Engaging Online Chapter Members

Purpose
We have heard from many chapters this year that you want to induct and engage online students as part of your campus chapter’s activities. This guide is filled with ideas from online chapters, campus chapters who engage online students well, and from the Headquarters staff. If you have questions, more ideas, or want to let us know how these ideas worked, let your RCC know or email mcs@kdp.org. We want your feedback!

This guide is designed to help your chapter meet the goals outlined in the Chapter Member Engagement Model—with your online membership. Nearly all chapter activities could be altered slightly to help meet online members where they are. By utilizing technology and allowing flexibility in participation, we believe that online students can have a full and meaningful chapter experience.

For simplicity’s sake, we use Blackboard® as the example throughout as “the platform your institution uses to facilitate online courses.”

Unique Needs of Online Members
Generally, online students have different needs than traditional students. Take into consideration:

- What is the purpose of the online program (e.g., master’s degree, career switch, leadership) and how could membership in KDP enhance the educational experiences of the online students? Chapter meetings may not be applicable to them, but they may appreciate the opportunity to give a professional development presentation or participate in a panel.
- Distance: You may need to mail items to students.
- Time and flexibility: Online students may not have the ability to attend a webinar at 4 p.m. or participate in events, even if they are local. Offering flexibility in times and events allows them to be connected and make a contribution.
- PIIP or participation programs need to include equitable points and opportunities for online members

Logistics
Engaging members who are not available in the manner your chapter typically meets can be daunting, but tools exist to help facilitate online membership. Several of our online-only chapters have perfected the art of online initiations and meetings.

- Check if KDP can have an online listing, as a course would for Blackboard® in order to post minutes, videos, and discussion guides.
- Consider recruiting an online professor to act as a co-counselor for the online students.
- Create an online student liaison officer or committee.
- Utilize social media, apps, and video calls. Facebook groups are great for conversation, updates, recognition, and relationship building, while Zoom (an app that allows 50 people to join for up to 40-minute meetings) or Skype can include members in meetings in a meaningful way.
Plan events and meetings to coincide with times when members could be on campus, such as Homecoming or graduation.

**Initiations**
We want every member to have access to the traditional induction experience shared by the 1.2 million individuals who have been part of KDP since 1911.

- Create a chapter PayPal account to collect local dues from online members.
- Film the chapter’s initiation and post on Blackboard®.
- Discuss with your RCC the potential to utilize KDP’s webinar and meeting resources to facilitate the webinar virtually.
- Invite members to attend the quarterly Virtual Initiation; let your RCC know who is attending.
- For groups of fewer than 10 online members, consider using Skype to include them during the ceremony.

**Meetings**
If your chapter’s meetings are generally used for planning events or focused on campus activities and logistics, online student members may not need to actively participate; however, many opportunities exist for online member involvement during the meeting and as part of the group’s professional development.

- Post meeting minutes/PowerPoint® presentations on Blackboard® or on the chapter website.
- Use NTA Ice Breakers and webinars with discussion guides during meetings, as online members could answer the discussion guides and complete the Ice Breaker activities on their own, then submit their answers to Counselors or officers.
- Use Survey Monkey or a similar platform to conduct elections, vote on bylaw changes, and gauge interest in different chapter events.
- Utilize Skype or Zoom to have online members join the event, present professional development, or participate on panels.

**Recognition**
Even if presenting awards and recognition cannot be accomplished in person, communicating the successes of the chapter’s online members to the broader community adds even more meaning to a KDP member’s experience.

- During times when online members can be on campus, ensure that other members have an opportunity to meet their fellow Kdelpians, even informally through a service project, meal gathering, or event.
- Hold a special cording ceremony and reception during graduation times for online members.
- Post accomplishments on social media (e.g., awards, scholarships, etc.).
- Encourage in-service teachers to apply for Classroom Teacher Grants from KDP.
- Have members earning major awards create presentations regarding the process and the award.
- Allow online members to serve as social media managers.
• Ensure that your chapter’s PIIP or points program includes sufficient ways for online members to engage and earn the same number of points as on-campus students.
• Ensure that online members have an avenue to apply for awards or scholarships offered by your chapter, with equal access to winning them.

**Member Development**
While the traditional campus members may want help with interviewing and creating portfolios, online members may want more ongoing professional development and leadership development skills. Gauging interest in various topics and offering multiple avenues and topics for development is the key to success in this area.

• Create a mentoring program, in which:
  o Graduate students and leadership students review resumes or e-portfolios for undergraduates, and
  o Peer mentors are available to work through members’ academic and internship problems.
• In place of in-person professional development, use KDP webinars with professional development certificates (those listed in the Resource Catalog with “Request for Certificate” in the detailed description).
• For PIIP points, consider allowing members to submit other organizations’ events or conferences for professional development.
• Encourage online members to use KDP Global for conversations.
• Invite online members to KDP’s Biennial Convocation and Regional Workshops.
• Have online members create PD presentations for all members to view.

**Community**
Offering a support network for online students can ensure a fuller chapter experience. Beyond networking, a chapter can provide support for in-service teachers and new experiences for all.

• Design service projects that are multi-site or can be replicated in another community (e.g., book drive, library readings).
• Have online members complete curriculum design and support for events (e.g., create activities for Literacy Alive! events or other projects).
• Ask online members to contribute either financially or with their knowledge and administrative skills prior to the event.
• Have chapter service projects revolve around an online member’s community or school.