

# Report on the University of Pittsburgh Fraternity & Sorority Community

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## INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1787, The University of Pittsburgh (Pitt) is an academically rigorous institution. The [U.S. News and World 2019 Report](#) ranked Pitt number 26th (tie) in **top public schools** and 70th (tie) in national universities.

The fraternity/sorority community has a longstanding relationship with the University dating back to the 19th century. Delta Tau Delta was the first North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) fraternity, established in 1864 on campus. Alpha Phi Alpha was the first National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc. (NPHC) organization to be founded at Pitt in 1909. Zeta Tau Alpha and Kappa Alpha Theta became the first National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) chapters in 1915.

### **Current Fraternity/Sorority Life Membership**

Membership (according to Spring 2018 grade reports):

**National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC):** Total 37  
Six chapters ranging from 1-10 members  
(Fall 2018 - 17 members)

**Collegiate Panhellenic Association (Panhellenic):** Total 1302  
Eleven (11) chapters ranging from 68-136 members  
Members are from NPC organizations; includes Phi Sigma Rho, a STEM-based social sorority

**Interfraternity Council (IFC):** Total 946  
Eighteen (18) chapters ranging from 8-122 members  
Members are from NIC organizations; includes Sigma Beta Rho, multicultural fraternity

### **Snapshot of Fraternity/Sorority Life Advisement**

The advisement of fraternity/sorority life is housed in the Office of Cross Cultural and Leadership Development (CCLD). Staff in that department also support international students; promote social justice among students, faculty, and staff; and advise student organizations, and coordinate [leadership programming](#) year-round for undergraduate students.

The University of Pittsburgh fraternity and sorority chapters fall under the leadership of the Tri-Council (Collegiate Panhellenic Association, National Pan-Hellenic Council, Inc., and Interfraternity Council).

The community is currently guided and advised by a Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life with five (5) years of student affairs experience which includes one (1) year at Pitt, an Associate Director of CCLD with 11 years of experience at Pitt, and a first-year graduate assistant.

## METHODOLOGY

As part of the fraternity/sorority life evaluation process, the CCLD staff invited an external review team to provide a baseline evaluation for continuous community improvement. Three (3) consultants from two companies, [Npower](#) and [Limberlost Consulting](#), were invited to serve as partners and evaluators of the fraternal experience. The Npower interview team is represented by Karyn Nishimura Sneath (owner) and Calvin Smith (Npower associate and current Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Johns Hopkins University). Limberlost Consulting is represented by David Westol (owner). This third-party evaluation provided several stakeholder groups an initial opportunity to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for transforming the fraternity/sorority culture and community.

### Interview/Focus Group Process

As part of the research, Npower and Limberlost Consulting conducted the following activities from November 12-20, 2018:

1. Reviewed fraternity/sorority community background materials from the University staff (policies, procedures, grade reports, incident reports, event announcements, and other relevant materials)
2. Solicited feedback from 35 fraternity/sorority headquarters' partners
3. Conducted seven individual interviews and 13 on-site focus group meetings
4. Interviewed 170 individuals in the following three categories:
  - a. **Students:** unaffiliated students, current Tri-Council officers, chapter presidents and officers, 1-2 year members, 3-4 year members
  - b. **University Stakeholders:** Senior student affairs staff, university community relations, housing operations, business and auxiliary services, Pitt Police, student affairs partners, university counsel, Professional Academic Mentors (PAM: campus volunteers serving as academic advisors to chapters), student conduct, diversity and inclusion, and Cross Cultural and Leadership Development.
  - c. **Alumni/ae:** local alumni volunteers, chapter advisors, and alumni/ae-at-large.

Interviewees and focus group participants were informed of the purpose of the study was to improve the fraternity/sorority experience so that it is healthier and less risky. They were assured that all names and identifying chapters would not be included in the report. This was done to create a trusting space for the participants to openly share their concerns, opinions, and issues. Exact quotations, without individual attributions, were noted from the meetings and inserted to amplify or illustrate issues identified in the report.

The semi-structured interview format was used so information gathered from the initial interviews could focus and guide later interviews. As additional data were collected, and as the evaluators became more familiar with the nuances of the University, the interview questions became more directed.

## **PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA**

### **KEY THEMES: Strengths, Weaknesses and Threats, Opportunities for Improvement, and Options for Action**

This report outlines the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the University of Pittsburgh fraternity/sorority community. The following is a list of those related themes. Detailed descriptions are provided in each segment.

Weaknesses and threats, and opportunities for improvement were described to the email, interview, and focus group contributors on a sliding scale of risk and concern from weaknesses (small issues, irrelevant, or easy-to-change habits) to threats (large-scale, deep-set issues threatening the existence and future of the Greek community).

Interviewees were asked what they wanted for the future of the fraternity/sorority community. They offered programs, training, and other ideas as desired results and improvements. Those recommendations are included with the consulting team's list of options for action.

### **Strengths**

Participants were asked about strengths of the fraternity/sorority community, not individual chapters. For this report, at least 5 out of the 21 (24%) individual interviews and focus groups had to mention a topic before it was considered a strength. An additional strength, the positive relationship the fraternities/sororities have with law enforcement, was mentioned in four (4) interviews. The consultants chose to include that in the reports since it was unusually positive.

Six (6) key themes emerged. Below are those themes along with the number of groups who mentioned the theme.

1. Community Engagement - 8
2. Brotherhood/Sisterhood/Relationships - 7
3. Tri-Council - 6
4. Leadership Experiences - 6
5. University Expectations - 6
6. Relationship with Police – 4

### Additional Commentary:

The consultants wanted to make note of two issues. First, the unusual and fortunate support of the overall fraternal experience from the very top of the student affairs division and throughout the campus community; and second, the inter/national headquarters representatives' views on their own chapters' adherence to risk management policies.

More details on each theme follows.

#### **1. Community Engagement**

With over 25,000 undergraduate students at Pitt, fraternities and sororities help make a large, urban university feel smaller. In almost all focus groups, members were often described as "engaged," "passionate," "involved," and "supportive" in the Pitt community and are visible at events. Fraternities and sororities contribute to the success of big campus events such as Pitt Dance Marathon and Pitt Make a Difference Day by participating in the events and raising money.

Staff, alumni, and the students themselves discussed the importance of philanthropy and the amount of money the community raises for their own inter/national organizations' causes as well as local organizations. The members shared they both enjoy and "support each others' philanthropy events."

Greek Week is focused on serving the Pittsburgh community. Chapter members raise money for the Children's Miracle Network of the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh Foundation and blood drive efforts for Central Blood Bank through Greek Sing. Steel City Step Show is supported by Greek Week to raise money for student scholarships, but Steel City does not raise money for Central Blood Bank, nor does it occur during Greek Week proper.

In addition to the large fundraising activities, leaders quickly and efficiently create opportunities for community engagement. For example, the Panhellenic subgroup started a spontaneous Fall 2018 voter registration drive.

The fraternity/sorority community appears well-integrated into the overall Pitt student body. Students reported "enjoying meeting people in and out of Greek life."

