

Greek Life Task Force Findings and Recommendations Executive Summary

Greek Life at WPI has an outstanding history. Many of the chapters represented at WPI represent some of the strongest chapters of their respective inter/national organizations. WPI's chapters are recognized for their academic performance, alumni/ae involvement, and chapter operations at an inter/national level. However, over the past several years, WPI has also observed a rise in a number of judicial issues, declining chapter membership numbers, chapter houses filled below capacity, and lowered alumni/ae involvement. In the spring of 2005, it was decided that during the 2005-2006 academic year it would be valuable to review the Greek Life program at WPI. The intent of doing a comprehensive review to examine our strengths and areas which WPI could strengthen our program. The result was a collaborative plan to identify the best practices of high performing organizations and to provide a framework for implementation of these practices within WPI's chapters. The work of the Greek Life Task Force helps to support WPI Greek organizations in forming and maintaining a strong, principle-driven fraternal community.

Objectives of Greek Life at WPI

The following are the outcomes of Greek Life at WPI as identified by each committee.

The Greek Life Task Force Envisions Greek Life at WPI where:

- Chapters set a standard of academic excellence.
- The community has higher overall academic performance than the respective male and female campus average.
- Continuous faculty and staff relations increase and stimulate academic growth among chapters.
- There is ongoing educational leadership programming related to the academic success of Greek chapters.
- There is a set of academic standards for participating in a chapter's new member orientation process.
- Greek chapters having a clear definition of academic success and academic honesty.
- Alumni/ae actively participate and support their respective chapters monetarily and by volunteering.
- All alumni/ae advisors are properly trained to fulfill the duties of their position.
- All alumni/ae advisor positions are filled.
- Undergraduate/alumni/ae events are successful through strong communication, offering engaging activities, perpetuation of traditions, strong alumni/ae involvement, non-alcoholic events, and a family based atmosphere at events.
- Greek Alumni Council is supportive of the undergraduate and alumni base.
- The physical facilities and internal operations of the Greek chapters and chapter houses are integral to support chapters' capacity to function in socially responsible ways within a safe and secure environment.
- All chapters have safe, effective, and ethical practices in place for the training and education of new members.
- All Greek members have opportunities and encouragement to pursue leadership positions both within the chapter and within the larger campus community.
- Greek chapters strive to connect to the larger campus community by seeking out and promoting collaboration and involvement with other chapters on campus, as well as, promoting organizational and individual Greek involvement in the WPI campus community.
- Each chapter has and adheres to written processes and procedures which support officer training and transition.
- All chapters support the ongoing development and understanding of chapter rituals and core values.
- Chapters, at minimum, meet inter/national programming standards.
- Chapters provide educational opportunities designed to strengthen members' personal and professional development.
- Chapters foster an appreciation for philanthropy and community service work among their chapter members, taking an active role in executing meaningful community service activities.
- Chapters foster a strong and positive image within the local, regional, and national arenas.
- Chapters promote chapter and community-wide accomplishments through special recognition programs.
- Chapters facilitate campus-wide programming initiatives designed to enhance campus-life.
- Chapters plan and articulate intentional outcomes for each activity within the chapter.
- The creation and design of a recruitment experience which ensures Greek member *quality* while maintaining or growing the size of the WPI Greek community.
- The community presents and markets itself in a way that attracts new members who may be demographically underrepresented in the current WPI Greek community.
- Every unaffiliated student considers joining a fraternity/sorority.
- Every member understands possesses tools necessary to successfully recruit new members.
- Greek governance organizations (IFC and Panhellenic Council) are structured to support the recruitment of new members.
- Risk management is embraced, understood, and practiced regularly by all members, not just chapter risk managers.

Academic Success

Research Findings—The results of a survey conducted in December 2006 indicated that students are satisfied with their membership because of enhanced academic abilities. Members who are involved in their fraternity perform better academically, generally due to improved time management skills. In addition, eight Greek chapters provide an academic orientation for their members. Five chapters surveyed said their library acted as a quiet study room. Only one of the chapters proctored study times in the library for two hours, two times a week for members in need of academic assistance, and only three chapters schedule study times during finals. All of the chapters surveyed indicated that the chapter houses provided a good environment for learning. The faculty and staff of WPI were also surveyed. The results indicated that over 50% would attend an event hosted by the Greek community to become better educated on Greek Life, 68% indicated that they had no interaction with Greek chapters outside of the academic setting, and 43% indicated that they would advise a Greek chapter.

