

**Name:** Shelah Novak  
**Pledge Class:** Fall 1980  
**Officer Position:** Legacy Rep  
**Decade:** 80s

**As a prospective officer & leader of the ODPAA, what do you consider your greatest strengths? Weaknesses?**

One strength is my ability to remain open-minded and gather all facts before making a decision. My decisions always concern the best interest of the sisters. Another is my commitment to being fair. This means I will not let my personal preferences dominate my decision making if it is not what is best for the group. Finally, another strength is my ability to communicate effectively. Creating an effective and appropriate tone matched with the most precise words means my meanings won't be misconstrued.

As far as weaknesses are concerned, my technical abilities may be a bit lacking, but I hope that more knowledgeable sisters can assist me when needed.

**If elected or re-elected to the position you seek, what is your commitment to serving out the full term?**

I am committed to the full term.

**Please describe accomplishments in your career and personal life that would benefit the ODPAA.**

In my career as a public school teacher, there have been others who have recognized my leadership abilities even before I was aware of them. I have had several administrators appoint me to leadership roles because they had total faith in my knowledge, experience, and ability to be effective. I gained the trust and respect of my colleagues which helped me inaugurate new programs and procedures that helped create a comfortable climate in the school.

In addition, when I entered my Master's program early in my teaching career, I participated in a program that actually changed my total outlook on education. I was introduced to new ideas and practices that none of my colleagues were utilizing. Even though I was alone in my new approach to conducting my lessons, I maintained confidence in what I was doing and followed through because I knew it would benefit my students. It was my openness in accepting these new ideas that helped me to reach new successes in my profession.

**What is your vision for the future of the ODPAA? What changes would you advocate and why?**

ODPAA has been facing many challenges over the past few years, from declining membership in Omega Delta Phi Sorority, to serious financial concerns, sanctions imposed on the sorority by the college, and the imminent possibility of forfeiting 51 Elm Street. We face the reality of having to find a new direction and mission for the Alumni Association. We face the fact this

could happen more sooner than later. Therefore, we need to begin talks, gather information, and entertain creative ideas from the sisters. I would advocate for doing this now rather than have a "wait and see" mindset.

**If elected or re-elected, please describe what you seek to accomplish:**

As a legacy rep, it is important to listen to the sisters and their concerns and immediately bring these concerns to the board. In addition, it is imperative to attend all meetings, collect all the information and disseminate it to the members in a clear, concise, and timely manner. I want to represent my decade and make sure all voices are heard.

**What does Omega Delta Phi mean to you? Please describe your experience as both an active member and an alumni.**

When I decided to pledge Omega, I did so at a time when I had no one. My closest friend had dropped out of school, and I was alone. In Omega, I found a group of young ladies who willingly accepted me, and that was an incredible feeling. This group of 40 sisters created a bond that has stayed with me for over 40 years. After college, though, life got in the way and I lost touch with everyone. Then along comes that remarkable 50th year anniversary celebration which allowed me to reconnect with so many sisters in such a way that I know this connection will never be broken. Every year, I look forward to spending 5 magical days at the alumni reunion in the summer where we make new memories that we will talk about forever. I have realized that Omega is a family in every sense of the word. These are sisters I can rely on in good times and bad times, and I cherish more than I can describe.

**How would your sisters describe you?**

I would hope my sisters would describe me as someone they enjoy being around. That they believe in me, trust me, respect me, and are proud to call me a sister.

**Please describe your approach to communicating and working with the ODPAA membership.**

Constant communication is a must, especially for a legacy rep. The sisters I represent would have to know that I will reach out to them and that they can feel comfortable in reaching out to me. I do realize not everyone from my decade knows who I am since I was an active member very early in the 80s, so I definitely need to introduce myself to give them all the information they would need to feel comfortable working with me and having me represent them.

**How do you deal with difficult people & situations? Please describe a situation in which you took a position that upset someone else, and explain how you handled it.**

I had a colleague who was not a team player at a time when being a team player was the focus of our staff. Since I was the department leader, I needed to show my supervisor that my department was on board with her direction. That meant I needed to get this difficult teacher to buy into something he did not want to be a part of. It was a delicate dance, and I knew I had to take it slowly or it would backfire on me. So, I approached him with a simple change. I

simply made a suggestion and presented the department would do because it as something that was necessary and beneficial for the students. Surprisingly, he was agreeable to it. Before long, I found he had made a commitment to my simple suggestion. It may not have changed his entire outlook, but it did show my supervisor that he could be a team player.

### **How do you motivate others?**

Motivation is essential for a teacher. Every day, I have to motivate students to do just about anything. I find that being positive in the approach is most effective. As for adults, being positive is important, but it is just as important to motivate by example. An effective leader cannot tell others to do something if she does not do it herself.

### **How do you handle criticism?**

If the criticism is constructive and not spiteful, I am amenable to change as long as it isn't compromising any of my personal beliefs. If someone is criticizing me just to blow off steam or to be hurtful, I can easily let it roll off my back.

### **What top 3 qualities do you think a leader should have?**

A leader should listen to all sides of any situation before making a decision.

A leader should be fair when dealing with people by giving everyone an opportunity to be heard and considered.

A leader should not be afraid to make hard decisions and also effectively communicate to the group about these decisions.

### **Would you rather be liked or respected? Why?**

In a leadership role, I would much rather be respected. I look at effective leaders whom I have encountered. Even if I did not like them, I respected the work they did because it got results.

### **How do you spend your free time?**

Three years ago, I moved to be closer to my family. I had spent my entire adult life living far away from my siblings. Now, I live close enough to them to be able to spend a lot of time with them. I value this time since I missed out on so much before. We get together for dinners, Trivia night, golf outings, day trips, etc. And when I am not spending time with them, I enjoy time at the beach, participating in community events, physical activities, and dancing.

### **For Fun: What's your 'superpower' or 'spirit animal' and why?**

My superpower would probably be the ability to feel comfortable in most any situation. Talking in front of a large group? Not a problem. Being stopped by the police? Piece of cake. Being confronted by the neighborhood bully? Bring it on!