#### **2. Brotherhood/Sisterhood Relationships**

Relationships are core to the overall fraternity/sorority experience. The students at Pitt are finding deep friendships within their own chapters as well as some very good relationships with people from other chapters. Focus group student participants like how "everyone has a sense of trust with each other," and "I love seeing someone I know every day."

The Panhellenic sororities widely use the intervention of sober sisters at parties and are proud of the fact that they keep an eye out for each other. They believe their risk

management teams are effective because they work from relationships. Junior Panhellenic has been an effective vehicle for helping the community's newest members understand the power of Panhellenic relationships and future leadership.

The NPHC community is small and everyone knows each other. It is easy to keep tabs on each other and members have worked hard to support each other and attend all NPHC chapters' events.

While relationships appear to be strong and genuine in the Panhellenic and NPHC sub-communities, the men involved in the IFC chapters appear lethargic and unmotivated based on comments from other community members. Compared to their Panhellenic and NPHC counterparts, very few men in the IFC groups attended the focus groups. Peers within the IFC fraternity sub-community spoke of the lack of commitment and connection to others in their own IFC meetings, leading to miscommunications and lack of attendance.

### **3. Tri-Council**

Pitt intentionally established a Tri-Council consisting of the three fraternity/sorority governing councils. This is not a governing council but rather a coordinating organization/vehicle to create specific times for the governing leaders to communicate with each other and facilitate relationships among students and staff. This community strength was identified by those closest to understanding its purposes and benefits (CCLD staff, chapter advisors, governing council officers, and chapter presidents).

Because of the Tri-Council, one chapter advisor noticed "more collaboration" among the councils. The Tri-Council leaders hold a retreat to start their office terms, and those plans and relationships begin to take hold immediately. The Family Dinner is an important initiative of the Tri-Council which keeps communication open and calendarizes time for purposeful conversation and relationship development. The meetings are informal and valuable. The council leaders themselves describe the Tri-Council as "genuinely supportive of each other," providing "good communication," and consisting of "strong relationships."

### **4. Leadership Experiences**

Student affairs staff and students alike discussed the leadership development opportunities fraternity and sorority chapters provide. Members are gaining relevant and marketable skills which strengthen their chapters, their individual leadership abilities, and thus, makes them more marketable in the job search process. Greeks are learning to work with others through committees, make difficult decisions with others, plan events and activities, budget appropriately, and motivate and empower others to do work. Staff in the career development office mentioned "leadership skills as key takeaways" from the fraternal experience.

## 5. University Expectations

Expectations, boundaries, and aspirations have been discussed intently due to the Spring 2018 community-wide suspension of activities by the Vice Provost/Dean of Students. This suspension put a laser-focus on the rights, privileges, and expectations Pitt leaders have of the fraternity/sorority community.

While some students may have seen the suspension as dramatic, many of them noted the timely benefit of it. By pressing “pause” on the activities of the Greek community, one chapter president discussed how leaders have moved to “a different mindset (of membership) toward a wellness mindset.” Community relations staff talked about the value of expectation-setting activities such as the “Be a Good Neighbor” block party. Now fraternity members are talking about how to be a contributing part of a neighborhood beyond just picking up their own trash. This created an opportunity for both reflection and change.

**The Fraternity/Sorority Action Plan** has been viewed as a fairly manageable and tangible set of actions to embrace by numerous stakeholders. This document has been discussed through many layers of the University and student leadership, and other stakeholders. With any major change initiative, there are going to be successes and failures and general growing pains with the Action Plan.

One immediate difference seen with the Action Plan was on new member education (pledging). Second-year members who just went through the new member orientation process in Spring 2018 experienced these changes. One of these members said their education “focused on history, organization, and personal values, as well as individual expectations of membership.” A few focus group participants noted how older members were mad “because this class didn’t have to go through the same things they did” during pledging.

The suspension was an opportune time to weave in conversations about University expectations and values as well as the mission and values of fraternity/sorority life. The **Pitt Promise** could be a powerful values-based tool augmenting these conversations. However, while administrators discussed it, none of the students mentioned it during the on-site visit. Below is the Pitt Promise.

### [Pitt Promise](#)

The University of Pittsburgh is committed to the advancement of learning and service to society. This is best accomplished in an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility, self-restraint, concern for others, and academic integrity. By choosing to join this community, I accept the obligation to live by these common values and commit myself to the following principles:

As a Pitt Student:

- I will embrace the concept of a civil community, which abhors violence, theft, and exploitation of others.
- I will commit myself to the pursuit of knowledge with personal integrity and academic honesty.
- I will respect the sanctity of the learning environment and avoid disruptive and deceitful behavior toward other members of the campus community.
- I will support a culture of diversity by respecting the rights of those who differ from myself.
- I will contribute to the development of a caring community where compassion for others and freedom of thought and expression are valued.
- I will honor, challenge, and contribute to the scholarly heritage left by those who preceded me and work to leave this a better place for those who follow.

By endorsing these common principles, I accept a moral obligation to behave in ways that contribute to a civil campus environment and resolve to support this behavior in others. This commitment to civility is my promise to the University of Pittsburgh and its community of scholars.

## **6. Relationship with Police**

The meeting with representatives of the University of Pittsburgh Police Department (UPD) was generally positive and a marked contrast to similar meetings with campus police officers at other schools.

The officers noted the number of transports of students for alcohol-related reasons was “down” this semester. They theorized this may be the result of generational dynamics at work with fewer undergraduates consuming alcohol in general and fewer drinking to excess. They also said that the number of incidents, interventions, and issues with fraternities and sororities at Pitt this fall had decreased.

The UPD works well with the City of Pittsburgh Police. Jurisdiction for UPD is defined as anything within 500 yards of a university building or location. Both departments use the Pitt referral system, alerting University personnel that a student is involved and providing information. Both departments are reportedly comfortable with that arrangement.

The two areas of focus for the fraternity community involve the “Hill,” the area on campus in which four fraternity houses are located and “Dithridge,” an area off-campus that is zoned for boarding houses. Many of the IFC chapters have annex houses or

similar locations for parties near Dithridge. Four (4) houses on campus are occupied by men's fraternity chapters.

The police have worked diligently to establish a good working relationship with fraternity and sorority members at Pitt through outreach programs and a community policing model.

#### Additional Commentary:

##### **Consultants Observation: Deep and Wide Support of the Fraternal Experience**

The three consultants noticed one unique strength of the community which many did not cite, perhaps because they do not know any different. There is not an anti-fraternity sentiment in the student affairs division.

Many administrators and staff are members of fraternal organizations and/or are very supportive of the experience. These professionals are at the highest levels of leadership within the division of student affairs and throughout the division. Others had not chosen fraternal life, but they had children who joined. Regardless of their affiliation, the participants shared concerns and were diplomatic during the experience.

Because of personal commitments and/or involvement in their own fraternity/sorority experience, many student affairs professionals have high, yet reasonable, expectations of the Greek community with one commenting, "There's a place for Greek life, but they need to situate Greek life in a healthier place." The same top administrator sees the potential in the chapter and members saying, "If you'd just be who your charters say you are, you'd be amazing."

