REPORT ON GREEK LIFE
AT
RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

MIGRATING FROM INITIATIVES TO STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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# REPORT ON GREEK LIFE AT RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

## MIGRATING FROM INITIATIVES TO STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evolution of the Greek system at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute has a long history dating back to 1853. It has been an integral part of student life since the early days of the school with Greeks providing many of the academic buildings as well as contributing to the birth of student housing, providing student leadership experiences, and social outlets for a sense of campus community. In 1991, at a time when many campuses were removing Greeks from their chapters or issuing documents of requirements for recognition, a team of Institute administrators, alumni volunteers, and undergraduate students completed the progressive “Relationship Statement” document that formalized the relationships and responsibilities of all Greek Life stakeholders. In 2000, the year after the arrival of President Shirley Ann Jackson, a forum was held to discuss the status of the Greek system in the tenth year after the Relationship Statement was adopted. This forum established some directions for the Greek system to improve the operations and keep pace with trends in student life. It also established a team to review and update the Relationship Statement document. The seven years since that forum have seen many challenges arise for the Greek system. These include:

- harsher penalties for alcohol violations,
- several chapters being involved with alcohol and hazing violations,
- stronger enforcement of the alcohol policies,
- changing demographics of the student population,
- new student life performance plans that included changes to the first-year experience (FYE),
- turnover and lapses in staffing for the Dean of Greek Life in the Dean of Students Office,
- reduced budgetary support for the Office of Greek Life, and
- an erosion of the working relations between the Greek Life stakeholders.

These environmental changes and setbacks ultimately culminated with the Division of Student Life issuing new directions for Greek Life in the spring of 2006. Over the course of nine months, with little-to-no collaboration from the alumni volunteers and undergraduate Greek chapter members, a set of three policies on alcohol, recruitment and member education, and house directors were developed.

This report was written to hopefully help with understanding how the Greek system got to the current state of affairs and provide some suggestions to invigorate the relations and operations for the Greek system organizations of the Institute, alumni, and undergraduates. It will:

- provide some background information and historical perspective of the past few years
- review the concerns for the RPI Greek system,
- present research data to give a somewhat scientific view of the situation,
- provide an overview of the initially proposed policies by the Institute,
- provide the preliminary responses and counter-proposals to the policies,
- provide a view of potential synergies with the Student Life Performance Plan
- and finally, provide a set of strategies and actions to aid the Greek system in moving forward.

This cannot be an all encompassing document. The Greek system is highly dynamic with the normal turnover of the primary participants – the students. The report can hopefully provoke thoughts and discussions so that the stakeholders can work together to create the framework for a Greek system that can evolve and adapt as needs demand, yet maintain the traditions and ties to the greater than 150 year tradition of Greek life at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. The alumni and administration need to be the continuity factor and foundation safety net for the system and also be patient enough to enable this great
living and learning experiment to succeed far into the future. It is time to begin the process of migration from the statement of initiatives to the implementation of strategies and actions. We all need to be the founding members of the next 150 years of Greek Life.

GREEK LIFE FORUM – MARCH 2000

In March 2000, a two day Greek LIFE forum was held to focus on Leadership, Innovation, Fortitude, and Evolution in the Greek community at RPI. It had been a period of ten years since the adoption of the progressive Statement of Relationship between Rensselaer and Social Fraternities and Sororities. A Greek Experience Survey was administered in the fall 1999 semester with a high percentage of the Greeks (563 students) completing either the University of Minnesota standard survey instrument or the in-house instrument on a Sunday evening in November 1999. The survey results helped form the foundation of the discussions at the Forum. The forum was sponsored by the Division of Student Life and the Alumni Inter-Greek Council (AIGC) with the support of the Rensselaer Alumni Association (RAA) and several of the national organizations. It provided the opportunity for alumni, undergraduates, and administrators to discuss issues and solutions through breakout working sessions in the five critical areas of:

- Independent Group Living
- New Member Education and Recruitment
- Leadership Development
- General Safety and Fire Protection, and
- Alcohol and Other Drugs

Some of the recommendations were implemented into the operations of the Dean of Students Office (DOSO), the AIGC and the Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) and Panhellenic Council (Panhel). Some progress was made following the forum, however, as campus, Greek, and student paradigms changed, some aspects of the stakeholders’ operations stagnated. The survey ended up being a useful tool, which may be worth re-administering to get another pulse of the Greek experience now nearly a decade later.

RELATIONSHIP STATEMENT – 1991 TO 2006

In 1991, the Statement of Relationship between Rensselaer and Social Fraternities and Sororities was adopted. At the time, it was a progressive document that outlined the rights and responsibilities of the alumni, undergraduate, and administration stakeholders in Greek LIFE. What made it progressive was that it was not just a statement of requirements for recognition, as other schools at the time were implementing, but a mutual agreement of expectations for the operations of each group. In the fall of 2000 after the Greek LIFE forum, a revision process for the Relationship Statement was undertaken. It had become apparent that some aspects were outdated, some aspects were not able to be implemented, and there was a desire to make the document more of a “living” document. There were several stumbling blocks encountered during the revision process, but eventually the revision was adopted in January of 2006. This revision clarified and consolidated the expectations for each stakeholder and moved several policies and guidelines to refer to the student handbook and appendices.
During the period of revision, several major challenges were faced by the Greek community. These included:

- Ratcheting up of the sanctions for organizations caught serving alcohol to underage students
- Three turnovers of the Dean for Greek Life
- Reduced budgetary and political support for Greek Life in DOSO and increased focus on FYE
- Rensselaer County Underage Drinking Task Force in 2004
- Letter to Greek Alumni from VP Student Life Eddie Knowles and VP Institute Advancement in June of 2004 addressing concerns for Greek Life with six chapters under suspension

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**RPI GREEK LIFE DIRECTIONS – THE “INITIATIVES” OF APRIL 2006**

With the backdrop of the Greek LIFE Forum recommendations and the events that transpired since that meeting, the environment of perceptions, behaviors, and operations of all the stakeholders culminated in the development and presentation of the New Greek Directions by the Division of Student Life in the spring of 2006. On April 12, 2006, the RPI Division of Student Life Administrators presented their initiatives for Greek Life. The presentation consisted of foundational information charts, observations, and policy proclamations that were the result of nine months of independent work by the DOSO and Office of Greek Life (OGL now Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs) personal. The primary concerns as viewed by the Institute were:

“We are observing trends that signal a growing disconnect between Greek chapter values and principles and its actions through –

- A compromising of its values and integrity
- An increasing reliance on alcohol as its social base
- A decreasing academic performance in comparison to non-Greek and all campus performance
- A decreasing membership
- A compromising independent living management
- A decreasing cooperation between Greek chapters
- A holding on to a recruitment style out of touch with today’s Rensselaer student”

Three initiatives were announced that were believed to be needed to address the concerns and observations of the administration. Briefly, the stated policies were:

- “First, effective July 1, 2006, we will extend the Institute’s current campus alcohol policy to include Greek chapters.
- Second, we plan to engage the campus, alumni, and other interested parties in the creation and implementation of a new member recruitment process that better aligns with Rensselaer’s undergraduate plan, first-year experience, and student life initiatives. The new recruitment process will take effect in the fall of 2007.
- Third, we will assure a live-in house director for every chapter with its own residence, whether on or off campus, beginning in the fall of 2007”

The week of April 20, 2006, a hardcopy letter signed by VP for Student Life Eddie Knowles and Acting VP for Institute Advancement Terri Cerveny was sent to all Greek alumni that expressed the
concerns and promotion of the policy changes for Greek Life and left the impression that there had been collaboration on the development of the directives. There was a large backlash to the policies and the manner in which they were developed and proclaimed. The Student Senate issued a referendum which passed 1585-85 the week before finals reprimanding the Administration and calling for a delay in implementation until proper student review and input is obtained. On May 1-2, 2006, CampusSpeak consultant Rick Barnes (of the NIC) visited campus and met with the stakeholders in small focus groups to discuss the issues of the initiatives and Greek Life environment at RPI. In early June 2006, he wrote a summary report of his observations and recommendations which was intended for general distribution to the study groups (The Poly 5/3/2006), but it was never released nor summarized by DOSO to the alumni or undergraduates. On May 3, 2006, VP Eddie Knowles issued an electronic letter to the RPI Alumni website in which he apologized for the manner in which the policy development occurred and retracted the policies with an agreement for the formation and support of working groups to hold discussions with Greek alumni and undergraduates. This letter was co-signed by representatives of the RAA, AIGC, and DOSO.

In late April 2006, the AIGC facilitated a meeting with the undergraduate Greek chapter presidents and the IFC and Panhel Executive Councils to formulate a plan of action in order to review the RPI proposals and to develop a set of recommendations for the development of Greek Life. A team was formed for each of the proposals with the themes of Alcohol, Recruitment, and House Directors. A fourth team was formed to provide research and resources to the other teams and to help coordinate the efforts. From May through August 2006, teams meet frequently and investigated a series of options and through a process of weighing “pros and cons” of each proposal option, they each reached a draft recommendation for action on the RPI proposed policy. Every other week, the team leaders held a teleconference to provide updates and progress reports. In the fall of 2006, some program changes were made by the IFC and Panhel to address the more immediate concerns of RPI and the undergraduates. These included some changes to the formal rush schedule and rules, adjustments to the social policy, and holding a chapter advisor’s meeting at the beginning of the semester. The teams reported their draft proposals at the October 2006 AIGC meeting and posted them to a website for public review. Teleconferences continued to be held every other week through the winter, although progress stalled as IFC and Panhel executive officers reached the end of their tenure, academic classes came into full swing, RPI Student Life administrators were consumed with WRPI issues, several Greek judicial proceeding were held against fraternities, and alumni advisors lost momentum due to uncertainty of how to proceed to resolution to a path forward with consensus of the stakeholders.

Now, with the beginning of the year 2007, the alumni, undergraduate students, and administration stakeholders are at a point in time where a migration is needed from the talk of initiatives to the strategies and actions required to bring the RPI Greek system further towards the goal of a “Model of Excellence.” From the research and work done by the teams, we have found areas where things are not as bad as RPI thought, areas where things are as bad as RPI thought, and finally some areas that could provide enhanced approaches for programs and processes, not just policy statements, needed to maintain and improve the Greek system. These include developing synergies and relations with other departments and in conjunction with strategies of the Student Life Performance Plan and other school Greek life plans.

