



# MORTAR BOARD

NATIONAL COLLEGE SENIOR HONOR SOCIETY



## INITIATION CEREMONY HANDBOOK



# INITIATION PREPARATION

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Every chapter is encouraged to make initiation a special event for new members, their families and friends. The Initiation Ceremony is also a time for outgoing members to be recognized for their achievements. Please set initiation at a time when outgoing members can all be present.

This ceremony, modified to suit each chapter's surroundings, is used by all Mortar Board chapters to initiate new members. The initiation language itself in the ceremony harks to the early days of the Society and so is very significant.

Please practice the staging and the wording in advance of the program. If possible, please have outgoing members walk through the program beforehand to rehearse.

If your chapter has its own language, you may insert it into this ceremony.

## Participants

- Chapter historian
- Alumni member
- Section coordinator
- Chapter president
- Chapter secretary
- Chapter vice president
- Initiates, current members and guests

## Regalia and Program

- Flowers or centerpiece
- Ribbons with pins fastened to them
- Certificates
- Silver candlesticks, gold candles
- Chapter roll book and good writing pen
- Printed program with the order of the service, leaders, and names of new and old classes

## Music

- Soloist or small choir
- Piano or other accompanying instrument

## Recommended Attire

All members and new initiates should wear caps and gowns. Some chapters robe new initiates in white and outgoing members in black. The

chapter president wears a mortarboard with gold tassel and gold and silver roping or a stole around the neck. A Mortar Board medallion or stole may be worn by the chapter president. Some chapters provide stoles or medallions for outgoing members. These are available for purchase from the Mortar Board Store.

For each initiate, buy a half yard each of ½-inch gold ribbon and silver ribbon. Join colors at back of neck; cross open ends and secure with Mortar Board pin, emblem or insignia. (To be put over head of initiate.) You can use these year after year. If your chapter chooses to pin the Mortar Board badge on each initiate rather than place it over the head of the initiate on the ribbon, make sure that it is pinned on the left side.

## Other Suggestions

- The chapter president, as she/he calls each new initiate forward, should give a brief idea of why that candidate was selected for membership in Mortar Board. Often other members of the leadership team trade off reading. Practice!
- The alma mater may be sung at the conclusion of the Initiation Ceremony after the singing of *Thy Ideals*.
- An outgoing chapter member may be appointed as official photographer for the chapter photo to go into archives and to be sent to the Mortar Board National Office.
- A faculty mentor may be honored by standing with each new member.



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# INITIATION CEREMONY

## Processional

(Includes platform party)

## Current members

(Singing the *Mortar Board Ode*)

We Mortar Boards receive you with welcome  
hearts and hands,  
To represent the noble aims for which our  
college stands;  
And this our aim, whate'er befall, respond to  
alma mater's call,  
Be honest, loyal, true, and strong as future  
Mortar Boards.

## Chapter President

(Reading with clear diction and pride)

President \_\_\_\_\_, Dean  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ (names  
of campus dignitaries to be formally addressed),  
initiates and honored guests; As President of  
the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter of Mortar Board  
at \_\_\_\_\_, I welcome you.

We are assembled here today to pay tribute to  
Mortar Board and to recognize this chapter's  
new initiates.

Mortar Board is a national honor society of  
college seniors. The society recognizes in its  
membership the qualities of superior scholastic  
ability, outstanding and continual leadership,  
and dedicated service to the college or  
university community.

The mortarboard is a symbol of ancient honor  
and distinction. In the earliest universities,  
students adopted the clerical or monastic  
robes as a sign they were devoting their lives  
to the profession of learning. We, too, wear a  
distinguishing sign, the mortarboard.

In ancient days, students from many lands who  
spoke diverse tongues were able to meet on a  
common ground by using the classic language of  
learning. So we, students in many universities and

colleges, are bound by the three Greek letters, Pi,  
Sigma, Alpha, representing the Ideals of Mortar  
Board: scholarship, service and leadership.

The purpose of Mortar Board is set forth in  
Article II of our national Bylaws, and will be read  
by our chapter's secretary.

