

Information Technology Crunch: Alpha Iota Delta Can Help

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The Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles reports that popularity of Information Technology (IT) as a major among incoming freshmen has dropped significantly in the past five years. The percentage of incoming undergraduate students indicating an interest in IT has declined by over 60 percent since 1998 and is now 70 percent lower than its peak in the early 1980s.

As the impact of the technology bust continues to settle in, enrollment in IT programs continues to decline. Many in academia are becoming increasingly alarmed and expect the decrease in IT enrollment will cause a skills shortage that could hit the industry hard. As the industry starts reinvesting in the neglected infrastructure, the IT unemployment will get absorbed. Absorption of IT unemployment will result in a higher demand for a skilled labor force and create growth in enrollment.

How can we attract potential students to study IT? When students feel their talents are being nurtured, they are more likely to feel satisfied. When they are more satisfied, they are more likely to stick with their chosen course of study. That said, the availability of student organizations that support coursework has benefits extending beyond classroom learning. Students are more likely to feel their talents are being developed if they are involved not just in academic coursework but also in college life. Student organizations serve a purpose in connecting the student to the school and thus promoting the major and increasing the chances of retention. Alpha Iota Delta, the national honor society in decision sciences and information systems, can be a force in improving enrollment and retention in IT programs nationwide.

Participation in Alpha Iota Delta can cultivate a student's sense of satisfaction with the college experience and increase participation and involvement within campus and community. Some of the many benefits to be gained from establishing an Alpha Iota Delta chapter for students include:

- improve students' self-confidence and the quality of their interpersonal relationships
- learn how to work efficiently with others
- learn how to prioritize their time
- learn how to be involved in a team effort
- acquire group skills and understand group dynamics
- learn group decision-making skills such as brainstorming and consensus building
- learn effective planning and organizational skills as well as dedication to a task or cause
- learn about the social aspect of group involvement by working with others whose personalities may be totally different from their own
- expands upon, and bridges gaps in, the classroom curriculum
- learn about the resources and learning opportunities available to help them meet academic demands
- develop communication skills on a face-to-face basis as well as at the public speaking level
- develop employment skills and career plans through "real world" experiences and organizational activities.

Good grades are no longer enough to secure a job or a seat in a highly competitive graduate program. Those students who have been socialized and matured through involvement in campus groups and student organizations are more likely to succeed in their future endeavors. To maximize educational and developmental impact, IT students must connect with their program and major in a special way. Involvement in Alpha Iota Delta provides one of the most effective means of developing this special bond. ■



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