

# Recruitment: Redefined & Redesigned



Student demographics have changed. Learn what the National Panhellenic Conference is doing to ensure the valuable benefits of Greek membership remain available to future generations of women.

by Christine Barnicki, Chi Omega, for the National Panhellenic Editors Conference

Remember rush? If you're over 30, most of us had about the same experiences: visiting every sorority for a round of open house parties, waiting for, accepting and regretting invitations to subsequent rounds of parties, Preference Night, and finally, Bid Day. During the structured daytime events held the week before classes began, your fellow rushees were primarily a homogenous group of typical college coeds: generally of European descent, from the middle to upper-middle classes, entering college directly from high school, attending college full time to earn a degree in four years, dependent on their parents to take care of most, if not all, financial responsibilities, working part time or not at all, and living on campus.

Today, rush is called recruitment, rushees are potential members, and the decades-old model of the campus collegian, upon which NPC's traditional membership-enrollment system was established, is no longer typical of contemporary college students: Only 16 percent of today's college students attend full time, are 18-22 years of age, and live on campus (Arthur Levine, "The Remaking of the American University" Innovative Higher

Education, Summer, 2001.); about 75 percent of all four-year college students now earn a paycheck, and about 25 percent of them work full time.

Contemporary students are ethnically, religiously and racially diverse, and come from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds than ever before. Thirty percent are minorities, 20 percent were born outside the United States or have a foreign-born parent, and 11 percent

spoke a language other than English while growing up. Many are also first-generation college students. All face more life pressures and bring with them a greater array of experiences than students in earlier decades. (Mary B. Marcy, "Diversity, Demographics, and Dollars: Challenges for Higher Education," July 2002)

The chart below illustrates the differences between today's students and the traditional-student model.

## Traditional Student

Student studies full time; 0 percent work

18-22 years old, no family responsibilities

Lives on campus

Ethnically and socio-economically homogeneous student body

Graduated in top 10-25 percent of high school class

Completes BA degree in 4 years

Students spend all four years at the college they enter

## Contemporary Student

Over 70 percent of students work

41 percent over 25 years old, many with family responsibilities

Commutes to campus

Ethnically and socio-economically diverse student body

Graduated in top 50 percent of high school class

Completes BA degree in 5-6 years

Many transfer students

(Sources: National Center for Education Statistics, 2000; S. Choy, Access and Persistence: Findings from 10 Years of Longitudinal Research on Students, American Council on Education, 2002)



## Only 9.8 percent of students estimate chances are very good that they will join a social fraternity or sorority while attending college. This is down from last year .

Responding to the more heterogeneous student body, campuses have developed outreach and support programs, multi-cultural centers, and ethnic-studies departments focusing on new student populations and, as the number of older students has grown so have the offerings of evening and weekend programs designed to respond to working adults. Supplementing the traditional, structured classroom time and lecture, new systems of delivering education are being implemented: independent study, online learning, assessment-based grading, and credit for civic



Delta Theta, Truman State University, chapter members during formal recruitment event, "On Broadway."

involvement, community service, and professional achievement.

With this understanding of the changing campus environment, it became clear to NPC that, to maintain a stable or growing membership and offer relevant experiences for an increasingly diverse population, new systems to respond to the new students must be developed. A new recruitment process to fit the needs of contemporary college coeds was of

primary importance. In the '90s there was a continuous effort by NPC to improve opportunities to recruit new members. Because the process no longer served students nor the institutions well on all campuses, variations on the traditional system mostly proved to be unsatisfactory.

Seeking clearer direction, in 2001 the NPC Recruitment Processes Committee gathered data from

surveys, oral interviews, past NPC recruitment committees, and campus statistics. Information was solicited from NPC national presidents, NPC's College Panhellenics and Alumnae Panhellenics Committees, student life professionals (such as Greek advisors on campuses), and campus Panhellenic presidents, and Panhellenic vice presidents of recruitment. The majority of survey respondents, regardless of which group they represented, felt there should not be

just one system of recruitment: that each campus is unique and therefore requires a unique approach.

As a result of these survey findings and NPC discussion, the following changes were among those agreed to at the October 2003 NPC meeting.

- A Marketing Plan that will encourage and assist all NPC member groups, College Panhellenics, and Alumnae Panhellenics in developing marketing programs that will focus on a variety of publics at the inter/national, community, and university levels.
- New methodology for determining release figures will provide realistic opportunities to encourage managed growth while balancing the need for parity among chapters with membership opportunities for unaffiliated women. Quota will be set as late as possible in the recruitment process to place the greatest number of women. How we manage the expectations of potential members plays a large role in whether or not they will complete the recruitment process and how satisfied they will be with the outcome.
- A menu of four recruitment styles models has been adopted. The four styles each lead to the same goal, but in different ways. While the emphasis and details of each style will vary from campus to campus, the move from one rather inflexible formal recruitment system to a four-style system presents an opportunity to make clear choices by offering alternative recruitment methods, responsiveness to changing demographics, and cost containment via the no-frills recruitment concept adopted in 1991.