## Chapter Secretary

(Reading distinctively and with dignity)

We, the undersigned, recognizing the advantage  
of a national union of senior honor societies,  
do hereby unite to form a national society  
whose purpose shall be to facilitate cooperation  
among those societies, to contribute to the self-  
awareness of its members, to promote equal  
opportunities among all peoples, to emphasize  
the advancement of the status of women, to  
support the ideals of the university, to advance a  
spirit of scholarship, to recognize and encourage  
leadership, to provide service, and to establish  
the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of  
ideas as individuals and as a group.

(If the Mortar Board chapter is located at a  
college, the reader may substitute college in  
place of the word university at the underlined  
point above.)

## Chapter President

(Addressing those to be initiated)

Will the initiates please stand as you are able?

(pause)

Will you strive earnestly to maintain these ideals  
and purposes? If so, respond "I will."

## All to be Initiated

(responding in unison):

I will.

## Chapter President

(Addressing the initiates again)

While it is an honor to be selected for membership in Mortar Board, it is the willingness of the selected individual to make the commitment to continue to serve that differentiates an honor society from an honorary. When one accepts membership, this acceptance indicates her or his agreement to accept the responsibility and obligation to be an active participant in the chapter. This commitment is an agreement to actively support the Ideals of the Society.

With this honor will you also accept the responsibility of active participation? If so, respond "I will."

### **All to be Initiated**

(Responding in unison):

I will.

### **Chapter President**

Please be seated. (pause)

The chapter vice president (or other officer) will present a national history of Mortar Board.

### **Chapter Vice President**

(Reading with pride and clear diction)

At the University of Chicago in 1915, a wearer of a gold pin in the shape of a mortarboard met another wearer of a pin, not like her own, but also in the shape of a mortarboard. Each one represented a group of senior college women striving to render service to their alma mater (pronounced all'-mah ma'-ter). The two talked together. If such an ideal existed on two American campuses, it probably existed on many other campuses of the country. Therefore, why were these groups with like ideals not united?

The group of one of the wearers of the pin worked for two years to interest similar groups in the idea of a national organization of senior societies for women, with the result that, in 1918, the delegates from five organizations met together, representing The Ohio State University, Swarthmore College, The University of Michigan, Syracuse University and Cornell University. On

February 15 and 16, they founded the first and only national honor society for senior women and established the badge, motto, ritual and constitution. The name for the new society was referred to the local groups, and "Mortar Board" was chosen in preference to a Greek-letter name.

Thus, the new honor organization began its life on American campuses. It represented at first a small section of the country. Two more groups in the Middle West joined the original four during 1918. It continued to spread throughout the Midwest, and in the East, and going to the South for one chapter until the end of 1922 found a chapter roll of 18. A banner year for Mortar Board was 1923: south to the Gulf, west to the Pacific — and the Society was truly nationwide. The chapter roll has grown steadily since then. Now there are 232 chartered chapters in the nation.

In 1975 a historic event occurred when membership in our formerly all women's organization was extended to include men. This occurred at a Special National Conference that was convened in Kansas City, Missouri, to consider the ramifications of the regulations to Title IX (pronounced Title 9), which prohibited sex discrimination by organizations on campuses that are recipients of federal funds. The purpose of the Society was strengthened to include emphasis upon the advancement of the status of women. Delegates to the Twenty-third National Conference of Mortar Board in June 1976 added to the purpose "... to promote equal opportunities among all peoples."

At the 1985 conference in Columbus, Ohio, Mortar Board delegates passed a resolution to initiate a national project, to be chosen by vote of the delegates at national conference. The delegates selected organ donor awareness as the first national project. In 2002, "Reading is Leading" was selected as the permanent project.

In 1993, chapters across the country celebrated the 75th anniversary of Mortar Board. We are now just a few years from our hundredth birthday.

Since 1918 more than 250,000 members have been initiated into Mortar Board. The

history of Mortar Board must be a chronicle of national growth, a record of women and men accomplishing countless services to colleges, universities, and students, and a story of local chapters whose achievements have been the strength that is Mortar Board.