This report is intended to address the issues presented by RPI in the spring of 2006 and discovered in the time since then. It will also provide a summary of the team findings and proposals for each initiative. Finally, the report will provide a higher level holistic view of and set of recommendations for the health and promotion of Greek Life at RPI. Most of the recommendations are a renewal of the items proposed and enacted with the Greek LIFE forum and contained in the Relationship Statement. It is time to rebuild relations and work together for positive programming and continued progress for the RPI Greek community.
ACADEMICS AND GPA'S

RPI presented curves with GPA trends as justification for the statement that there was “A decreasing academic performance in comparison to non-Greek and all campus performance.” The plots used are shown in Figures 1 and 2. Observations from these curves would at first say that, yes, the Greek grades are trending downward. But upon further review of the data, it also appears that all campus academics are on a downward trend. Secondly, the sororities were actually on an upward trend with their academics relative to the non-Greek women and campus wide. And finally for the fraternities, it initially appears there had been a narrowing of the difference and then lately a slight widening. With the scales of the Y-axis being only 0.3 GPA points wide, any differences would be exaggerated and this style of data presentation is something RPI students are encouraged to avoid. More data was required to better understand the GPA trends and implications of differences between Greek and Non-Greek (Independents) GPAs.

Upon further review of the historical DOSO GPA records kept since 1992 and with a scale that reflects the standard deviation of the data, the trends indicate a grade inflation component to RPI academics, which slowed beginning in 2003. The historical record for the Institute is shown in Figure 3. In June 2001, the School of Engineering issued a report on the grade distribution within the school in which it stated “the distributions reflect fairly obvious and severe grade inflation or “creep” for all departments except CHME and EPOW.” A few semesters later, The Poly reported on February 26, 2003 that the Provost was launching an examination of grade patterns to determine whether grade inflation was significant at RPI. A professor in the Physics Department was quoted as not believing it to be a major problem, “Grade inflation has occurred elsewhere, but I don’t think that it’s a particular problem at RPI.” It is curious how a report 1.5 years earlier could have been missed by both the Provost and The Poly or that a simple review the historical data would have shown the obvious 0.15 GPA increase over a decade of time. It is also curious how in the fall of 2003, the campus saw a step change downward in the grades and the move towards the plus/minus grade modifier program.

Figure 1 Fraternity Academic Performance Presented by RPI
Sorority Academic Performance

Figure 2 Sorority Academic Performance Presented by RPI

RPI GPA History

Figure 3 Historical DOSO Reported Campus GPA Data
It appears from Figure 3 that the women had a slightly higher grade inflation rate than the men in the decade of the 1990’s. The figure also shows the strong trend in improved academics of the sororities since 1999 - up to the point where they surpassed the Non-Greek women in the spring of 2006. As shown in Figure 4, the Greek men had been narrowing until the fall of 2003, whereupon they settled back to the historical average of ~0.12 difference.

Two independent surveys were performed from which data could be retrieved and other conclusions drawn about Greek and grades. The Middle States accreditation report contained data on the admissions acceptance rate for freshman for a period of five years. When this data is considered with the campus and Greek GPA data during the same timeframe, there is a slight correlation to the data implying that the higher the acceptance rate, the lower the campus GPA. This is shown in Figure 5.

In the summer and fall of 2006, the Office of Institutional Research performed an analysis of the matriculation of two classes from their admission to graduation. This included both the retention rates and the GPAs broken down by men/women and Greek/Non-Greek. This study showed that the 0.12 difference in grades was statistically significant (a confidence level primarily due to the large sample size). It also showed that the standard deviation was three times larger than the difference in the grades. Figure 6 provides the plot of the statistical distribution of men’s grades from the fall 2006 brief. The green band indicates the width of the difference in the GPA’s. For the same cohort year, the women showed a similar response, although the standard deviations of the distributions were close to 0.1 GPA units smaller.

*Figure 4 Historical Trends in Fraternity GPA and difference to All Men’s GPA*
As has been demonstrated by the 14 years of data, the trend of the difference in grades has been fairly constant for the men and is within the GPA delta if each member had done one grade letter better in one of their classes. Figure 7 shows how the Fraternity GPA could have looked if this scenario had been met. The sororities actually have improved their GPAs to the point that they are now above the All Women’s Average, therefore, a goal to further reduce the difference in the Men’s GPAs should not be abandoned.

As can be seen in the curves for the GPA in Figure 3, there is a saw tooth nature of the GPA with lower semester grades in the fall and higher grades in the spring. As will be proposed in the next section, a reason for this might be given if one correlates the GPA data with retention data. Those with lower grades may be more likely to leave RPI than those with higher grades. Coupling this with a significantly higher retention rate for Greeks, the likelihood is then higher that Greek members with lower grades will stay at school more than Non-Greeks. This would cause a bias of the Greek GPA curves to be naturally lower, given the current ~28% Greek population of the men.

There is a need, however, for ongoing data collection with new parameters to truly get at the heart of the issue and to confirm or disprove the assertion from the above data. Specifically, each class year needs to be culled out each semester. Also the impact of the Greek men having a GPA that is 0.12 lower than the Non-Greeks on Career Development Center job interviews, job placement, and salaries of graduating seniors needs to be investigated to see if that is really a penalty to the student’s career. Given the strategies of the undergraduate plan to have more student participation in the campus community and be more exposed to living and learning opportunities and that Greeks tend to be involved on campus and in their chapters, the negative implications for such a difference in GPA seem to be minimal.
Report on Greek Life at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute – Migrating from Initiatives to Strategies and Actions

GPA Distribution - 1999 Freshman Cohort

![Density Function of GPA](image)

**Figure 6 Distribution of Grades for Men in the 1999 Freshman Cohort**

Grade Potential if Fraternities did One Class, One Letter Better

![Grade Potential Trend](image)

**Figure 7 Grade Potential Trend if Fraternities Performed “One Letter Better in One Class”**
RETENTION

RPI presented the plot in Figure 8 as justification for the statement that there was “A decreasing membership and a holding on to a recruitment style out of touch with today’s Rensselaer student.” The trends show that Greek membership as a percentage of the student population has been decreasing. For the men this is a real trend and a concern. For the women, the percentages are fairly stable. Lumping the Sororities and Fraternities into the same bin and considering only percentages can be misleading since the two groups have unique membership attributes.

Figure 8 Greek Chapter Enrollment Presented by RPI

Figure 9 shows the historical data reported from DOSO for the fraternities and sororities, looking at only the values for the spring of each year since 1992. There had been a peak in percent male Greek membership in 1998, but prior to and after this, the percent male being Greek was around 32%. The women saw a decline in percentage to a minimum in 1998 and then have recovered as a percentage with the last three years showing an increase. The men also have shown a slight improvement in the last three years.
Figure 9 Historical DOSO Data for Percent Population that is Greek

Figure 10 shows the raw Greek membership numbers since 1992 as reported by DOSO. The Y-axis scales are such that the maximums are scaled by the relative size of the fraternity and sorority populations. The fall numbers will naturally be lower, as will be shown, due to the behavior of the overall student retention trends. The plot shows that the women have actually had a steady increase in their membership numbers since 1998. The Panhel had taken on recruitment as a major task item. Additionally, there have been two sororities start up in this timeframe. The reason the percentage Greek women is lower than the high value back in the mid-1990’s is that the number of women at RPI had been increasing and the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority had disbanded by the fall of 1998. Figure 11 shows the trend of the women population over the time period since 1992. The trends of raw numbers in Figure 10 clearly show how using only percentages of population to draw conclusions can be misleading.

The story for the men is a little less clear. While the Panhel women looked at their numbers and worked to coordinate their recruitment programs, the IFC men have not been as diligent. As RPI sees membership dwindling, they are correct for the fraternities. Some reasons for this are that the number of men attending RPI has seen a slight downward trend the last five years, but as Figure 12 shows, the Greek male population has dropped slightly faster. Some portion of the decrease is due to the manner in which the membership numbers get reported by DOSO and the registrar. If a chapter is on suspension, they are not counted in as Greek since they are technically not recognized by the school as such. Therefore, accounting-wise they are put into the Non-Greek bin. The effect of this for some of the semesters was as high as 100 brothers, or ~3% of the population, when compared to the campus male population. This same number represents, however, 9% when compared to the fraternity population value. With the Student Handbook “Zero Tolerance” policy in place, the ability for chapters to stay in the membership ranks, but on probation socially and operationally, is not possible. One side effect of the implementation of this policy has been to reduce the ranks of fraternity membership, because at any given time in the last 4 years there have been 1 to 3 chapters on suspension. The fraternities need to work on the recruitment practices, but also on their social and risk management practices.
Figure 10 Greek Chapter Enrollment of Greeks by Raw Numbers

Figure 11 Historical DOSO Reported Data on RPI’s Women Population
The reduction in numbers cannot be only blamed on the “Zero Tolerance” policy and bad actor fraternity chapters. Even if those fraternity chapters were still counted in the ranks, the overall IFC numbers would still be down. There is, therefore, a general need to improve the rush and recruitment strategies for the male Greeks, while continuing to strengthen the practices for the women. These will be discussed in the section dedicated to the Recruitment initiative. The strategies can be incremental improvements without dramatically changing the time period for the formal rush.

Some reasons to not defer rush are born out by the population curves and the retention numbers provided by the Office of Institute Research. In both Figure 11 and 12 there is a saw tooth to the curve where the fall population is much higher than the spring population. Some of the drop can be attributed to December graduations, but not all since the retention numbers reported by RPI would indicate that approximately 10% of the freshman class will leave and another 3% of the upperclassmen will leave. This alone is approximately 200 students. What is interesting to note is that the Greek raw numbers do not cycle as much, especially for the freshman class – highlighting again the importance of the high Greek retention rate. Figure 13 shows the retention rates for the Greeks and Non-Greeks from the Freshman 1999 Cohort as reported by the Office of Institutional Research. For the freshman, more than 10% of the Non-Greeks do not return for the next year, while only 3% of the Greeks do not return. Each year after that, approximately 4% of the Non-Greeks leave and 3% of the Greeks leave. In the end, more than 91% of the Greek graduate from RPI, while only 79% of the Non-Greeks graduate.

The goals of FYE and the undergraduate plan are to enhance student life so that retention numbers and student satisfaction will be higher overall. Because the Greeks already have a high retention rate, programs aimed to improve retention numbers in others ways may have the undesired consequence of increasing the numbers of students not desiring to participate in Greek Life. Greek Life is already at a disadvantage with first year students according to the incoming freshman surveys that show less than 20%
think they will join a fraternity or sorority. Since the Greeks and the Institute both seek the same goal of increased student numbers, the quickest way to increase retention and Greek numbers would be to improve Greek recruitment during the fall of freshman year. This involves more than a rush period date change. It involves wholesale improvements in recruitment practices of undergraduates, the alumni, and the Institute that will coordinate the marketing of, promotion of, and access to Greek Life by the prospective members.

