

Lehigh University Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs

Accreditation Process

Statement of Purpose

The Lehigh University Accreditation process for fraternities and sororities was developed in 2004 as part of the Strengthening Greek Life Task Force. This process was updated in 2009 to connect Accreditation with student learning and fraternal relevance. The new process allows chapters to connect Accreditation with inter/national organization values and priorities, streamline the requirements for the application and challenge students to demonstrate learning as part of their fraternal experience.

Chapters are assessed in five critical areas:

- Intellectual Development
- Leadership Development
- Community Development
- Organizational Development
- Facilities Management

For each section, chapters are evaluated in two distinct areas (non-residential chapters will not be evaluated in Facilities Management):

- **Chapter Standards:** The Accreditation committee will consider chapter goals, activities and achievements for each area. These areas will determine Accreditation rankings and qualify chapters for Greek awards.
- **Chapter Development Questions:** Students should demonstrate how their chapter contributes to student learning in each area and connect their chapter experience with the development of lifelong skills. This connection to learning will help determine Accreditation rankings and qualify chapters for Greek awards.

In addition to these two areas, chapters should connect their goals, activities and achievements to the goals, mission and ritual of their specific organization.

Statement of Justification

The Accreditation process has been in place for five years and resulted in a 26% improvement in gold and silver chapters from its inception in 2004-05 through the latest rankings following the 2008-09 academic year. Throughout those five years, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs has been receptive to feedback from all constituencies involved with Accreditation, including:

- Active chapter members
- Chapter alumni leadership
- Greek Alumni Council membership
- Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs staff members
- Accreditation panelists

As part of the 2009 Next Steps Initiative, an Accreditation committee was formed to provide feedback regarding possible improvements to the process. This group, consisting of the aforementioned constituents, considered previous feedback regarding Lehigh's Accreditation process including:

- Streamlining and/or eliminating Accreditation sections to better fit the progress reflected by current chapters.
- Reduction of the "checklist mentality," by including key developmental questions based off of the Dean of Students (D.O.S.) Core Competencies. These questions will be utilized by chapters at the beginning of each year to assist in strategic planning.
- Turning recommendations into challenge questions based off of the D.O.S. Core Competencies. Challenge questions will be provided to every chapter, regardless of Accreditation rankings or current accomplishments.
- Integration of the Organizational Stewardship section to allow for better assessment of chapter organizational structures and practices.
- Integration of the Facilities Management section to allow for a more specific assessment of residential chapter facility upkeep and maintenance.
- Consideration of best practices in the fraternity and sorority advising field, especially utilization of information gained from the Fraternal Relevance Institute in 2008.

Intellectual Development

Fraternalities and sororities at Lehigh must demonstrate that they provide academic support for individual chapter members and enable an atmosphere of intellectual advancement within the organization. Chapters should show how they structure opportunities for academic support, recognition, and accountability for the organization and individual members.

Chapter Standards

- Academic consistency and/or growth, looking at trends (chapter and new member GPA's, Dean's List, etc...) over the past two to four years and the current years' new member and chapter GPA
- Scholarship chair & scholarship plan, including a plan for new members and chapter members

Chapter Development Questions

- ❖ How does membership in your fraternity/sorority connect your members to academic resources and opportunities for intellectual growth?
- ❖ How does your chapter provide opportunities for member development, intellectual growth, and education on topics of diversity and pluralism?
- ❖ How does your facility and atmosphere facilitate academic and intellectual excellence for your members?
- ❖ Demonstrate how academic support, balance, and prioritization skills are a critical component of your new member plans.
- ❖ How does the chapter evaluate and implement changes to the academic plan to continually meet chapter members' needs?
- ❖ How does the chapter utilize academic reinforcement and support for academic programming on a peer-to-peer level?

Leadership Development

Every member of a chapter has the potential to lead and leadership should not be based on position or title, but rather on positive action that contributes to common goals and greater good for the larger community. Fraternities and sororities at Lehigh must demonstrate that they promote engagement in campus activities, involve their entire membership in goal setting and decision making processes, and encourage positive communication and contribution.

Chapter Standards

- A completed membership development program approved by the inter/national organization and the Lehigh Office of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs and/or a program in conjunction with the University's Office of Student Leadership Development
- Chapter involvement in campus activities and in formal campus leadership positions
- Quality of the new member education plan, specifically in regards to creating a sense of community within the new member class and connecting new members to the organization
- The ability of the chapter to use their leadership training program to fill a need within the chapter and produce positive results
- Chapter activities to build brotherhood or sisterhood among members

Chapter Development Questions

- ❖ How is leadership understood and developed within the context of your individual chapter?
- ❖ How do you encourage dialogue and educational conversations between the members of your organization?
- ❖ How do you mediate conflict and encourage quality relationships among members and class divisions?
- ❖ How do you ensure that all chapter members are involved in goal setting, decision making and the everyday actions of the chapter?
- ❖ How does your chapter's executive board give and receive feedback? How is this feedback utilized to improve chapter communications and leadership?