**Chapter President**  
(Addressing the initiates)

The chapter historian will now present the history of the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert chapter name) of Mortar Board.

**Chapter Historian**  
(Insert here a brief summary of the history of your chapter beginning with the chapter's founding to the present. The National Office can help you with this.)

**Chapter President**

You have heard the history of today's Mortar Board, the way in which it developed from a thought to a unique senior honor society in the United States. You have heard the history of this chapter. You have learned of Mortar Board's Ideals and purpose. Now you must add the next chapter in the history of Mortar Board.

You have been chosen as leaders to foster all that is noble in this university (college). You will not work alone. You will be bound in the loyalty of common ideals to other students in other institutions of learning who will strive with you to maintain and advance the Ideals of Mortar Board.

The gold of our colors stands for achievement - the silver for opportunity. We charge you to promote the honor and welfare of your alma mater - not only by your own leadership, but also by your wise following of those in authority and by your continuing friendship with fellow students. We charge you to give in leadership and service of the best that is within you. (pause) Please stand as you are able.

(Pause until all initiates are standing)

Having heard the purposes of Mortar Board and the responsibilities you are expected to assume,

will you receive the certificate which makes you a member of Mortar Board ... accepting from us the burden of its privileges? If so, respond "I will."

**All to be Initiated**  
(Responding in unison)

I will.

**Chapter President**  
(Addressing the initiates again)

You, as new members, will recognize the stimulating opportunity of sharing interests among yourselves as a group of intelligent and concerned individuals. This is a vital and rewarding objective of Mortar Board, which only you can make a reality. Along with opportunity comes the responsibility to use your combined resources to lead and to initiate. From this kind of commitment can evolve the directions for your service to Mortar Board.

You may be seated.

(Pause until all noise abates)

Now, as evidence of the trust we place in you, we ask you each to affirm our Bylaws by placing your signature on the Chapter Roll, receiving your symbol of membership, and accepting the Mortar Board Certificate of Membership.

(At this point, the chapter president calls each initiate forward to sign the Chapter Roll, only if membership payment has been completed. Each candidate then receives the gold and silver ribbon with pin and the Membership Certificate from the chapter vice president.)

(After all initiates have signed the Chapter Roll, all present members and alumni come forward in turn to receive a candle and light it. They stand together while *The Torch* is read.)

**Chapter President**

(Usually a distinguished Mortar Board alumna or alumnus with a commanding voice is selected to recite *The Torch*.)

Now, \_\_\_\_\_ (name of distinguished guest) will recite The Torch, which was introduced in 1925 by Elizabeth Furry of our Torchbearer chapter at Florida State University.

### Distinguished guest

#### THE TORCH

The God of Great Endeavor  
gave me a torch to bear.  
I lifted it high above me  
in the dark and murky air.  
And straightway, with loud hosannas,  
the crowd proclaimed its light.  
And followed me as I carried my torch  
through the starless night.  
'Til drunk with the people's praises,  
and mad with vanity,  
I forgot 'twas the torch that they followed,  
and fancied they followed me.

Then slowly my arm grew weary  
upholding the shining load,  
And my tired feet went stumbling  
over the dusty road  
And I fell - - with the torch beneath me.  
In a moment the light was out,  
When lo! from the throng  
a stripling sprang forth with a mighty shout,  
Caught up the torch as it smoldered,  
and lifted it high and tall,  
'Til, fanned by the winds of heaven,  
it fired the souls of all.

And as I lay in the darkness,  
the feet of the trampling crowd  
Passed over and far beyond me,  
its paeans proclaiming aloud.  
And I learned in the deepening twilight  
the glorious verity,  
'Tis the torch that the people follow,  
whoever the bearer may be.

### Chapter President

(Speaking with great ceremony)

I now present to you these newly initiated members of the \_\_\_\_\_ (name of local chapter) of Mortar Board.

(The president leads applause. The initiates are seated.)