Another top student affairs leader shared, "We've strayed from our founding values. What you recruit is what you become." He was hopeful that today's student leaders could take advantage of this opportunity for change and get back to the original purposes and values of fraternal life. Immediate financial and personnel investments (adding two more entry-level staff in 2018-2019) are being made to the Fraternity/Sorority Life staff because of this commitment.

This upper-level administration support is assertive and visible with a wall mural on the floor of the Vice Provost and Dean of Students' Office. A photograph timeline mural stretches the entire hall, depicting the fraternity/sorority community from its inception to the current day. The consultants had never seen a similar mural dedicated to Greek life.

##### **Headquarters Staff Perception: Chapters Follow Risk Management Policies and Procedures**

Though this was not a major theme of the on-site interviews and focus groups, six (6) of the ten (10) headquarters' personnel shared their own chapters were following their inter/national policies and procedures. They noted students do a "good job," "keep safety at the top of their mind," and have some "good habits because of the FSL staff."

One reported the “students understand the concept of registering parties but lack the follow-through.”

It is important to note that 10 of 35 headquarters’ representatives (29 percent) responded to the email request for information: 2 were from the 18 NIC fraternities and 8 were from 10 NPC sororities. There were no NPHC respondents.

## **Threats and Weaknesses, Opportunities for Improvement**

While a critical review of a community may be uncomfortable, it is essential to identify opportunities for improvement to ensure the future of the fraternity/sorority community.

Focus group participants and interviewees were asked to identify issues and place them on a scale from annoying weaknesses to critical issues threatening the existence of the community. The summaries of these answers are included.

For this section of the report, at least 8 out of the 21 interviews/focus groups (38 percent) had to mention a topic before it was considered an opportunity for improvement. Though challenges for and opportunities for the NPHC organizations were discussed mainly by the leaders and members themselves, the consultants believe these organizations play a vital role in the overall health of the fraternity/sorority community. The NPHC organizations, and thus community, are small; and the consulting team has included the critical issues specific to this community in this report.

Two key themes emerged as weaknesses and threats. Two additional key themes emerged as opportunities for improvement. Below are those themes along with the number of times the item was mentioned in focus groups:

1. Hazing - 14
2. Alcohol Culture – 12
3. Impact of Alumni – 8
4. NPHC Community – 5

More details on each theme follows.

### **1. Hazing**

Institutions of all shapes, sizes, and reputations across the country are grappling with a hazing culture within their fraternal communities. Within the last two academic years, the University of Pittsburgh has also experienced high-profile hazing incidents that have prompted the University community to reflect on the practice and find better ways to on-board and educate students engaging in new member processes.

During the review, participants were asked to rate their new member education experience on a scale of 0-10 with 0 meaning students followed the new member education process prescribed by their inter/national organization and 10 meaning

students are engaging in behavior that could lead to permanent injury or death. This scale aligns with the continuum identified on [Stophazing.org](http://Stophazing.org) which classifies hazing from subtle to violent (Allan, E., 2014 - adapted from Bringing in the Bystander, Prevention Innovations).

- **Subtle (Intimidation) Hazing:** Behaviors that emphasize a power imbalance between new members/rookies and other members of the group or team. Termed “subtle hazing” because these types of hazing are often taken-for-granted or accepted as “harmless” or meaningless. Subtle hazing typically involves activities or attitudes that breach reasonable standards of mutual respect and place new members/rookies on the receiving end of ridicule, embarrassment, and/or humiliation tactics. New members/rookies often feel the need to endure subtle hazing to feel like part of the group or team. (Some types of subtle hazing may also be considered harassment hazing).
- **Harassment Hazing:** Behaviors that cause emotional anguish or physical discomfort in order to feel like part of the group. Harassment hazing confuses, frustrates, and causes undue stress for new members/rookies. (Some types of harassment hazing can also be considered violent hazing).
- **Violent Hazing:** Behaviors that have the potential to cause physical and/or emotional, or psychological harm.

The University has a well-defined [bystander anti-hazing policy](#) that in many ways also aligns with the continuum.

Students (within and outside of the fraternal community) and administrators were transparent about the hazing culture that exists within the fraternal community. Students outside of the community stated there is a perception that chapters haze, and “the University knows it's crazy out here.”

There were a few members in leadership that described their experience as a “2” or “3” mostly because of the time commitment associated with joining a fraternal organization. Several of the newer members from IFC and the Panhellenic stated they had a “good experience because all of their new member education focused on history and values.”

A couple of students stated they “think the hazing was low during the spring 2018 semester because of the community-wide suspension. Older brothers and sisters are mad because this class didn’t have to go through what previous classes had to go through.” On several occasions, students were given the opportunity to discuss issues regarding hazing in the community, and they often would describe activities by chapters that were not present.

Four (4) students within the community described the hazing culture as an “8” on the scale presented. Many of the students that described the hazing culture as an “8” stated that the detrimental behavior was being perpetuated within the IFC and the NPHC.

Students stated that they have an 8- to 10-week pledge process, and they cross pledge between chapters. They also described activities they participated in (as either a perpetrator or a recipient).

They were as follows:

- Forced food and alcohol consumption
- Paddling
- Psychological hazing
- Cyber bullying
- Manipulation
- Extended time away from academics
- Abductions/kidnapping
- Exposure to cold weather or extreme heat without appropriate protection

Many reasons were cited for engaging in hazing practices, and they are listed below.

- Tradition: “I had to go through it; you should too.”
- Rationalization: “People should focus on the good work we do like philanthropy.”
- Culture of one-upmanship
- Lack of compassion for fellow students
- Lack of individual accountability
- Group think (noted by administrators)
- Lack of alumni involvement or negative alumni involvement
- Influence of alcohol
- Influence of underground organizations that cement the hazing culture

Eight (8) administrators referred to “repeat offenders” and underground organizations that contribute to the hazing culture on campus. One administrator stated “they (students) won’t get it until they kill someone.”

Twelve (12) students and administrators stated they felt the fraternity/sorority community is “targeted” (in regard to hazing and other risk management issues) by the administration. One participant indicated, “There is some contention about the disparate impact of policies for Greek orgs versus non-Greek orgs.” They contend that the University should take a more comprehensive approach to educating the entire student population engaged in activities that may perpetuate the hazing culture.

Feedback from **professional headquarters' staff members**, who are at an arm's distance from the campus and chapters, also cited the hazing culture as a threat to the community. Their members talk with front-line leadership consultants and/or volunteers about hazing rumors but do not have enough facts and evidence to take complaints to the FSL staff.

**The administration** has taken steps to increase education to students on the subject of hazing and the University's policy and position on this type of misconduct. Students stated they know the policy and understand hazing is harmful for the individuals involved and the community broadly. Many cited the **bystander training** offered to all students entering the University as a source of education. Others cited the Greek 101 or New Member Orientation offered by CCLD as other opportunities for education on the subject. Students stated "bystander intervention (training) is not great" in general, and not very comprehensive with regards to hazing.

Additionally, **students and administrators** stated that they perceive Greek 101 as "voluntary," and there is "no accountability" if students miss these programs. However, Greek 101 is mandatory and has accountability measures for non-compliance. These sessions in this program covers expectations for membership, rights and responsibilities of new members, sexual assault prevention, alcohol safety, combating exclusive traditions, and hazing education.