Community Development

Fraternities and sororities at Lehigh must be a positive contributor with regards to their chapter, the Lehigh community and the greater Bethlehem community. This contribution includes support for members, proper use of alumni mentoring, and the chapter's passion and advocacy for community causes. Chapters must also demonstrate that they form meaningful and far reaching partnerships with various constituents.

Chapter Standards

- Evidence of balance and intent with community service and philanthropic activities
- If the chapter has regular engagement with alumni on activities related to the values and mission of the chapter
- If the chapter has active engagement/involvement with the Greek Alumni Council
- A chapter's standards board and evidence of use as an accountability/recognition body
- A chapter's conduct record – consideration will be based on the severity and frequency of conduct issues

Chapter Development Questions

- ❖ How have chapter standards boards and educational opportunities provided chances for chapter members to better confront each other on difficult topics as well as provide opportunities for mediation and positive discussion?
- ❖ How have your chosen community service and philanthropic opportunities tied to issues of which the chapter is committed? From where does this commitment come?
- ❖ How have chapter relationships with alumni allowed for opportunities to give and receive appropriate feedback and approach controversial topics in a civil manner?
- ❖ How are programs and practices for the actives and alumni advancing the concepts of community and equal participation for all chapter members?
- ❖ How does the chapter embody and support diversity and pluralism?
- ❖ How is an inclusive atmosphere created within the chapter, as well as with activities the chapter is organizing and promoting with others?
- ❖ Please discuss the process for forming a university partnership that has extended beyond a one time event. How has this partnership benefitted your organization?

Organizational Development

Fraternities and sororities at Lehigh must demonstrate that they take responsibility for the success and progression of their organization. Chapters should show that they have set appropriate goals for each semester, made positive changes to the organization, and remained a relevant member of the Lehigh Greek community.

Chapter Standards

- The existence of chapter goals, action steps and follow through
- Assessment and evaluation of organizational practices and procedures
- Evidence of consideration, reasoning, and implementation of Accreditation Committee recommendations and challenge questions
- Organizational systems and verification of follow through showing the entire chapter is involved in the day-to-day running of the organization
- Financial management and responsibility
- The chapter's relationship with their inter/national headquarters, as well as awareness, understanding, and utilization of headquarters resources
- Evidence of education and practice of inter/national organization rituals, values, and traditions

Chapter Development Questions

- ❖ What changes has your chapter experienced this year? How have your members reacted to this change?
- ❖ How has your organization remained relevant with respect to changes and priorities at Lehigh University? What about changes made in your inter/national organization?
- ❖ What improvements did you set out to make with regards to the day-to-day operations of your chapter? Did these improvements occur and if so, how did you make it happen?
- ❖ Where do you see your chapter in three to five years? How has this year contributed to the long term vision of your organization?
- ❖ What efforts have been made to help chapter members define individual values and develop understanding of your fraternity or sorority values?
- ❖ How do your members integrate fraternity or sorority membership into their everyday actions and decisions?
- ❖ What has been a key event that has succeeded due to a solidified partnership? From a logistical perspective, how was your organization an equal contributor throughout the event planning process?

Facilities Management

Fraternalities and sororities at Lehigh must show the ability to take care of overall operations, maintenance and safety of their facility. Chapters should show the ability to manage the overall process of running their facility during the academic year. This management includes collaborative and productive partnerships with all constituents involved in the management process.

Chapter Standards

- Successful planning and management of the facility during beginning and end of semester break periods, including openings, closings and Thanksgiving and winter breaks
- Written, verbal, and face-to-face communication with constituents involved in facility management process, including paperwork requirements and deadlines, interaction with professional and custodial staff members, and meeting attendance and conduct
- Facility management and accountability, including common damage management and accountability, house project management, key and furniture management, and capacity/occupancy planning
- Life safety management and accountability, including lease and life safety violation management and accountability, room and life safety inspection attendance, and fire drill preparation

Chapter Development Questions

- ❖ What systems does the chapter have in place to provide leadership with questions, feedback, and concerns when facility issues need to be discussed? How does chapter leadership communicate with appropriate university and/or alumni/ae officials?
- ❖ How does the chapter facilitate opportunities for individual and organizational accountability and education when facilities issues/violations occur?
- ❖ How does the chapter assess and strategize about reoccurring facility needs, such as opening and closing?
- ❖ How does the chapter collaborate with university and/or alumni/ae officials in handling such issues as furniture management and damage billing?
- ❖ Please explain the chapter planning process for room selection and management of available room space within the facility.

