

Report of the Student Organization Review Committee (SORC) February 2017

Description

The Student Organization Review Committee (SORC) was created by a subcommittee of the Charter Committee for Building Social Community at Trinity College and was first convened in December 2013. SORC is composed of two students, two faculty members, and one staff member. The committee currently meets twice per semester. The purpose of this report is to describe the work of SORC during the 2015-16 academic year. This document will describe the annual review process, provide an update on the work of the committee, and conclude with recommendations regarding the work of SORC.

Purpose

SORC annually reviews selective social organizations to assess progress toward compliance with the standards set by the Charter Committee's subcommittee. Selective social organizations are defined as all social organizations with a dedicated facility (regardless of ownership), selective membership, and/or initiation process. These include Greek letter organizations, theme houses, and cultural houses. SORC is not a disciplinary body. Rather, the committee determines whether an organization has met the standards set by the College. The committee also provides constructive feedback to each organization with suggestions for improvement during the next review period.

Reporting Process

For the annual review, each organization is provided a form or "report" with the following prompts:

- What is the event or accomplishment of which your organization is most proud?
- Please list community service projects your organization participated in.
- Please list initiatives you have taken to enrich the intellectual and/or community life of Trinity.
- Please list efforts you have made to promote academic achievement among your membership.
- Please list programs or events your organization has held or co-sponsored that fostered interaction between your membership and other groups on campus.

The questions/prompts correspond to requirements detailed in the Student Organization Regulations and Procedures from the *Student Handbook*. The organizations also are required to attach rosters and to have the organization's adviser sign (or acknowledge) receipt of the report. The committee then reviews the reports and offers constructive feedback to each organization. Each group receives an individual communication that addresses any concerns raised by or deficiencies apparent in the report.

Overview

SORC has oversight of the following student organizations:

Greek letter organizations: Alpha Chi Rho, Alpha Delta Phi, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Cleo Society of Alpha Chi, Ivy Society, Kappa Kappa Gamma, Kappa Sigma, Pi Kappa Alpha, Psi Upsilon, St. Anthony Hall, Zeta Omega Eta

Cultural organizations: ASAA, Umoja House, Bayt Al Salaam — House of Peace, La Eracra-La Voz Latina

Social houses: The Mill, International House, PRAXIS, Zachs Hillel House, The Fred, Treehouse, The Charleston House of Interfaith Cooperation

In September 2015, President Berger-Sweeney eliminated the coed mandate that would have required all selective social organizations to reach gender parity by October 2016. The action, ratified by the Board of Trustees in October 2015, tremendously impacted the work of the committee. Initially, the committee's primary role was to oversee the implementation of the coed mandate and to ensure that the selective social organizations were moving toward full compliance with the mandate. With the mandate eliminated, however, the committee was free to focus on other matters involving selective social organizations.

During the course of the year, three groups of students approached Joe DiChristina, dean of campus life and vice president for student affairs, with requests for new Greek letter organizations. Two groups were interested in starting new sororities, while one group wanted to start a new fraternity. The group interested in starting the fraternity quickly affiliated with a national organization unbeknownst to the College. This required the committee to consider a process for recognizing new Greek letter organizations. In response, the committee approved the Greek Chapter Recognition Policy (see addendum) that specifies the process for proposing a new fraternity or sorority on campus. As of this writing, there are two new active sorority interest groups and one fraternity that has provisional recognition. The names of the new sororities are The Stella Society and the Order of the Elms; the name of the new fraternity is Lambda Alpha Upsilon.

The year was also marked by changes in organizational leadership. In addition to the campus hiring a new vice president for student affairs, the associate director of student services for social houses moved to a different role at the College. This left the social houses in a state of transition as the College revised the position and completed a search. In July 2016, the new director of campus life initiatives and social houses, Kathryn Wojcik, was hired and began serving in this capacity. Even during a time of change, the social houses continued to program and to work to enhance the co-curricular life at the College.

Annual Review 2015-16

This year marked the third annual review period for the selective social organizations. The annual review is an opportunity for the organizations to reflect on their accomplishments and to report to the College their activities in various categories. Of particular interest are three categories: community service, intellectual and community life, and collaborative programming.

- **Community Service:** The social houses are expected to engage in service to the community both on campus and in the Greater Hartford area. Some service events are campuswide and involve all social houses; others service events are developed and completed by the chapters alone. Collectively, the social houses participated in **84** community service events. This number includes organizational participation in events involving multiple organizations.
- **Intellectual and Community Life:** The social houses are expected to produce and support programs that enhance the life of the College. These are programs that fall outside the usual social programming and can include intellectual programs and other community events. Collectively, the organizations participated in **73** events designed to enhance the intellectual and community life of the College. This number includes organizational participation in events involving multiple organizations.
- **Collaborative Programming:** In an effort to foster a more inclusive social environment on campus, the social houses are expected to collaborate with other organizations on programs. These programs can be

social, cultural, or intellectual. While primarily social, the goal of the collaborative programming is to bring together students who may not normally associate socially at the College. The social houses participated in **83** collaborative programs. This number includes organizational participation in events involving multiple organizations.

