

FSL Committee: Chapter Growth/Size and Recruitment Policies Final Report & Recommendations

Members of the Committee

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Charge

This committee will provide recommendations concerning future expansion of FSL, determine the optimal time in the academic schedule for recruitment, chapter size and the processes currently being utilized for fraternity and sorority recruitment.

Recommendations regarding when or if we should lift the moratorium on growth as well as effective strategies to bring current sorority chapter's numbers closer to national averages will be addressed.

Observations

Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) is an important part of the student experience at the University of Oregon. Seventeen percent of the student population are affiliated with Greek life at the university. Student interest in joining the Greek community has increased significantly over the past few years. Data from the last two years show there is an increased number of students entering the UO who are actively seeking membership in fraternities and sororities. The members who join fraternities and sororities will benefit from the organizations they join because they will not only receive academic support provided by their affiliation, they will also be a part of a smaller community within the larger university setting, and ultimately they will have higher standards of student conduct than other students attending the university.

The benefits of FSL are well documented. Students who are involved in the Greek community

have a higher GPA than the overall college GPA. Undergraduates raise money for local organizations and provide thousands of volunteer hours for a variety of local non-profits than the average student population. Greeks are 20% more likely to graduate from college than students not in Greek life. Of the Fortune 500 executives 85% belonged to a fraternity or sorority in college. Further, all but two US Presidents since 1825 have been in a fraternity. These students are, by and large, college leaders and the future alumni who contribute to projects and fund university wide programs. Greeks tend to be professionally successful, and they are more inclined to give because of their positive college experience. As alumni, Greeks give approximately 75% of all money donated to universities. It is an important long-term investment for the university to engage and advocate for Greek life.

Important Considerations

In the External Review conducted by Mark Koepsell and Jeremiah Shinn (March 2016) it was reported that “there have been unintended consequences connected to the current ban on expansion of sorority chapters”. The report further states that “current chapter sizes have grown beyond what student leadership and their advisors can effectively manage”. Still further, “the unwieldy size of chapters were cited as major factors contributing to the reality of risky behaviors”. We believe these findings are correct.

These unintended consequences have led to chapter sizes rocketing to record numbers, adding to the gap between the University’s ability to support the Greek system and FSL students’ ability to hold their members accountable which has led to an increase in risky behaviors. Student leadership and alumni advisors cannot effectively manage without an infrastructure provided by the University with maximum support. In addition, the FSL office has been in continual flux for the past five years with numerous staff changes and a lack of clear and measurable goals. The office has struggled to maintain committed professionals, which has resulted in a lack of professional development and industry leading expertise. As a result, more time has been spent devoted to hiring staff than developing strategic programming and student support. Without clear goals, measurable outcomes, and the development of new collaborative programming model, challenges will continue to distract and discourage FSL staff. Finally, given these challenges at the UO (and nationally) sororities and fraternities increasingly experience bias on campus. Students in FSL are experiencing growing criticism and alienation without due process. Students are expected to govern themselves and without a template or model of how to accomplish this, the job of accountability is even tougher. Frustrations are growing quickly and a renewed sense of partnership and support between FSL and the University is needed. It is the hope of this committee that the following

recommendations will provide a path forward for increased collaboration and a successful partnership between the students in fraternities and sororities and the university.

Future Expansion

Provide recommendations concerning future expansion of FSL...regarding when and if we should lift the moratorium on growth and develop strategies to bring current sorority chapter sizes closer to national averages.

Recommendation #1

We recommend that the moratorium on expanding the number of sororities and fraternities be lifted, and the university grow the number of fraternity and sorority chapters to accommodate the growing student interest. In addition, minimum standards need to be in place prior to being recognized as a fraternity or sorority on campus. For example, new groups would need to provide risk management policies, and submit advisory board names of local alumni in advancement of endorsement. These and other minimum standards are critical and often used at peer universities.

Sororities

With the inclusion of Sigma Kappa entering fall formal recruitment in 2016, and Delta Zeta entering fall formal recruitment in 2017, the overall sorority chapter membership numbers will be provided some relief. Once Delta Zeta comes to the UO in 2017, the sororities can decide if they should invite another group. After fall 2017, the decision to further grow sororities should be reviewed with the stakeholders again, paying specific attention to the reduction in individual chapter membership numbers and reviewing what is best for all chapters considered.