# Four Proposed Recruitment Models

## Continuous Open Recruitment

On-going, informal events of all sizes organized by chapters and their alumnae. Bids offered directly to potential members.

### Campuses are different:

63% have four NPC groups or less

28% have 5–9 NPC groups

9% have 10–21 NPC groups

### Quotas vary:

17% have Quotas less than 10

24% have Quotas of 11–10

18% have Quotas of 20–29

19% have Quotas over 30

22% have unknown Quotas

- Sixty percent of campuses have Greek communities considered small or very small, with no more than four NPC groups. Forty-one percent have new members numbering not more than 18 annually.

- Many campuses have growing recruitment numbers; others have declining numbers.

- Many campuses have a tradition of students living on campus; others are strictly commuter campuses.

## Minimally Structured Recruitment

Potential members explore options at their discretion. Members and potential members get to know one another in a relaxed, informal atmosphere without structured events. Each chapter determines the times and types of social occasions they will have, and may include a preference event. The campus Panhellenic organization determines the date for issuing bids.

## Partially Structured Recruitment

Events established within a more loosely defined time frame provide potential members the flexibility to attend events according to their own schedules and interests. Potential members are required to visit each sorority at least once; a preference event and Bid Day conclude recruitment.

## Fully Structured Recruitment

Traditional, with structured rounds and events highlighting positive aspects of sorority life and responsible

membership. Traditional recruitment works well on some campuses, generally those with a large number of women interested in becoming part of the Greek system.

In consultation with the campus Greek advisor and with the approval of their NPC area advisor, college Panhellenics will determine which recruitment style is the best fit for their campus. Implementation of the recruitment styles will begin in January 2005 after the college Panhellenics on each campus have assessed their needs using material provided by NPC. No-Frills Recruitment will remain a goal on every Panhellenic campus.

- NPC also established a Committee on Recruitment: to monitor trends and recommend and implement recruitment strategies. The committee may include fraternity/sorority advisors and other relevant experts. A new recruitment handbook will also be developed.



Alpha Mu, University of Michigan, new members posed for a photo on Bid Day following formal recruitment.

# What's next?



Mu, University of Washington, chapter members prepared to give house tours during formal recruitment.

Now that you understand why and how recruitment is changing, here's what you can do to ensure the joys of sisterhood remain available to generations of women yet to come:

- Seek personal and informative Panhellenic-spirited contact with prospective members at all times during the year.
- Let these young women know that only through Greek affiliation will they have a multi-faceted association dedicated to life-long local and national support systems in which they are able to develop leadership skills, pursue knowledge, wisdom and scholarship, build career, personal, and social networking, discover rewarding opportunities for community service and philanthropic endeavors, and form enduring friendships built on common experiences, aspirations, and respect.
- Relate to potential members your fondest memories of all-night chats

with your sisters, the help you received from a senior English major that got you through a tough freshman writing assignment, the planning and execution of a fund-raiser to benefit Alzheimer's Disease research, the experiences you gained as a chapter chairman and then officer which later helped you advance in your career, the social skills you honed during recruitment, and the myriad new sisters you met and instantly connected with as an alumna.

- Tell them about the reunions you still attend, 10, 25, even 50 years after your college graduation. Tell them that your Greek affiliation has been a building block and a cornerstone of your life, and still is.
- Tell them that NPC will continue to ensure that young women have an opportunity to enjoy the same life-affirming relationships, opportunities and memories as you did and one day fondly ask, "Remember recruitment?"

NPC groups remain viable for contemporary students by integrating social and academic support in dynamic, interdisciplinary communities that encourage students to learn from each other. These kinds of environments have been shown to

- increase student retention
- expand levels of learning
- enhance relationships between students, faculty, and disciplines
- tie education to experience
- increase commitment to civic involvement and
- enhance students' capacity for cross-cultural understanding

Effective campus social support systems contribute to increased student learning. Women's fraternal associations are positively correlated with educational attainment, leadership, cultural awareness, tolerance, empathy, independence, and ability to relate to others.

As campus paradigms continue to shift, NPC must do the same to remain an important partner in the total education of women—integral to the learning process by providing community service, co-op learning environments, vital social support, and environments in which appreciation for a broader population is fostered.