

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY FRATERNITY/SORORITY REVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND

During summer 2018, Syracuse University engaged external consultants to co-lead an evaluation of its fraternity/sorority community. The consultants requested reports, processes/procedures, and historical documents to help shape the on-site focus group work performed in September 2018. Some of these documents included:

- Divisional and departmental strategic plans
- Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (FASA) documents
- Greek council documents
- Names of chapters and membership totals
- Organizational charts
- Membership/grade reports
- Newspaper articles
- Educational program summaries
- And myriad pieces of information to better understand the services, resources, personnel, and structures related to the fraternity/sorority community

METHODOLOGY

Pre-Consultant Visit Surveying

The Syracuse University Office of Institutional Research launched a Greek Life Survey before the consultants came to campus. Per the survey report:

“The Greek Life Survey was administered from August 13 to September 3, 2018, to all non-University College students who were enrolled full-time for the fall 2018 semester and had previously spent at least one fall or spring semester on campus as a full-time student. A total of 9163 students were invited to participate in the survey and 3820 responded, for a response rate of 41.6%.”

Consultant On-Site Research/Focus Groups

As part of the research, the consultants conducted the following activities during their visit in September 2018:

1. Held 21 on-site focus group meetings and interviews with more than 260 people.
2. Interviewed individuals (260+) in the following categories:
 - a. Students
 - b. University Stakeholders
 - c. Alumni

STRENGTHS

The consultants asked participants questions about the strengths of the fraternity/sorority community in the on-site focus group meetings. Compared to their work on other college campuses, the consultants noted that participants in the fraternity/sorority focus groups here at the University required more time and thought to identify strengths of the University's fraternity/sorority community.

The five strengths identified by the groups were:

1. Panhellenic Council Recruitment
2. Philanthropy
3. Hands-On Community Service
4. FASA Advisement of Culturally Based Chapters
5. Schine Student Center Event Management

While five strengths were identified, most of the discussion during the focus groups centered on challenges in the fraternity/sorority community. Those challenges are discussed in the next section.

CHALLENGES

Six areas emerged through the survey and during the three days of focus group interviews as challenges in the fraternity/sorority community. The areas are:

1. Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (FASA)

Organizational structure and operational practices in the FASA office were challenges identified in the focus group meetings. University partners believe FASA is understaffed and underfunded which has led to strained relationships with University partners and student leaders.

2. Communication

Unclear policies and information, policy implementation, and a lack of Interfraternity Council (IFC) participation in the review process were the overarching themes related to communication. Focus group participants were hopeful the new director would implement consistent communication with all constituents and work to streamline policies and processes.

3. Diversity and Inclusion

The Chancellor, the Board of Trustees, and the Chancellor's Diversity and Inclusion workgroup are making campus diversity and inclusion a priority and have accountability practices in place to ensure progress in these areas. In the fraternity/sorority context, the consultants observed that the Syracuse fraternities and sororities operate within three separate and distinct communities: a) Interfraternity Council (IFC) and Panhellenic Association (PanHel) chapters (4081 members); b) Professional Fraternity Council (PFC) chapters (368 members);

and c) the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), and the Multicultural Greek Council (MGC) chapters (163 members).

The culturally-based chapters (*e.g.*, NPHC; NALFO; MGC) expressed feeling marginalized (“SU doesn't understand what it means to be an underrepresented student.”) among the Greek community. These chapters discussed instances of cultural appropriation and microaggressions (Cinco de Drinko and Nacho Libre nights at a Panhellenic sorority house), and missed opportunities for inclusion, engagement, and authentic relationship development between all chapters.

4. Law Enforcement Jurisdiction

Two law enforcement departments oversee the safety of the University community, including the fraternity/sorority community. The Syracuse University Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the City of Syracuse Police Department (SPD). Departments have an “understanding” as to who does what and when, with exceptions duly noted. The shared jurisdictional responsibilities of DPS and SPD seem to create confusion and frustration for fraternities and sororities in three areas: parties, hazing, and event security.

a. Parties

Regarding parties, members of the culturally-based chapters discussed the perceived difference with how parties are monitored for students of color.

Specifically, NPHC, NALFO, and MGC members do not have houses on campus but do live together in off-campus apartments. Their events fall under the jurisdiction of SPD. Therefore, the ramifications of loud or large parties for these students are markedly different: tickets, fines, and even jail. IFC and Panhellenic events are largely monitored by DPS and private security companies.

