time in our history. The Board also addressed our history of diversity, equity, and inclusion in a special meeting. From that discussion, ODK will work to make governance changes and create programming to ensure that we are at the forefront of these issues.

We know that the Fall of 2020 will not be like anything you or we have experienced. We have a great deal of work ahead of us as an organization and as circles. The uncertainty about campus openings,

programs, and the future of organizations such as OΔK makes it difficult to conceive how our organization may change. As I look at our history, I see the resilience of our organization. Our fledgling organization survived two world wars and a depression. When those events began, no one knew when they would end. Then, as now, we must work to maintain the organization we have as we adapt to the challenges of the time.

The OΔK National Headquarters staff and many of our volunteers have been working diligently to prepare for a different future than we imagined at this time last year. We have revised the [Circle Officers](#) page to provide a menu of links to the most important content for you. Bookmark this page for quick access to critical links. A sample of what is [new for FY 2021](#) is below.

- Sophomore Membership Guidelines
- OΔK Podcasts
- The National Leadership Conference - Online
- National Virtual Initiation Ceremonies
- Monthly Officer Forums
- . . . and many others

Please do not hesitate to contact the [OΔK National Headquarters](#). We are here to assist and support you.

Sincerely,

Tim

Timothy A. Reed, Ph.D.  
Vice President for Membership and Operations



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