Accreditation Committee Structure

The Accreditation Committee structure will remain in place, with three staff representatives, one student representative and one alumni/e representative reviewing each presentation. However, the only permanent committee member will be the Director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs. In place of two permanent Lehigh staff committee members, a larger pool of university faculty/staff will be selected and trained to serve as panelists. These individuals will serve on a rotating basis as allowed by schedules. Selection of committee members will consist of recruiting individuals who can connect the work of chapters to both the values of the organization as well as the academic and intellectual development of its members. This flexibility will allow for ease of scheduling accreditation panels, as well as reduce the burden on Lehigh faculty and staff during a time of year that is already overscheduled. Additionally, while the student and alumni/ae committee members will remain in place, there will be no mandate regarding the need for fraternity representatives to sit on fraternity panels, and vice-versa. The selection and training processes for accreditation panelists will be coordinated by the Director of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, in consultation with the Associate Dean for Campus Living.

Accreditation Pilot Program

Background

The revised Accreditation process will take effect during the 2010-2011 academic year. Before that time, several pilot groups have been identified and will begin utilizing the process during Fall 2009. These students will offer feedback on the revised system and work to connect Accreditation with student learning and fraternal relevance as represented by:

- Connection with inter/national organization values and priorities
- Streamlined accreditation applications and presentations
- Demonstration of learning as a part of the fraternal experience

Pilot Group A

These organizations are new non residential chapters that have not participated in the previous Accreditation process. In order to facilitate a seamless transition to the new process, these student groups will begin their Accreditation. The pilot chapters in group A are:

1. Pi Kappa Alpha
2. Lambda Sigma Upsilon
3. Delta Chi

Pilot Group B

These organizations are established, residential chapters that have operated under the previous Accreditation process. They represent a diverse array of organization types and

represent four ratings from the 2008-09 Accreditation rankings (gold, silver, bronze and poor).
The pilot chapters in group B will be:

1. Alpha Omicron Pi
2. Psi Upsilon
3. Delta Gamma
4. Lambda Chi Alpha

Pilot Program Communications:

The Director of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs will meet with pilot chapter Presidents and their Greek Life Coordinator in September 2009 to discuss changes in detail and answer questions. OFSA will then hold optional monthly meetings for these chapters to discuss their experiences, provide feedback or ask questions.

Accreditation Rankings

Chapters assessment metrics will remain consistent with the current system
Ranked on a scale of Gold, Silver, Bronze, Poor Unacceptable in each of the 5 areas
Ranked on a scale of Gold, Silver, Bronze, Poor Unacceptable overall

Accreditation Rewards

Chapter Goal Setting and Rewards

Chapters will be encouraged to work with their alumni to set appropriate rewards during the strategic planning and goal setting process in August/September. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority affairs staff will work with campus constituents to help chapters coordinate reward systems that connect to their values and organizational priorities.

Tie in to Greek Awards

The Accreditation Committee will be working with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, as well as the Interfraternity, Panhellenic and Multicultural Greek Councils to consolidate the Accreditation process with the Greek Awards process. While individual Greek Awards will still be recognized during the spring semester, chapter awards will be selected using the Accreditation results, as opposed to a separate awards application process, allowing chapters to streamline work put into various assessment and awards application processes during the course of the year. The ultimate goal for OFSA and chapters is to reach a point where one application, based off of individual chapters' Inter/National Chapter of the Year Award processes can also be used for Accreditation and Greek Awards. The current Greek Awards process will remain in existence through 2009-10, with a process for 2010-11 implementations in place by the end of the fall 2009 semester (pending IFC, Panhel, MGC approval).

*Communication and Education Timeline**

September 2009

- Review final Accreditation Overview with Next Steps Committee
- Review final Accreditation Overview with permanent Accreditation panelists
- Review final Accreditation Overview with IFC/Panhel/MGC executive boards
- Review final Accreditation Overview with pilot chapter leadership
- Review final Accreditation Overview with pilot chapter general membership
- Review final Accreditation Overview with pilot chapter leadership
- Review final Accreditation Overview with remaining chapter presidents

October 2009

- Review final Accreditation Overview at Greek Alumni Council fall meeting

December 2009

- Review Pilot chapter mid-year reports

Spring 2010

- Educational sessions for fraternity and sorority community on new process
- Focus groups/survey with panelists and chapter members involved with the new process

Summer 2010

- Comparison and trending of current and new processes

**Including monthly alumni/ae and Next Steps Committee updates and feedback.*