### Chapter President

(Speaking after the initiates are seated and noise has quieted)

I invite the family of our new initiates to stand, as you are able.

(After pausing while they stand, the president continues.)

Our chapter thanks you for your guidance and support of our newest members. Their successful careers and selection to Mortar Board are the result, in no small part, of your presence in their lives. With our thanks, please also accept our congratulations on your mutual success.

(The president leads applause and then the families take their seats.)

### Chapter President

I invite \_\_\_\_\_ (use the name of alumna or alumnus) to the stage.

### Alumni Member

(Please make every effort to have an alumni member present to take this part)

Will the retiring members of the chapter please rise?

Although active collegiate membership in Mortar Board lasts only one year, the commitment to excellence in scholarship, leadership and service is one of lifelong duration.

Do you pledge to continue your commitment to the pursuit of excellence in scholarship, leadership and service?

### All Retiring Members

I do.

### Alumni Member

On behalf of Mortar Board, I thank you for your contribution to the Society, and I welcome you as alumni members of Mortar Board. As alumni



members, you carry with you the Ideals of our Society. The Mortar Board Alumni Association will provide you with many opportunities to enjoy the value of Mortar Board and to ensure the endurance of our Ideals throughout your lifetimes. May you ever hold high the Torch.

(The outgoing members may pose for photos. They then take their seats.)

## Chapter President

Before we hear and sing our anthem, which is entitled *Thy Ideals*, permit me to explain that this original tune and lyrics were written by members of Mortar Board for Mortar Board, very early in the Society's history. *Thy Ideals* was written in about 1920.

The lyrics of *Thy Ideals* are stunningly on point with the Initiation Ceremony that you just heard. The first stanza, "Thy Ideals, Pi Sigma Alpha, We are ever striving toward..." What we stand for are our Ideals: Scholarship, Service and Leadership. And we are always working toward these Ideals.

"As we seek to live thy motto in the bonds of Mortar Board..." This sense of betterment and connection represents the friendships that our class has built over this past year and the hope

you new members will also establish as you live the Mortar Board Ideals.

"And to you whom we have chosen in the years both far and near..." What a great way to say that Mortar Board is forever.

"Comes the privilege of service to our alma mater dear...." How clever to point out that in addition to selecting the finest scholar-leaders, that Mortar Board chapters exist to serve their college or university. And what a lovely wish for us outgoing members to have for the incoming members. We wish for you that you have the privilege of serving our alma mater in the year ahead — and always.

(pause... Now the musicians may perform *Thy Ideals* once. Then the entire group assembled should sing it through with them. Rehearse in advance!)

(The president leads applause and begins the recessional.)

## Recessional

(Your chapter should allow for photos to be taken by family members of the new class. Be sure to send photos to the National Office!)

## Reception



# ABBREVIATED VIRTUAL INITIATION CEREMONY

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Though our initiation is normally a full ceremony in person, we have an abbreviated version for virtual initiation of one or more candidates.

## ITEMS YOU WILL NEED

- Mortar Board lectern banner or other backdrop. Email [mortarboard@mortarboard.org](mailto:mortarboard@mortarboard.org) or call 614-488-4094 to have one sent to you.
- Consider recording the initiation.
- Stage the location well before the event.
- Officers standing comfortably at the side or behind the president.
- Attire: chapter president and officers should be dressed in professional dress if possible. If wearing robes and mortarboard caps, have professional attire underneath. Remove mortarboard cap while speaking.
- Camera and lighting: Remember to look at the camera, not at the screen. Put the camera so it is straight on to you and you are not looking down at you. If it is looking up at you, anything above you, including a spinning ceiling fan or ticking clock, will be over your head.
- Background: Mind your background. Make it pleasant with no clock, ceiling fan, cats, dirty laundry, unmade bed, or dirty dishes behind you.
- Noise: Still the noise from your surroundings. No TV, ringing mobile phone, dishwasher, doorbell, barking dogs, construction or traffic noise.