GPA Requirements

Selective social organizations whose membership does not renew annually are required to maintain a collective grade point average of 3.0 or above. The only social houses currently falling into this category are the Greek letter organizations. Each chapter has met or exceeded the aggregate minimum GPA. Please see the fall 2015 and spring 2016 grade reports below:

Chapter	Fall 2015 Term GPA	Spring 2016 Term GPA
Alpha Delta Phi (AD)	3.068	3.217
Cleo of Delta Chi	3.472	3.437
Alpha Chi Rho (Crow)	3.365	3.458
Ivy Society	3.269	3.437
Kappa Sigma (Kappa Sig)	3.241	3.143
Kappa Kappa Gamma	3.503	3.619
Pi Kappa Alpha (Pike)	3.425	3.459
Psi Upsilon	3.28	3.372
St. Anthony Hall	3.305	3.380
Zeta Omega Eta	n/a	3.378
All Fraternity GPA	3.272	3.371
All Sorority GPA	3.405	3.499
All Greek GPA	3.325	3.390
All Male (non-Greek)	3.16	3.041
All Female (non-Greek)	3.444	3.421
All University (non-Greek)	3.297	3.231

Recommendations

With the elimination of the coed mandate, the College has an opportunity to use the committee differently and to maximize the committee as a resource. The following recommendations should be considered moving forward.

- **Greek Life Program Assessment:** 2017 marks the fourth year that the Greek life program has had a full-time adviser. The program would benefit from a comprehensive review and assessment to guide the next phase of development. This would include an opportunity for students participating in Greek life to provide feedback on the quality of their Greek experience.
- **Discipline:** The College should consider utilizing SORC as a consultant for serious organizational conduct matters, particularly if such matters may result in the closure of an organization or substantial loss of privileges.

- **Term Limits:** Term limits for membership on the committee have not been set. The College should consider whether members of the committee should be subject to term limits.
- **Minimum Standards:** In the final report of the Charter Committee for Building Social Community at Trinity College, the section on minimum standards detailed six areas of compliance “for all social organizations with a facility, selective membership, and/or initiation process.” (Charter Committee report, pp. 27-28.) The committee should consider exercising stricter oversight of the remaining five standards.
- **Quarterly Reports:** While the annual review is comprehensive, it would be helpful if the selective social organizations submitted quarterly updates to the committee. These updates should include programing information and disclosure of organizational misconduct that may occur.
- **New Theme/Cultural Houses:** The committee should consider developing a policy and process, similar to the Greek Chapter Recognition Policy, for students to request new theme or cultural houses.

Conclusion

Overall, the 2015-16 academic year included significant transformations in the community with changing leadership and the elimination of the coed mandate. The committee is successfully positioned to focus on other matters related to the selective social organizations regarding program assessment, organization recognition, committee structure, and review of policies that directly affect these groups. The recommendations made in this report to the committee strongly emphasize the need to serve as a resource in oversight of the organizations.

Addendum. Greek Life Chapter Recognition Policy

I. Procedures to form a Greek chapter at Trinity College

1. A group of four (4) or more Trinity students interested in forming a fraternity or sorority chapter must submit a written statement of interest to the dean of campus life and vice president for student affairs (VPSA) or her or his designee. The VPSA or her or his designee must give the students permission to request interest group status before the students can move forward with the effort to be recognized as outlined in Article II. The VPSA will respond to the interested students within 30 business days to let them know if they can move forward. The interested students in coordination with the director of campus life initiatives and social houses shall then contact national organizations. It is important that a relationship with a national organization is developed with the interested students and Trinity College to ensure effective communication between all parties and that appropriate procedures are followed. This process also enables the director of campus life initiatives and social houses to support and guide students as they explore their interest to bring a chapter to Trinity College.
2. A national organization must receive written permission from the VPSA to recruit Trinity students for membership in a newly formed or reconstituted fraternity or sorority chapter. All newly formed or reconstituted organizations must be affiliated with a national fraternity or sorority.

