Greek Life Commons planning event – Saturday, November 6, 2010
Responses from Working Session 2, Discussion Question 1:
“What, in your chapter, do you struggle with that the Greek Life Commons can help you to address and improve?”

The comments listed below were generated by the participants in attendance during Greek Life Commons planning event held on Saturday, November 6th, 2010.

The responses were taken directly from the participants. No responses were omitted and no editing occurred (other than a spell check). The category headings included below were created after the event and once all of the information was compiled. This was done in order to organize the comments and responses to assist the reader.

Participants at the event were responding to the following discussion question. “What, in your chapter, do you struggle with that the Greek Life Commons can help you to address and improve?”

**Residential & House Concerns**

- House maintenance, not having people that know how to fix things (i.e. roof), mostly student repairs
- Owning houses
- Physical House repairs / State of physical house
- Raising funds for house improvements
- Making it easier to donate to the house, set up a way to do this
- Safety, security of Greek houses over break.
- Maintenance Issues- Collective RPI Greek house help with contractors, electricians, plumbers
- Improvements to the houses - Guaranteed loan program also Cosign loans with RPI
- Finding a centralized way to provide labor such as plumbing and contractors (cheaper in bulk) so it’s easier to fix the houses.
- Vendors as well, in the same context: fuel oil, food, supplies.
- Centralize efforts for houses near each other, i.e. The Pawling Houses, RAPS/Stacwyck + Sunset, Sherry/Sage, and Fifteenth Street.
- Housing sophomores in our house getting capacity need to be more responsive.
- RPI has contractors with contact that we can use. Use RPI fixit. So they can provide us with service. Have RPI provide us with contractors attorneys and higher them as a third party.
- How we go about home improvements. Contacts and money.
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(Residential & House Concerns - continued)

- Have to have a house director and a chef so struggling to find the correct resources. Have cooks or resources directors that can share
- Living Standard for common areas in the houses
- Develop understanding within house on why keeping it clean, well kept is important
- Encourage members to live in house and maintaining a full house → and organization when people do not live in – effective communication
- No house, so accumulation of historian stuff that ends up in people’s apartments to store stuff. AOE has been refused places in Union to store and keep information where they don’t have place to store everything
- Housing for Greek Life, physical house search no real support
  - Local Off Campus Housing Search Help/Legal Services not completely effective
- Fire inspections,
  - Creation of Greek commons forces everyone to be up to code, but the historical society prevents some houses to do any major things like installing sprinklers, now because the sudden increase in these fire inspections, we have to hire professional companies coming in and doing this.
  - Getting the quota of people to go to the events where a certain amount is mandatory or you get a fine, how do you get a good enough programs where more people will go?
- AGD is concerned because they don’t own their house, are they going to be able to use Greek commons to help them get a house, they don’t have any alumni support, they don’t have any help from the city, they want to know if they are going to be able to turn around and get help in 6 years when they don’t have a house.
- Helping Greek Organizations find houses that don’t have one
- Sophomore live-in problems
- Sophomore housing debate
- No House/General Space
  - What’s the Greek Zone?
  - GLC should help Greek obtain houses as it increases a sense of community.
- Freshmen room selection takes place too early which interferes with housing plans
- Use them to help with fixing living situations and chapters who need some
**Financial Concerns**

- Collecting dues/bursar billing
- More funding being directed to Greek life
- Financial continuity
- Bursar Billing difficulties getting money
- Bursar Billing
  - How fast houses get money
  - Housing scholarships- but those are going to go away
  - Trouble setting it up because there isn’t clear instructions
  - A lot of requirements: room arrangements because often those aren’t planned until end of semester (TOO ORGANIZED)
  - Communication with people in charge: email reminders, more organized notifications and records
  - Hard to structure or houses around bursar billing; want bursar billing to fit houses
  - Big advantage: people have to pay or will have a hold on account
  - HCB works through Bursar: helps decrease complications
  - Can help with housing, with codes and getting loans
- Trouble with the billing system through RPI.
  - RPI underestimated the amount of chapters that were going to be using the Bursar
- Financing
  - Bursar billing has been a problem
    - Delaying receiving our own funds
    - Need to fix the process
  - All Greek fund (to lend money to houses as they need it)
- Getting paid by RPI through bursar
- Biggest issue we have is the money distribution, now that we bill through the school we don’t get our money in time and is hard to account for.
- Bursar Billing payouts and financial cash flow for houses
- Bursar Billing needs to be better. Houses aren’t getting the right disbursements at the right time. Can we possibly put fines on RPI bill that would help with collecting those?
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(Financial Concerns – continued)

