

Recognition and Governance of Undergraduate Social Fraternities and Sororities at the University of Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

The University of Pennsylvania values collegiate fraternities and sororities as an important component of the undergraduate student experience at Pennsylvania. Fraternal organizations have existed at the University since 1849. Over the years, they have undergone many changes, and they now take a variety of forms. These social organizations complement the academic and non-academic aspects of the University's community life not only by offering a vital residential alternative for undergraduate students, but also by serving as a source of academic and social support as their members pursue their educational goals. The University also welcomes the important contributions fraternity and sorority alumni make to the Pennsylvania alumni family, to the undergraduate chapters on campus, and to the University community as a whole.

To acknowledge these and many other contributions, and to strengthen the presence of fraternities and sororities on our campus, the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life has adopted the following Policy on Recognition and Governance of fraternities and sororities, to be administered by the Office of Fraternity Affairs with the advice and assistance of the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, and Interfraternity Alumni Council. This Policy is intended to define the relationship between fraternities/sororities and the University, to establish the framework for fraternity governance, and to guide successive generations of fraternity and sorority members in maintaining the traditional strengths of the fraternal system within the University community.

FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNITION

A. DEFINITION OF RECOGNITION

Recognition is the formal process by which the University of Pennsylvania agrees that a social fraternity or sorority, whether residential or nonresidential, may function on the campus, enroll members from the undergraduate student body through rush activities, and identify its chapter with the University.

As detailed below, organizations covered by this recognition policy are in all cases independently incorporated. The University thus enters into agreements with them only within the basic principles applied to University affiliation with any externally-incorporated organization: there must be commonality of goals and standards; disclosure of principals; mechanisms for accountability; and provisions for the discontinuation of the affiliation should goals diverge or standards decline in ways that would expose the University to liability or loss of reputation.

At the same time, fraternity and sorority chapters are associations of students, operated to enhance the educational experience of students. Thus it is appropriate for the University to provide support services that will help the chapters to function effectively for their members and will protect their stability over time given the inherent turnover of membership and leadership.

This policy therefore outlines the commitments the University makes to recognized social fraternities and sororities, as well as the obligations assumed by each chapter and its sponsoring body to carry out its collective responsibility for the well-being of its members and for the chapter's performance and reputation in the University community.

B. APPLICABILITY OF RECOGNITION POLICY

The terms "fraternity" and "sorority" are used to designate

honorary/professional societies as well as social/residential fraternities; this recognition policy applies only to the latter group. Whether residential or nonresidential, fraternal organizations reviewed for recognition under this policy will have all three of the following characteristics:

1. Their sponsoring bodies are legal corporations external to the University; in all cases, their chapter corporations, alumni corporations, and national/regional or local fraternal organizations are incorporated separately from the University.
2. Individually, they have organizational goals which are articulated by their sponsoring groups, and these goals are social/fraternal rather than honorary, professional, religious or political. Collectively, they share elements of a fraternal ethos which emphasizes the personal bonding of members to the group to a degree which precludes membership in more than one such fraternal organization at once.
3. They are entitled to be subjectively selective in their membership within the limits of the University's nondiscrimination policies, and are entitled to single-sex membership under the provisions of Section 86.14 of the regulations promulgated under Title IX of the U.S. Education Act Amendments of 1972.

Some national fraternal organizations have been founded at Pennsylvania, and the University continues to be receptive to the formation of embryonic groups with the expectation that such groups will become recognized fraternities within a reasonable period of time. Such groups must meet the criteria and standards of this policy in order to become fully recognized by the University.

C. CATEGORIES OF FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

The University will grant recognition to social fraternities and sororities whose membership is drawn entirely from the undergraduate and/or graduate student bodies of the University. They may be recognized in one of two categories:

1. *Residential*: This type of fraternity or sorority owns or rents a residential facility for the purposes of providing room, and frequently board, for its membership, housing only University undergraduate or graduate students unless exception is granted in writing by the Director of Fraternity Affairs. Whether privately-owned or University-owned, the residential fraternity or sorority will provide accommodations equal in safety and comfort to those of University residences, and are subject to the same University regulations, guidelines, and standards applied to residential dormitories and facilities.
2. *Social*: This type of fraternity and sorority also has its chapter comprised only of Pennsylvania graduate and/or undergraduate students, and is subject to all provisions of this Recognition policy except those relating to the maintenance of residential facilities. City-wide fraternities or sororities whose membership is drawn from more than one college/university within the greater Philadelphia area fall within the category of social fraternity. In order to be considered for recognition, city-wide groups must have national sponsorship. Moreover, only the membership drawn from the University of Pennsylvania will be recognized as the official fraternity or sorority chapter; participants from outside the University will be considered "guests" of the fraternity or sorority.