Some administrators stated, "students know what to say and how to dress" when speaking to administration about their fraternal experience and education; however, beyond students' rhetoric, "there is no substance" and "we are not impressed with the leadership training." Those administrators think more intensive and intentional hazing and other education is key to continuing to reform the system.

Many **students** were confused by the University views on hazing and how the University holds students accountable for violating policy broadly. Specifically, students stated they have a lack of clarity around a "ladder" of risk/unacceptable behavior. There is an understanding of the policy, but it does not relate to the nuances they experience.

To compound this confusion, **students** felt the University office responsible for adjudication was adversarial, and University expectations were not transparent. Students want a better understanding of the conduct process; they perceive some groups receive harsher sanctions for what seems to be less egregious activities. They state the University needs to help them better understand how they came to decisions. Students expressed great interest in multiple sessions in gaining a more informed understanding of the parameters the University uses to make its decisions.

## 2. Alcohol Culture

When asked, "What keeps you up at night?" a frequent response from administrators was, "**Did we keep someone's child safe while she or he was here at Pitt?**" This

concern, voiced by the top student affairs administrator and other student affairs professionals, was most often framed in the context of alcohol consumption as opposed to hazing in an IFC fraternity. The terms “disability” and death as potential results of an alcohol-related injury were mentioned by several administrators.

The consistent reported effects of alcohol consumption included fights, falling from buildings, acute intoxication (especially by first-year students) and the omnipresent “We don’t want a Penn State situation” as in hazing with alcohol. A couple of administrators shared their perception that belonging to a fraternity or sorority means that you have a license “for anything.”

Alcohol continues to be a focal point within the fraternity/sorority community at Pitt. The use of alcohol permeates nearly every activity (including ritual and events associated with Greek Week) in the Panhellenic and IFC chapters.

Many Power Five Conference universities have a Greek Row with most chapter houses situated close to each other on or off campus. Others have two or three clusters of houses off campus. The University of Pittsburgh has two venues associated with risky behaviors and parties with alcohol.

- The first area is on-campus housing with men’s fraternity houses situated on “The Hill.” However, only four (4) facilities are currently occupied of the nine on the hill.
- The second area is called Dithridge, zoned for boarding houses. The consultants were told a number of fraternities have annex houses or apartments in this area used for parties. The prevailing philosophy regarding houses in Dithridge, according to an alumnus, is that since these are not University “recognized” houses, the regular risk management rules do not apply. One source commented, “When the weather is reasonable, look for parties in the Dithridge area. When the weather is unreasonable, look for smaller parties in the Dithridge area.”

Focus group participants shared parties on The Hill, in Dithridge, and at other locations do not follow risk management policies or guidelines. Below are participants’ comments.

- Guest lists or practices employed to reduce risk are not used. Mixers, usually two-way events involving one IFC and one Panhellenic chapter, are held off campus as a means of avoiding interventions. This practice results in undergraduates walking back to campus after consuming alcohol and transportation concerns.
- Alcohol in a variety of forms is provided by IFC chapters to members and guests.

- Chapter officers and members, along with council members agreed that pre-partying or pre-gaming is a common practice, especially among younger members.
- Some of the IFC fraternities have bars in their facilities along with beer pong tables.
- A checklist mentality culture exists. Participants' comments focused on compliance with the rules ("We've got to do this or that to stay out of trouble.") rather than changing the way they think, talk about, and practice risk management.
- IFC chapter members shared the everyone-drinks-in-college response along with, "We make sure people get home okay" by having pledges or new members drive intoxicated people back to their residence hall or other locations. That practice leans on the newest, youngest members of a chapter, with the least amount of social capital, driving intoxicated people late at night in a densely-populated metropolitan area (and often in unfamiliar vehicles), and subject to the whims of the passengers.
- During the focus groups very few IFC members could articulate their own inter/national and IFC risk management expectations or requirements.
- Participants shared that NPHC group members host events and charge at the door. While this is an acceptable habit for events at the student union, the practice continues at off-campus events with alcohol served. This is highly risky behavior as it brings about significant criminal law as well as civil litigation concerns.
- Participants also noted that Panhellenic members struggle with the definition of a chapter event as that may apply to four or five women who want to go out for a drink; and that, in general, risk management is an afterthought.
- Undergraduate members in the focus groups identified specific chapters engaging in risky behavior. Those chapters were not usually represented at meetings during the on-site visit.

Feedback from some headquarters' staff members echoed the findings noted above. A community weakness shared was the students' general short-view of the community-wide suspension. In an email survey response, a headquarters' respondent wrote about the challenge of "students seeing the end goal as being able to host parties, rather than creating systemic change." This lack of general concern about the fraternity/sorority

community was observed and shared by a sorority staff member: “(They lack) the value of genuine care and respect for self, one another, and the community at large.”

## **Opportunities for Improvement**

### **3. Alumni Impact**

For a city the size of Pittsburgh, with several nearby colleges and universities, the alumnae/alumni support for undergraduates at Pitt is disappointing and frustrating. Only one (1) alumnus attended the IFC chapter alumni meeting during the on-site visit. He wondered aloud why others did not attend when a Doodle poll had been completed with the best day, date, and time for the advisors.

During the meeting with officers and an alumnus, several undergraduates complained that there is next to no support for undergraduates from alumni. Alumni do not show up for meetings scheduled by others.

Alumni do not attend special occasions such as initiation, homecoming, or founders’ day events; and they do not regularly attend chapter meetings. According to undergraduates, mentoring from alumni is a rare occurrence. For housed IFC chapters, the alumni do little more than collect bills.

Senior student affairs staff observed how the IFC alumni involved in their chapters are comparatively young, within five years of graduation. These alumni reportedly demonstrate a negative influence for chapters by glorifying hazing and alcohol consumption. Older alumni are not current with the challenges and issues that undergraduates face today.

### **4. National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)**

As previously mentioned, the consultants believe these organizations play a vital role in the overall health of the entire Pitt fraternity/sorority community. The NPHC organizations have a rich history and much pride in their impact and influence within the broader fraternal community as well as “Black Pitt.” They are genuinely proud of their affiliation and want to improve the reputation and perception of the NPHC to outside students on campus.

Many members of the NPHC, both students and alumni, acknowledge that they participate in hazing activities. Some students stated the “entire council is made” — meaning they all have an underground pledge process. Those students disclosed they participate in an unofficial process that is well beyond their national organizations’ expectations, and they have attended the “set” of other organizations. NPHC members and advisors believe the numbers are low as a result of hazing or the perception that chapters engage in certain activities. They stated that students have expressed interest in joining but did not want to go through a “process in order to join.”

Students shared they are only asked to “step and stroll” by the administration. They also mentioned that there is a belief among some members that their experience has been reduced to “performing” and not highlighting the other positive aspects they bring to the fraternal experience.

Students state that they feel pressure to provide the social outlet for “Black Pitt.” While they feel this pressure, they also acknowledge they do not follow appropriate party registration and risk management protocols and they are not entirely familiar with the rules.

Some groups provide hard alcohol and charge for entry to their events at off-campus locations. Occasionally, a small get together will get shut down without a clear reason. The students state the arbitrary nature of policy enforcement, especially off campus, makes them fearful of hosting events at all.