Fraternities

With numbers ranging from 20 to 109, the average membership for UO fraternities is 79. Rather than just adding new fraternities to the current 18 recognized fraternities at the UO, an important discussion should occur about what the minimum membership number should be and what requirements must be met prior to a fraternity being recognized on campus. Fraternities generally would benefit greatly by engaging new chapters that colonize on campus because they will bring more alumni oversight and involvement than simply growing membership in existing chapters. Furthermore, the university should review existing fraternities to ensure that proper alumni engagement is in place and work on a success plan to help fraternities reach the minimum requirements to be recognized

by the university or consider disaffiliation of those chapters that then do not meet the minimum requirements.

Recommendation #2

Beyond recommending that the moratorium on growth be lifted, effective immediately, we recommend further study before linking optimal fraternity and sorority numbers to national averages. Additional data is necessary to better understand what specific number is “optimal” when it comes to membership totals in comparison to national averages.

Recruitment

Provide recommendations concerning the optimal time in the academic schedule for recruitment.

Recommendation #1

We recommend a different fall recruitment experience for our potential new members. Because the campus academic calendar is based upon the 10-week quarter, we believe changing the timeline for fall recruitment to before the academic year begins would better suit new students who wish to become involved in a fraternity or sorority. We recommend that recruitment be moved to the week before school starts, beginning in the fall of 2017. Students would be required to arrive on campus early in order to join a fraternity and/or sorority. Like other student groups who meet prior to the start of the school year, those potential new members would also be given the special consideration of moving into their dorms earlier to accommodate this fall recruitment experience. In doing so, the university would affirm the importance of prioritizing academic focus and it would allow ample time for chapters to complete recruitment. In addition, the university would be able to incorporate helpful on-boarding support during this entry period to university life. Special trainings with specific aspects of Greek life and information sharing could be included for those students who are involved in recruitment. We believe this will provide a positive beginning to the academic year which will contribute to overall academic and student-life success for each student.

Students who enter FSL as freshmen have a support system as they begin their college career, with academics being a priority for the FSL community. Study tables and study hours are incorporated into each new member experience and fraternity and sorority

members are academically motivated because they are required by their organization to maintain high scholastic standards. College can be an intimidating experience for many entering freshmen and having a support through FSL can have an immediate impact at the beginning of their college career. For most FSL members, maintaining a strong academic record is a tenant of membership.

Sororities

Currently fall formal recruitment is provided during the first weeks of the academic year, typically between week 2 and week 3. Changing this fall formal recruitment period to begin prior to school starting in the fall would be important for starting the year out right. Because fall formal recruitment is a six-day endeavor, and the seventh day is when bids are revealed, an optimal time for the university to provide for recruitment would be the six days prior to the beginning of school, beginning on a Tuesday (for example). Academic priorities would not be compromised as school would not be in session. With respect to risky behaviors during this time period, there would be less risky behaviors and party atmosphere around the first week back on campus due to the “dry period” for Greeks during the recruitment period. There would be provisions placed ahead of time to deal with this zero-tolerance activity.

Fraternities

A formalized fall and spring recruitment is recommended. All recruitment events must be registered and organized/sanctioned for both fall and spring. Utilizing a specialized app, students who would like to participate in formal recruitment would be required to register. This would provide FSL with accurate information about how many students are formally participating, who they are, where they live, and what their expectations are with respect to membership in fraternity life. Gathering recruitment information prior to the start of formal recruitment would also provide for a way to compile information. This information would ensure that fraternity expectations are aligned with university expectations.

We propose that this organized recruitment period occur two times during the academic year: the week before fall classes begin and during the first week of class following spring break.

Other Challenges/Concerns

We recognize accountability, oversight, recruitment timing, and the way these transitions are implemented are critical to improving the overall experience for the students in FSL. For those coming to campus and with the recommendation of expansion, do we have a system that is set

up for success, and are we set up to support the FSL office properly? The university and FSL leadership need to have plans, expectations and clear policies in place to maintain a quality experience for FSL.

Institutional expectations are a priority. What do we expect from our fraternities and sororities? We believe minimum standards need to be established, publicized and enforced. For example, a minimum number of alumni advisors are necessary, and GPA requirements should be an important part of this group's recognition.

Another concern is demand. What happens if student demand for FSL membership falls and there are too many chapters on campus? We would need to be mindful of this fact and respond accordingly and with respect to the councils involved. Further, especially with so many chapters having housing properties to maintain, the issue needs to be reviewed on a broader level with those who are informed of how chapter housing is organized. An advisory group, could be created to assist in the development of these updated policies, procedures and best practices. The Advisory Group would not only provide experience and knowledge in developing this policies but also would serve as a positive public engagement effort to disseminate information.