## SCRIPT

(Chapter president stands before the camera, with candidate or candidates also standing, as they are able)

### Chapter President

(Speaking with distinction and certainty and looking at the camera)

As chapter president of the \_\_\_\_\_ chapter at \_\_\_\_\_ College / University, I am pleased to present this abbreviated virtual initiation. My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Mortar Board recognizes in its members the qualities of superior scholastic ability, outstanding and continual leadership, and dedicated service to the university community.

The mortarboard is a symbol of ancient honor and distinction. In the earliest universities, students adopted the clerical or monastic robes as a sign they were devoting their lives to the profession of learning. We, too, wear a distinguishing sign, the mortarboard.

In ancient days, students from many lands who spoke diverse tongues were able to meet on a common ground by using the classic language of learning. So too, we, students in many universities and colleges, are bound by the three Greek letters: Pi ... Sigma ... Alpha ... representing the Ideals of Mortar Board: scholarship... service ... and leadership.

The gold of our colors stands for achievement ... the silver, for opportunity.

The purpose of Mortar Board is set forth in Article II of our national Bylaws and will be read by our chapter secretary \_\_\_\_\_ (or insert office and name of other reader).

### Chapter Secretary

(Stepping forward to the camera and reading distinctively and with dignity)

We hereby unite to form a national society whose purpose shall be to facilitate cooperation among our chapters; to contribute to the self-awareness of our members; to promote equal opportunities among all peoples; to emphasize the advancement of the status of women; to support the ideals of the university; to advance a spirit of scholarship; to recognize and encourage leadership; to provide service; and to establish the opportunity for a meaningful exchange of ideas as individuals and as a group.

### Chapter President

(Looking at camera, speaking clearly)

A very short history of Mortar Board will be read by our chapter vice president \_\_\_\_\_ (or insert office and name of other reader).



## **Chapter Vice President**

(Stepping forward to the camera and reading distinctively and with dignity while looking at the camera)

At the University of Chicago in 1915, a wearer of a gold pin in the shape of a mortarboard met another wearer of a pin, not like her own, but also in the shape of a mortarboard. Each one represented a group of senior college women striving to render service to their alma mater (pronounced all'-mah ma'-ter).

The two talked together. If such an ideal existed on two American campuses, it probably existed on many other campuses of the country. Therefore, why were these groups with like ideals not united?

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Thus, the new honor organization began its life on American campuses. It represented at first a small section of the country. Two more groups in the Middle West joined the original four during 1918. It continued to spread throughout the Midwest, and in the East, and going to the South for one chapter until the end of 1922 found a chapter roll of 18. A banner year for Mortar Board was 1923: south to the Gulf, west to the Pacific — and the Society was truly nationwide. The chapter roll has grown steadily since then. Now there are 232 chartered chapters in the nation.

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Title IX (pronounced Title 9), which prohibited sex discrimination by organizations on campuses that are recipients of federal funds. The purpose of the Society was strengthened to include emphasis upon the advancement of the status of women. Delegates to the Twenty-third National Conference of Mortar Board in June 1976 added to the purpose "... to promote equal opportunities among all peoples."

At the 1985 conference in Columbus, Ohio, Mortar Board delegates passed a resolution to initiate a national project, to be chosen by vote of the delegates at national conference. The delegates selected organ donor awareness as the first national project. In 2002, "Reading is Leading" was selected as the permanent project.

In 2018, chapters across the country celebrated the 100th anniversary of Mortar Board. A Centennial Campaign raised more than one point two million dollars to support Mortar Board.

Since 1918 more than 250,000 members have been initiated into Mortar Board. The history of Mortar Board must be a chronicle of national growth, a record of women and men accomplishing countless services to colleges, universities, and students, and a story of local chapters whose achievements have been the strength that is Mortar Board.

## **Chapter President**

Our historian \_\_\_\_\_ (or insert office and name of other reader) will present a history of our chapter.

## **Historian**

(Looking at camera, reads the history of the chapter)

## **Chapter President**

(Looking at the camera and speaking distinctly and with energy)

Candidates for members, will you stand as you are able?