As a council, chapter members initially stated that they were unified; but after some questioning, they relented and revealed that there are some deep divisions within the council.

Those divisions include:

- A lack of participation in the NPHC meetings
- Non-participation in large scale events hosted by the NPHC
- A lack of participation in NPHC-sponsored community service and philanthropic projects
- Tension between the NPHC and Black Action Society

There was a lot of conversation about the Steel City Step Show and outsourcing participation to chapters from other campuses. The students are worried that they will not be able to continue to produce the show if this lack of interest continues. These issues are compounded by the lack of consistent FSL staff advising.

Participants appreciated the administrative help their current advisor provides but indicated the fraternal knowledge that an affiliated person can bring to the table is missing. This has led to apathy between chapters and within chapters. Participants were relieved to learn a full-time professional will be hired to advise their council.

##

## OPTIONS FOR ACTION

This Options for Action section is collection of community-strengthening best practices, resources, training/leadership development opportunities, and potential initiatives.

Staff and volunteer leaders and influencers of the Pitt fraternity/sorority community know the culture the best. They know the people resources and financial reserves necessary to make both deep and wide changes in the community. While the evaluators have deep experience making recommendations, their influence is limited as outside resource personnel to the Pitt Greek community. The consultants strongly encourage continued information gathering, data analysis, and strategic planning involving key stakeholders in order to make culture changes “stick.”

The options for action address the following five (5) topics:

1. Hazing
2. Alcohol Culture
3. Alumni and Parent Interventions and Programs for Engagement
4. NPHC Community
5. Additional Best Practices

Options details are provided in each of the four categories that follow.

### 1. Hazing

#### a. **Provide hazing education for students and staff.**

Hazing education must be required for all new members every semester. In addition to learning about the University’s expectations, students should also learn about the hazing continuum, so they can gain a better understanding of the breadth of activities that constitute hazing.

All new members should sign off on the anti-hazing policy prior to joining their organization and all members should reaffirm they understand the hazing policy and sign-off on it every semester.

[Stophazing.org](http://Stophazing.org) provides excellent resources on how to construct anti-hazing education. Moreover, staff and administrators expressed interest in learning more about hazing and how to identify when students may be engaging in those activities. It would be helpful to find time during an all staff meeting to educate those who work with students and organizations directly.

A good way to get the campus involved is establishing a Hazing Prevention Week. Invite speakers, provide passive programming, engage student leaders in

all student organizations on the dangers of hazing and how students can positively impact the culture within their organization.

**b. Communicate regularly with parents.**

Many institutions have taken a proactive stance in notifying parents and family members about a chapter's misconduct, especially if it rises to the level of interim suspension or suspension. This allows transparency in communication and prompts parents to engage in discussion with their student about the behaviors of their organization.

It is a good practice to send out notifications about the fraternal community in a parent and family communication prior to orientation and prior to recruitment. Produce a [Parent's Guide](#) or a dedicated website for parents to learn more about the community and the University's expectations.

**c. Evaluate and standardize the new member education period.**

Currently, the new member education period is not explicit at Pitt. It is imperative to determine a time period and hold all chapters to the same standard.

During the review, the new member education periods varied from four (4) weeks to ten (10) weeks. Many universities and inter/national organizations are moving to shorter new member education windows, and some are eliminating new member education all together.

Alpha Gamma Rho and Zeta Beta Tau have moved to immediate initiation--that's within 48 hours after receiving a bid. SAE has, as noted, done the same thing. Sigma Phi Epsilon has led the way with member development--an ongoing process of education throughout one's career as an undergraduate which eliminates pledge education—and Beta Theta Pi has followed.

At a minimum, it would be helpful for the FSL staff to learn (from the inter/national organization) the length of the new member programs for each chapter and hold the chapters accountable to the standard set by their national organization.

**d. Adopt assessment tools to track experience and satisfaction of new members with the new member education program.**

Have new members assess their recruitment and the new member experiences. This could provide vital information about which areas of the experience are beneficial to new members and what areas need improvement or elimination.

The Pitt Department of Institutional Research could be a good resource to consult to assist with the development of questions and survey structure.

The Pitt Information Technology Office could assist with developing or obtaining software to house the survey and collect data.

**e. Establish conduct code language addressing underground organizations.**

Throughout the review students, staff, and administration discussed the frustration with underground organizations and their impact on the culture at the University. While university professionals attempt to rehabilitate organizations, suspension can be warranted. Unfortunately, there are students, alumni, and even inter/national organizations, that support continued violations of the code of conduct.

Institutions have implemented changes to their conduct code to address underground organizations and clarify expectations for students engaging in unsanctioned fraternal activities. Some examples of institutions that have implemented those changes include:

**[American University Student Conduct Code:](#)**

Definitions

CC. “Underground Group” – a formerly recognized student organization or group that has lost or been denied university registration or recognition as a consequence of responsibility for Code and/or other policy violations.

Prohibited Conduct

GG. providing assistance to or in any way perpetuating the activities of an Underground Group that violates the Code and/or other university policies.

American University’s actions against students in underground can be found at this link: [Actions Taken Against Students Involved in Misconduct by an Underground Group Known as EI](#)

**[Johns Hopkins University Student Conduct Code](#)**

28. Providing assistance to or in any way perpetuating the activities of an Underground Group. An “Underground Group” is defined as a formerly recognized student organization or group that has lost or been denied university registration or recognition or dissolved as a consequence of responsibility for Code and/or other policy violations, even if operating under a different name.

**f. Provide students with a chapter's conduct history.**

It is important that students make an informed decision when choosing a fraternal organization. It is also important that parents can have an informed discussion with their student when they are considering joining a fraternal organization.

It is a best practice to provide a website page with updated information about a chapter's current university status, as well as their history. Providing this information is also helpful when conducting a chapter leadership transition meeting. Sometimes new chapter leaders are not aware of the chapter's conduct standing. This lack of information makes it difficult for new student leaders to effectively manage their organization as well as their members' expectations on appropriate behavior.

**g. Require specific training for the new member educators before they can serve in this capacity.**

New member educators have a critically important role in eliminating hazing. They must be educated on their respective risk management policies and commit to introducing the new members into a positive and healthy environment. If the new member educators all worked together on creating a positive environment (without alcohol and hazing), the community can start to transform the high-risk alcohol culture.

A training should be held every semester and coordinated by the FSL staff. The new member educators are key stakeholders in this process. The behaviors and patterns established in the first months of chapter membership will set the stage in future semesters.

## **2. Alcohol Culture**

**a. Strategize with new CCLD personnel on risk management education and advising needs.**

The newly hired staff members could directly address risk management issues specific to each council. The member chapters of the three governing councils have unique needs and issues to be addressed regarding proactive risk management education as well as targeting their differing habits.

Some campuses have a dedicated advisor to all three councils with the ability to spread the advising of individual chapters evenly among the staff. In this model the three council advisors/coordinators would report to the current Coordinator

of Fraternity/Sorority Life. Each coordinator would be responsible for a functional area (i.e. risk management, hazing education, officer training, assessment, member education/development) and would coordinate and execute education programming and trainings around those areas.