Retention Rates for RPI Students (Freshmen 1999 Cohort)

![Retention Rates for RPI Students (Freshmen 1999 Cohort)](image)

Figure 13 Retention Rates for RPI Students (Freshmen 1999 Cohort)

ALCOHOL

In the spring of 2006, RPI perceived “an increasing reliance on alcohol as its social base.” In addition to the number of chapter suspensions for alcohol violations, RPI used curves and data from the 2005 graduating senior survey to provide justification for the alcohol free housing directive. The figures presented in April 2006 presentation did not include any annual trending data, although in the fall of 2005, the Office of Institutional Research performed an analysis of the relationship of being Greek to drinking, smoking, and “partying.” A report was generated for DOSO in November of 2005 that was released to the Resource team in April 2006 after it was requested by the Resource team. Figure 14 shows the data for “partying,” (which was left for the respondents to define) that indicates a disparity in the use of alcohol between Greeks and Non-Greeks. Much like most other campuses nationwide, the prevalence is for Greeks to consume alcohol and to “party” more frequently. The question then is, what have the trends been for the senior respondents and how does that compare with the rest of the nation? This needs to be answered before dramatic changes to the alcohol policy for the off campus independent living situations are implemented.
Senior Survey 2005
Partying – Both Men & Women

[Source: 2005 Rensselaer/UCLA Senior Survey, Crosstabulation analysis based on “Joined a social fraternity or sorority” compared to “hours per week spent partying”; N = 756, N Greek = 231, N Non – Greek = 525]

Greek Students – As hours spent partying increases, the percentage of Greek students also increases
Non-Greek Students – As hours spent partying increases, the percentage of Non-Greek students declines

The CORE Institute Survey, or similar ones from other organizations, has been suggested in the past to RPI as a means to more scientifically gage the prevalence of alcohol and other drug use and problems associated with the use. Data from the Higher Education Center, the Center for Social Norms, and the CORE Institute indicate the national rates for both Non-Greek and Greek are higher than the RPI student body. It is also relevant that the surveys oftentimes also correlate grade performance to number of drinks per week. If the same correlation were used at RPI, it would predict the Greek GPA’s to be much lower than a 0.14 difference to the average. The negative impacts for the RPI campus appear to be associated more with student health and welfare, chapter house conditions, and risk management than with grades. An argument can easily be made from this data, however, that a lot of money could be saved and that it would perhaps be easier to do “one letter better in one class” if less time was spent “partying.”

The Office Institutional Research analysis performed in November of 2005 which contained 5 years worth of senior survey data broken out by men and women from 2001 to 2005. Figure 15 provides the set of data for each of the years for the Greeks and non-Greeks in order to view the trends from which the conclusions were apparently reached. Some observations can be drawn about some of the trends, but they should be taken in the context of the manner of the survey being used to generate the data (i.e. graduating seniors). Observations include:

- The rates of Greek women drinking beer or liquor/wine show a decrease in the “occasional” category and shifting towards the “frequently” category. The non-Greek trends were flat over the same time period.
- The rates of Greek men drinking beer or liquor/wine show a decrease in the “frequently” category and shifting towards the “occasional” category. The non-Greek trends were fairly flat over the same time period.
• If one combines the rates of the men and women, the Greek trends actually show a very slight decrease in the categories of “occasional” and “frequently.” So for a trending basis, it would appear that an “increasing reliance on alcohol as its social base” is not quite true.
• The time period bins for “partying” show a slight shift from “1-5 hours” to “>6 hours” for both the Greeks and the Non-Greeks. The Non-Greeks also have a larger shift in the percentage that say they do not party at all.
• Women prefer liquor/wine over beer. Greek men prefer beer over liquor, while the non-Greek men slightly prefer liquor.

![All Greek and Non-Greek Responses to Hours Partying](image)

**Figure 15 Trends in the Greek and Non-Greek Responses to Hours Spent “Partying”**

**RECRUITMENT, COOPERATION, HOUSING**

In the spring of 2006, RPI also perceived that the Greek system had:

“A holding on to a recruitment style out of touch with today’s Rensselaer student”

“A decreasing cooperation between Greek chapters”

“A compromising independent living management”

No charts were used to explain these observations, so it is hard to determine the exact nature of the concern. For the recruitment item, concerns focused on “Dorm Storming”, availability of alcohol during rush, and limited fundamental information about the rush process and the real aspects of the chapters’ operations. Some steps were taken in the fall of 2006 to address and mitigate these with varied amounts of success. There may be a concern over the timing for when rush should occur and the length of the pledge period. Concerns were also expressed related to issues such as competition with FYE goals, assimilation period to the campus, academic impact to the freshmen due to rush and pledging periods, and retention of students. The research performed by the Institutional Research Office could suggest a relation to lower grade averages and the higher Greek retention rate, if one considers that students with
lower grades would usually leave the school given no affinity to a Greek chapter. It also, therefore, suggests that there may be a negative impact to student retention if the formal rush period was to be deferred to the spring. There is a need to determine the real issues that were driving this statement to be made by the Institute.

For the concern about cooperation between chapters, as it pertains to social or judicial matters, there are likely trends in both directions depending on the particular chapters. One anecdotal trend is that chapters trying to do the right thing are getting tired of defending the Greek system while those chapters who disregard risk management and social responsibility are often allowed to continue jeopardize the system. With the suspensions of late, this should help with leveling the playing field, but one needs programming and sanctions that can provide learning from mistakes and best practices in addition to holding chapters accountable for their actions. When it comes to community, there are many examples of chapters helping each other for projects and fund raising and for the IFC/Panhel working together on massive projects such as the Relay for Life held in the spring of 2006.

For the concern about a compromised independent living, the high profile judicial cases may be biasing the view of the Institute on how the chapters operate in conjunction with their chapter advisors and house corporations. There is a wide disparity in the relations that chapters and the Institute have with the alumni advisors and corporations. Some standardization can be encouraged if the expectations of the Relationship Statement are promoted and followed. If this concern was also meant to bring in consideration of the facility operations, then a better understanding of the finances, occupancy goals, and long term capital improvement plans is needed. A view of the occupancy rates of the Greek houses is given in Figure 16, with data provided by DOSO for the fall of 2006. Even if the numbers are somewhat off, it does indicate that few of the chapters are at greater than 85% occupancy. Some of this is due to low chapter membership and some is due to the current needs of students for housing situations that could alter the real value for the “available beds” in the denominator.

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**Figure 16 Fall 2006 Occupancy Rate of Chapter Houses as Reported by DOSO**
ALCOHOL TEAM EFFORTS

ORIGINAL RPI DIRECTION: ALCOHOL

Alcohol – Expand Rensselaer on-campus alcohol policy to include all Greek life Chapters; Effective July 1, 2006

- No consumption or storage of alcohol in any common areas on property occupied, owned or leased by a Rensselaer fraternity or sorority
- Members who are 21 or over may possess, store and consume alcohol only in the privacy of their individual rooms
- Social events are to be alcohol free unless it takes place in an approved 3rd party location
- Policy applies at all times, under all circumstances, in all venues

ALCOHOL INITIATIVES COUNTERPROPOSAL ABSTRACT

A team of undergraduates, alumni, and school administration officials meet over the late spring and summer of 2006. They discussed various aspects of the use of alcohol in the social events of the Greeks. The team felt it was important to maintain recognition of the independent living group status of the primarily privately owned chapter houses. They also recognized that the misuse of alcohol by its members and availability to underage student was a problem for the survivability of the Greek system. A proposal was sought that would be felt to be more workable than a blanket directive that would be hard to enforce and that would include peer education and risk reduction measures to prevent the need to invoke the Student Handbook “Zero Tolerance” policy. The following proposal was approved by the Interfraternity and Panhellenic Councils on August 27, 2006, informally presented to Dr. Shirley Ann Jackson and her administration on September 11, 2006, and posted to the rpi.greekissues.com website along with the evaluation of several proposals. It was meant to be the first step in collaborative work on alcohol by the Institute, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 13th, 2006, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s administration presented a plan to Greek life termed ‘New Initiatives’. This plan called for sweeping changes in the Greek system at RPI including, but not limited to, alcohol, chapter management and recruitment. This document serves as a formal counterproposal from the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council and the Alumni-Inter-Greek Council. The proposed counterproposal includes several key aspects overlooked by the original plan which include, but are not limited to, the social nature of the campus at large, the educational aspect of socializing, and the lack of education provided to students.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Currently, there are several major issues at hand which plague the Greek system.

The following points are a brief overview of these issues:

1. There is a lack of a standard risk management protocol for Greek Life.
2. There is a lack of support from the Dean of Students Office and the Interfraternity Council to chapters in regards to alcohol education and the prevention of alcohol abuse.

3. Incidences of chapters facing judicial sanctioning have increased substantially.

4. Independent students lack basic knowledge about alcohol, the dangers of alcohol abuse and the repercussions associated with underage drinking.

5. A majority of Greek-related Grounds for Disciplinary Actions which have occurred involve independent students and alcohol abuse.

6. The social nature of the campus does not allow for the removal of alcohol from the social scene.

PROPOSAL DESCRIPTION

Henceforth, at all fraternity sanctioned social events held at a chapter's residence, at which alcohol may be present, Rensselaer students present must be 'Greek-Trained' and must present a proof of participation in educational programs certificate which will be given to them upon completion of training to signify their compliance with the Institute and the IFC/Panhel social policy. Events will be /strictly/ monitored to assure full compliance. Such events will be BYOB (Bring Your Own Beverage) only and will follow current IFC social policy. BYOB events will be based on the following N.I.C. standards:

1. No one under 21 may bring to, or consume alcohol at a fraternity social event.

2. Alcohol may only be brought if it follows the guidelines of up to six (6) 12 oz. cans of beer OR up to four (4) wine coolers.

3. When bringing alcohol, a guest will receive a beverage card with his/her name, the type and quantity of alcohol and his/her birthday recorded on the card. This card is to be presented at the bar before any alcohol can be received.

4. If alcohol is check into a function, a wristband will be issued and hand stamps will be marked on appropriate individuals.

5. Any alcohol left at the conclusion of the function will not be given back until the following day.

In addition to this, the seminars required will include, but are not limited to the following:

1. T.I.P.S
2. Sexual Assault Prevention
3. Advanced Risk Management techniques
4. Non-Alcoholic social events
5. A special presentation by IFC/Panhel leadership on relevant information for social events, chapter risk management plans, chapter leadership information and general information about chapter operations and management

CONCLUSION

It is the goal of this proposal to provide a safe social environment for students at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, while lowering judicial sanctions against Greek chapters and decreasing the gap between Independent students and Greek students. This proposal also aims to eventually create a college
social life program which may be incorporated within the First Year Experience and may be disseminated amongst all first year students as part of their initial college experience.