- Housing Scholarships
  - Finding enough people to live in
  - Alternative if these scholarships don’t apply to Greek houses - would’ve been better if they were clearer in the beginning
- If money for programming does happen, are you going to pay for just those living in the house, since the Greek commons is very property oriented, or is it going to be for the whole fraternity?
- Free things that are mandatory… like TiPS training
- Outstanding debt with alumni, now you can’t graduate without paying house bills

Recruitment & Membership

- Problems getting to know first-year freshmen before recruitment?
  - People different than initial impressions
- Recruitment for PanHel
  - Help with getting venue
- Communicating what we offer to prospective members
- Recruitment, Risks/Safety, Judicial Process (what needs to happen to strengthen a chapter after it is effected by a rule breaking)
- Improve Recruitment Training
- Issues with pre-rush don’t tell incoming freshmen don’t tell anyone about rush until. Get more information to freshmen. Admissions can be contacted this as well Greeks are part of the experience.
- More engagement of the new members
- Keeping numbers comfortable
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**Greek Pride & Unity**

- Greeks need a general spot that they can all use when they need it and hang out together. The IFC office does not suffice
- Greek unity, more Greeks uniting in one place, like an all Greek place
- Creating an environment where Greeks can succeed together
- Creating fraternity unity – traditionally always done by having a key Greek row.
- Better way to coexist with the other organizations
- Need help structuring the individuals in the chapter, some resources and collaboration between chapters, having some general information with the Greek dean or Greek commons
- Bringing us together as a whole
- Why not get excited about Greek life
- Staying close as a sister or brotherhood with growing sizes
- Unity among large new member classes and large groups of people
- Develop “family” bonds, not just good friend relationships

**Officer and Member Education**

- Officer transitions and transitions into chapter housing
- Chapter transition workshops through the school
  - Everyone transitions at once
- Improving the education of members: Maybe have RPI put programs on that fulfill national requirements
- Better organization in the knowledge of the Greek life members
- Officer Academy through national
- Police your own so that administration doesn’t come down on students
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Involvement

- Motivation amongst members
- Showing Greek unity
- Motivation to run for positions
- Membership involvement
- Running for positions in PanHel/IFC or in house
- Incentives to attend events
- Getting houses involved in IFC and PanHel: Keeps members appreciating Greek Life as a whole and all houses.
- Active engagement of every member of the chapter
  - Try and eliminate the 20% 80% gap.
- Motivation for philanthropy the same core group of guys doing most of the work. Me first mentality
- Motivation, sense of responsibility (accountability) for house, pride in membership → dishes, cleaning
- Burnout – overstretching oneself and taking on too much then losing motivation to participate in activities at all
- Motivation- specifically scholarship, getting the bottom third to improve
- Keeping seniors involved and keeping them motivated to continue to participate
- Theta Xi brothers involved very much within the house but not on campus in other opportunities
- Prioritization problems: brothers and sisters getting too involved when the primary focus should be school
- General apathy with respect to:
  - Leadership
  - Service
  - Commitment/responsibility
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Community Relations & Public Perception