Changes in category: Chapters may request a change in their designation when the appropriate situation arises. For example, social fraternities may request to become residential fraternities if they obtain a residential facility for their University members and meet the appropriate standards for residential fraternities. Such changes will be implemented by the Office of Fraternity Affairs

after consultation with the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee. Similarly, a residential fraternity may request to change its designation to a social fraternity if the alumni corporation can no longer maintain the chapter house.

D. STAGES OF RECOGNITION

In addition to its designation as residential or social, a fraternity or sorority is designated in one of three stages of recognition: Full, Provisionary, or Probationary. Such changes will be implemented by the Office of Fraternity Affairs after consultation with the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee.

FULL RECOGNITION

Full Recognition accords the fraternity/sorority all the rights, privileges, obligations, and University resources available under the University's recognition process, as follows:

- (1) Identification of the chapter with the University of Pennsylvania and use of the University's name along with, but not in place of, identification of the sponsoring body. Use of the University's name by fraternities and sororities is subject to the approval of the Office of Fraternity Affairs.
- (2) Endorsement by the University that the fraternal organization provides a positive experience for its members, that it is truthful in its representation to the students it recruits as members, that it is meeting its obligations to the University and the community, and that it is capable of fulfilling its promise of life-long association for its members.
- (3) Participation in the University's Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council, and Interfraternity Alumni Council, as those organizations relate to the self-governance of the fraternity/sorority system at Pennsylvania.
- (4) Participation in any official University-wide rush or membership solicitation program, as articulated and monitored by the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Council, and the Interfraternity Alumni Council.
- (5) Assistance of various University offices in communicating with the University's alumni of the local chapter. This shall include, but not be restricted to, advice and assistance provided by the Offices of Development, Alumni Relations, and Annual Giving.
- (6) Participation in the athletic, social, and educational programs and activities of the University which are provided for fraternal organizations.
- (7) Access and use of University facilities for official chapter functions as approved by the Office of Fraternity Affairs and/or other University offices under whose jurisdiction utilization of any University facility is regulated.

For residential fraternities and sororities, recognition accords the following additional services or benefits:

- (8) Assistance of appropriate University offices, such as the Office of Public Safety, in protecting the fraternity and its property from disruptions, thefts, intrusions, etc.
- (9) Advice and assistance of the Office of Fraternity Affairs and other appropriate University offices in the conduct of the fraternity's business affairs, its plant operations, maintenance, and renovations, and its short-term and long-term financial planning.

Some of these services are provided by the University in accord with agreements which are negotiated from time to time between the University and the fraternity and sorority. Other services are provided by the Office of Fraternity Affairs and other offices of the University as part of the student services provided through the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life. The University shall agree with each fraternity and sorority on the services to be provided and on the charges, if any, for them. Where priorities in reservations or differentials in fee may exist for outside versus University users, fraternities and sororities shall be regarded as internal users.

PROVISIONAL RECOGNITION

Provisional Recognition describes the University's conditional approval for a specified period no shorter than one year after

fulfillment of the criteria and procedures for recognition described in Section II; a maximum period for Provisional Recognition may be specified by the Director of Fraternity Affairs upon recommendation of the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee. At the end of the period of Provisional Recognition, a review of the status of the fraternity/sorority shall be conducted by the Office of Fraternity Affairs. Upon completion of this assessment and after consultation with the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee, the Director of Fraternity Affairs in conjunction with the Vice Provost will designate the fraternity to have full recognition, continued provisional recognition, or to have recognition withdrawn, as specified in these guidelines. Normally, provisional recognition will be applied during the establishment of a new fraternity/sorority chapter or the reestablishment of a formerly active fraternity/sorority chapter at Pennsylvania.

