

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

What is the history of Alpha Tau Omega?

Alpha Tau Omega was founded by three cadets at the Virginia Military Institute in Lexington, VA. ATO was created immediately after the Civil War in 1865 to help reunite the North and South among college men. The Fraternity's founders believed their effort would be successful only if members lived by Judeo-Christian principles upon which the Fraternity is based. Today, Alpha Tau Omega is considered America's Leadership Development Fraternity; we have over 140,000 living alumni and more than 6,500 undergraduate members in over 140 chapters across the nation. These men are brothers by choice based on their merits as men of character.

What are the principles of the Fraternity?

The principles of Alpha Tau Omega are focused on Scholarship, Brotherhood, Character and Leadership. ATO is dedicated to developing men of character in an academic setting through the bonds of brotherhood and the foundations of leadership.

How many members does Alpha Tau Omega have?

Since our founding in 1865 we have initiated more than 192,000 men and currently have over 140,000 living alumni worldwide and approximately 6,500 undergraduate members in more than 140 chapters and colonies throughout the United States.

What about pledging or hazing?

New members all experience a new member education period. During this time the new members or pledges participate in weekly meetings to learn about the university and the Fraternity, leadership retreats, community service projects, and activities designed to build friendships among the new members and the older Fraternity members.

ATO is an interfraternal leader in implementing an anti-hazing policy. ATO risk management policy outlaws any and all forms of hazing. The National Fraternity educates every member on hazing and risk management guidelines. We are committed to a membership education period that instills a sense of responsibility and commitment in the new members. This period will assist your son in overcoming some of his concerns about success in college.

What educational opportunities do you provide?

Alpha Tau Omega offers a great deal of opportunities. With innovative programs like The VMI Challenge and LeaderShape, ATO continues to provide programs rooted in values and focused on leadership, character, membership education and overall personal development with many opportunities to participate in conferences and workshops across the nation.

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Each chapter of ATO has their own unique service projects and programs they create, organize and perform on their own. These projects and programs foster organizational development and goal achievement while enabling our members to develop their skills as leaders.

What impact will fraternity membership have on my son's grades?

Students often find managing their time difficult when moving from the highly structured high school environment to the freedoms of college. Part of the new member program is to assist in that transition by offering scholarship programs, which might include study partners, mandatory study hours and time management workshops. At ATO, your son can access the network of brothers who already know how to use campus resources like the library, study skills centers, computer labs and academic advisors.

ATO recognized there are academic differences from campus to campus, there's no doubt MIT will differ from the University of Nebraska on an academic level. Alpha Tau Omega relies on each campus and chapter to establish aggressive and ambitious academic standards for new members and initiates. Brothers are required to maintain positive academic standing at their academic institution and if members do not fulfill the expectations of the Fraternity, the local chapter is expected to address the situation. Members of ATO are enrolled in higher education for the primary purpose of attaining a degree or several; it is an expectation set by the Fraternity that members achieve excellence in the classroom and one we're sure you can appreciate.

Will the fraternity help my son with job placement after he graduates?

With a worldwide network of nearly 140,000 living alumni it is likely that there are a significant number of ATO alumni volunteers who would be pleased to recommend or hire your son for employment after graduation. Being a member of Alpha Tau Omega can expose your son to an incredible number of highly successful ATO alumni who are leaders in all areas of business, education, arts, sciences, politics, technology, and numerous other fields.

Aren't fraternities just like the one shown in the movie "Animal House"?

Unfortunately, after the showing of that movie, fraternity members have been categorized as partiers, irresponsible and abusive. A stereotype we are trying to reverse on every level. In reality, fraternities are values-based organizations dedicated to the development of character and lifelong friendship.

Alpha Tau Omega has even gone so far as to create a success initiative called ATO Roadshow, focused solely on publicizing our chapters' good works and the positive affect ATO is having on communities across the U.S. We are dedicated to the success of our chapters and our members, if you would like to see some of the successes of

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ATO and the chapter your son may join, check out ATO Roadshow at www.atoroadshow.org.

Doesn't it cost a lot of money to be in a fraternity?

The Fraternity is self-supported through dues charged to all members. Each chapter may charge chapter dues for local operations, but the National Fraternity asks each member to pay for National dues and all members, pledges and initiates must pay for insurance. There is also a one-time pledging fee of \$50 and an initiation fee of \$150. You should ask the local chapter president or recruitment chair to give you a breakdown of all local dues and financial obligations. There's no doubt the return on investment will be great compared to most other student organizations or clubs.

The national dues and insurance are billed to individual brothers once in the fall and once in the spring.

If the chapter on your campus has a house there will be a room rental fee, but you will probably find you get a great deal for your money when you live in an ATO chapter house compared to living in the residence halls.

Being in a fraternity sounds like it takes a lot of time?

Participating in any worthwhile activity always requires an investment of one's time. Research has shown that "involved" college students are more likely to graduate and they report greater satisfaction with their college experience. Through his fraternity involvement, your son will learn how to balance his academic, work, campus involvement, and social commitments.

What is my role as a parent?

Be supportive and learn as much as you can by asking questions of your son as he meets people through the recruitment process. Fraternity members will be more than happy to tell him (and you) about their chapter.

If your son becomes a member of the Alpha Tau Omega Fraternity there are many opportunities for parents to become involved. Parents are welcome to be a part of the Alpha Tau Omega experience as a volunteer in a Board of Trustees or a parent's club.