Recommendations

- Chapters should have a written Standards of Excellence Scholarship Plan that includes adherence to inter/national academic guidelines, academic educational programs for members and new members, recognition for outstanding academic performance of chapter members, formulation of a scholarship contract for prospective members, establishment of nightly quiet hours, and creation of an annual chapter scholarship budget.
- The chapter's Scholarship Chair, in collaboration with the Student Activities Office, should supervise the academic performance of each member, providing support for those members and new members who do not meet chapter requirements.
- The Student Activities Office will assist chapters in connecting with campus academic resources and will clarify the definitions of transfer and upperclass students when determining academic eligibility to join a Greek organization.
- New Member Programs should include weekly study sessions and education on time management and study skills.
- The Student Activities Office should provide recognition for academic excellence among Greek students using public forums such as *Tech News* and Greek Alumni Council Awards.
- Each chapter should have a faculty or staff advisor who attends at least one non-ritual meeting per term.
- Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council should organize an annual event for chapters to socialize with faculty and staff.
- The Student Activities Office should explore creation of an online faculty/staff support system for Greeks on myWPI.

Alumni/ae Relations

Research Findings—Training and communication are essential to the strength of the alumni/ae who directly impact chapter strength. The Alumni Relations Committee found many successful alumni/ae events are traditional events, such as Homecoming or a yearly golf event, there is a direct correlation between chapter strength and having an involved advisor, chapters with an advisor training program generally had stronger advisor involvement and most, if not all roles filled, communication is vital for successful activities and support, and that support from the university is important for a fully developed advisor program.

Recommendations

- For successful alumni/undergraduate events, chapters should plan events that meet the scheduling needs of alumni.
- WPI should create a standardized advisor training manual and program for Chapter Advisors, Faculty Advisors, and House Corporation Presidents.
- All chapters must have at least one advisor in regular contact with the chapter and documented with the university.
- A Greek alumni database should be accessible to Greek Presidents and Alumni/ae Chairs.
- Chapters should have a formal communication device such as a newsletter.
- Chapters should communicate to seniors about participating in their chapters and on campus after graduating.
- Greek Alumni Council (GAC) should inform Greek alumni and undergraduates quarterly about Greek campus news.
- GAC should look to develop additional GAC Awards supporting new Greek Life Task Force initiatives.
- GAC should create a manual to assist chapters in planning, publicizing, and hosting alumni/ae events.
- GAC should create a pre-recruitment mailing for parents of new students regarding the Greek community from an alumni/ae perspective and hold a seminar on Parent's Weekend.
- GAC should host a career development day for undergraduates and younger/older alumni/ae.

Facilities and Operations

Research Findings—In direct interviews with City of Worcester housing/building inspectors, the committee found that the City Inspectors want to work together to complete all inspections in a timely fashion, prefer and will insist upon working with alumni, wish to work with the WPI Greek community to achieve a safe environment within the chapter houses. Through a survey of Graduate Building Corporations, most that responded stated they are incorporated within the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, yet several were unsure of corporation status. Most respondents indicated that the chapters and the housing

corporations have annual budgets for the House Corporation. There is no consistent method for managing facilities and operations, however, the majority have policies and procedures in place for house operations, house maintenance, and financial operations.

Recommendations

- Chapters should be aware of and comply with all Life Safety Codes as set forth by local and Commonwealth authorities and have all the proper licenses and permits which are required to operate a fraternity house.
- Chapters should work with local agencies to conduct a facilities audit.
- Chapter houses must be owned by, or rented through, a duly licensed House Corporation.
- Chapters and chapter houses must be adequately insured.
- Chapters should have guidelines and regulations for proper maintenance and upkeep of facilities.
- Chapters must maintain the exterior of their chapter houses at all times including summer yard maintenance.
- Chapters should have sound financial operations and oversight. On an ongoing basis, the House Corporations and chapters should review all financial polices and procedures as well as conduct regular audits of all financial records.
- Chapters must have open and continuous communication with neighbors with policies in place for maintaining neighbor relations.
- Resources should be available to all chapters and House Corporations to assist in the upkeep, repair, and code compliance.
- GAC should provide training seminars and manuals to assist the chapters and Housing Corporations.