**b. Create relevant council-specific education sessions.**

FIPG was rebranded and repurposed beyond a risk-management policy. It is now the Fraternal Information and Programming Group. They provide [guidelines](#) but council-specific conversations about its application are needed. The Pitt risk-management policy needs to be explained so that it is applicable to different environments (i.e. registered houses, “satellite houses,” apartments, third-party vendors).

In addition to council-specific risk-management education, there also needs to be open dialogue for council leaders and members to address issues that affect their respective communities. These conversations could be facilitated by a staff partner or content expert and used to gather information about critical issues within those communities and a way to obtain feedback on campus climate, social concerns, and other means of student advocacy and support.

For example, [“Something of Value”](#) is an initiative developed and facilitated by the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC). The program is a full-day interactive community building experience that helps College Panhellenic communities build capacity, relationships, and influence in addressing risky situations in their community. NPC-endorsed presenters provide on-site facilitation and action planning.

The newly redesigned “Something of Value” curriculum features a real-life simulated call to action; lessons in peer influence and social change; and deep, honest dialogue across chapters about healthy behaviors in the community.

**c. Fully utilize GAMMA as a peer education and intervention tool.**

Founded at the University of California, Irvine in the late 1980s, GAMMA started as a peer education tool to facilitate discussions around alcohol use and abuse. The initiative utilized respected fraternity/sorority chapter and council leaders to lead those discussions. After that start, campuses around the country created their own models catering to their unique campus dynamics. The following four campuses provide solid examples:

- i. [Duquesne University](#) – given time and resources, Pitt could visit this campus to learn more about their programming and strategize for Pitt’s unique needs.

- ii. [“The University of Louisville](#) GAMMA student organization coordinates the Voice of Reason (VOR) Initiative. Voice of Reason is a strategy based on the social diffusion theory. VOR helps drinkers and nondrinkers make safer decisions when in social settings that involve alcohol. Students named the initiative because they find when they are in situations where alcohol is present, it is helpful to have a “voice of reason” to help them make rational, safe decisions.”
  - iii. [University of Missouri](#) fraternities and sororities partner with the campus Wellness Center for programming and peer education.
  - iv. **Rutgers University** uses fraternity/sorority members in the education and training process. This encourages more participation within chapters and brings authentic and current experience to the programming provided. They use [SCREAM theater](#) and their program could be adjusted to meet the needs of the Pitt fraternity/sorority community.
- d. Strengthen the University-wide peer education program using the [National Association of Student Personnel Administrators’ \(NASPA\) model](#)**
- “Initially launched by the BACCHUS Network in 1994, the Certified Peer Educator program has been an asset to health and wellness peer educators, leading to the certification of more than 200,000 individuals since its inception.
- “As the higher education landscape has evolved, so have the roles of peer educators - whether in the capacity of traditional health and wellness peer educators, resident advisors, or orientation leaders. Campuses are relying on their students to be curators of change and support systems for their peers, and the CPE program provides foundational-level skills to allow these students to be successful.
- “Throughout the 12-hour, 8-module course, students will hone their skill sets to be effective peer educators and leaders.”
- e. Invest in community-wide sober monitor training and strengthen bystander intervention education.**
- The fraternity/sorority community could benefit from a formalized training process that teaches proper assessment of guests and intervention skills in the event of a crisis. Requiring a percentage of the chapter to be trained and certified ensures that the education and training has depth in each organization. Below are three types of training available.

[TIPS \(Training for Intervention Procedures\)](#)

### [ASTP \(Alcohol Skills Training Program\)](#)

Many national organizations have implemented ASTP as part of their chapter education requirements. This training can also be conducted by campus professionals with chapters that are not required by the inter/national headquarters but are in need of similar education.

### [SafeBars](#)

This program teaches individuals working at bars, restaurants, or other functions where alcohol may be present how to look for signs of potential sexual harassment and assault. The program can be tailored to the collegiate environment.

**f. Continue to develop and strengthen the relationship with police.**

Take advantage of the opportunities to bring police officers to council and chapter meetings.

- i. **Encourage participation by the officers who police areas and events as opposed to command officers.** Topics for those meetings should include scenario planning (i.e. what to do if \_\_\_\_ happens; sexual assault; bystander intervention and anonymous reporting; the Pitt amnesty program and related topics).

Another campus example of a [student amnesty policy for alcohol and drug emergencies](#) is from the University of Texas, Austin. Case studies and practical examples are excellent tools to further understanding medical amnesty. The College of William & Mary provides examples for discussion on its [website](#).

- ii. **Publish an updated list of recognized chapters/groups for the police each semester.** Include a list of unrecognized groups and any information that can be shared, especially addresses. FSL and upper-level administrators should discuss their philosophy and strategies for dealing with unrecognized groups.
- iii. **Educate police officers on hazing so they know how to report incidents and to whom.** Establish a multi-disciplinary Hazing Response Team (HRT) which includes police officers. Pennsylvania recently upgraded its hazing laws, and police officers need to be able to identify hazing in subtle as well as obvious forms.
- iv. **Partner with respected and effective police personnel.** Publicize the work of Heather Camp who speaks on sexual assault and promote that partnership. She is in demand with chapters, and her

work can be expanded because undergraduates find her trainings valuable.

**v. Strengthen relationships with police with hands-on service initiatives.**

Coordinate opportunities for police and undergraduates to work side-by-side on community service projects to strengthen relationships. The police are available to do more volunteer work with the fraternity/sorority community.

**g. Scrutinize events.**

**i. Clearly define a chapter event and educate others.**

While a hard number of members definition, such as eight members, provides guidance to defining an event, the primary factor in defining an event is the association with an organization. That approach is used because that reflects the legal system--that in the event of an injury, any organization that can be identified may be named in a lawsuit.

Some national organizations use a single-digit number to define an event. Others rely upon language such as, "... an event that an observer would associate with the chapter."

The use of "associated with" properly places the emphasis upon the activity and not the venue. That can help address concerns and issues with the annex or Ditheridge houses. The outcome is to influence our undergraduates to consider nearly any activity that involves members and alcohol as an event and therefore risk management or health and safety standards apply.

The [FIPG Guidelines](#) do not specify a specific number for purposes of definition.

**ii. Empower and educate the Panhellenic chapters about hosted events.**

After decades of "We can't do that," some of the women's national organizations, are making progress towards approving events hosted by women's chapters. These changes will require work by undergraduates and alumnae and a firm partnership with national organizations, but these changes are occurring on other campuses.

The NPC organization's collegiate women are weary of always going to men's venues for events. The empty houses on campus would serve as venues for events hosted by non-IFC fraternities.

**iii. Publish an FSL calendar of events populated by chapter and council leaders.**

A shared calendar will help people know when large events, registered parties, and other activities will be held. Describe the estimated numbers of attendees and dynamics of those events. Agree upon the individuals and offices who should receive this calendar and have student leaders share this information.

**iv. Require guest lists for any chapter event with alcohol.**

The guest list must be prepared and submitted at least 24 hours in advance of the event. If Pitt continues to use a registration process for events, then all organizations in the fraternity/sorority community must register their events regardless of the venue. A card swipe system is effective in limiting those in attendance to Pitt students and keeping track of the guest list.