FUTURE WORK

There has been some concern over the BYOB and educational aspects of this program. Further clarification is needed on how the BYOB events can be held and how to address the non-registered and informal gatherings that occur with alcohol present. Policies from Lehigh University, MIT, and WPI can provide good guidance on how alcohol might be effectively managed at social events and easily adopted to the RPI campus. The prevention programs that were discovered and revisited as part of the research into currently available programs outside the walls of RPI need to be evaluated and action taken to adopt one to see where that can lead. Using the resources and experiences of other schools and organizations can provide a quicker move to success without having to reinvent the wheel. This is especially important with the budgetary issues facing the Division of Student Life in the Student Health and OFSA departments. Work on the self-policing enforcement challenges (or like a Cornell program promotes, “Controlling the Idiots in your Chapter”) is needed by the IFC and Panhel among its member chapters and each chapter with their own members.

This proposal has essentially been sitting idle since September of 2006 due to a variety of circumstances. The opportunity to sit and discuss and work out the implementation of this or consensus approach has not become available. It is hoped that with the beginning of the spring 2007 semester and a new IFC and Panhel executive council, that progress can be made. There are many reasons to remain confident that a workable, enforceable, and positive program can be developed by May 2007. But facilitation and action are needed. Whatever policy that is enacted will need support and resolve to be effectively implemented and to keep the enforcement penalties from reaching the higher levels of judicial treatment. It will need more than words from the stakeholders. It will also need a commitment of attitude and resources.

RECRUITMENT TEAM EFFORTS

ORIGINAL RPI DIRECTION: NEW MEMBER RECRUITMENT AND EDUCATION

New Member Recruitment and Education (transforming recruitment from Rush to year-long recruitment)

- Delay new member recruitment to begin no earlier than the sixth week of classes in the Fall semester
- Focus recruitment to showcase Greek life as a community and highlight features of individual chapters
- Recruitment period to end one week prior to the last day of classes
- Extend an invitation to join (bid) to prospective members no later than the last day of classes
- Pledge/new member education period begins the Spring semester and end before Spring Break (about the 8th week)
- New member recruitment policy and process, effective July 1, 2007
RECRUITMENT INITIATIVES PROPOSAL ABSTRACT – DRAFT COPY

A small team of undergraduates and alumni meet over the summer of 2006. They discussed various aspects of the use recruitment/rush process for the Greeks. The team felt it was important to separate the unique issues and need of the sororities from the fraternities and to separate the membership education from the rush issues as they are large enough issues to need their own attention. Consideration in the deliberations was given to when the academic calendar could influence both the schedules for rush period and also for beginning and ending the various pledging/new member education programs. Immediate concerns such as dorm storming and alcohol were items that the IFC and Panhel could address immediately without having to wait for a new policy proposal to be adopted. Several new ideas were prototyped in the fall of 2006, such as reduced dorm storming, use of tables in the Union and Commons for general Greek rush information, interfacing with the Dorm RA to address issues that might come up, and using roving chapter president patrols and increased fines to help on the front of use of alcohol during rush. The following proposal was presented to the AIGC meeting on October 14, 2006 and posted to the rpi.greekissues.com website along with the evaluation of several proposals. It too was meant to be a first step in the dialogue for ongoing work on recruitment programming by the Institute, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 12th, 2006, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s Dean of Student’s office, with support of the administration, presented a plan to Greek alumni termed ‘New Initiatives.’ This plan called for sweeping changes in the Greek system at RPI including, but not limited to, alcohol, chapter management, and recruitment. This document serves as a formal proposal from the Alumni Inter-Greek Council (AIGC), the Interfraternity Council, and the Panhellenic Council, with input and support from RPI alumni worldwide. The high-level proposal focuses on our analysis of the situation and our proposed response, primarily constituted by addressing problems and retargeting the Greek recruitment effort.

CURRENT SITUATION

Greek recruitment at RPI has suffered from several issues lately. The following issues have been suggested for evaluation and possible action by RPI. These issues can affect recruitment numbers, or have other undesirable side effects, such as negative community relations.

1. Greek recruitment numbers have been lower than in past years.
2. Lack of constraints on rush and new member education could be affecting academic performance.
3. Certain members of the Greek community practice unethical methods of recruitment, such as employing alcohol.
4. The Greek recruitment process is ‘out of touch’ with today’s Rensselaer student.
5. Decreasing cooperation between Greek chapters.

As can be shown from our team’s research, some of these observations may have been overstated, but they are areas for concern and action for the administration, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders in RPI Greek Life.
ANALYSIS

Since April, the Recruitment Initiative Team has investigated the validity of the trend observations and also aspects of various approaches to rush periods implemented at other campuses.

Our analysis resulted in a number of revelations. In response to the elements raised for evaluation, we found the following:

- The decreasing membership trends can be traced in part to the impact of the high-profile suspensions in recent years, as well as some impact due to impact of FYE programming. Gross changes can also be attributed to smaller class sizes.
- No evidence has been found that there is a trend of increasing disparity between Greek and non-Greek GPAs. The current disparity of ~0.1 is historical, and well within the ~0.4 standard deviation of the GPA distribution.
- Complaints regarding unethical recruitment practices, poor community relations, and rules violations continue to be an issue. Qualitative reports suggest that if this is not curtailed, other houses may feel pressured to follow suit.
- While year-long recruitment is rarely practiced, the current recruitment model at RPI is not out-of-line with NIC standards. The analysis revealed that education in recruitment and marketing models is lacking.
- The areas where the RPI recruitment process was found most lacking were marketing and research. We found this to be an area that could use drastic improvement.

Our final analysis found that retention was significantly improved for students involved in Greek life. 6-year Greek graduation rates were 12% higher than non-Greeks, at 91%, and freshman year attrition was Greek attrition during freshman was only 3%, compared to 11% for non-Greeks. This last fact, more than anything, highlights the positive contribution that Greek life can have early in the careers of the RPI student and the need to keep a fall rush period for freshmen.

PROPOSAL

Our proposal is to keep a similar recruitment period, open to all students, and in conjunction with that formulate a new, adaptive Recruitment Program with the involvement of IFC/Panhel Recruitment, the AIGC, DOSO/OFSA, and the Office of the First Year Experience. This plan involves focusing marketing efforts, research, assistance / resources, and enforcement, while leaving the overall time period of recruitment relatively unchanged.

The key points to this proposal are:

- Allow all students to rush or be part of recruitment at all times, encourage houses to adopt year-long recruitment strategies in line with NIC positions
- Maintain a formal rush period in the fall after a general IFC/Panhel rush
- Tailor plans and programs to students based on research on student demographics
  o Eventually create a fully integrated cycle of data gathering, statistical analysis, and marketing
- Provide leadership and resources to houses in terms of marketing techniques & avenues, and training
Integrate participation with other departments and events
  - FYE, NRB, SO, RPI Mobile Computing, RPI’s website – presentations and integration

Effectively police rush/recruitment events and processes so that violations do not occur

Focus on new member/pledge education as a separate initiative

**CONCLUSION**

This proposal seeks to address the recruitment imbalances at RPI. It appears that many elements of RPI’s Greek system are not effective in attracting, or even targeting, the modern RPI student. Historically, as part of pre-arrival surveys, 17% of the incoming freshman stated they were interested in going Greek, while ~30% end up joining a fraternity or sorority chapter. By working through this preconception with a combination of research, marketing, and guidance, as well as integration into many areas of the administration, we can create a self-sustaining recruitment culture that is both less invasive and more effective, increasing the health and morale of the Greek system at RPI as a whole.

**FUTURE WORK**

This initiative needs further work to refine the action items. Ideally a committee of the stakeholders can prioritize the items for immediate implementation and that can have the biggest impact for the fall 2007 rush period. Other strategies that may take more political discussions to get implemented can be worked on throughout the semester and next year. Some effort should be made to address aspects of academics and retention of first-year students. Building upon probable successes with the first wave of actions, confidence may be gained that there is a true collaborative and non-competitive spirit of the Greeks and OFYE and DOSO to help fulfill aspects of the Student Life performance plan. At that point even greater successes may lead to increase the numbers of Greek students, higher retention of students, and an enlivened student body filled with leaders and independent living and learning environments.

A short list of potential items to consider first would be:

- Compile the data from the chapter evaluations and IFC/Panhel reports to create summary of Greek Involvement on campus and community (see Bowling Green and Cornell for example)
- If can’t get summer rush address list, work to get a brochure into summer freshman mailer
- Work on websites of OFSA, FYE, IFC, Panhel, and AIGC to have improved access, information and styling (see Lehigh, WPI, Bowling Green, and Cornell for example)
- Work on presentation for FYE/NRB to head off bad stereotyped expectations and explain formal rush process (see Lehigh’s for example)
- Add a paragraph about Greek Life to the Student Orientation Manual (see Cornell’s for example)
- Set goal of recruiting 1-2 more pledges than last year
- Implement academic programs such as tutors, learning assistants, early warning on students at risk to the pledge educators and chapter advisors, or academic challenge for the chapters
HOUSE DIRECTOR TEAM EFFORTS

ORIGINAL RPI DIRECTION: CHAPTER MANAGEMENT HOUSE DIRECTOR

Chapter Management / House Director:

- House Director is to advise, support, and assist with educational programming and management of chapter facility
- Assure continuity as leadership changes from year to year
- Model after Residence Life process (selection and training)
- Enable actives to retain autonomy and independence with appropriate intervention as necessary from the House Director
- Dual Reporting – House Corporation and Greek Dean

HOUSE DIRECTOR INITIATIVES PROPOSAL ABSTRACT - DRAFT

A team of undergraduates, alumni, and school administration officials meet over the late spring and summer of 2006. They discussed various aspects of the house director initiative and the health of the independent living situation. Much of the discussions revolved around the costs associated, the logistics of managing the hiring and job performance of the individual and the living arrangements. The discussion also focused on ways to more effectively use the AIGC, the Relationship Statement, and the chapter’s alumni to avoid the need for a non-associated person in the role that can be better fulfilled by dedicated alumni. The following was presented to the AIGC meeting on October 14, 2006 and posted to the rpi.greekissues.com website along with the evaluation of several proposals. It was meant to be the first step in collaborative work on alcohol by the Institute, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On April 12th, 2006, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s Dean of Student’s Office, with support of the administration, presented a plan to Greek alumni termed ‘New Initiatives.’ This plan called for sweeping changes in the Greek system at RPI including, but not limited to, alcohol, chapter management, and recruitment. This document serves as a formal proposal from the Alumni Inter-Greek Council (AIGC), the Interfraternity Council, and the Panhellenic Council, with input and support from other RPI alumni. The high-level Proposal focuses on our analysis of the situation and our proposed response, primarily constituted by highlighting consequences of the spring RPI proposal, addressing the current weaknesses, and invigorating the Chapter Advisor and House Corporation involvement.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Greek housing and chapter management at RPI has suffered from several issues lately. The following issues have been suggested for evaluation and possible action by RPI. These issues can affect the living and learning environment of the chapters, or cause an undesirable disconnect between chapter behavior and their organization core values:

1. A compromising of values and integrity
2. An increasing reliance on alcohol as its social base
3. A compromising independent living management
4. A decreasing cooperation between Greek chapters

As can be shown from our team’s research, some of these observations by DOSO may have been overstated or misunderstood, but they are visible areas for concern and action by the administration, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders in RPI Greek Life.

