



Putting Scholarship at the Forefront of Recruitment and New Member Education

By Laura Ansley, Sigma Psi

Many chapters have academic problems with new members – both during the pledging process and in their first semester as an active brother or sister. There are numerous ways that these problems can be solved throughout the recruitment and pledging process.

Emphasize scholarship during the recruitment process. By talking about what kinds of academic standards the chapter and Greek Life enforce, you may be able to weed out the recruits that are just coming for the social life. For sorority recruitment, this is a lot easier now with the “no-frills” policies, but you also have the option to check grades with the Greek Life staff to ensure that your PNMs are meeting your standards. For fraternities, this may be a bit harder, especially as first-semester freshmen don’t have grades to ask about. However, you can always bring it up in conversation and ask how they did in high school or if they participated in any scholarly groups or activities or were awarded for their academic success (i.e. National Honor Society, Honor Roll, etc.). You can also discuss how their high schools prepared them for college. If their high school sounds like a top-tier school that prepared them well, this may be an indicator of how they will do in college. The same can be said of taking difficult classes in high school, like honors and AP courses.

Utilize your scholarship chairs during the pledging semester. Your scholarship chair is the best person to talk about academics in the chapter since he or she should be the one enforcing the policies and helping struggling members. By having your chair attend a new member meeting, the pledges will see that this is an area the chapter wants to focus upon, and that there are resources within the group to utilize if they are having trouble in their classes.

Set up an academic support system for your new members. There is more your chair can do than just talking to your new members in the beginning of the pledge process. During their pledging semester, the best thing you can do is to set up individual meetings with each new member to gauge what kind of help you can offer them or what kind of assistance they need. You can find out the basics of what major/minors they are pursuing and what classes they are taking so that if they are struggling you can help them find the right person to ask for help. If they are already having trouble, you can help them to decide if they are just having a rough semester but really enjoying their classes or if they would enjoy another major more and have a higher aptitude for it. You can even set up a formal academic mentoring program in which older members can be paired with the pledges to help with homework, time management, scheduling for the next semester, or any other problems the pledges may be having.

Emphasize to them that academics come first. If you are looking to improve your chapter’s academics, the best thing you can do is recruit men or women who value scholarship. In all, you will be starting with a better foundation that you can build upon through the semesters. Though it takes time, several semesters of recruiting with scholarship in mind will help to improve your chapter GPA and the overall attitude towards academics in your chapter.

Plus/Minus Grading for Case?

By Chris Coy, Beta Theta Pi

The Undergraduate Student Government recently hosted a forum on the possibility of moving Case Western towards a plus/minus grading system. USG representatives first presented their research on the topic, using studies and simulations from universities around the country. Highlights include:

- 84% of universities use a form of +/- grades in their undergraduate program
- Benefits to +/- grades include a more accurate reflection of student achievement, more informative feedback, more incentive to students to produce quality work, and a greater competitive edge concerning graduate school admission.
- Drawbacks include the possibilities of a slight decrease in average GPA (this concern is addressed later in the study), and greater clerical error in recording grades.

Following this, the floor was opened to student questions and responses. Many students reacted quite vocally against the idea, worrying and speculating about a possible drop in student GPAs (something the USG representatives addressed even before the questioning).

While the benefits of the proposed changes are not something that many students get excited about (greater accuracy, more informative feedback), many students were unable to look beyond their own potential grade declines, and seemed unwilling to consider any benefits. This change appears to be an asymmetric situation, where the potential “losers” are concentrated and vocal, and any potential “winners” are dispersed or uninformed of their potential gain.

Overall, the grading forum served its purpose as a way to inform and elicit feedback from students. Future discussions and research by USG should help to clarify potential gains to the student body and ask students to consider looking beyond their hypothetical 0.04 drop in GPA.

Fall 2008 Grade Report

Fraternity All-Member Chapter G.P.A.

G.P.A.	Chapter	# of Members
3.521	Beta Theta Pi	36
3.405	Lamda Chi Alpha	23
3.336	Delta Tau Delta	64
3.272	Phi Kappa Tau	46
3.256	Sigma Nu	37
3.209	Sigma Phi Epsilon	43
3.204	Phi Gamma Delta	36
3.167	Zeta Psi	40
3.126	Phi Kappa Psi	56
3.109	Black Greek Council	8
3.065	Delta Upsilon	26
3.047	Sigma Chi	41
3.045	Phi Delta Theta	36
3.027	Theta Chi	49
3.010	Phi Kappa Theta	27
2.944	Zeta Beta Tau	49
2.919	Delta Kappa Epsilon	18
2.638	Alpha Epsilon Pi	9
2.408	Sigma Alpha Mu	14

Sorority All-Member Chapter G.P.A.

G.P.A.	Chapter	# of Members
3.511	Alpha Chi Omega	58
3.462	Delta Gamma	63
3.399	Kappa Alpha Theta	59
3.373	Sigma Psi	48
3.354	Phi Mu	66
3.334	Alpha Phi	62
3.300	Phi Sigma Rho	29
3.229	Omega Tau Zeta	13
3.109	Black Greek Council	8
2.889	Sigma Gamma Rho	4