**v. Enact the BYOB policy or third-party vendor provided events.**

(Note: As it is used in health and safety/risk management discussions, a third-party vendor involves the use of a professional bartender who sells alcohol across a bar to those of legal age.) Both systems reduce liability for the host organization and both systems reduce the amount of alcohol consumed by members and guests.

BYOB (Bring Your Own Beer) and Third-party Vendor (hiring a professional bartender who sells alcohol "over the bar" as at a commercial establishment) have one common factor: an individual makes her or his own choices as to what to drink and how much to drink, within policy limits. And, if these practices are followed, a chapter is not providing, giving or selling alcohol to members or guests. That reduces the amount of alcohol that members or guests may consume and the potential liability involved with an event.

When an organization provides alcohol to guests and members, the legal responsibility for that alcohol and its effect upon each person is arguably assumed by the organization and in some states by individual members of the organization. Since the use of alcohol often contributes to falls from elevated places, sexual assault, physical violence and related issues, the restriction on the type and

amount of alcohol generated through BYOB or TPV contributes to safer events.

**vi. Provide specific risk management training for NPHC by alumni and/or staff.**

NPHC members may say, “We don’t have to worry about risk management because we don’t host huge parties with alcohol.” However, there are still risks involved at their “dry” events because chapters continue to host pre- and post-event parties and charge a fee at the door. These practices place individuals and chapters at great risk.

**h. Investigate discounts for substance-free housing.**

Fraternities that are housed on campus should receive a discount for adopting substance-free housing. That translates into no alcohol in the house, 24/7/365. Events can be held at other locations including an empty house. Inter/national organizations Delta Upsilon, Sigma Phi Epsilon, and Beta Theta Pi have adopted substance-free housing in the past 18 months for implementation within 2 years for all chapters.

FarmHouse Fraternity has always had a substance-free housing policy. Phi Delta Theta has been substance-free since 1997. Other groups such as Alpha Tau Omega and Delta Tau Delta are working to bring about similar changes. The University can encourage safer environments and events through discounts and other incentives.

**i. Strategize for governing councils’ self-governance initiatives.**

Push the leadership and responsibility down to the chapter and council leaders. Outline health and safety/risk management expectations but also support and encourage the leaders, whether elected or simply followed, to take control of their chapters and their actions. Begin with the council leaders and encourage them to schedule a closed meeting (undergraduates only) to decide what better and safer events look like and the practices associated with it. They need consensus, not unanimity, to bring about changes. They must share their outcomes.

University administrators, working with council leaders, must decide which violations of policy will be handled or processed by which entity. That should not exclude the governing councils from acting on matters that the University does not consider within its jurisdiction.

**i. Establish a committee dedicated to town/gown relations.**

With the understanding that fraternity and sorority members must coexist with the residents of Pittsburgh, a town/gown relations Tri-

Council committee or task force could serve as a bridge between the two communities and work to create healthy partnerships.

This group could serve as a liaison to the police department to better educate the fraternity/sorority community on policies, procedures, and being good neighbors. The membership should be representative of the residential areas highly populated by undergraduates. A maximum of four members from each area (i.e. The Hill, Dithridge). Members of the committee can either be appointed or elected based on the Tri-Council by-laws.

ii. **Redefine social fraternity and sorority.**

In the feedback students provided about community engagement, they mainly referenced philanthropy and used the contributions made through philanthropic efforts to justify certain attitudes and behaviors. Help students redefine “social” fraternities and sororities to its true meaning, “contributing to society. “

An emphasis on the service component could educate the fraternity/sorority community on how the money raised is used to enhance the lives of others and give them an opportunity to see the direct impact of those contributions.

### **3. Alumni and parent interventions and programs for engagement**

a. **Start small with alumni initiatives.**

Smaller initiatives, if well targeted, can make a big difference and can also serve as the basis for future successes. The key is to move beyond nondescript and untargeted requests (i.e. “We need money”) to more thoughtful inquiries. Something as simple as an email announcing the job plans or job needs of graduating seniors might be a nice way to inform alumni about what is happening on campus and to engage them in job placement or future internship opportunities.

Service initiatives can be undertaken off-campus as well as on-campus. Consider working together with alumni to conduct service projects over the summer, spring, or fall break. To inspire confidence in alumni, initiatives like this must be done in a timely and professional manner. Coaching from the Alumni Affairs staff is strongly suggested.

b. **Create a list of alumni volunteers.**

Begin by compiling an accurate list of all advisors, corporation officers, and other involved alumni including regional volunteers for all chapters. Cross-check with the inter/national headquarters. Maintain this annually. Share with all

volunteers to promote collaboration and communication. This can be distributed during a meeting, event or newsletter.

**c. Invite alumni to offer their time and talents beyond chapter advisement.**

Alumni have talents that might be helpful to the chapter. Give them the opportunity to utilize those talents and to be involved and engaged in specific, positive and community-beneficial activities. Tap them for initiatives which improve the entire community. An involved alumnus is a supportive alumnus.

**d. Solicit coaching for chapter leaders from headquarters staff on how to manage disruptive alumni.**

For general members and chapter leaders, it is difficult to confront alumni who are disruptive, rude, drunk or just inappropriate at events. Work with headquarters staff and mature, respected alumni to strategize for these instances. Set the tone and communicate firmly via the chapter newsletter and website. Be sure to do this well in advance of events which have become problematic because of alumni behaving badly.

Help alumni understand what behaviors are expected and what is unacceptable in today's changing chapter culture. Rarely are the big donors and/or influential alumni the ones making problems for undergraduates. Rogue alumni are oftentimes young and are those who want to relive their chapter experiences without any fear of sanctions by the chapter.

**e. Develop relationships with alumni and other constituent groups.**

Students are transient. The long-term preservation and progression of the fraternity and sorority community is dependent on engaging alumni and inter/national headquarters representatives and volunteers.

Efforts to engage alumni could focus on increased communication. This can be done by FSL or student leaders. Disseminating templates of content to these constituents via e-newsletters may be a helpful practice. Common content could be developed for all chapters to post on their own websites and other social media sites. This can be done by a Tri-Council leader to ensure information is being shared about the NPHC, Panhellenic and IFC chapters. Working together allows for a holistic approach to championing the fraternity and sorority experience.

**f. Strategize for regular and ongoing alumni communications.**

The FSL staff can schedule at least one meeting each semester and one in the summer for all alumni volunteers. Have an agenda and keep the meeting to an hour with at least 15 minutes for discussion. Solicit questions and topics ahead of time to keep the discussion focused. Alumni volunteers want and need

comparison data (i.e. how many hours chapter meetings takes, dues, recruitment information, motivation tactics).

**g. Host an Alumni Summit on alcohol, hazing, and other risk management and safety issues.**

Offer regular meetings, training opportunities, and other educational experiences to help fraternity and sorority alumni, PAM, and other supporters learn about the challenges and opportunities for changing the alcohol culture. Sometimes a one-time, intensive Alumni Summit is the best use of alumni members' time.