(pause)

Will you strive earnestly to maintain these Ideals and purposes? If so, respond "I will."

(I will.)

You have been chosen to foster all that is noble in this Society. You will not work alone. You will be bound in the loyalty of common ideals to others who will strive with you to maintain and advance the Ideals of Mortar Board.

We charge you to give in leadership and service of the best that is within you.

(pause)

As evidence of the trust we place in you, you will affirm our Bylaws by placing your signature on the Chapter Roll. This will be accomplished when the chapter can meet on campus \_\_\_\_\_. At the time of your signing the roll, you will receive our badge and certificate.

Are willing to accept this obligation of membership? If so, please respond "I will."

(I will)

Please be seated.

The \_\_\_\_\_ chapter is proud to claim you among our number and add you to the \_\_\_\_\_(insert year like 34th or 56th class of Mortar Board at \_\_\_\_\_ College / University. Congratulations.

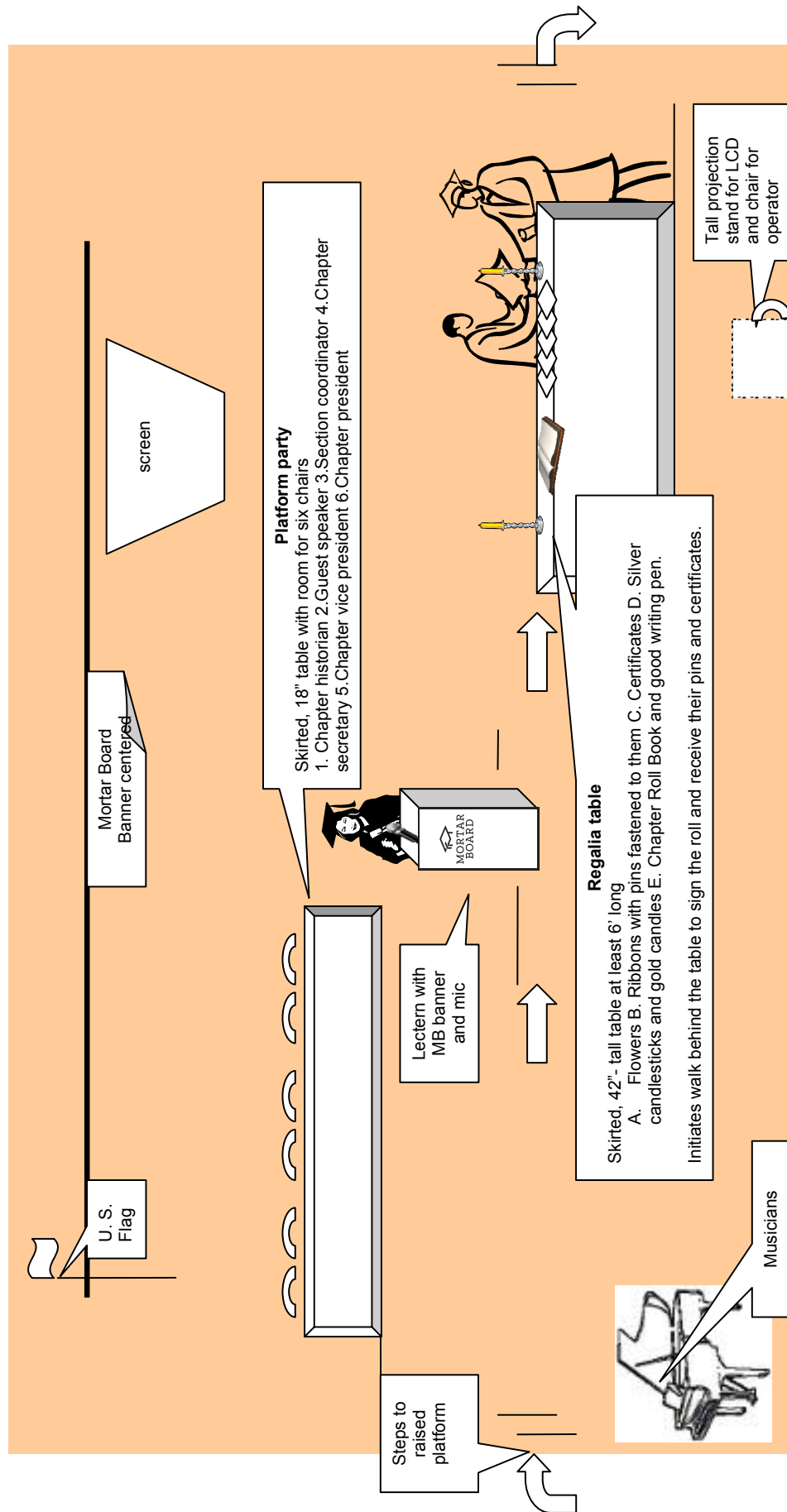
(pause)

