

Report of the Student Organization Review Committee (SORC)  
August 2015

**Overview**

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. During the first review period (2013–2014), the committee generally met on alternating weeks. Currently, the committee meets twice per semester. The purpose of this report is to describe the work of SORC and to update the Trinity community on the status of Greek Letter Organizations (GLOs). This document will discuss the annual review process, provide a progress report on the minimum standards presented in the final report of the Charter Committee for Building Social Community at Trinity College, and conclude with a series of next steps connected with 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.

**Social House Oversight**

One recommendation in the Charter Committee report was for the College to hire a full-time professional staff person to oversee the social houses. The position of associate director of student services for social houses (ADSS) was created, and Timothy Dunn was hired in November 2013. The position has limited involvement with the theme and cultural houses (which are supervised by other offices) and serves primarily as the campus Greek adviser. The benefits of having a dedicated adviser are readily apparent. First, GLO operations are now centralized and managed from one office. The resulting effect is that the community can approach one official with GLO-related issues. Further, the ADSS is a comprehensive resource for chapter leaders. This also has led to a renewed interest in GLOs. For example, there are currently four groups of students who have expressed interest in forming new organizations: two traditional sororities, one Latino fraternity, and one Jewish fraternity.

Second, having a dedicated adviser has led to members of GLOs feeling supported. It also has led to increased feelings of cooperation and respect between Campus Safety and the GLOs. Third, there is a visible increase in unity and cooperation among the GLOs. Finally, having an adviser who is an advocate and is supportive has resulted in the GLOs knowing that their concerns are being heard and voiced to the senior administration at the College.

Trinity’s Greek system is not without its issues. There are areas of accountability, education, and development that still must be addressed. However, implementing a system of consistent and intentional GLO oversight has resulted in significant improvements, and the system is moving in a positive direction.

**Reporting Process**

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

1. What is the event or accomplishment of which your organization is most proud?
2. Please list community service projects your organization participated in.
3. Please list initiatives you have taken to enrich the intellectual and/or community life of Trinity.
4. Please list efforts you have made to promote academic achievement among your membership.
5. Please list programs or events your organization has held or co-sponsored that fostered interaction between your membership and other groups on campus.
6. What is the ratio of men to women in your organization? If you have not reached gender parity, please list the efforts you have made to address that.

Four of the prompts are evaluated objectively using a three-point scale. The committee evaluates the other two questions – concerning gender parity and contribution to the life of the College – subjectively. The questions/prompts correspond to requirements detailed in the Student Organization Procedures and Guidelines 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 specific, constructive feedback to each organization. Each group receives an individual communication that addresses any concerns raised by or deficiencies apparent in the report.

### **Annual Reviews**

1. 2013–2014

Overall, there was significant effort by GLOs to collaborate with organizations beyond the theme, cultural, or Greek organization lines. Groups that generally had not mixed socially in the past paired for programs. For example, St. Anthony Hall worked with the campus group Encouraging Respect of Sexualities (EROS) to host a dinner for faculty, staff, and students who self-identify as members of the LGBTQ community. The event was quite successful and signaled a clear move toward nontraditional collaboration and social inclusion.

The groups that were single sex began a process of coeducation, and that was acknowledged in the committee feedback. For example, the Ivy Society held an informational dinner for two groups of first-year men, and Kappa Sigma surveyed a group of women. The purpose of this information gathering was to gauge whether or not members of the opposite gender would be interested in joining a coed GLO. There also was broad discussion around the topic of change. Specifically, the question was asked: what would our group need to change to encourage you to join? The feedback from these inquiries was quite negative. Students made it clear that there was no interest in joining coed GLOs beyond the coed GLOs that are currently active on campus. There were two groups that made no demonstrable progress during the first review period, and this was highlighted in the committee’s feedback letters to those organizations.

While there were many positive things happening in the social houses generally, there was not much consistency among the groups. Further, it was difficult to apply the “demonstrable progress” standard to the organizations whose membership must change in order to meet the coeducation requirement articulated in the Student Organization Procedures and Guidelines. It also was evident from the reports that some organizations took the process more seriously than others. The first review period was a learning process for all involved.

## 2. 2014–2015

The 2014–2015 SORC review is currently under way. The committee has not been able to meet due to academic and administrative conflicts, however a preliminary reading of the reports indicates the following:

- There has been a substantial increase in faculty involvement in educational programming in the social houses. The theme and cultural houses regularly hold events involving faculty. Additionally this year, 7 of the 10 GLOs hosted programs involving members of the faculty. This is quite an increase over the one program that was reported from the GLOs during the 2013–2014 review period.
- Collaboration among the social houses is improving. There have been joint events among many groups that traditionally do not mix. For example, Pike held a program with iHouse, and Kappa Sigma held joint programs with The Mill. Further, all GLOs participated in Ally Week and Day of Silence, in collaboration with – and with the support of – EROS and the LGBTQ community.
- Coed involvement and leadership seems to be thriving in the theme and cultural houses.
- All 10 GLOs have met the required collective GPA threshold at this time.