ANALYSIS

Since April 2006, the House Director Initiative Team has investigated the evolution of the need to propose a live-in house director for all chapters. A review of the current live-in advisor program imposed as a sanction has been evaluated. The consequences to the chapter finances, alumni relations, and independent living environment far outweigh the potential benefits of the RPI proposal. The current program has been shown to not be as successful nor as easy to logistically support as desired. The wide diversity of housing situations and relations with house corporations and chapter advisors make a universal plan nearly impossible to implement. As a result of a review of practices of leading and deficient chapters and a rededication to the goals and strategies of the Greek LIFE forum of 2000, Relationship Statement of 2006, and the Undergraduate Plan of 2006, the team’s proposal developed into a tiered approach to chapter advising and improved support, communications, and training of the chapter advisors and house corporations

Unforeseen consequences of the proposal from DOSO in April 2006 make it not viable:

- Equity will be difficult when implementing into a housing market that is a mix of private homes, independent apartments, and campus facilities.
- Implementing a non-related house director who reports to both the Institute and the school runs counter to the goals of independent living groups
- Incremental costs to smaller chapters are high
- Ignores the current chapter advisors and house corporations as stakeholders and resources which runs counter to the undergraduate plan strategies
- Questionable success of the current judicial mandated live-in advisor program
- An inadequate pool of candidates for >30 chapters and infeasible to have long term continuity if are graduate students with 1-2 years of possible service

PROPOSAL

Our proposal is to implement strategies to strengthen current relations and interactions of the chapter advisors and house corporations with their undergraduate chapters, improve the communications and relations of RPI with the local alumni entities and the chapter’s national organizations – without a mandate for a non-related live-in housing director. It involves promotion of a positive change in attitudes and behaviors of the students, alumni, and administration stakeholders through training and resource assistance. The proposal advocates using the advising model that can work best for the chapters, their national organizations, and when help or sanction is needed.

The premise of the independent living model that is advocated by the Relationship Statement and Undergraduate Plan includes:

- Minimal supervision
• Self governance
• Positive community relations
• Fiscal accountability and physical facility management
• Personal confidence and skills development

The Proposal includes the following aspects for this model to be actualized:
• Alumni communication must be sustained and developed
• Scholastic achievement may necessitate the involvement of advisors
• Social outlets need to be positive and more in line with organization’s policies
• Leadership transition needs to be smooth from semester to semester
• Baseline standards of operation and behavior need to be evident and promoted
• Assistance for educational programming and management of the facility

Key points to strengthen the current chapter advisor and house corporation programs are:
• Improve communications and networking of the Institute and Undergraduates with their alumni bodies (advisors, house corporations, and nationals)
• Provide training that meets the needs and schedules of the alumni advisors
• Align the organization’s founding principles and values with measurement of the chapter’s performance
• Build off the strong history and traditions of Greek Life at RPI and the resources of the alumni individually and with the participation of the AIGC
• Align Greek Life with the Undergraduate Plan so the Institute and chapters benefit

CONCLUSION

This proposal seeks to address the perceived independent living issues with Greek student housing without the need to implement a non-associated live-in housing director. The purported justification and possible positive opportunities are better served by making use of and enhancing the roles of the current advisor, House Corporation, and DOSO/OFSA personnel. Therefore is it recommended that the aspects of this consensus proposal be implemented

FUTURE WORK

This proposal has been stagnant since early fall 2006. From informal discussions with the Institute, a realization has been made that the logistics involved make the original Institute proposal non-viable. As suggested in the team’s proposal, chapters can implement a live-in director if they individually chose to do so or are required to as part of a judicial sanction. In the case of a judicial sanction need clarification of the job duties, measurement of the effectiveness of the advisor, and the potential for sun-setting the requirement if the alumni house corporation board and/or chapter advisors have created a viable relationship with the undergraduate chapter and Institute OFSA that can fulfill the roles for maintaining positive tradition of chapter operations and unique independent living opportunities. The AIGC could work with the house corporations of chapters to help the Greek community as a whole to better understand the current housing situation with regard to costs, long-term facility planning, safety,
sanitation, independent living, and self governance. A new commitment by all stakeholders to the program ideas outlined in the Greek Housing Appendix of the Relationship Statement may also help to improve current and future housing needs.

**RESOURCE TEAM**

In April 2006, the Initiatives Resource Team was formed to help provide data and information to the other initiatives teams. Requests for the research data used by RPI the leading up to the initiatives and new data was requested. Rick Barnes, from CampusSpeak, was invited by DOSO to visit the campus in May 2006 to discuss alcohol programming and to perform small focus group meetings to discuss issues and concerns with the initiatives. A summary report was provided to DOSO with the intention of Rick Barnes and Eddie Knowles that it be release to the general Greek community. Despite several requests for this report - or even a version summarized by DOSO - a copy was never released. Alumni who attended the breakout sessions summarized their observations and provided them to the initiative teams to help frame their discussions and highlight the key concerns and issues. There were many points about the operations and relations of the undergraduates, alumni, and administration and many suggestions for dispelling misperceptions and for improving programs. These were incorporated into the recommendations for the counter proposals and future work items.

The Resource team gathered information from other schools and national fraternity and sorority organizations, requested information from RPI to further investigate the concerns scientifically, created “Google-groups” to share discussions and information, and hosted bi-weekly teleconferences to coordinate the initiative team leaders efforts. Information was shared among the geographically diverse participants by the posting to the “Google-groups”, teleconferencing, and/or loading of files to the rpi.greekissues.com file sharing website. CD-ROM copies of large sets of documents were sent to DOSO and the IFC to more readily give those groups the compilation of the research information.

**FUTURE WORK**

With the reformulation and rededication to the development and implementation process in January of 2007, the Resource team will need to serve as a mentor to avoid rework of the last 9 months and to help with the coordination of the efforts. The new stakeholder teams should be expected to review the past work and make requests to gather new information as they see fit. The resource team could take on the role of publishing the final strategic plan and policies and marketing of the actions down to the rank and file of the chapter membership and Institute staff.

**SYNERGIES WITH THE STUDENT LIFE PERFORMANCE PLAN**

**STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR GREEK LIFE IN RECENT STUDENT LIFE PLANS**

Each year the Division of Student Life presents its performance plan in a town hall in the early December timeframe. It is then generally adopted by February of the spring semester. It is meant to be posted to the Student Life website for further promotion and dissemination, but the past few plans have not been posted despite requests by *The Poly* during the town hall presentations (*The Poly* 1/19/2006, 11/29/2006). The Student Life Performance Plan (hereafter “the Plan”), sets the Institute-wide highest priorities for graduate, first-year experience, undergraduate, faculty, and other operational programs. It was with the first Plan that the First-Year Experience (FYE) concept and infrastructure was implemented.
and resource loaded. This shifted the organizational structure of the Division of Student Life with a separation into the Office of FYE geared specifically to the first-year students and the Dean of Students Officer (DOSO) department assembling the remainder of student life programs. There are some students that believe that too much attention has been focused on FYE, while neglecting the upperclassmen. With the maturity of FYE, the last two Plans have included strategies on how the Undergraduate Plan will expand to promote upperclassmen initiatives and how the East Campus Athletic Village and Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) programs are to be accomplished.

Contributing factors that lead to the development and pronouncement of the Greek Life Initiatives appear in the Plan for FY07. The FY07 Plan included the following strategy and action as part of the overarching goal for the Undergraduate Experience Initiative:

B. The Undergraduate Plan: Undergraduate Experience

Goal 3: Continue to provide and enhance a robust undergraduate experience in living and learning, experiential learning and growth; leadership education, career development, persistence and related support services; student activities and related signature events, campus spirit, and the Culminating Year Experience.

Strategy 9: Continue developing a plan to achieve national prominence for Greek Life (M. Smith) (A1.11, A4.2, A4.3, A4.4)

Action 1: Develop and implement annual Greek Life initiatives to focus on creating systemic change and the establishment of Rensselaer Greek Life as a national model

Measures/Metrics:
- Academic performance of Greeks/higher than non-Greek average
- Recruitment/increased number of new members from previous year
- Chapter recognition/baseline
- Number of chapters facing disciplinary action/fewer than previous year
- Compliance with Rensselaer’s relationship statement/increase from previous year

Timeline/Milestones: FY07/monthly

Where the “We Will” statements supported by this Strategy are:

A1.11 We Will: Graduate innovative students
A4.2 We Will: Provide pervasive opportunities for students
A4.3 We Will: Empower students as learner and entrepreneurs
A4.4 We Will: Enliven campus life

These goals were meant to be metrics for the department and the FY07 plan was the first to have specifically mentioned Greek Life. Unlike other strategies and actions of the Plan, whose accomplishments are more tangible and more in control of the responsible departments, these strategies needed the buy-in and work of all the stakeholders. Because the wording of the Action item specifically called for the development and implementation of Greek Life initiatives, this possibly led to the pressure on DOSO to provide some initiatives in order to fulfill this action item, and possibly to the manner in which the directives were conceived. Unfortunately, the initiatives were developed throughout the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006 without the review and input from the Greek alumni and undergraduate stakeholders. It was also in this FY07 Plan that the off-campus jurisdiction initiatives and changes to the Student Handbook were authorized. (Strategy 11, Action 1). The approach by which the Student Handbook was being revised in the spring of 2006 became another process and protocol issue with which
the student senate had concerns (The Poly 1/19/2006 announcement; 3/22/2006 expanding; 5/3/2006 lateness with wording and no student input).

SYNERGIES WITH THE FY08 STUDENT LIFE PLAN

In December 2006, the draft FY08 Performance Plan was released. In it the strategies for Greek Life have been changed to:

- **Strategy 8:** Continue developing a plan to achieve national prominence for Greek Life (M. Smith) (A1.11, A4.2, A4.3, A4.4)
- **Action 1:** Develop and implement annual Greek Life initiatives to focus on creating systemic change and promoting Greek Life as a national model (FY08, FY09)

This keeps Greek Life in the undergraduate plan and allows the opportunity for the Institute, alumni, and undergraduate stakeholders to work together on the definition of what a “national model” means and to develop and implement annual initiatives. This would fulfill the commitment to work together as made by V.P. Eddie Knowles in his May 2006 letter to the Greek community.