Governance

Research Findings—The committee collected and reviewed the by-laws of over a dozen Interfraternity Councils nationwide. Members also had extensive discussions with IFC officers and administrators at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Rose Hulman Institute of Technology. “Best practices” were assembled, reviewed, and used to formulate the recommendations which follow.

Proposed Basic Structure of the Governance System

It is proposed that the Interfraternity Council at WPI be reorganized into three distinct branches, including the Legislative Branch, Executive Branch, and Judicial Board. The following outline includes highlights of reform for each branch.

- *Legislative Branch*—Formulates policy/regulations and has powers to impeach executives. One member is chosen by each chapter for a one year term. It is the desire of the Task Force to make the new positions on the IFC recognized as respected campus responsibilities and desirable leadership achievements.
- *Executive Branch*—President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Risk Manager are elected by the Greek community as a whole. Positions are nominated by an overseeing elections operating committee appointed by the outgoing IFC President. The Executive Branch operates the functions of Interfraternity Council.
- *Judicial Board*—The Greek Judicial Board hears cases which may be brought before it. The Board will include a Chief Justice to be elected at large for a one-year term. Four other voting justices will be filled at random for each case from a pool of justices representing each chapter.

Member Development

Research Findings—Currently, there are many leadership opportunities built into the organizational structure of each chapter, Panhellenic Council, and Interfraternity Council. Greeks also assume leadership positions in a variety of campus organizations. There is wide variability in each chapter’s level of support for formalized leadership development training. Half of the chapters indicated member participation in a leadership conference. Most chapters had 75% to 100% individual involvement in at least one campus organization. A few chapters indicated that participation in campus activities is mandatory as per national guidelines, while one chapter cited an involvement rate of 10%. Most chapters cited efforts to co-sponsor events with other chapters. All chapters indicated they had binders and/or notebooks to provide for continuity. Just over half of respondents indicated that there was a formal retreat to support officer transition and about on third emphasized the importance of “job shadowing” to support new officer training. At WPI, all Greek chapters have new member development programs, yet few appear to have a currently developed and fully implemented member development program. Members of Greek organizations indicate that they are moderately to highly satisfied with opportunities afforded them for growth in areas such as academic success, social skills, self discipline, career support, and community service.

Recommendations

- Each chapter should have an established new member program with clear goals and purposes with the objective of having new members effectively learn the inner workings of the chapter.
- Each chapter should have a system in place where new members are positively supported by the members.

- Interfraternity and Panhellenic Council should develop a self-evaluation program for chapters to evaluate their new member education programs.
- IFC/Panhellenic Council, in conjunction with WPI, should develop a hazing education program for new members.
- WPI should provide links to information about hazing via the IFC, Panhellenic Council, and Greek Life websites.
- Greek chapters should continue to encourage, support, and reward involvement of members in leadership positions both within the Greek community and in the larger WPI community.
- Greek chapters should encourage and support involvement in national and regional leadership conferences by insuring financial and other logistical support.
- WPI should offer an annual “in house” leadership development program for Greeks.
- Each chapter should participate in campus events, presentations, and programming.
- Each member of the Greek community should strive to participate in at least one non-Greek organization.
- For each office in each chapter and in the governing councils there should be a written record in the form of a file or binder which includes goals, ideas and interventions, progress reports, outcomes and recommendations.
- Officer elections should be held several weeks before taking office, allowing for mentoring and position shadowing.
- Each chapter should conduct a needs assessment as well as a review of core values and rituals to determine the extent to which current practices reflect the mission and values of the organization.
- Each chapter should assess the degree to which they support ongoing development of all members and implement programs which support active growth and involvement.
- WPI should recognize and reward chapters which offer opportunities for life-long member development.
- WPI should develop an online service guide describing contractors and other service providers chapters use regularly.
- Each chapter should actively seek to identify and establish ongoing relationships with WPI supports.

