New Guidelines Announced for Fraternity and Sorority Recruitment

(April 2, 2015) ~ The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life within the Division of Student Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh announced today new deferred membership guidelines for fraternities governed by the Interfraternity Council (IFC) and sororities governed by the Collegiate Panhellenic Association (Panhel).

Effective immediately, to be eligible for membership in a fraternity or sorority at Pitt, an individual must be a full-time student in good standing with the University of Pittsburgh, with no less than twelve (12) earned credits (as reported in the University’s PeopleSoft records system), and have a minimum 2.50 cumulative grade point average (GPA).

First semester freshmen, who do not meet the above eligibility requirements, will no longer be eligible to receive a bid for membership. Transfer students must have earned at least 12 credits at an accredited college or University. Fraternities and sororities who are members of Pitt’s third governing body, the National Pan-Hellenic Council, are already set up on a deferred membership model (meaning a student must have achieved a certain number of credits and a minimum GPA to join).

“This policy is designed to allow first-year students with an opportunity to get acclimated to college life, both academically and socially, before having to make an important decision about engaging in the formal process of joining one of our fraternities or sororities,” said Linda Williams-Moore, director of Pitt’s Office of Cross Cultural and Leadership Development. “It enables students to make a more informed decision about which organization is best for them, and gives our first-year students every opportunity to get off to a good start academically, and become well-adjusted socially, before joining a fraternity or sorority.”

“Often times students who were at the top of their class in high school, and had a 3.8 or 3.9 grade point average, struggle to adjust to the intensity of college courses, as well as the challenges of living away from home for the first time,” said Dr. Matthew Richardson, Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Pitt. “Disparities in grade point averages among first-semester students, and those who have been on campus for at least one semester, have existed for several years. Student Affairs administrators, and leaders of fraternities and sororities at Pitt, have discussed making this change for the past couple of years.”

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According to Richardson, coordinator of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Pitt, the Panhellenic new-member grade point average in the Fall 2014 semester was a 2.945, which is below the all-female average of 3.237. The IFC new-member GPA in the Fall 2014 semester was a 2.851, which is below the all-male average of 3.067.

When the first semester freshmen new member grades were removed from the average, the communities’ GPAs raised significantly: IFC’s new member average became a 3.103, and the entire IFC was at a 3.100 average, both above the all-male average, while Panhellenic’s average new-member GPA improved to 3.290, and their overall GPA became a 3.272, both above the all-female average.

“Academic excellence remains a guiding principle and value of the fraternity and sorority community,” Richardson added. “By waiting one semester to go through the new member process, students can become acclimated to Pitt and to college life, then join our ranks to enhance their collegiate experience.”

During the 2014 calendar year, the IFC established a peer-tutoring program, and Panhellenic has promoted academic success through a book scholarship. The Order of Omega Greek Honor Society has also held various academic skills workshops for those chapters that requested it.

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