

FRATERNITY & SORORITY AFFAIRS: NEW DIRECTIONS – NEW OPPORTUNITIES

July 2007

Table of Contents

Discussion Group Participants.....	p. 3
New Directions – New Opportunities.....	p. 4
Linking Greek Life to the Undergraduate Plan.....	p. 4
Alcohol Policy – Consistent with Institute Policy.....	p. 5
Rush – New Member Recruitment Process.....	p. 5
House Director.....	p. 6
Unplanned Outcomes.....	p. 7
Summary.....	p. 8

APPENDICES

A. <i>Proposed Revisions to Alcohol & Other Drug Policy (Effective July 1, 2007)</i>	p. 9
B. <i>Good Samaritan Policy (Effective July 1, 2007)</i>	p. 16
C. <i>Five-Star Standards Accreditation (Effective August 30, 2007)</i>	p. 17

Discussion Group Participants

Alcohol Committee:

Sadra Azizi	Active, $\Lambda X A$; Senator, Student Senate
Brandon Bradley	Active, ΘX
Josh Coyne	President, IFC, & Member, $\Delta T \Delta$
Art Depoian	Advisor, ACACIA; AIGC
Anne Dodson	Advisor, $\Pi B \Phi$; AIGC
Katie Dumas	Active, $\Pi B \Phi$
Nicky Hajal	Active, $\Phi K \Theta$
Rick Hartt	Director, RU, RAA Representative
Charlotte Kaplan	President, Panhel & Member, $\Pi B \Phi$
Terri Kersch	Health Educator, RPI Health Center
Roger Mike	Advisor, $\Delta \Phi$; AIGC
Ryan Railton	Active, $\Phi K \Theta$
Franklin Regan	Active, $\Phi K \Theta$
Mark Smith	Dean of Students
John Thomas	Advisor, $\Sigma A E$; AIGC
John Whalen	Active, $\Pi K A$
Jessica Wickiewicz	Assistant Dean of Students, OFSA
Jerry Witter	Advisor, $\Sigma A E$; AIGC
Brian Zaik	Senator, Student Senate

Rush/Recruitment Committee:

Dan Booth	Active, $\Pi K A$
Rich Boroway	Advisor, ΘX
Josh Coyne	President, IFC, & Member, $\Delta T \Delta$
Stu Gittleman	Executive Director, $\Delta \Phi$ National
Roger Grice	Advisor, $\Lambda X A$; AIGC
Jim Hanley	Active, $X \Phi$
Charlotte Kaplan	President, Panhel & Member, $\Pi B \Phi$
Shannon Kelly	Advisor, $\Pi B \Phi$; AIGC
Danielle LeBeau	Member, $A \Gamma \Delta$; AIGC
Ray Lutzky	RAA and AIGC, $\Lambda X A$
Arlen Plotkin	Member
Jessica Wickiewicz	Assistant Dean of Students, OFSA
Jerry Witter	Advisor, $\Sigma A E$; AIGC

House Director Committee:

Joe Cambareri	Active, $\Lambda X A$
Art Depoian	Advisor, ACACIA; AIGC
Roger Grice	Advisor, $\Lambda X A$; AIGC
Margaret Harvey	Advisor, $\Pi B \Phi$
Joseph Horton	Active, ΨY
Brad Jonas	Active, $A \Sigma \Phi$
Cassidy Joy	Active, $A \Sigma \Phi$
Greg Mann	Advisor, $\Phi K \Theta$
Peter Michaels	Active, $A \Sigma \Phi$
Roger Mike	Advisor, $\Delta \Phi$, AIGC
Nick Nuzzolilo	Active, $\Lambda X A$
Jessica Wickiewicz	Assistant Dean of Students, OFSA
Frank Zadroga	Advisor, ZBT

New Directions – New Opportunities

Last April, the Dean of Students Office presented to the campus community its concern about the downward direction Greek life was heading and to impose new initiatives as a means to counter this apparent negative direction. We stated with no uncertainty three very distinct directions we believed necessary to re-center Greek life at Rensselaer. These were (1) significantly reduce Chapter reliance on alcohol as its social base and eliminate access to and misuse of alcohol by students and guests under the age of 21; (2) defer the rush period to allow new and continuing students the opportunity to adjust and adapt to a new semester without the significant and time consuming effort to formally recruit new members at the beginning of the semester, and (3) mandate a House Director for every chapter to serve as a source of counsel for and facilitator of chapter management and operations. As an outcome of the presentation, Dr. Eddie Ade Knowles, Vice President for Student Life, delayed the implementation of the new directions to gather thoughtful and constructive ideas from constituents about the future of Greek life at Rensselaer.