- Relationship between Greeks and Community
  - More receptive of Greek events
  - Work with newspapers to list accomplishments and local events
  - Help us improve image with community by letting them know about good things we do
  - PR stuff: should be done by IFC and PanHel
  - More events with administration
- Struggle with city relations RPI and alumni are taking different paths to solve the problem.
- More helpful relationship with public safety
- Lack of communication with offices on campus
- Interaction with offices on campus (Public Safety) have poor relations for things like accidental fire alarms. Interaction with Troy community services as well
- Room for improvement between faculty/student relationships (advisors).
- Faculty/student integration, advisors. Being able to contact faculty and have them attend events
- Preconceptions/judgments of Greeks - Campus/troy in general & From people elsewhere
- Greek preconceptions of the administration, and what they think of Greeks
  - Constantly at odds
  - Comes down to liability and image
  - Need to change how we think of the administration as “enemies”
- Overcoming negative feelings toward Greek life
- Campus attitude towards Greeks, many non-Greeks talk down on Greek life.
  - Maybe think that Greeks get special treatment?
  - Is dorm storming a problem?
  - Many think that Greeks are not involved in other organizations/activities on campus.
- Public Image – non-Greeks, RPI community, Troy community
  - Don’t get full recognition due to limited sources for recognition
- Recognition on campus and by non Greek students so they know who we are, specifically for chapters with houses far away from campus
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**Marketing & Advertising**

- Advertising
  - NRB/SO program that’s more detailed
  - Show that RPI Greeks are very different from stereotype
  - Requiring RA’s to talk about Greek life
  - Info packet for parents of freshman (and Parent SO info session)
  - Packets of information passed out to Freshman
  - Education about Greek life: sessions that are advertised via email
  - Incorporate Greek life in advertisement for RPI as a school (in professional manner)
- Advertise more to EVERYONE not just PanHel and IFC
- More notification of events that are going on in Greek life and their activities
- Over programming and too much information, it’s difficult to look in so many places
- Spreading news (events or reports)
- Greek news/updates via new student mega list?
- Helping spread news of each chapter’s achievements from national – there are a lot of role model chapters on this campus, but people don’t know about it… promoting the positives of Greek life
- Centralized advertising for individual Greek events that everyone uses and many people see. Calendar of events
- More publicity for the flagship site on what it has to offer.
- Face book page IFC/PanHel? Google Docs?

**Alumni**

- Educate Alumni about their roles
- Outstanding debt with alumni, now you can’t graduate without paying house bills.
- Sigma Delta: keeping contact with alumni
- Mentorship programs between alumni and students.
- Ways to communicate with alumni from other houses, for example to compose presentations.
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(Alumni – continued)

- Develop strong relation with undergraduates and alumni to build stronger relationship – handling a generation gap or handling interactions with much older alumni and instilling a sense of pride of wanting to show off the house to the older guys
- Encourage older alumni to come back through alumni house and houses during alumni weekend → regaining alumni after probation
- Combination of alumni weekends for every house so that friends outside of their houses can all be together
- Alumni Relations
  - The alumni board/team works well but it’s hard to get farther out from that.
  - Alumni sign up on website to receive messages when updates are made to the chapter website.
  - Help with obtaining accurate database and finding “lost” alumni.
  - Help with planning regional events.
    - RPI does them all the time and can probably shed some light on how to get people out to the events and how to organize them efficiently and effectively.
- Along the lines of networking, conducting alumni job fairs.
- Do a better job of bringing in alumni to conduct mock job interviews with students.
- Alumni networking standardized system to reach out to alumni, better than the alumni house. Sustainability is essential here.

Programming

- Food budgeting and cooking guidance
- Philanthropy – community service is easy, but raising money is tougher
- Family friendly weekend, Greek reunion weekend, some big event like Chowderfest
- Some way to facilitate working with other houses. Some dinner event or something
- Greek-life specific tutoring, similar to ALAC
- Career guidance Q&A
(Programming – continued)