Programming

Research Findings—Greek members are highly satisfied with their involvement and membership in the community. From the programming perspective, student members signify high levels of satisfaction with fraternity and sorority experiences that establish close relationships, assist in adjustment into the college environment, assumption of leadership responsibility, time and task management skills, and conflict resolution skills. Areas where student members have experienced the least benefit include a personal understanding of one’s sexuality, involvement with cultural activities and diversity education programming, and general educational opportunities and experiences associated with diversity initiatives.

Recommendations

- Establish a chapter by chapter checklist of inter/national programming expectations to determine standards are being met.
- Chapters should intentionally offer programs designed to strengthen their members’ personal and professional development on each of the following topic areas over a 2 year cycle: understanding one’s sexuality, cultural sensitivity and diversity education, conflict management, professional skill development, and leveraging co-op, internship, and summer employment into the job search process.
- On a yearly basis, new members should participate in at least one educational program on the following topics: alcohol use and abuse and defining and identifying hazing.
- At minimum, chapters should meet inter/national standards for philanthropy and community service programming, with members participating in structured philanthropy and community service efforts..
- Each chapter should adopt a local service agency or beneficiary that they intentionally focus their philanthropic and community service efforts toward.
- Members should strive to dedicate at least 10 hours per semester to philanthropy and community service efforts.
- The Greek system should sponsor at least one campus-wide community service event per year.
- Each chapter’s Public Relations Chair will be responsible for publicizing chapter activities and achievements in *Tech News*, as well as within the local community press.
- The WPI Greek community should actively work to support a positive image within local, regional and national arenas.
- The IFC and Panhellenic Council should organize an annual presentation to the faculty and staff on why the Greek community is positive for the overall WPI community and how it fits into the success of the institution as a whole.
- Greek chapters should annually compile and submit reports/applications to apply for regional and inter/national awards.
- Each chapter should sponsor a campus-wide program that helps to showcase their members, values, and philosophy.
- IFC and Panhellenic Council should sponsor at least one educational program per semester for the campus community.
- Each chapter should publicly identify their specific core values, disseminating these values on the chapter webpage and in other public domains. All chapter programs should directly correlate to one or more of the chapter core values.
- Implement a full review of the *Greek Relationship Statement* to support the recommendations of this report.

Recruitment

Research Findings—The Greek community is not being marketed well to prospective members. In speaking with freshmen new members, the committee found that they were generally unknowledgeable during A-Term with respect to recruitment. New members also reported that their friends who chose not to join a Greek chapter did so most prominently due to their being uninformed as to what the WPI Greek Community offers. Prospective members would be eager to attend events sponsored by the Greek community during A-Term. Freshmen new members believed that events on the Quad would be effective at attracting prospective new members. The female sorority community continues to grow, and recruitment appears to be a strength of this system. For the fraternity community, the overall size of the male Greek community has remained relatively constant over the past five years, however, the percentage of first year male students choosing to join a fraternity has dropped. This seems to indicate that the fraternity system is unable to attract the majority of the freshman class. The recommendations below focus primarily upon male recruitment.

Recommendations

- An IFC Recruitment Committee should be created, with the power to oversee all issues related to male recruitment.
- The IFC Recruitment Committee should create deadlines for the approval of recruitment materials.
- The guidelines for recruitment materials should be changed from disallowing references to “use of alcohol or drugs” to disallowing all references to “alcohol or drugs,” and not limiting this rule only to the use of these substances. We strongly believe that alcohol and drugs should not be used in marketing the Greek community at WPI.
- A Greek Public Relations & Marketing Committee should be formed, composed of male and female members. This committee should work with the Recruitment Committee in formulating a yearly recruitment publicity campaign.
- A system-wide A-Term recruitment period should be planned and implemented by the IFC and Panhellenic Recruitment Committee and the Greek PR/Marketing Committee with events designed to promote Greek Life in general, not for chapters to recruit individual members.
- A plan should be created for the selection of “Recruitment Leaders” who will serve as ambassadors of Greek Life. They will serve as a source of unbiased information and act as the “ground-troops” for promoting and marketing Greek Life.
- Greek Public Relations & Marketing Committee should develop a publicity plan, geared towards parents and students.
- WPI should sponsor a Recruitment Retreat during the summer months for all chapter Recruitment Chairs.
- All chapters should meet twice during A-Term with the Assistant Director of Student Activities to discuss recruitment goals and progress.
- Every prospective member is required to fill out a registration form prior to visiting a chapter house.