Since April 2006, the new directions have undergone a critical review and lengthy comment period by Fraternity and Sorority life constituencies: individual chapters, IFC, Panhellenic Council, AIGC, RAA, Inter/National leadership, and representatives from DOSO and Health Center.

□ Linking Greek Life to the Undergraduate Plan

The overarching vision for Greek life is to continue and enhance its role as a critical and necessary element to the undergraduate experience. A testament to this role is that members of fraternities and sororities are retained and graduate at higher rates than do non-Greeks and also exceed the all-campus rate. Retention, graduation and academic performance are key metrics for the Institute. Greek life plays a significant role as a major influence on retention and graduation rates for the Institute. Factors that contribute to this effort include leadership, philanthropy, community service, independent living and strong connections to and identity with alumni/ae. These efforts enhance and strengthen the undergraduate experience for all students.

As independent living units, Greek chapters have the capability to become residential learning communities. For example, Sigma Phi Epsilon (15th Street) has embraced their national's effort to facilitate and support creating residential learning units as a major component of fraternity life. Sigma Phi Epsilon has begun the process to identify a faculty member to serve as a resident scholar. They have also begun renovation of a section of their housing to serve as a residential learning unit. Delta Phi will assist the Vice Provost for Entrepreneurship in various areas and emerge as a living-learning community. Delta Tau Delta Fraternity, in a similar fashion as Theta Chi, has embarked on creating an endowed scholarship to support students and considering an opportunity to create a residential learning community in engineering and/or physical sciences. In each instance, the goal is to broaden the reach and engagement of chapter members to focus on their living and learning environment joined with the undergraduate experience.

Opportunities abound within Greek life to embrace the international experience as a means to expand service beyond the confines of the United States; to link together their alumni base with undergraduates having an interest to engage in an international experience. These efforts are intended to expand the traditional view of Greek life to be better connected to the overall undergraduate experience and cater to the diversity of the students enrolling at Rensselaer.

□ **Alcohol Policy – Consistent with Institute Policy**

Greek life at Rensselaer has **begun** a cultural shift that, over time and with a continual focus on policy and guideline assessment and improvement, will transform Greek life into a model of excellence. The first area of concern, alcohol misuse and abuse, has generated a realistic and safer environment for members and their guests. Aligning the expectation of responsible conduct by Greek organizations and its members with Institute policies has generated a more committed, educated and stronger alliance between DOSO and Greek life. Furthermore, it has begun the process to sustain a lower reliance on alcohol for Greek life as its social base. Chapters, AIGC, IFC and Panhel have endorsed the concept of eliminating access to alcohol of underage students, limit consumption of those 21 and over at their social events and registration of social events with the Dean of Students Office.

Appendix A, page 8, contains the full Institute Policy on Alcohol and Other Drugs, 1999 Revision, with the recommended changes to the policy effective upon approval by the Institute Alcohol Review Committee. Key highlights include:

- Ban on distilled spirits
- Alcohol cannot be purchased or brought to an event in any quantity exceeding the one drink per person 21 or over per hour
- Events restricted to a designated number of invited guests not to exceed the legal limit of persons allowed in a facility or common area
- Open social events are prohibited
- Any event at which alcohol is present must be BYO and BYO restricted to only those 21 or over
- Any event at which 6 or more members are present and alcohol is being served, must be registered and approved by the Assistant Dean of Students, Office of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs
- Non-compliance will result in a minimum two-semester suspension, ban on alcohol, and mandatory live-in advisor

□ **Rush – New Member Recruitment Process**

We recommend that the recruitment process be revised to focus at the beginning of the semester on the Greek community, then transition into later into the formal rush period. It is envisioned that the first two weeks of the semester would showcase Greek life as a community, then enter into the formal Rush period as a showcase of individual chapters. The goal is to meet the Rush and new member education requirements in eight weeks instead of

the traditional fourteen weeks. A revised Rush and new member recruitment process afford Greeks and non-Greeks an opportunity to adjust to an RPI education while forming new friendships, adapting to a new social environment, and selecting better informed and prepared students.

Recruitment efforts will focus on retention, academic success, service, and community. Lessons learned over the past year include an acknowledgement to use the **Five-Star Standards Accreditation (Appendix C)** as a public ranking of chapter performance, to promote Greek life and individual chapter identities, to use chapters' human capital by hosting study groups during the recruitment process coupled with training by ALAC for GAPS programming, to ban all social events hosted by individual chapters during the recruitment period, and develop more service and community building activities that connect with First Year Experience and Residence hall initiatives. On-going assessment and revision of the recruitment process will be conducted in partnership with DOSO, AIGC, RAA, IFC and Panhel as a means to incrementally implement a year-long recruitment process. This approach affords students the opportunity to engage in Greek life beyond the traditional period. We envision this process to occur over next five years to develop a recruitment culture consistent with Rensselaer's educational mission and the nature of its students.