This concludes our virtual initiation. We are excited to share membership with you and we will now move on to our next order of business.

(Give dates of next meeting, introduce officers, introduce advisors, and thank alumni that are present).



# MORTAR BOARD INITIATION STAGE AND AUDIENCE SET



## Audience

1. Reserve seats in the front row for campus dignitaries, alumni speaker and those with special needs
2. New members are seated next in alphabetical order. Arrows show direction that initiates travel across stage as they are named and receive pins and certificates
3. Family members and other guests are seated as close as possible to the front so they have the best view
4. Remaining current members with unassigned duties should take their seats behind the new members and be prepared to help out as needed
5. If an initiate is unable to cross the stage, appropriate members of the platform party should come to her or his seat, which should be near the stage

## Other requirements

- **Make sure there is NO space between raised platform and the back wall so that no one accidentally falls off the back of the stage.**
- Place a working microphone at lectern
- Arrange for roving microphone (optional) and microphone for musicians as needed
- Provide power to LCD and computer
- The taller regalia table allows for initiates to sign the Roll Book without having to bend over. Initiates walk behind the table



## Mortar Board Ode

Arr. by Brandon M. Caten

## Mortar Board National Senior Honor Society

Soprano

We Mor - tar Board, re - ceive you with wel - come hearts and hands, to re - pre - sent the

Alto

We Mor - tar Board, re - ceive you with wel - come hearts and hands, to re - pre - sent the

Tenor

We Mor - tar Board, re - ceive you with wel - come hearts and hands, to re - pre - sent the

Bass

We Mor - tar Boards, re - ceive you with wel - come hearts and hands, to re - pre - sent the

Piano

S

no - ble aims for which our col - lege stands. And this, our aim, what e'er be - fall, re - spond to Al - ma

A

no - ble aims for which our col - lege stands. And this, our aim, what e'er be - fall, re - spond to Al - ma

T

no - ble aims for which our col - lege stands. And this, our aim, what e'er be - fall, re - spond to Al - ma

B

no - ble aims for which our col - lege stands. And this, our aim, what e'er be - fall re - spond to Al - ma

Pno.

# Mortar Board Ode

2  
13

S  
Ma - ter's call, be hon - est, loy - al, true and strong as fu - ture Mor - tar Boards.

A  
Ma - ter's call, be hon - est, loy - al, true and strong as fu - ture Mor - tar Boards.

T  
8  
Ma - ter's call, be hon - est, loy - al, true and strong as fu - ture Mor - tar Boards.

B  
Ma - ter's call, be hon - est, loy - al, true and strong as fu - ture Mor - tar Boards.

13

Pno.

# Thy Ideals

Music by: ed. W.G. Niederer  
Arranged by: Brandon M. Caten

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

Thy Id - eals, Pi Sig-ma Al - pha, we are e - ver str-iving toward. As we

5

S

A

T

B

seek to live thy mot - to in the bonds of Mor-tar Board. And to you whom we have

seek to live thy mot - to in the bonds of Mor-tar Board. And to you whom we have

seek to live thy mot - to in the bonds of Mor-tar Board. And to you whom we have

seek to live thy mot - to in the bonds of Mor-tar Board. And to you whom we have