- Communal source of ideas and positives for the Greek system. Mapping methodology of programs, events, general chapter issues
- Under IFC/PanHel having different areas of chapters meeting together and brainstorm/share ideas- Philanthropy, Social Events, Fundraising.
- Helping members of the Greek student body develop professional skills.
- Helping all Greeks to develop skills such as social skills, appearance, and proper manners.
- Have a way to critique resumes, like all chapters would collect all their active’s resumes and submit them, and they would be looked at and returned.
- Residence halls have access to resources that Greeks do not have. (LA, TA, Workshops)
- Greek Week needs to be more developed. Need stronger participation from all the houses. Use it as IFC Rush tool that focuses on people already at RPI in the spring and aimed at freshman in the fall.
- Philanthropy
- Shared/common Risk management process for event planning between all houses
- Programming
  - Put on events for houses that can help to fill National requirements.
  - E.g. 80% of members must attend an event geared at life skills/Chapter must hold ‘x’ amounts of ‘y” events.
  - Use the GLC as a brand to put on events.
  - Instead of having houses put on events, have the GLC provide the outlet for one big seminar that multiple houses can attend.
  - Free tips training? Defensive/Drunk Driving?
- Money, time, workshops
- No active Greek Leadership programming
  - Greek-centric: Recruitment Help, Financial Help beyond Greek 101
  - Bursar, Alumni House – Not effectively conveying vital information with houses
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(Programming – continued)

- IFC can’t handle too much more programming but can the Greek life commons necessarily help, as in getting freshman and sophomores to go to our programming, what is the legal clamp? A lot of potential threats without seeing the good stuff maybe help the school to see our side, getting a higher Greek percentage.
- PanHel: quota sucks, there is no good point, it hurts the sororities and the girls who want to join the sorority, if no one likes it, then institute the change, be the change and make it in your bylaws, there is no point following a rule that no one can reason when no one wants to follow it.
- If money for programming does happen, are you going to pay for just those living in the house, since the Greek commons is very property oriented, or is it going to be for the whole fraternity?

Communication

- Communication between the Greek administration and Greek community
- Communication with Administration
  - Booking venues- priority for some things (treated the same as Union funded):
    - public events
  - Emails about policies (i.e. financial)
  - Cabinet dinners with houses/Greek life
  - PanHel Professor Mixer
  - Transparency
  - Make more open forums
- Tend to make changes without letting us know the effects
- Having more communication and grouping with different organizations with their have their social activities
- Separation between IFC/PanHel and houses – representatives maybe don’t always relay all the information to their houses
- Communication lists keeping updated? – Link with RPI
- Greek databases, central communications between houses to keep everything updated
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(Communication – continued)

- Academic lists of brothers so if no one in your houses is in your class/major, you can find a brother/sister in another chapter to work with
- How effective is IFC? Are they for communication? There’s no collaboration between IFC and the E-Boards.
  - Positive image promotion.
  - It would be nice to well define what IFC does and what they stand for.
- Need more communication/cooperation
  - Access to dean Hunt
  - Process for filing complaints/grievances
  - Close the gap between Greek life and the rest of the administration
- As a Greek community we need to work as a group to improve our houses and try decrease the amount of competition
- Difficult to communicate with other Greeks.
- Specify time to get things done: like Tips training, and Greek 101.
- Need to learn from each other to improve our own houses
- What are the schools thoughts on the Greek system and want to hear their thoughts since we don’t know what their thinking.
- No feedback. Give us feedback. And the update
- Explanation of where points were lost on the five-star.
- Officer directory that everyone has of every house presidents of the houses

**Services or Resources**

- Crisis Management Resources
  - Campus community supporting students
- Mental Health concerns
- Services that are available for on campus residents are not fully translated to Greeks
  - ALAC: LAs, ResLife: RAs training
  - Does not occur for Greeks who serve similar roles in their chapters
- Having people on the undergraduate’s side to help when things are an uphill struggle with RPI
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**Concerns for Administration & Questions about the Greek Life Commons**

- We don’t know that the Greek Life Commons is, need a better definition from administration
- Is Greek commons going to be a property thing or a workshop/intellectual thing?
- What is it? We want it in writing
- What is the Greek life commons: maybe something like this, where Greeks get together, come up with tons of ideas, maybe institute some things.
- We don’t know what Greek life commons will be yet
- Administration involvement and access
- More realistic expectations
- Sports coaches strongly discouraging pledging your first semester.
- Revising 5 Star to go along with more national level standards. Update it more.
- Not adequate evaluation of accreditation