

Fraternity and Sorority Task Force Overview

The Task Force: The Creating a Community of Excellence is the product of a planning initiative undertaken from 2004-2006. A Fraternity and Sorority Task Force was formed with the purpose of examining the culture of the fraternity and sorority community then developing recommendations to address the themes identified. The Fraternity and Sorority Task Force was charged with evaluating the current state of the community, gathering data, reviewing other campuses best practices and conducting focus groups. In addition, the Task Force was charged with creating a 5-10 year plan for the Fraternities and Sororities at Florida Tech. The instruction to the committee was to devise a plan that would establish Florida Tech fraternities and sororities as a preeminent fraternity and sorority community in the small private school sector.

The Fraternity and Sorority Task Force was chaired by the Assistant Director for Student Activities. Throughout the process, input from other external consultants was sought. The committee was comprised of six student representatives. The Fraternity and Sorority Task Force began their work in the fall of 2004. The major research was conducted in the spring of 2005. Over the fall of 2005 the information was analyzed and the recommendations and benchmarks were created. The document was presented in February 2006 to the university administration for endorsement and was adopted by the chapter presidents soon after.

Report Purpose: The purpose of this document is to describe the relationship between Florida Tech and fraternities and sororities and develop a plan for the future. For the purpose of this document, fraternities and sororities are defined as those private, voluntary associations with national and international affiliations with the National Panhellenic Conference, National Interfraternity Conference or National Pan-Hellenic Council, which meet the following criteria:

1. They have organizational goals which are social/service/fraternal rather than honorary, professional, service, religious or political. Membership in more than one such fraternal organization at once is not permitted.
2. They may select members according to subjective criteria, but they must act in accordance with the equal opportunity policy of the University. They may be entitled to single sex membership if they meet the provision of Section 86.14 of the regulations promulgated under Title IX of the U.S. Education Act Amendment of 1972.
3. They maintain a charter from their inter/national organizations and exist at Florida Tech with the approval of the Office of Student Life.
4. They agree to subscribe to the recommendations set forth in this document.

Background: Fraternity and Sorority life at Florida Tech dates back to the founding years of the university. From their inception, these student associations have played a significant role in shaping the campus environment and have contributed to the development of thousands of Florida Tech students. In process of examining the culture

of the fraternity and sorority community at Florida Tech, various themes emerged and have been identified in this document. The university has grown and the underlying theme, articulated by the fraternity and sorority community members through their experience in their own organizations, is their commitment to creating a campus with a strong student life presence.

Today, approximately 12% of undergraduate students at Florida Tech affiliate with fraternity and sorority organizations. The average fraternity chapter membership is 39 members and the average sorority chapter numbers 31. At the time of report, six fraternities and three sororities were established on campus with plans for a seventh fraternity expansion in spring 2006.

Over the years, the values inherent in fraternity and sorority letter organizations have enhanced the academic mission of the University, encouraged leadership and character development, promoted community service, and helped to form lifelong friendships. These values, along with fraternity and sorority customs and activities, have contributed to many campus traditions and have had an impact on the local communities. The University takes pride in the many accomplishments of the chapters and has demonstrated its institutional commitment to these organizations through its addition of a professional staff person for the groups in the Office of Student Life, the office budget, programs and resources that have been provided.

Clearly fraternity and sorority organizations at Florida Tech have been and continue to be an important part of the undergraduate experience for many students. Faculty and staff have acknowledged the philanthropic activities undertaken by fraternity and sorority members. Alumni recall their lifelong friendships and leadership development opportunities. For these reasons and for the many personal and educational benefits offered to students through their membership in fraternity and sorority organizations, the Task Force endorses the University's commitment to fraternity and sorority life and to strengthening its role in the community.

In the past, fraternity and sorority life has afforded many benefits to its affiliated members and to the community as a whole. The Task Force believes that the chapters show great promise and are viable to the university mission. The groups however lack a common purpose or goal as a community. In fact, the chapters function almost as independent units rather than a unified, strong, viable community of leaders. The main emerging theme is a divergence from the founding values of fraternities and sororities.

Divergence from the principles of their founding members is not unique to Florida Tech's Fraternity and Sorority Community; this situation currently reflects the national norm. We know that many colleges and universities are struggling with the issues related to the change in direction taken by Fraternity and Sorority organizations. Significant concern has been expressed by fraternal executive offices and host universities. Inter/national executive officers cite the founding principles of scholarship, leadership, character, service, and friendship and report that these ideals are no longer universally embraced by undergraduate fraternity and sorority members. Moreover, they charge that the

replacement values and behaviors exhibited today discredit the integrity of their organizations. Most institutions are reexamining the role of Fraternity and Sorority organizations to determine whether they remain compatible with their educational missions. Nationwide, college and university staffs are frustrated by the continual need for crisis management that wastes valuable time and resources that were once used for the positive development of fraternity and sorority members and chapters.

Florida Tech's fraternity and sorority community reflects the same national concerns. The Fraternity and Sorority Task Force therefore affirms a return to the inherent values and principles of scholarship, leadership, character, service, and friendship that will serve as the cornerstones of fraternity and sorority organizations. The common values shared by all Florida Tech fraternities and sororities should serve as guideposts for chapter and member programming and practice, pointing the way toward the development of a community of excellence at Florida Tech.

The Report: The report is broken up into various sections: preface, resolutions, historical perspective, overview, results, executive summary, key recommendations and the appendices. The results are a portion of the research that was collected over the process; however, reflects the main themes that emerged from the work. The executive summary plainly lays out the main task force recommendations in order of importance. The key recommendations provide the detail for each recommendation on how to achieve the recommendation and benchmarks to determine success. Finally, the appendices provide more detailed supplemental information. In addition to this report, a timeline document details the order in which the recommendations should be completed.

Implementation: The responsibility for implementation will be through the various constituents guided by the Office of Student Life staff. The implementation phases will use the social change model to ensure implementation effectiveness. The social change model identifies three key components: Individual, Group, and Society/Community. The model is "embedded in collaboration"; the task force realizes that individuals affect groups and in turn groups affect the society/community. The recommendations are designed to target all three subsets.

The Desired Outcome: It is the belief that the Florida Tech chapters can become a preeminent fraternity and sorority community in the small private school sector when the constituents are challenged to achieve the recommendations set forth in this document.