Upon further review of the FY08 Plan, there are several other strategies and actions that either mimic concepts that Greeks are, or should be, doing as part of being a model system. In particular the Student Life Departments are working within the guidance of the Plan to address several challenges:

“The major challenges are being addressed and we are committed to continuing to collaborate with others regarding: 1) the paradigm shift in terms of how and where students live and learn; 2) the changing campus climate regarding student interests and sense of community; 3) the imperative to be risk averse in matters related to student health and safety; 4) the quality of life in residence halls and athletic facilities.”

These challenges are being faced by the Greek community as well. Through the participation of Greek community with the broader campus student initiatives, benefits to both the Institute and the Greeks can be realized. It would also allow the Greeks to leverage the resources of the OFSA during the period of budgetary constraints to include the programming resources of other departments. By reminding the Greek undergraduates that they are RPI students first and Greek students second, student life in general can be enhanced.

The following strategies and actions are a sampling of some of the synergies available to the Greek life stakeholders:

**Graduate Education Initiative**

Goal 1, Strategy 9: Market Resident Life student staff employment opportunities for qualified graduate students. This could be a source for application pool for house directors if chapter is required to have one or desire one.
Undergraduate Education Initiatives

Goal 2: First-Year Experience

Strategy 1: Continue to provide first-year students with the opportunity to experience leadership education. (L. McCloskey, L. Trahan, P. Snyder) (A2.2, A2.3, A4.1, A4.2, A4.3)

Action 1: Continue to provide first-year students with the opportunity to participate in an interactive teambuilding activity emphasizing leadership skills and affinity building.

Action 2: Provide ice breaker and team building activities as part of three trips for Navigating Rensselaer and Beyond.

Action 3: Co-create a pilot theme house with the Office of Residence Life which will address leadership topics/skills and philosophies for interested students.

Advertise and make some of the resource material and event locations available to the IFC, Panbel and individual chapters for their pledge programs

Strategy 4: Increase student satisfaction and support initiatives, as well as connectivity to Rensselaer by creating a coherent, coordinated, and inclusive first-year experience for Rensselaer students. (L. Trahan) (A2.1, A2.2, A4.4, A5.2)

Action 1: Continue to collaborate with academic departments, ALAC, and other Institute offices to ensure a "total first-year experience."

Action 2: Continue to offer Tuesday Night Toolbox and other "beyond" programming to keep students connected and informed

Action 3: Create a databank of information and findings since OFYE’s inception to allow for easy retrieval of data

Use this model to help track pledge academics (including at-risk student program) and also the information databank strategy for trending the metrics of rush/recruitment and other Greek programs. This could also be used to improve the cooperation between groups via improved connectivity.

Strategy 5: Provide educational opportunities throughout the duration of the first-year experience in order to support our students’ development (L. Trahan) (A2.1, A2.2, A4.2, A5.2)

Action 1: In collaboration with the Archer Center, create a four week Emerging Leaders experience for second semester freshmen to support student development in the transition of the first-year to the sophomore experience. (new initiative)

The chapters should be encouraged to have their pledge class members to apply for the Emerging Leaders program or perhaps create a set of student organization leadership skill workshops (not just for freshmen but could be part of continuing and culminating year experiences). See the UIUC and Cornell Greek Leaders Retreat syllabi.

Strategy 10: Develop Living and Learning opportunities for first-year residents. (P. Snyder, P. Hajela, L. Trahan, T. Tarantelli, J. Nondorf) (FY08, FY09, FY10) (A2.1)

Action 1: Collaborate with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, the Office of the First Year Experience, Career Development, Enrollment Management and the Residence Hall Association to develop a Living Learning Center within the residences.

Fraternity and sorority chapter houses are unique experiential living and learning environments and perhaps the house corporations and AIGC can work with this to develop stronger housing options that are more desirable in order to raise the live-in occupancy rate of the chapters with houses.

Strategy 12: Assist students with the transition to "taking charge of one’s own health" both mentally and physically, beginning at Student Orientation and continuing through the year. (L. Lawrence) (A5.3)

Action 1: Provide programming that will address key transitional issues for students including, but not limited to, decision making, alcohol and other drugs; sexual assault, depression and adjustment issues

The IFC and Panbel used to be a long time sponsor of the “Navigating the Social Scene” as part of the student orientation and NRB. After 15 years it was replaced with a different format focused more generically to alcohol and
social concerns. It did have the opportunity for the IFC and Panhel to talk to all of the students about the broader aspects of Greek Life and the actual rush process. Now this opportunity is only offered during summer SO on a volunteer basis. Perhaps a program can be reborn with a new approach to head off the stereotype impressions of Greek life and alcohol? Resetting expectations and providing accurate social norms can be an important component of prevention programming.

Goal 3: Undergraduate Plan

Strategy 2: Provide students with the opportunity to develop and enhance their leadership skills through experiential learning activities, supporting co-curricular programs (L. McCloskey, R. Hartt) (A2.2, A4.2, F6.5)

Action 1: Design and facilitate a leadership training workshop or module upon request for any student organization, meeting the specific needs of each organization.

Action 2: Continue to provide the following leadership programs: Annual Leadership Conference, Key Executive Workshop, Professional Leadership Program, C.I.u.b., and a Slice of Leadership, Celebration of Leadership Dinner (if funding is available)

The IFC, Panhel, and individual chapters should take advantage of these actions as they are being offered to any organization. Chapter Advisors and OFSA should encourage chapter officers to participate in the leadership programs to gain insights on successful management practices.

Strategy 3: Continue to identify networks to help increase experiential career opportunities for all students particularly in national research laboratories, policy and think tanks, and IT jobs in the financial services sector (T. Tarantelli) (A4.2, D1.4, E3.2)

Action 1: Develop alumni contacts and networks in collaboration with Alumni Relations and the Rensselaer Alumni Association

The AIGC, chapter advisors, and house corporations could work with the alumni office and RAA to develop contacts for career networking and also to recruit alumni volunteers to work with the chapters. This work would not be only on career development, but also on the day to day operations and relationship skills needed to run the organization and maintain strong traditions.

Strategy 7: Enhance programs and initiatives for students, 2nd year through graduation (M. Smith) (A2.3, A5.2, A5.4)

Action 1: Continue Class Dean Initiative utilizing “lessons learned” from the ’07 and ’08 Class Dean to develop guidelines and recommendations for the ’10 Class Dean (FY08, FY09)

Action 2: Develop a new position for an Assistant Dean of Students to focus on Class Dean responsibilities and student retention initiatives (new initiative)

The program could be followed and perhaps adopted for upperclassmen mentoring of the younger members. It would be a way to keep the upperclassmen engaged and maintain a better continuity of leadership and adherence to values of the organization. As this mentions the student retention initiatives and Greeks are much better at retaining students than the Non-Greek counterparts, the Class Deans might be able to utilize the “lessons learned” from the Greeks and then new initiatives could be used by the Greeks to further increase their retention numbers.

Strategy 10: Develop and implement strategies to address off-campus jurisdiction and enhance the quality of off-campus life (M. Smith, Student Health Center, Rensselaer Union, and Government Relations) (A5.2, E1.9)

Action 1: Reduce the number of off-campus incidents affecting student – neighborhood relations.

This strategy needs to be tracked as most of the Greeks life off-campus, whether they are in their own chapter houses or in groups of student apartments. Individual responsibility and accountability can be the first line of defense before escalating to becoming a chapter incident that needs to be adjudicated. Improving and maintaining good neighbor relations is important, so perhaps the Greek Neighbor Relations Committee (GNRC) can be reformed with guidance from this strategy.
Strategy 11: Through collaboration with academic departments, continue to support the goals of the Undergraduate Plan (L. Trahan) (A5.1)
Action 1: Continue to assist with the vision, direction, and implementation of a comprehensive living/learning community and theme housing experiences. (FY08)
Action 2: Communicate events and important dates to first-year students (ex. study abroad fair) via email and website postings

In some way each fraternity and sorority form their own “theme house” as each chapter even though part of the Greek system, maintains their own unique identity. The goal of the Greek Life initiatives should not be to breakdown the individuality of each chapter, but to strengthen the chapter’s ability to maintain the identity while working within the confines of acceptable behavior and operations. By being able to tap into the first-year student email and website postings for the formal recruitment process like some other campuses, may allow for better introduction of Greek life and the rush process so that students are better prepared for it and are more willing to participate and investigate Greek life at RPI.

Strategy 16: Improve the Undergraduate Experience by providing activities and leadership initiatives that complement the educational experience (R. Hartt)
Action 1: Provide robust student activities, student organizations and student development experiences for undergraduate students
Action 2: Collaboratively develop leadership education activities that are truly rooted in the Rensselaer Union and sponsored by the Archer Center for Student Leadership
Action 3: Support school spirit initiatives such as THE RED ARMY

The IFC, Panhel, OFSA, and individual chapters should take advantage of these opportunities and individual members should become involved in campus clubs to promote the diverse interests and activities of the Greek members. This would help with the connectivity and cooperation between the chapters and the non-Greek students and enrich and enliven all student life. The Greeks should also become engaged with the school spirit initiatives and benefit from the resources made available to such ventures. School spirit can extend beyond the fields of athletic competition as evidenced by the Relay for Life in the spring of 2006.

Strategy 17: Develop a more cohesive community in the campus upper-class apartment complexes and provide programming and community developmental events throughout the year. (P. Snyder) (FY08, FY09, FY10) (A4.4)
Action 1: With the assistance of the Residence Hall Association, create community celebrations in the single student apartment complexes
Action 2: Strengthen the Residence Hall Association presence in the single student apartments.

This appears to be attempting to strengthen the student organizations and provide social community outlets for the upper-class apartment residents. This may alleviate the pressure on Greeks to provide a “social” outlet for the upper-class Non-Greek and could provide alternative ideas for events in the broader meaning of “social” fraternity and sorority organizations.

Strategy 18: Increase outreach to the upper-class residents by hiring six professional live-in Community Directors. (P. Snyder, Human Resources) (A5.3)
Action 1: Hire six professional live-in Community Directors (FY08, FY09)

It is not clear what this program will provide, but if it helps to better define a live-in house directors duties, then OFSA, the AIGC, and house corporations should follow the development and implementation of this strategy. If this appears successful, perhaps like Lehigh University, DOSO will be able to provide resources to hire additional professional Greek Life Community deans, coordinators, or directors, especially if Greek represent 30% of the student population.