II. Request for interest group status

1. Once a national organization has established a relationship with a group of Trinity students in accordance with Article I, the group may petition for interest group status.
2. A request for interest group status must be submitted in writing to the VPSA, with a copy to the dean of students, the director of campus life initiatives and social houses, and the president of the Inter-Greek Council. The request must include the following:
 - A. The constitution and bylaws of the national organization, which must include the following statements:
 - i. All chapters must abide by state laws, College policies, and Inter-Greek Council regulations.
 - ii. No chapter may discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, ability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
 - B. The constitution and bylaws of the campus organization that include a mission statement that is in line with the goals, values, and purposes of Trinity College.
 - C. A roster of all prospective members and officers.
 - D. Written permission from the Trinity College Executive Board of the Inter-Greek Council to form an interest group at Trinity College and to participate in Inter-Greek Council activities.
3. The VPSA may grant or refuse interest group status to the petitioning organization on the basis of this written request. The VPSA may consult with other parties as necessary and may consider other matters such as the state of the fraternity and sorority community, the characteristics of the national organization, and the potential for the interest group to contribute positively to the College community. The VPSA may impose conditions on the interest group. The decision of the VPSA can be appealed to the Student Organization Review Committee of Trinity College. SORC may uphold or make a new recommendation for the VPSA to consider. The VPSA will consult with SORC prior to making a final decision. A group whose petition is not approved must wait one full year before reapplication will be considered.
4. An interest group shall have the following privileges:
 - A. Participation in Inter-Greek Council programs, including membership recruitment and membership education programs, dues assessment, voting privileges, Greek Week, and intramurals. Other issues related to Inter-Greek Council membership shall be subject to the discretion of the Inter-Greek Council.
 - B. Participation in all events open to student organizations.
 - C. Use of College facilities if appropriate and available.
 - D. Maintenance of academic records and membership rosters by the director of campus life initiatives and social houses.

III. Responsibilities of an interest group

1. A recognized interest group must fulfill the following responsibilities to be considered for chapter recognition by the College:
 - A. All activities must conform to federal, state, and local laws; Trinity College policies as stated in the *Student Handbook*; Inter-Greek Council regulations; and the organization's constitution and bylaws.
 - B. The interest group must be in good standing with the Inter-Greek Council and must participate fully in council activities.
 - C. The interest group must maintain a grade point average equal to or greater than the standard set for Greek GPAs (3.0 or higher) from the time of the request and until it is approved as a chapter. Please note that once a chapter is approved, the fraternity or sorority must meet the GPA standards as set forth in the *Student Handbook*.
 - D. The interest group must be in sound financial condition as determined by the national organization.
 - E. The interest group must hold regular meetings and keep accurate minutes of the meetings in accordance with the policies of the national organization.
 - F. The interest group must maintain a membership size sufficient to ensure continued existence of the organization. This number shall not fall below 10 students enrolled at Trinity College.
 - G. The interest group and the national organization must maintain regular contact with the director of campus life initiatives and social houses.
2. The interest group's performance of these responsibilities shall be evaluated by the VPSA upon application for chapter recognition as outlined in Article IV. The recognized interest group must document all activities during the time as an interest group.

IV. Request for chapter recognition

1. The interest group may apply for chapter recognition after completion of the following:
 - A. Minimum of at least two academic semesters during which time the interest group must fulfill the responsibilities of a recognized interest group as specified in Article III, Section 1 and in accordance with the procedures/requirements of the national organization.
 - B. In its application for chapter recognition, the interest group shall submit the following to the VPSA, with copies to the dean of students, director of campus life initiatives and social houses, and the Inter-Greek Council president:
 - i. A current copy of the local constitution and bylaws.
 - ii. A recent financial audit.
 - iii. A record of meeting dates and attendees.
 - iv. A comprehensive summary of all activities, including social, philanthropic, academic, recruitment, and membership education programs.
 - v. A statement from the national organization confirming good standing for the group and expressing its wish that the recognized group be granted College Recognition status.
 - vi. A statement from the Inter-Greek Council confirming good standing of the group and expressing their wish that the group be granted College recognition.
 - vii. Verification from the director of campus life initiatives and social houses that the group has fulfilled the responsibilities as specified above.
2. The VPSA may request that certain conditions (e.g., substance-free housing) accompany the granting of recognition. The conditions may be asked of a potential chapter to ensure the well-being of Trinity students and to confirm that appropriate policies and standards are in place when a chapter is being brought back to campus or when a new chapter is granted recognition.
3. An interest group may operate for no more than two academic years as an interest group and as guided by the national organization's standards. If the group has not been granted chapter status at the end of that period, it shall be disbanded and shall lose privileges as specified above. If the interest group is not granted chapter status by the VPSA, then this can be appealed to SORC. As similar to the appeal process in Article II Section 3, SORC may

uphold or make a new recommendation for the VPSA to consider. The VPSA will consult with SORC prior to making a final decision.

V. Chapter recognition

1. When granted chapter recognition by Trinity College, the chapter shall have all of the privileges of an interest group as specified above, as well as the following privileges:
 - A. Use of the Trinity College name in reference to the chapter.
 - B. Use of the Alumni Office for maintenance of records and communication with alumni.
 - C. Use of College materials and services for membership recruitment in accordance with College policy and Inter-Greek Council regulations.
 - D. Inclusion in College publications that list the members of the fraternity and sorority community.
 - E. Eligibility for Greek awards.
 - F. Support from campus resources such as the Campus Safety Department, the Career Development Center, and the Dean of Students Office.
2. No interest group or Greek life organization shall operate at Trinity College without the formal recognition of Trinity College and a national organization.
3. The VPSA may revoke chapter recognition from a chapter in accordance with College policies and regulations as found in the *Student Handbook*.