Chapter Chat: April 2018

STUDENT SENDOFFS PART II
Your Host:

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Guest Contributors:

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Link to Last Year's Sendoff Chapter Chat
What is a Student Sendoff?

- An event specialized to welcome incoming students and their families to the Hokie Nation and to engage current students and alumni.
- Different from all other events chapters host, as it is geared toward students, and not alumni.
- Work with the resources you have and what fits best for your chapter!
What VTAA needs from you!

- Is your chapter hosting a student sendoff?
- Details for website – May 1, 2018 (or as close as possible) Where, When, Time, RSVP, Hospitality info
- Think about who you want to invite – current students? All alumni in area? Select group?
- First-Year Orientation takes place **July 9 - August 2**.
The Chapter Team will handle the following for the student sendoff events:

- Email Request, no individual chapter emails (speak with you liaison) – sent twice (May and July)
- VTAA Website – all traffic is being sent to the website
- Postcard mailer – sent twice (May and July)
- Sending the chapters a list of accepted freshmen in their area

Chapters will handle:

- Social Media & Chapter Webpage updates
- If applicable, personal Invitations to:
  - Incoming Students
  - Current Students
  - Specific Alumni Identified by VTAA
Keys to a successful picnic:

- Find a central location.
- Plan ahead: Start at least 2 months prior to the date of the picnic.
- Use social media for publicity.
- Utilize a planning tool such as Google docs, evite etc.
- Build up an email database. Using various sources & contacts.
- Keep up constant communications about the picnic. This helps the “fence sitters” make a decision.
- Have a variety menu. Have people sign up for appetizer/entrée/dessert etc. using evite/google docs. They should be able to see what is taken and what is needed. Ask about food allergies.
- Have some games handy.
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate.
SE Michigan Chapter

2013

2014

2015

2016

2017

2018!!!!
Prepared Questions

- Please tell us what factors you took into consideration when planning the event specifics; time of day, date, location, who to invite, hospitality.
- What are your biggest successes in hosting a sendoff event and why?
- What are you changing about your event this year that was inspired by previous years?
- What is your advice for success for chapter just starting their first sendoff?
Atlanta Chapter

- Please tell us what factors you took into consideration when planning the event specifics; time of day, date, location, who to invite, hospitality.

  - We usually have our sendoff the last weekend in July or first/second Sunday in August. It's probably best to pick last weekend in July or first weekend in August since athletes and/or Corps members may have to be at school earlier than others. Check the school calendar.

  - We pick a Sunday evening for the event, usually around 4pm or 5pm. It's late enough that we're clear of church or sporting activities, but it's not too late that parents are worried about work the next day (or getting younger siblings to bed). There are often other parties or events on Fridays or Saturdays, so the Sunday time-slot has been favorable for us.

  - We host a cookout and potluck where the chapter provides the main proteins (burgers, hot dogs, etc.) and team members and guests bring a dish.

  - We have held the event at a park picnic pavilion and also at someone's home. Both options have worked out well.

  - We pick a location that's going to be convenient to where our students live and attend school. This can be a challenge as Atlanta is very spread out, but this is an event that we don't have to pick something smack dab in the middle of the city or at the newest, trendy spot. The suburbs are the bigger draw here.
What are your biggest successes in hosting a sendoff event and why?

- Get in touch with the parents if possible. Sending students emails is important, but the parents are often better about RSVP'ing and remembering.
- Since we're 400 miles away from Tech, the parents really like to make connections with other parents at the event. It's a great opportunity for them to find someone that might be a ride/to from school. It's comforting since they are sending their child off to college 6+ hours away.
- Parents and students have lots of questions. Make sure the chapter leaders are mingling and speaking to both. Often the students will group off and socialize among themselves which is great.

What are you changing about your event this year that was inspired by previous years?

- We have to pick a new location this year because the host from last year has moved out of state. We had the event at his house last year and it was great compared to the park for a number of reasons (1) indoor/outdoor so the summer heat wasn't an issue (2) access to bathrooms and running water. We'll shoot for that again.
What is your advice for success for chapter just starting their first sendoff?

- Use this as an opportunity to get parents and students to subscribe to your email list, follow you on social media, etc.
- Encourage the parents to connect and join your Facebook group. We've had parents reach out for rides, tickets, apartments, and even one that needed to send a new car tire up to Blacksburg.
- Invite the parents to your chapter game watching parties and upcoming events. It connects them to their kids while they're away.
- Come up with a trivia game or scavenger hunt that ties in Virginia Tech campus, sports, history, etc. Offer prizes like Orange and Maroon Effect t-shirts (you can buy them now online for cheap).
- Consider putting together a top 10 list (favorite place to study, favorite restaurant on/off campus, tips for getting around campus).
- Take a group photo.
- Get a cake that's personalized. We usually have it say "Welcome Class of 2022" or something like that. You could get creative and have your chapter logo printed on it, or something else.
- We've found that it's really important to keep the itinerary simple and flexible. If people are talking and mingling and nobody is left out, then that's a great first step in welcoming them to Hokie Nation. The most important thing from there is to make sure everyone knows about your social media channels and upcoming events, and that you have their contact info.
2017 Picnic, 2016 Picnic, 2015 Picnic

- Our biggest benefit is that the parent of alumni who is a caterer and owner of the properties in the photos. She doesn't charge us for the venue and we pay for the catering at cost. Last year she gave a tour of her new property which was considered the "Virginia Camp David during Jimmy Carter's presidency."

- We moved our time to later in the day after 3 years of sweltering temperatures.

- In the past we've had the VT students compete in games but we are not sure about doing that this time.

- Last year we had fewer, but bigger, auction items. They brought in more money but didn't have a lot of bids.

- We tried a 50-50 raffle and that went well!

- We tried a bingo game where many squares were VT related things (i.e. find someone who was an engineering major, find someone who is wearing orange, etc.).
Hokie Hospitality

Greet, Welcome AND Mingle!

Be sure to:

- Thank individuals and groups for helping with your event
- Recognize important guests
- Chapter Scholarships
- Statistics about Class of 2021
- Talk about how parents and students can get involved with the chapter
- Congratulate the students on their achievements and thank their parents/families for supporting them
- Share a favorite memory from Virginia Tech and/or recommendations for when they get to Blacksburg
- Ending the event with a “Let’s Go!” cheer!
How can we find a synergy with promoting local chapter support and broader university goals?
Upcoming Dates to be aware of

- Next Chapter Chat: Wednesday, May 23
- Virginia Tech Day at Kings Dominion, Saturday, May 19
- Virginia Tech Reunion Weekend 2018, June 7-10
- Virginia Tech Beer Fest – June 23
- Student Send-Offs, last two weeks of June or the first two weeks of August (more info to come!)
- 2018 Chapter Officers Forum Save-the-Date, September 6-8, 2018
Thank you for all that you do!

On behalf of the Chapter Team and entire VTAA, thank you for your continued hard work and dedication to making our chapter program so great. Your work does not go unnoticed and we are all so very excited to work with you and develop the program even further over this next year!

Go Hokies!
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