**Diversity and Diversifying Program Offerings**

Strategy 2: Create programs that are designed to enhance the undergraduate experience, promote citizenship, and facilitate cultural and social development. (M. Smith, P. Snyder) (A4.2, A4.3, A4.4, D1.3)
Action 1: Create a Theme House focusing on entrepreneurship and innovation as its core mission (Planning Phase – FY08; Construction Phase – FY09; Implementation Phase – FY10)
Action 2: Enhance academic support initiatives to improve retention, persistence to degree, and graduation rates by developing and implementing an OMSA Academic Support Initiative (FY08, FY09)

As stated before the fraternity and sorority chapters are essentially theme house organizations. Materials and resources could be provided to improve the implementation of the alumni advisor and House Corporation plans and to enhance the promotion of the values of each individual chapter. As this also mentions the retention and academics of the students, any developments from any stakeholder could enhance the successful accomplishment of the second action item.

**East Campus Athletic Village**

Strategy 8: Improve identity by creating a consistent athletic mark to be utilized by all sports programs on uniforms, correspondence, apparel, and promotional materials. (K. Ralph) (F4.1) (new initiative)

Action 1: Identify a professional firm to work with Athletics and Communications on the new logo.

Action 2: Develop a plan to increase revenue through a licensed apparel program.

By interacting with the Greek community, which represents 30% of the student market, a broader buy-in on the branding strategy may be accomplished. The chapters also have the ability to tap into the alumni networking aspects for career development and the RPI name brand, as well as the alumni contribution to the recruitment of new students. As there are many Greeks on the varsity and junior varsity teams, it may also be possible to gain broader buy-in from the team members and student fan supporters. This should be done in a more open and consensus manner than when the Red Hawk was chosen back in 1995 due to the roosting of Red Hawks at the Pittsburgh Building. (Wikipedia: “The official nickname of some of the school’s other Division III teams was changed in 1995 from the Engineers to the Red Hawks. (In addition to hockey, the football, cross-country, tennis, and track and field teams all chose to retain the Engineers name.) The "Red Hawks" name was, at the time, very unpopular among the student body; a "Red Hawk" mascot was frequently taunted with thrown concessions and chants of ‘kill the chicken!’” Read the Poly article 3/3/2003)

Strategy 11: Provide a robust program in the area of intercollegiate athletics, club sports and fitness (R. Hartt, K. Ralph)

Action 1: Create fitness and club sport programs that meet the needs of the student body

Action 2: Collaboratively develop an Intercollegiate Athletic Program that is rewarding for our students.

Could be to improve intra-murals to provide more non-alcohol opportunities for the students.

**Campus Culture**

Strategy 2: Continue to keep rich traditions a part of our students’ experience in order to sustain a connection to Rensselaer and to enrich student satisfaction through cultural and campus wide events. (L. Trahan) (A4.2, A4.4, E2.6)

Action 1: Maintain Communiversity events as an integral part of the student experience.

The participation in these events should be better recognized and promoted during student orientation and press releases. Building stronger ties to the general campus can only improve satisfaction component of the senior surveys.

**Health and Safety**

Strategy 2: Continue to support the initiatives as outlined in the Suicide Prevention Grant; allowing the SHC to increase the health care and awareness of services available on campus for those students who have a mental health need (L. Lawrence) (A5.2, A5.3, A5.4)

Action 1: Continue to offer Gatekeeper Training for faculty, staff and students

Action 2: Develop, produce and distribute new marketing materials for faculty, staff, students and families that focus on signs and symptoms, recognizing the warning signs, and ways to effectively respond

Should explore providing training and materials to chapter advisors and house corporations as well as chapter officers (like RA training for living groups)
**Student Development**

**Strategy 1:** Continue to develop and deliver innovative and high quality career development programming for students (T. Tarantelli) (A5.1, D1.5, E1.2, E3.2, F1.3)

**Action 1:** Enhance the on-campus recruiting program

**Action 2:** Provide an effective career counseling program based on available resources and utilizing employer representatives when appropriate and available

**Action 3:** Market and implement programming consistent with the Four-year time line developed by the CDC

**Action 4:** Create and support Culminating Year Experience programming

*Making use of the alumni networking component can enhance this and it is surprising this has been watered down from the FY07Plan*

**Customer Service**

**Strategy 3:** Ensure websites are sources of updated and complete information as well as “destinations” for first-year students and parents (L. Trahan) (A5.1)

**Action 1:** Analyze and create suggestions for individual website redesigns or new technology integration

**Action 2:** Teach additional members of FYE staff technical background and processes for updating sites

*Especially needed for the IFC, Panhel, Union Clubs, and OFSA websites with better and more visible access from Student Life, FYE, Student Organization webpages. The student orientation manual should also include a short paragraph about Greek Life as is done in the Cornell manual.*

**Strategy 8:** Continue to work with the Data Warehouse team to enhance the new Academic History data mart to the Warehouse (S. Kunkel) (F2.1, A5.1, A5.4)

**Action 1:** Create queries and develop appropriate dashboards for users

**Action 2:** Develop with the Data Warehouse team a training program to increase the number of users accessing the new data mart

*This could help with the data maintenance and report generation for GPA, numbers, community service, athletics, clubs participation of Greek on campus – highlight participation on campus, so Greek identity not just the social component*

**FUTURE WORK**

A committee should be formed to review these strategies to determine how the Greek system may be able to collaborate with the development and implementation of these programs or to make use of these resources in their own OFSA, Greek-wide, or individual chapter programs. The alumni and student stakeholders should feel empowered to review these strategies and actions to be educated in the direction that the campus is heading and work to support them and/or participate in the formulation of the direction. It is a tenant of the type of students and alumni that RPI wants to develop and without it, there is little room for allowing complaints that one does not like the direction. A strong effort should be made to restore the OFSA budgetary funding to at least the $8000 level it enjoyed in 2003 and to explore other revenue streams from alumni funding from such things as endowment funds similar to Cornell’s.
SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE NEW STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

RESOLVE THE CURRENT INITIATIVE PROPOSALS

The work over the last nine months of the Greek initiative teams needs to be completed, resolved, and implemented as measurable action items. New teams and physical face-to-face meetings and/or teleconferences are required to regain momentum lost in the fall of 2006. The action plans should be viewed as a vehicle for improving the relations and responsibilities of OFSA, AIGC, and the undergraduate chapters and setting the stage for future operations of the Greek system at RPI. Refocusing our efforts toward achieving the “We Wills” of the Relationship Statement can make this an ongoing effort, complete with annual reviews celebrating our successes and finding new ideas for solutions to our weaknesses. There can be no room for complacency and must remember that with the high student turnover, enduring procedures, practices and continuing education programs will be needed.

LIVE TO THE” WE WILL’S” OF RELATIONSHIP STATEMENT

The AIGC should form a Relationship Statement biennial review committee to see if any changes are needed and to complete a self-assessment of the performance of DOSO and the AIGC towards the expectations set forth in the Relationship. Upon review of the “We Will’s” of the Relationship Statement, had each of the stakeholders lived up to the responsibilities and expectations set forth in the document and the summary table tool made by Dean of Students Mark Smith, much of the turbulence of the last five years could have been avoided, or at least minimized.

AN IDEA FOR ACTION: MIMIC THE NEW US CONGRESS “FIRST 100 HOURS” CAMPAIGN

Here is a possible set of actions for the “first 100 hours” of the new IFC and Panhel Executive Councils. With help and mentoring from OFSA and the AIGC, great strides could be made to gain confidence in planning and implementing actions and programs.

1. IFC/Panhel Social and Risk VP form tiger task force to finalize the position and policies for social activities with alcohol to address the “Alcohol Initiative” before April 2007.

2. IFC/Panhel VP PR to work with the Union and OFSA to coordinate update of websites.

3. IFC/Panhel VP PR and Secretaries to work with OFSA to streamline data for Greek Statistics so easy to compile and report the data.

4. IFC Rush/Recruitment VP work to develop more formalism to “rush” and information materials for the fall 2007.

5. IFC/Panhel PR VP to work with FYE to get mention of Greek Life on their website and in the Student Planner

6. IFC/Panhel Rush/Recruitment and PR VP’s to work with FYE to incorporate presentation to overview Greek life and the recruitment process. Head off alcohol stereotypes and highlight other aspects of the living and learning opportunities. Synergies and collaboration are key – not competition.
7. IFC/Panhel VP Programming work with Archer Center to develop new member and officer leadership training programs/workshops focused on organizational behavior and finding synergies with the Student Life Performance Plan.

8. IFC/Panhel Social and Risk VP’s to work with SHO and OFSA and Union on educational and preventative programming for alcohol issues (e.g. Speakers, Bacchus-Gamma, ASTP, AlcoholEdu, CORE survey, TIPS, Late Night at RPI).

9. IFC/Panhel Judicial Officers work with Greek J-board and DOSO Judicial to provide clear policy and penalties for infractions for Rush, Social, Member Education to aid with self-governance and setting expectations and accountability. (Cornell’s “Confronting the Idiot in Your Chapter”)

10. IFC/Panhel Rush/Recruitment and PR VP’s work to get brochure put together for the summer first year student mailer if can not obtain freshman mailing list.

AN IDEA FOR STRATEGIES: BORROW OTHER SCHOOL STRATEGIC PLANS FOR GREEK LIFE

Several schools have recently performed strategic evaluations of their Greek systems and student life in general. In particular, Lehigh University, MIT, Cornell recently completed strategic team assessments and enacting programs to take action and review performance in achieving the goals, making adjustments when needed. Some issues are specific to the particular campus, but in many cases there are common issues that could be address by adopting many of the goals that these schools have set into action plans. For instance, one might consider the following goal for Recruitment and marketing that is borrowed from the Lehigh University Student Life Strategic Plan 2004-2006. This shows the formatting for the action item and how it was measured for performance. They also incorporated Greek Life aspects into broader leadership, housing, and other student life initiatives – partly due to the more integrated approach in their Student Life organization structure and cross functionally responsibilities.