**h. Work to get at least two alumni advisors/mentors for each chapter.**

The job is too big for just one person. And, two heads are better than one when it comes to problem solving and coaching young leaders. Remind people that advisors do not need to be an alumnus from that chapter and from the University of Pittsburgh. A woman can advise a men's chapter and vice versa. The important factor is that that she or he cares.

**i. Take full advantage of regional events by various national organizations held at the University.**

Pittsburgh is a great convention city. Many inter/national organizations host their regional and national conferences in town. While those are frequently on a weekend, those organizations recruit and contract with experienced and sometimes high-profile presenters. Many of those speakers are willing to offer an additional session or two at no expense for local alumni.

#### **4. NPHC Community**

**a. Educate strategically on hazing, risk management, and intake.**

It is imperative to educate students in a culturally competent manner. If not done so, membership numbers may continue to fall, and students will continue to conduct events that expose their chapters and themselves to unnecessary risk.

The University should provide yearly mandatory education on its hazing and risk management policies. Additionally, it should provide training covering alcohol, drugs, and Title IX. Advisors should be trained on these issues as well.

While providing this education, the University must hold these organizations to the same standards as their IFC/Panhellenic peers, especially in the area of risk management. Provide speakers and/or facilitators that will allow dialogue regarding risk management and hazing issues unique to NPHC, as well as opportunities to attend the Northeast Greek Leadership Association ([NGLA](#)),

Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values ([AFLV](#)), and the [Miseducation of a Black Greek](#), for students in these organizations to learn specific leadership skills.

**b. Draft a policy on chapter size.**

The university does not currently have a minimum membership number requirement. One (1) out of the six (6) chapters is currently meeting their minimum insurance requirement of seven (7) students. This should be a transparent and collaborative process that considers the demographics of the University, resources provided by the University, additional marketing, education, and exposure to the broader University community. Many institutions have instituted a minimum standard to encourage recruitments within the groups represented. This will also require the University to have a transparent process for enforcement, the opportunity to appeal, and detailed steps to return to campus.

**c. Engage with the larger fraternity/sorority community.**

While the Tri-Council is great at connecting leaders within the community, the members of the NPHC still do not feel connected. Students do feel supported by CCLD and upper administrators, but they need to be continually engaged in all aspects of their experience as members.

The NPHC community has strong traditions they want to showcase, and it is important to encourage participation by IFC/ Panhellenic members in the NPHC traditions in an authentic manner. More NPHC students should be a part of the planning of Greek Week, orientation, New Member Orientation, and Greek 101. There is a sense the members of this council are not held accountable to participate because of their small chapter size, and there is not an emphasis by the office to have IFC/ Panhellenic support NPHC events.

**d. Contextualize programming and services.**

The NPHC organizations nationally, as well as at Pitt, are unique in their program offerings. They provide a wide variety of programming for the campus and community at large to fulfill their respective organization requirements.

When working with these groups, professional staff should request the calendar of semesterly events, as well as keep track of on- and off-campus programs the chapters participate in. It is critical to understanding the difference between the NPHC organizations and their IFC/ Panhellenic counterparts by contextualizing their amount of programming. This is where professional staff can assist the chapters by connecting them to on-campus resources.

To assist in increasing their visibility, professional staff should encourage chapters to do more programming and service on campus as opposed to off campus. The increased visibility of the positive aspects of the chapters'

programming/services will help attract quality candidates and increase interest in the organizations more broadly.

**e. Focus on building the council.**

Organization members tend to believe the NPHC governing body is secondary to their chapter; however, it is critical that students understand that their affiliation with the council and the effectiveness of the council is just as important as their individual chapter. Fortunately, the University is already in the process of hiring a full-time program coordinator to focus on their council and chapter development.

Council and chapter development should focus on building unity within the council, connecting the members of the council with more faculty and staff that do not generally interact with NPHC organizations, and addressing the exclusivity and secrecy mentality. The NPHC should conduct an annual planning retreat as well as attend conferences geared towards the development of that council and the individual organizations within.

**5. Additional Best Practices**

**a. Create and implement a Pitt fraternity/sorority life mission/values statement.**

Upon review of the Pitt Greek Life website, there was no collective statement expressing the mission and values of the office. Thoroughly outlining the office's duties, its constituents, and its expectations and philosophy would be beneficial information for interested students, parents, alumni, and members of the Pitt fraternity/sorority community. The Pitt Office of Cross Cultural and Leadership Development (CCLD) [vision and mission statement](#) can serve as a model.

**b. Assess needs around program needs.**

Conduct a needs-based assessment to identify programming areas lacking support and create a list of potential partnerships to close the gaps in programming.

Part of self-governance is proactive work. The FSL staff can work in conjunction with Student Health Services and the University Counseling Center to develop programming targeted at problematic issues within the fraternity/sorority community.

- i. Creating safe social environments
- ii. Confronting inappropriate behavior from chapter members
- iii. Mental/emotional health
- iv. Consent
- v. Signs and symptoms of alcohol/drug use, abuse, and dependence
- vi. Making suggestions and referrals for assistance

vii. Allyship, Violence Prevention, and Survivor Assistance

c. **Create intentional programming geared toward the incorporation of the Pitt Promise.**

The Pitt Promise is comprised of many values that are congruent with the mission and values of fraternities and sororities. The CCLD office could institute programming and activities directly related to the Pitt Promise as a means of helping to bring the fraternity/sorority community expectations in closer alignment with institutional expectations of conduct in and out of the classroom.

Examples of programming could include a speaker series, community service projects, social media campaigns, and open town halls.

d. **Create an incentive-based process connected to accreditation program that adds credibility to being recognized by University.**

The vast majority of campus accreditation programs provide member chapters with a list of expectations, a rubric to measure progress, and a ranking that dictates a particular status based on achievement of those expectations. There are very few of these processes that extend beyond an award or recognition of high performance.

Working with student leaders could help determine what kind of incentives would motivate stronger participation, encourage buy-in from the chapters, and increase investment in the accreditation process. This will also help aid the chapters in explaining how beneficial university recognition is and how this experience greatly differs from those in unrecognized organizations.

e. **Establish training for alumni, campus advisors, and other connected supporters about the conduct process.**

Work in conjunction with the Office of Student Conduct to provide organizational support about and through the conduct process. A sample program from Rutgers University-New Brunswick can be seen at their [website](#). Lehigh University also has an [accreditation program](#).

f. **Explore the creation of an Advisory Board consisting of fraternity/sorority students/alumni and staff and staff partners.**

A major strength that was identified in the report was the willingness of University administration to support the Pitt Greek community. It was also pointed out that there are many administrators at Pitt who are members of fraternities and sororities.

Establishing a direct line of communication between undergraduate Greek leadership, alumni, and University administration could help to provide a space

for transparency and understanding in regard to the concerns around the status of the Greek community at Pitt and the expectations of University administration. This board would provide undergraduates with an assurance that their needs are concerns are being heard by the administration, a means for engaging alumni, and a way for administration to provide engage and support the Greek community. Below are examples of universities where these boards exist:

[Cornell University](#)

[Indiana University](#)

[Elon University](#)

[University of Illinois, Champaign Urbana](#)

##

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