We believe consistent data about the Fraternity and Sorority community is important:

- GPA of New groups vs Established groups
- Conduct cases past 5 years New vs Established
- Conduct cases relative to size of chapters.
- Fraternities vs. Sororities difference in growth relative to growth of community

Some Takeaways

Our committee agrees with the External Review that there are benefits to growth in both the fraternities and the sororities; however, we recognize that there are defining questions that need consideration prior to calling our work a success.

- Should the nature of the relationship between the university and FSL be of a close and active nature or of a distant and passive nature?
- Should the nature of the relationship between the university and FSL be education and developmental or legal and compliance oriented?

Answers to these questions not only need to be clearly defined in writing, but in seen action.

The cooperation of all stakeholders is important to Greek community success. Involving and including stakeholders in these decisions make for good partners in the future. We also recognize that this report was presented in March, and no “quick fix” will solve the problem.

We believe there is a current lack of trust in the leadership. We desperately need people who understand what they are talking about to advise the University on their actions regarding Greek life.

Faculty engagement is also a key to the overall success of FSL. The faculty are the backbone of the university. We need them to be advocates for the Greek community, to mentor the Greek community, and foster good relationships with the Greek community. Is there a way to locate faculty members who are Greek, or who aren't Greek who would like to be involved? Many sorority and fraternity members cite shame from professors for their being involved in Greek life. Does this happen with the band students, or athletes, or any other student group on campus? Threats and backlash should not be part of the fabric of choosing to be involved in a campus extracurricular activity.

It has been said that the best way to fix our issues is to recruit fantastic new emerging leaders who can develop into the kind of people who can make change. We need to have advisors that support and encourage our chapters to do that. At most schools (even those smaller than our size), there are 3-4 advisors per chapter that can help facilitate and guide the chapter's leadership. That isn't the case here. Not only in the FSL office but chapters only have one advisor (some have none). How can the university work with our national headquarter organizations and the FSL office to help foster better relationships between alumni and the chapters so they are exciting and willing to be alumni advisors for us all? While that isn't directly related to recruitment, it factors into the growth this community needs to see.

Throughout the work of our committee an overarching frustration was the sense that university administration is looking for an immediate solution to a slew of issues that have been festering for more than a few years. The challenges facing FSL at the UO are long in the making and can't be resolved with a quick fix approach. A fundamental question facing FSL is, what does the university envision as success? Can we partner with the university and truly work together for the betterment of our student engagement? There is a concern about how many hours have been invested so far in the recommendations with the fear that, once again, nothing will be accomplished.

Additional data would be helpful in better understanding how FSL fits into the university's student success expectations. This understanding could assist the university and FSL in addressing areas for improvement and modeling areas of success. In President Schill's Investiture address he cited student success as one of his key priorities. We believe that FSL can be contributing partner in achieving this goal.

Other important data that needs special consideration:

- 4 and 6-year graduation rates
- First-year retention and conduct
- Gallup/ASTIN
- Fall term new member GPA comparison study (University of Oregon/Other Pac 12 Universities).

National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) Groups

The committee focused primarily on the traditional Greek community but did spend some time discussing the need to support and grow the NPHC groups. At a basic level there is much more work needs to be invested in growing and supporting these student groups. These groups need specific and targeted guidance from a FSL office that relates to their needs and they need local councils and advisors to advise them. They need to be recognized on campus as welcomed participants in the student life experience. Identifying and supporting these groups should be an important goal for the Division of Student Life and this should be done in the context of overall staffing for FSL support; specifically, more dedicated staff time with these groups.

Specific Recommendations include:

Newly formed multicultural groups need campus wide recognition. We further recommend that instead of an unstructured expansion process for these groups, we advocate for open expansion. We need to dedicate resources to openly acknowledge the value of the NPHC, their recognition and support are paramount for their success. These groups require infrastructure and template models. Further, encouraging interactions between all fraternities and sororities is important to the success of the NPHC chapters wishing to colonize. Inviting the NPHC councils to attend IFC and PHC meetings and leadership development programming we believe would be very important moving forward. Advocating for these groups, recognizing them on campus, and allowing advising to take place in Eugene would be important to their success.