2. Intended Outcome: DOS – CLSC (pg 17)
OFSA, in conjunction with students, will enhance the marketing of the Lehigh University Greek System to parents, alumni, campus and local communities.
Action Steps: 2005-06
- OFSA, in conjunction with the Interfraternity Council, National Panhellenic Council, and University Relations, will research effective and appropriate marketing techniques and strategies, as well as appropriate constituents to whom to market.
Progress to date:
- Effort such as: an advertisement in the The Brown & White, Go Greek brochures, 31 Reason’s Why YOU Should Go Greek, Fraternity Rush FAQs, Go Greek tee shirts, assistance with First-Year Move In, mailbox stuffers, IFC and Panhel Open Houses, Sorority Service event (on campus and off), and Parent’s Weekend Tailgate contributed to enhancing the marketing of the Greek system.
- Created promotional materials for men’s recruitment that include informational postcards to all first year students, a parent’s letter and a Greek Directory containing information on every chapter for potential new members.
- IFC and Panhellenic, in conjunction with OFSA, hosted the Hill Opening BBQ, Mr. Green Jeans Concert, and Panhellenic Pink Day.
- Partnered with the Office of Alumni Relations on a non-alcoholic Young Alumni Tailgate during Young Alumni Weekend.

The stakeholders should also review the MIT assessment by Jelke Solutions and put into play the actions that share similarities to the situations that RPI Greek Life faces – like recruitment promotion and
access, leadership development, values based education, etc. From the public relations portion of the assessment at MIT, the following actions were suggested. These are directly applicable to the current situation at RPI.

- The IFC needs to utilize new shared values, vision and mission to create a promotional campaign for the fraternity community.
  - Focus on marketing the right fraternal values
  - Focus on combating stereotypes of fraternities

- The FSILG office and the IFC need to improve and update the website.
  - The Institute should make campus life information accessible from the MIT home page if possible.
  - Fraternities need to be listed as student organizations, not just living groups
  - IFC page should be no more than 2 clicks from MIT home page
  - MIT’s IFC page should be expanded and restyled
    - Contact information on first page.
    - Create a style that draws students into context.
    - Add a message of support from the MIT administration.
    - Create a section on why to join.
    - Create a “What We Are About” section talking about values, etc.
    - Provide improved content
      - News and upcoming events
      - Visual Calendar
      - Message to parents
      - Common misconceptions, and truths that refute them
      - Why Join?
      - Good examples of Greek Life webpage content and styles
        - [http://greeks.unc.edu/](http://greeks.unc.edu/)
        - [http://www.uiowa.edu/~greek/main.html](http://www.uiowa.edu/~greek/main.html)

- MIT officials need to better promote fraternity life as a leadership development opportunity for students.
  - During orientation
  - Educating faculty and staff members

- The fraternity community needs to increase its visibility on campus
  - Wear letters proudly and often
  - Join campus organizations
  - Be visible on various parts of campus (not just in their houses)

**NEED FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION**

The Middle States Final Report in the spring of 2006 had several findings and recommendations on their way to the accreditation of the Institute. One part of the report often quoted in several of the press releases appears is the first sentence of the second of four areas that require special attention. The four areas were 1) Continued awareness of financial risk; 2) Improved communications; 3) Undergraduate admissions; and 4) Graduate student enrollment and policies. The recommendations for area number 2 were:
2. Improved Communications

Change at Rensselaer in the last five years has occurred with a scope and swiftness that may be without precedent in the recent history of American higher education. That pace of change unavoidably affects people’s lives and their attitudes toward the Institute. While many feel invigorated by a sense of momentum and shared purpose—the Team found not one person who dissented from the goals of The Rensselaer Plan—others feel cut out of the decision-making process and uncertain about the future. The Self-Study Report identifies these issues repeatedly and clearly, and their own recommendations call for improved two-way communications and real dialogue between the faculty, the Faculty Senate, and the Administration, especially the President. The Evaluation Team strongly endorses these suggestions.

The first sentence acclaims the fact that there have been swift and dramatic changes. The remainder of the paragraph, however, calls out the repeatedly identified feeling of being cut out of the decision-making process and the need to improve two-way communications. While this recommendation is focused on the President, the administration, and the faculty, the parallels to the interactions of Student Life Division with students for the student life planning, and with alumni and undergraduate Greek life stakeholders are apparent given the process used leading up to the April 2006 announcement.

It is now time move forward with the initiatives process and migrate to a program focused on strategies and actions that will lay a strong foundation for the relations and operations of the Greek life stakeholders. This foundation will then allow the OFSA, AIGC, IFC, and Panhel to be able to review each others performance to achieving the goals set forth and make periodic updates to the plan as successes are achieved, programs become outdated, or attempts fail. We need to be adaptive and proactive, rather than relying on our past five year performance of reactionary programs. We should not be in a position of surviving, rather we should be thriving. With better communications and working relations, trust can be rebuilt and real progress made. Small early successes will help the long run health and demonstrate what can be achieved if each stakeholder is willing to take a positive risk by seeking to understand the others viewpoints and even trying some of their ideas. Groups at this institute of higher education should not be afraid to change the world.

CONCLUSION

Much has been said about the state of the Greek system at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute – some positive, some negative, some based in fact, and some based in perception. This report attempted to review some of the data and viewpoints in order to provide a historical perspective to the current situation the stakeholders of Greek life face. It also summarized the response to date to the “Initiatives” proposed in April of 2006 by the Division of Student Life. While no actions to formally discuss or implement any of these responses have taken place to date, the stage is now set for progress to be made. Using the draft proposals, new ideas for achievable actions, and a new spirit of cooperation and communication, the “initiatives” should be able to migrate to the strategies and action phase. The stakeholders involved now will be laying the foundation for the next 150+ years of Greek life at RPI, and will need to incorporate this long term view into their dealings so that they will be able to come back to campus years later and feel proud of the programming work that was accomplished and initiated during the 2006 to 2007 timeframe.
REFERENCES

REPORTS AND DOCUMENTS

I am sorry that I did not properly reference the facts, quotes, and figures all the time. The information was taken from the following reports, letters, and data sets. If there are questions about some data, I can be reached to provide the sources.

- Education for a Technological Society, A Sesquicentennial History of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Samuel Resnick, 1968
- Summary Report on Greek LIFE Forum held in March 2000 (on the AIGC website)
- Statement of Relationship between Rensselaer and Social Fraternities and Sororities: Original in 1991 and Revision 1 in 2006 (on the DOSO website)
- Review of the timeline for the revision to the Relationship Statement (ppt on the AIGC website)
- Summary of the “We Will” statements of the undergraduates, alumni, and RPI groups as part of the Relationship Statement, Mark Smith, 2005
- June 2004 letter to Greek Alumni, Eddie Knowles, Dave Haviland
- Alcohol Initiatives Power Point given to alumni and undergrads April 12-13, 2006
- April 2006 letter to Greek Alumni, Eddie Knowles, Terri Cerveny
- Alumni participant notes on breakout discussion sessions with Rick Barnes (NIC consultant)
- April 2006 open letter to Greek and RPI community providing counterpoint arguments and highlighting inaccuracies in the Knowle/Cerveny letter, Jonathan “Jerry” Witter (on AIGC website)
- April 2006 Letter by Jonathan “Jerry” Witter requesting research data that supported the RPI policy development and addressed current concerns.
- May 2006 The Poly article about the Student Senate referendum opposing the Initiatives
- May 2006 electronic posting to Greek Alumni, Eddie Knowles, RAA, AIGC, DOSO
- Historical Compilation of DOSO GPA and Membership Number Data, Jonathan “Jerry” Witter
- Office of Institutional Research Brief on Greek Graduation Rate and GPA Analysis
- Office of Institutional Research “Greek Analysis – Smoking, Alcohol, and Partying, November 30, 2005
- RPI Greek Recruitment Survey, DOSO/OFSA Fall 2006
- Assessment and evaluation of MIT fraternity; provide results to FSILG office; provide recommendations and ideas to structure the findings in strategic plan format., Consultation Report for MIT, Jelke Solutions, May 2003.
- Lehigh University System Wide Greek Assessment Report, 2005
- Lehigh University Dean of Students Performance Plan for Fall 2005
- Alcohol Team Draft Proposal Review Powerpoint presentation, Fall 2006
- Recruitment Team Draft Proposal Review Powerpoint presentation, Fall 2006
• House Director Team Draft Proposal Review PowerPoint presentation, Fall 2006
• Best Practices for a Model Greek System at RPI, Keith Cormier Report November 2004 (summary of interviews and observations in final report for management class)
• Rensselaer Greek Experience Survey Results, Fall 1999 – modeled on the University of Minnesota
• Report on Grade Distribution During Spring 2001, School of Engineering, Robert Messler, June 19, 2001 (“Once again, the distributions reflect fairly obvious and severe grade inflation or “creep” for all departments except CHME and EPOW….“)
• Report and Discussion on the Grade Modifier Program: http://www.rpi.edu/dept/dosen/2003-2004/issues/grading.htm
• Poly Articles on various issues:
  • 2/26/2003 Grade Inflation
  • 3/17/2004 Grade Modifiers
  • 2/16/2005 Greek Life Dean search stalled

WEBSITE RESOURCES

In addition to the documents referenced in above, many websites were visited and many documents downloaded. Some were a little lacking in information, but in general all the schools had better information and resources easily found within 3 clicks from the first student life or activities homepages. For RPI to be known as one of “the most-wired campuses,” it was a little disappointing to visit the other schools and see the wealth of information available to the undergraduates and alumni.

• University Student Life and Greek Life Programs:
  • Cornell, Lehigh, Bowling Green, Worcester Polytechnic, UNC, Georgia, William and Mary, UIUC, MIT, to name a few of the many to which I benchmarked RPI
  • RPI Greek Life (www.rpi.edu/dept/doso/greek/)
  • Alumni Inter-Greek Council (www.alumni.rpi.edu/services/affinity/AIGC/)

• Alcohol (too many to mention all):
  • Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drugs (www.edc.org/hec)
  • Bacchus Gamma (www.bacchusgamma.org)
  • Social Norming (www.socialnorms.org) – now endorsed by the Higher Education Center
  • CORE Institute (www.siu.edu/~coreinst) or ACHA (www.acha.org) assessment tools
• “AlcoholEdu” part of Population-Level Prevention of Outside the Classroom:
  o www.outsidetheclassroom.com

• Promising Programming: Campus Alcohol Strategies:
  o (www.promprac.gmu.edu/2005/index2.htm)

• Above the Influence.com (www.abovetheinfluence.com)

• National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
  o www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

• NIC Alcohol Summit (www.nicindy.org/alcoholsummit.htm)

• Facing Alcohol Concerns Through Education (FACE) Project (www.faceproject.org) media material – posters, brochures, bookmarks

• Risk Management:
  o National Fraternities and Sororities (www.nicindy.org)
  o HRH/Kirklin & Co., LLC Insurance (www.kirklin.com)
  o Campus Firewatch (www.campus-firewatch.com)

• File sharing website: http://rpi.greekissues.com

• Google Groups for discussions and consensus building
  o Team Alcohol
  o Team Recruitment
  o Team Housing
  o Team Resource
  o General Greek Life Discussion

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