While students from IFC and Panhellenic organizations see the culturally-based organization’s ability to host parties at their places of residence as an advantage, the members of the culturally-based groups feel that IFC/Panhellenic organizations get a pass; and their events are never shut down by DPS or event security.

b. Hazing

Authority for investigation of hazing cases is divided between SPD, DPS, and the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR). These dynamics have generated frustration and angst among all involved.

c. Event Security

The consulting team heard consistent and often extended complaints and concerns about event security. Concerns were raised about frequency of visits, security policies, and perceived favoritism of some chapters.

5. Risk Management

During the focus group meetings with students, the consulting team asked, “What are the weaknesses and threats of the community (i.e. What keeps you up at night)?” **The responses** included unrecognized groups, liability of officers, over-programming, and untrained standards boards at the chapter level.

When asked **what would make the community safer**, students said:

- Stronger event security
- A clear, consistent, and easier way to register events
- More timely communication from FASA about the status of registered social events
- Fewer blackout days (Some believe blackout days increase high-risk behavior to “make up” for the banned days)
- A ban on certain alcoholic beverages, such as “jungle juice”
- Updated risk management and health and safety information and training

Party Culture

The social event environment dominated much of the conversation among the IFC and Panhellenic chapter student groups. Consultants learned of the many high-risk behaviors associated with the fraternity/sorority community (specifically IFC and Panhellenic groups).

Policies and Procedures

When it comes to understanding and interpreting the rules that may reduce risk, the students mentioned the need for clarity. Students desire more formalized training. They specifically requested:

- **Event management training** for members and leaders where they learn how to identify alcohol poisoning and how to intervene if they witness the possibility of a sexual assault occurring.
- Training around **bystander behavior, how to identify hazing, and creating alternatives to hazing behavior.**

Hazing

Although hazing did not seem to dominate the conversation with the **affiliated** students, there were some underlying concerns shared by them. Some examples shared included sleep deprivation, extreme exertion/exercise, and verbal and emotional abuse.

6. Unrecognized Groups

Syracuse University lists 11 unrecognized groups on its website. The consulting team heard about two (2) men’s unrecognized groups most frequently who continue to generate complaints and problems.

The concerns with unrecognized groups include:

- The lack of accountability to respective national organizations
- The lack of accountability to Syracuse University
- Many recruit new members, host parties, engage in negative behavior and create problems and issues in surrounding neighborhoods
- Potential hazing in unrecognized groups

RECOMMENDATIONS

FASA

1. Review the organizational structure
2. Increase monetary resources
3. Improve operational procedures
4. Improve communication with stakeholders

COMMUNICATION

1. Create a strategic communication plan
2. Continue communications from high-level student affairs administrators.
3. Continue the "Meet the Fraternities/Sororities" dinners and receptions.
4. Develop a sound FASA internal communication strategy

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

1. Diversity and Inclusion Recommendations
2. Engage Alumni
3. Develop interchapter relationships
4. Educate the fraternity/sorority community as a whole
5. Encourage fraternity/sorority involvement in Syracuse Pride
6. Encourage cross-council collaboration with the professional fraternity chapters

LAW ENFORCEMENT JURISDICTION

Immediate:

1. Schedule a meeting with the OSRR and representatives of the two police departments.
2. Discuss the jurisdiction between the two departments.
3. Hold separate meetings with NPHC, NALFO, PFC and MGC officers and representatives from the two police departments.
4. Consider employing a new event security approach.

Three to six months:

1. Establish a schedule of meetings with officers from both departments with undergraduates.
2. Hold at least one meeting a year with chapter advisors, house or alumni corporation representatives, and house directors.

RISK MANAGEMENT

1. Have FASA create formalized training and easily accessible resources
2. Create a comprehensive hazing education program.
3. Create a detailed Hazing Incident Report Form.
4. Review Penn State's hazing policies for consideration.

UNRECOGNIZED GROUP

1. Take a more aggressive stance on unrecognized groups.
2. Update the FASA website language about the 11 unrecognized groups.

3. Train resident assistants to be alert for any signs of hazing.
4. Audit social media and any websites of unrecognized groups on a regular basis.
5. Work with the intramural department to prohibit unrecognized groups from participating.
6. Audit the registered student organization list each fall and suspend unrecognized groups.
7. Ask recognized organization members to identify unrecognized group members.
8. Educate recognized group members about the risks of unrecognized groups.
 - a. Health and safety
 - b. Liability risk of chapters
 - c. Liability risk of individuals
9. Meet with representatives from SPD and DPS about unrecognized groups.