PROBATIONARY RECOGNITION

Probationary Recognition describes the University's conditional withdrawal of certain University services/benefits and/or its applying specific sanctions against the chapter. Probationary recognition signifies that the chapter has failed to abide by University standards, codes or guidelines, by state or local or federal laws and statutes, and/or has failed to comply with the procedures and criteria articulated in this policy statement. In most instances, the fraternity's local/national sponsoring groups will be asked to supervise the chapter during the entire probationary period, the length of which shall be specified by the Vice Provost for University Life. At the end of the probationary period, an intensive analysis of the status of the fraternity/sorority shall be conducted by the Office of Fraternity Affairs in consultation with the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee. Upon completion of this assessment the Vice Provost will designate the fraternity to have full recognition, continued probationary recognition, or to have recognition withdrawn, as specified in these guidelines.

Unless there is substantial progress recorded in those areas where the fraternity or sorority falls short of its goals under this policy, the chapter will lose its recognition status at the end of the probationary period. (See Section V of this document).

II. CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL RECOGNITION

A. GENERAL CRITERIA FOR INITIAL RECOGNITION

All fraternal organizations must fulfill the following criteria in order to secure initial recognition by the University:

(1) Eligibility

Demonstrate eligibility for recognition (as outlined under "Applicability" in Section I,B) by providing evidence of non-University and alumni affiliation and support. Such evidence will take the form of:

- (a) A statement and pledge of sponsorship by an approved national and/or local sponsoring group(s) or association(s);
- (b) Identification of an active corporation board which maintains ongoing supervisory relations with the undergraduate chapter;
- (c) Identification of a "chapter advisor" or "liaison" who will be a member of the sponsoring fraternal organization residing in the greater Philadelphia area. It shall be the responsibility of the chapter liaison or advisor to monitor the operations and activities of the undergraduate fraternity chapter, to make recommendations to the Office of Fraternity Affairs which will strengthen the chapter at Pennsylvania, and to assist the Office of Fraternity Affairs in ensuring the fraternity's continued compliance with all terms of this recognition policy and to assist in ensuring that all activities of the fraternity comply with University regulations and guidelines, as well as local, state, and federal laws and statutes.

(2) Consonance of goals with University's mission

Provide official documentation to the University that the

policies and objectives of the parent chapter are in consonance with the University's aims, goals and educational mission. Such documentation, or copies of pertinent documents, shall include:

- (a) The statement of purposes and goals of the fraternal organizations;
- (b) The national and/or local sponsoring group's constitution, by-laws, and governance structure;
- (c) the local chapter's chartering document, as well as constitution and by-laws, and statement of purpose and goals;
- (d) policies and standards for the selection of members, the education of new members, and the initiation of new members.

These documents must conform to established University standards and policies as may be found in official University sources (*Intro to Penn, Almanac*, and documents that may be compiled and distributed by the Office of Fraternity Affairs).

(3) Responsibilities

Acknowledge responsibilities within the University by submitting a written statement of adherence to the principles and guidelines defined in this document.

(4) Membership

Provide full membership information including names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the fraternity's national organization officers, its local alumni corporation and board(s) and its undergraduate officer(s) and chapter members. Active membership in the undergraduate chapter is defined as the individual's right to participate in any formal activities of the chapter or to reside in the chapter house, in the case of a residential fraternity. Membership in the University's chapter shall (a) be restricted to individuals who are matriculated undergraduate or graduate students at the University, and (b) be large enough to assign, without undue burden upon any individual member, the responsibilities prescribed by the Office of Fraternity Affairs pursuant to this policy.

(5) Governance Structure

Provide a governance structure for the fraternity/sorority, indicating assignment of responsibility for the fraternity's financial activities, program planning, compliance with University disciplinary standards and regulations, orientation and selection of new members, communication with the University's administration, housing operations and arrangements (if appropriate), and participation within the University's Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council, and Interfraternity Alumni Council.

(6) Financial Plan

Present a financial plan for the fraternity/sorority which addresses the following issues: income and cost expectations and projections, estimated number of members for chapter viability, proposed schedule of financial reporting in-house and to the University, appropriate insurance coverage as mandated by the University (e.g., liability, personal property, automobile, etc.) and designation of responsibility for the financial supervision of the fraternity.