Risk Management

Research Findings—The areas of Risk Management examined by the committee include alcohol and drug use, hazing, sexual assault, and event management. In particular, the committee found that the number of reported incidents of sexual assault at WPI is very low. In 2003, there were two reported incidents, and in 2005 there were two reported incidents. Given the national statistics on these kinds of crimes, we can assert that not all incidents are being reported. While sexual assault is certainly not just a problem for the Greek community, that community is in a position to take a leadership role on the issue. As many people associate Greek life with parties, private houses, and loyalty codes that might lead people to suspect internal protection, it is in the Greek’s best interests to create an environment where the risk of sexual assault is minimized. WPI hosts a number of programs already, and new programs are being developed at this time.

Recommendations

- The Greek Life Office in partnership with the House Corporations should produce a House Manager Manual that includes safety & risk management, maintenance & renovation, inspections, renewing lodging licenses, with appendices covering emergency plans, codes & ordinances, recommended vendors, and self inspection.
- Each chapter facility should be required to install one hard-wired telephone per floor in a common area, for emergency calls only, with the telephone numbers being on file with WPI’s Campus Police.
- WPI should explore expanding its current campus police powers to include deputy sheriff’s powers.
- Formalize an advisor program whereby one campus police officer acts as a liaison with the Greek community.
- A peer education program should be created to share peer experiences as it relates to safety/legal/risk concerns.
- All chapter houses should abide minimally by the *Expectations for Gatherings at Greek Chapter Houses*. Each member should sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the guidelines.
- WPI should establish minimum risk management expectations that should be adhered to in order to be recognized at WPI. Each chapter member would need to take an on-line risk management quiz and achieve a satisfactory score.
- A program on sexual assault should be mandatory for all fraternity and sorority members and new members.

Implementation

Impacts on IFC, Panhellenic Council, or GAC—For recommendations that impact IFC, Panhellenic Council, and GAC, it is important that each group have a sense of buy-in regarding the recommendations. Therefore, each group will develop an implementation plan in collaboration with the Assistant Director of Student Activities and Greek Life Programs during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Impacts on WPI—For recommendations that impact WPI, the Assistant Director of Student Activities and Greek Life Programs will work with key offices to provide resources to chapters. The Assistant Director will develop an implementation model with all accepted recommendations in place in two years to allow for adequate acquisition and/or allocation of fiscal and human resources.

Impacts on Greek Chapters—Chapters will set individual goals at the beginning of the year for their chapters. They will then meet to review the goals with the Assistant Director of Student Activities and Greek Life Programs. At the end of the year, the chapter will complete an “Annual Report,” which replaces the GAC Awards application. This Annual Report would have two sections: a review of the goals the chapter set at the start of the year and the ways the chapter made progress toward those goals, as well as a section in which points are earned for meeting recommendations from the Task Force. A chapter would earn points for accomplishments they can justify. For example, if a chapter should perform a recommended ten hours of service per member each semester, they will earn points for each hour of service they do as they strive toward 10 hours (For example: 1hr = 1 point, 3 hrs = 3 points, 10 hrs = 10 points, more hours = bonus). Chapters would then be rewarded for adherence to the Task Force recommendations through Greek Alumni Council Awards Eligibility and additional incentives. Additionally, there would be a minimum standard number of points for all chapters to achieve. If the minimum number of points is not achieved, the chapter would have a time interval to meet these standards with support from WPI. These minimum standards would be realistic and achievable. Once chapters become acculturated to the recommendations after two to three years of compliance, the recommendations will become standard operating procedure within chapters.

Evaluation of the Success of the Task Force Recommendations

This plan is important for evaluation of the success of the Task Force because it allows one to measure the number of chapters who are compliant with the recommendations and to evaluate where chapters are working towards compliance. It also creates a culture of continuous improvement because chapters are able to identify areas where they can improve and develop goals to foster this improvement. The annual report will also serve as documentation of the chapter’s year in review and as archival materials.

A full report is available upon request to Philip Clay, Dean of Students, at pclay@wpi.edu.