Key highlights include

- Maintain Fall semester formal rush period by adopting Panhel/IFC general Greek recruitment (~ 2 weeks) then transition to house specific recruitment period (~ 2 weeks)
- Emphasize benefit of Greek life as retention and graduation strategy and immersion into the undergraduate experience; include academic performance and success as a foundation for Greek membership
- Rush events are campus-wide to encourage upperclassmen to consider going Greek
- Create strategies to formulate rush as a year-long process, not limited to a specified period
- Rush events showcase what Greek life is – sister/brotherhood, leadership, independent living, scholarship, philanthropy and community service; maximize the importance of affinity group membership and its long-term benefits (e.g., social networking, connection to alumni, and lifelong friendship)
- Develop strategies, in collaboration with the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, Alumni Inter-Greek Council, Inter/National governing bodies, and DOSO, to monitor, track and assess Rush/Recruitment activities to assure compliance with the mission for a Rensselaer undergraduate education, address changing demographics of entering students to facilitate Greek life adaptability, and integrate Greek life involvement and presence throughout campus activities and in organizations.

House Director

We recommend that a mandatory house director be withdrawn from the table for consideration. It is clear from the research and interaction with chapters that there is no reasonable method to assure system wide compliance without significant financial investment

by chapters. Based on our research, to make this concept feasible a private apartment needs to be constructed in each chapter to house the house director and a stipend. On average, start up costs to construct appropriate living space is estimated to be \$40,000 plus an annual stipend ranging between \$20,000 – 25,000. For smaller chapters, it is not affordable. For larger houses, it would result in a decrease in number of residents and cause significant financial hardship. Furthermore, there is not a sufficient pool of potential house directors who are qualified for and interested in living in a fraternity house. Chapters have experienced significant difficulty identifying a live-in advisor when such is part of a judicial sanction. It would be virtually impossible to do if a mandatory house director was imposed by the Institute.

Therefore, it is recommended that the chapter advisor role and alumni governing body be strengthened to facilitate more direct intervention and management of chapter operations. There is a growing trend that this indeed is occurring given the review and change in advisors since January this year, increased participation in AIGC, and excellent participation of alumni, actives, IFC and Panhel leadership, and advisors during the new directions review process. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, DOSO, will monitor advisor participation, contact and involvement over the next semester to assure this trend becomes part of the Greek life culture.

However, there are conditions in which a House Director will be mandatory. These include (a) a judicial sanction, (b) decision by a chapter itself, or (c) chapter efforts fail to engage an alumnus or campus person to fill the role as chapter advisor. Regardless of cost to the chapter, it is our belief that if a chapter knowingly chooses not to comply with Institute policies, then it is then the responsibility of the chapter to determine how best to address and comply with the live-in advisor requirement. Having a strong chapter advisor and governing board will pay significantly higher dividends than a mandatory house director. Furthermore, failure of the chapter advisor to attend the mandatory annual Chapter Advisor Meeting will be construed as actives' failure to engage a person to fill the role of chapter advisor.

□ **Unplanned Outcomes**

Given the nature, scrutiny, and broad participation in these discussions, participants successfully crafted an **Institute Good Samaritan Policy (Appendix B)**, a **Fraternity and Sorority Social Management Manual**, and a process for **Reinstatement to Full Recognition by a Fraternity or Sorority**. In addition, a consensus was reached among the participants that consequence for non-compliance remains the same (two-semester suspension) with the added stipulation that there be a permanent ban on alcohol and a permanent live-in advisor. Those who knowingly violate this policy accept full responsibility to cover the high expenses for a live-in advisor. Each case will be adjudicated on its own merit, the loss of recognition, ban on alcohol, and live-in advisor has significant impact on the continuation and long-term health of the chapter.

□ **Summary**

The alcohol policy will be aligned with the Institute policy. The recruitment process will better align with the Student life and Undergraduate plans. The house director shall not be included as a mandatory requirement for Institute recognition except when issued as the result of judicial action. Furthermore, several chapters, most notably Sigma Phi Epsilon and Delta Phi, have embraced the idea of forming a residential learning community as part of its future planning. We envision this to continue as chapters begin to review their standing and seek appropriate membership.

Finally, additional features have emerged through the discussion and collaboration process. These include an Institute *Good Samaritan Policy*, 5-Star chapter evaluation, Fraternity & Sorority Social Management Manual, and Process for Reinstatement to Full Recognition by a Fraternity or Sorority. The process complements Rensselaer's educational mission, acknowledges the importance of Greek life to the undergraduate experience, acknowledges the high retention and graduation rates realized by Greek participation, and creates the means to shift the culture of Greek life to a more meaningful partnership with Institute goals and performance plan. These are provided in more detail in Appendices B – E, page 14.