(7) Plan for projected services and activities

Submit a plan for projected services and activities for members as well as a plan for the educational, social, charitable, community service, and athletic programs and activities to be offered members.

(8) Evidence of academic performance

The chapter, as a group, will be expected to maintain a high chapter cumulative grade point average as reported by the Office of the Registrar. Any student who is not in good standing

with his/her school may not retain active membership status and/or reside in the chapter house, as may be appropriate.

(9) For residential fraternities/sororities: Housing Plan

Provide a detailed housing plan which includes the contractual arrangements for providing residential facilities for undergraduates and verifies that the residential facility conforms to University housing standards regarding the facilities, safety and security measures, insurance coverage, debt services, etc.

B. GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR INITIAL RECOGNITION

To secure provisional recognition status the following sequence of procedures will be completed normally within the period of one year:

- (1) An authorized representative of the fraternal organization will submit a formal application for recognition to the Office of Fraternity Affairs, including all information requested in Section A, "Criteria for Recognition."
- (2) Upon receipt of application, the Director of Fraternity Affairs will consult with the Executive Council of the Interfraternity Alumni Council whose evaluation or assessment of the application for recognition will be sought. Advice may also be sought from the Officers of the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council; such consultation may be sought individually with each group and/or with a Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee.
- (3) If the information submitted is judged to be acceptable, the Director of Fraternity Affairs will issue a letter or provisional recognition together with a listing of any specialized terms of conditions, to the applicant.
- (4) Written acceptance of the offer of recognition will be furnished by the president of the fraternity/sorority local alumni corporation to the Office of Fraternity Affairs.

III. MAINTENANCE OF RECOGNITION

A fraternity's recognition shall continue annually so long as it maintains the standards set forth in this policy, and further:

- (1) Provides an annual report each September to the Office of Fraternity Affairs, noting any changes in the items listed in Section II of this policy, and updating all required statements of responsibility. Any changes in information filed under Section II occurring during the academic year must be reported to the Office of Fraternity Affairs within two weeks of the change.
- (2) Reviews annually with Director of Fraternity Affairs the general progress and contribution which the fraternity/sorority has made during the previous academic year regarding house viability, compliance with University goals and standards, issues of collective responsibility, projected planning and programming needs, and specific needs for advisory services by the University.
- (3) Reports annually to its national and/or graduate/alumni sponsoring fraternal organization regarding the status of the undergraduate membership. The national sponsoring group — or the local sponsoring group in the absence of a participating national organization — shall communicate regularly with the Office of the Fraternity Affairs on its evaluation of the chapter.

IV. OBLIGATIONS

A. OBLIGATIONS OF THE FRATERNITY TO THE UNIVERSITY

By undertaking the process of recognition, the fraternity or sorority assumes certain obligations and responsibilities to the University community:

- (1) To maintain the University's standards for fraternities and sororities as articulated in this recognition policy;
- (2) To accept collective responsibility for the activities of individual members of the undergraduate chapter as they relate to the following:

(a) *Academic performance* of both individual members and the group as noted under Section II.

(b) *Conduct* of members and conduct of guests of members which is knowingly tolerated by the members of the fraternity and is in violation of the University's Code of Conduct;

(c) *Obligation to cooperate* with the administrative and law enforcement functions of the University;

(d) *Educational and student development programs* of the fraternity or sorority.

(3) To maintain chapter viability through sound financial management of the fraternity and supervision of the chapter.

(4) To participate actively in the University's fraternity and sorority governance system through active membership in the Interfraternity Council or Panhellenic Council, and the Interfraternity Alumni Council.

(5) To contribute positively to the University community and to the development of the individual fraternity member in his role as student at the University.

(6) To abide by all lease or other written agreements or contracts which the fraternity enters into with the University.

(7) To abide by all appropriate rules/regulations of the University and all local, state, and federal laws and statutes.

(8) To affirm annually the fraternity's commitment to the University community and this Recognition Policy document.

B. OBLIGATIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY TO THE FRATERNITY/SORORITY

Through recognition, the University binds itself to the following obligations to the fraternity/sorority:

(1) To provide those benefits outlined under the description of "Full Recognition", Section I.

