

Transitions: Creating Meaningful Experiences for Seniors

Fraternities and sororities pride themselves on creating better men and women through their involvement in the organization. However, one of the main issues many chapters face is the problem of senior involvement. When asked, many undergraduates say that their seniors are “apathetic.” The North-American Interfraternity Conference is prepared to challenge that statement of apathy, and put forth the idea that seniors are not as involved in the chapter because the fraternity/sorority is no longer meeting their needs. Most seniors do not have an interest in attending their fourth seminar on hazing or even the really cool party scheduled with the XYZ chapter.

The NIC believes that fraternities and sororities still have a great deal to offer senior members, and *Transitions* is a new resource for campuses, the general fraternity and the undergraduate chapter to use in creating a meaningful experience for a member in their last year of college.

According to Chickering and Schlossberg (1998), there are three sets of issues confronting students in transition (graduation):

1. Making a career connection
 - College is not preparing students for the “real world”*
 - Seniors need to be prepared for ambiguity.*
 - Things will probably feel unsettled.*
 - Seniors need to realize they have the resources to deal with transition.*
 - Need help setting realistic expectations including that they will experience discontinuity, downward mobility (small fish in a big pond transition).*
 - Takes time to find a career that is a good fit.*
2. Clarifying their newer identity as it relates to vocation, avocation, and lifestyle
 - Time of creating more independence and autonomy.*
 - Separating from the “family of origin” and establishing own identity.*
 - Become grounded occupationally and develop a permanent relationship.*
 - Advice: know yourself, your partner, and your boss; speak the truth; be intentional about your future by articulating your dreams; be aware of how your dreams might subvert someone else’s.*
3. Developing a life span perspective
 - Be comfortable with putting self in new, challenging situations and learning from them.*
 - Know what skills, knowledge, abilities and characteristics you are taking with you.*
 - Develop a perspective on what lies ahead . . . the adult life span. This includes developing ones own life and relationships, commitments, and realizing who you are as an individual and the limits you have in your life.*

It is important to understand the role campus, fraternity/sorority professionals, chapters and volunteers can play in supporting upperclass students’ career development paths. The seniors need sounding boards as they begin this next phase of adulthood, and they need guidance as they figure out what career path they want to follow. By providing this support network, we can help our seniors enter the world outside of college with confidence and excitement that they can achieve success beyond graduation.

Resources

Chickering, A. W., & Schlossberg, N. K. "Moving on: Seniors as people in transition." In J. Gardner and G. Van derVeer (eds.), *The Senior Year Experience*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.

Gardner, J. & Van derVeer (eds.). *The Senior Year Experience*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1998.