(2) To communicate with the national sponsoring fraternal organization and/or local sponsoring corporation board as required regarding the status of the chapter at the University of Pennsylvania;

(3) To provide necessary guidance and resources to the undergraduate chapter and its officers so that they may fulfill their leadership roles within their chapters and within the University community;

(4) To provide the undergraduate/graduate student chapter with supportive activities and programs for fraternity members and fraternal organizations and to provide those activities with appropriate resources (e.g., intramural sporting events and equipment).

(5) To assist in the mediation or resolution of conflicts between fraternal organizations and to provide appropriate resources as circumstances require.

(6) To abide by all lease or other written agreements or contracts which the University enters into with the fraternity.

V. CHANGES IN RECOGNITION STATUS

Once recognized by the University, a fraternity or sorority is assumed to be in good standing as long as the organization meets the expectations articulated in this policy.

However, when it is determined that a chapter has failed to meet the obligations articulated in this policy, then alterations in the fraternity's status may be implemented by the University, upon written notification to the fraternity's undergraduate chapter, and the local alumni/graduate as well as national sponsoring organizations (See items #1-4 below in this subsection).

On any finding that the chapter has jeopardized its recognition status through failure to maintain the standards in this policy, the Director of Fraternity Affairs and the Vice Provost for University Life after consultation with a Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee (defined below) may implement any of the following actions:

(1) *Administrative Warning*. This warning will suggest a reasonable timeframe for corrective action. If the schedule for correction is not

met, then the Vice Provost may invoke probation of recognition.

(2) *Chapter Probation*. Probationary Recognition is for a determined period of time and may or may not include suspension of specific privileges for the fraternity (see Probationary Recognition, Section 1D). Under the terms of probation the fraternity may be required to suspend the active membership of one or more individuals within the chapter in accordance with guidelines set forth by the applicable national or local constitution or by-laws. In the case of any further infractions of the University's Recognition Policy standards or if a schedule for corrective action is not met, the Vice Provost may invoke Suspension or Withdrawal of Recognition.

(3) *Suspension of Recognition*. Suspension is for a set time period during which all activities of the chapter may be suspended and privileges revoked. During this period the national sponsoring body, working with the alumni corporation, will be required to produce a written plan or corrective action to be taken so that the chapter will meet the criteria established by this policy. If a chapter house is maintained, the alumni corporation may be required to cease its operation as the chapter house and terminate residence for members of the fraternity. The Chapter may, however, be reorganized with newly recruited members. After the term of suspension, members in good standing may regain their right to live in the Chapter house and may be granted the right to resume participation in chapter activities and programs.

(4) *Withdrawal of Recognition*. At the time of withdrawal, the alumni corporation will cease its operations of a chapter house, terminate residence for members of the fraternity, and revoke all privileges and authority for the undergraduate chapter to function. Current individual members registered at the University could be liable for suspension from the University for failure to comply in accordance with any such Withdrawal of Recognition. Withdrawal of Recognition terminates all agreements between the University and the undergraduate chapter of the fraternity.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

The general procedures to be implemented when any change in recognition status is appropriately possible/probable are:

1. The Director of Fraternity Affairs will report the Office's findings to the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee within a reasonable period of time. The Committee will be composed of 3 IFAC members (one of whom shall serve as chairperson), 2 University faculty members, 3 students (two fraternity members, one non-fraternity member), and the Director of Residential Living *ex-officio*.

2. The Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee will meet and review the matter in accordance with its judicial review policy, which is to be adopted and incorporated by reference into this document.

3. The Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee will report its findings and recommendations within one week to the Director of Fraternity Affairs and to the parties involved, including alumni corporation and national representatives.

4. The Vice Provost for University Life, after consultation with the Director of Fraternity Affairs, will give the recommendations and findings of the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee due weight and consideration in reaching a final determination in the matter.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR ALTERATIONS

Recommendations for amendment to or alteration of this policy in order to meet changing needs may originate with the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic Council, Interfraternity Alumni Council, a Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee, or individual fraternal organizations as well as with the Office of Fraternity Affairs. Recommendations shall be reviewed by the IFAC, IFC, Panhellenic, and the Fraternity/Sorority Advisory Committee. Any amendments or alterations in this policy shall be issued in writing by the Vice Provost for University Life, with a specified grace period for compliance by fraternities and sororities already in recognition status. None will be retroactive.

Appendices which accompany the above policy are available at the Office of Fraternity Affairs.