The organizations took the review process much more seriously this year, and there is generally more consistency among the reports. The organizations with dedicated College facilities seem to be maximizing use of those facilities for the benefit of the College. The Mill, for example, has served as host for TiPS training and bystander intervention training, in addition to its regular calendar of alternative programming.

Currently, there is a proposal before SORC to change the review period from September–April to January–December. Frankly, the GLOs are the organizations most affected by the review and seem to have the most trouble compiling the report. The majority of GLOs change executive officers in January. Setting the review period to coincide with the organizations’ presidential term would make for more effective reporting.

### **Minimum Standards – Progress Report**

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.). While the details of compliance have been revised (the coed membership quota benchmarks, for example, were removed), the six standards provide the framework for GLO operations and policy guidance.

1. **Coeducation – GLOs:** This year, the GLOs participated in two semesters of coed recruitment. At least three organizations report that they also have continued open conversation with members of the opposite gender around the topics of organizational change and coed membership. The committee will determine if these activities satisfy the “demonstrable progress” standard this year. However, there has been no actual change in the membership composition of the single-sex organizations. Further, student sentiment around the idea of coed GLOs remains consistent and does not support the 2016 gender parity requirement. A lack of coeducation in the theme and cultural houses has not been an issue.
2. **Pledging:** At the conclusion of the 10-day new-member orientation period referenced in the *Student Handbook*, GLOs must confirm initiation with an e-mail from either a national representative or an alumni adviser. Since spring 2014, each organization has complied with this confirmation requirement.

3. **GPA Required to Pursue Membership:** When a student registers for fraternity/sorority recruitment, grades are checked via the student's advising transcript to verify that the student has a 3.0 cumulative GPA or earned a 3.0, or better, the semester prior to seeking membership. Any student who does not meet the GPA requirements is notified via e-mail and removed from the recruitment process.
4. **Chapter Collective Average:** As the requirement relates to the chapter aggregate GPA, at the end of fall 2014, all GLOs met or exceeded the requirement.
5. **Faculty/Staff Adviser:** At this time, 7 of the 10 GLOs have dedicated faculty advisers. There are members of Trinity's administration and faculty who have agreed to advise the three remaining groups. Therefore, as of fall 2015, each GLO will have a dedicated faculty/staff adviser.
6. **Membership Records:** At the beginning of each semester, all GLOs provide an updated membership roster of the chapter to the College and the Inter-Greek Council (IGC). St. Anthony Hall, Alpha Delta Phi, and Psi Upsilon also are required to provide the names of any student who is a member of its associated eating club without regard to membership in the fraternal organization. All 10 GLOs have consistently complied with this requirement.

### GLOs – Next Steps

In order for Trinity's Greek system to continue to move forward in the current positive direction, there are a number of areas that must be addressed. There are matters that only can be addressed broadly by the College, and there are matters that must be addressed at the chapter level.

- **Campus Alcohol Concerns:** Alcohol consumption is not unusual on college campuses. However, the alcohol culture on Trinity's campus must be addressed broadly in order for there to be significant change as it relates to the culture in the GLOs. GLO social hosts often comment on students arriving to GLO social events after having already consumed alcohol in residence halls, apartments, and other locations. Further, there is a culture of "pre-gaming"<sup>1</sup> before parties that has become problematic generally and that directly impacts the GLOs.
- **Supervision:** The ability to enforce accountability is effective only when Trinity personnel can be present to the extent allowed by the College's jurisdiction statement (detailed in the *Student Handbook*) and agreements with GLOs. There is brief, official interaction between Trinity officials – or designees – and students during registered social events. However, to ensure the health and safety of students and the viability of the Greek system, the College must have the ability to check for compliance at times other than during registered social events. This is not to suggest the College intends to violate student privacy or exercise authority, dominion, or control over privately owned spaces. The College, however, has a duty to ensure the well-being of all students. Fulfilling that duty will require cooperation between the organizations and College officials.
- **Relationship Agreement:** The relationship between the College and the GLOs must be clearly articulated in terms agreed upon by the organizations and the College. Such terms include, but are not limited to, rights of entry, expectations related to property management, and clarification on

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<sup>1</sup> Pre-gaming is the rapid consumption of alcohol before attending a social event.

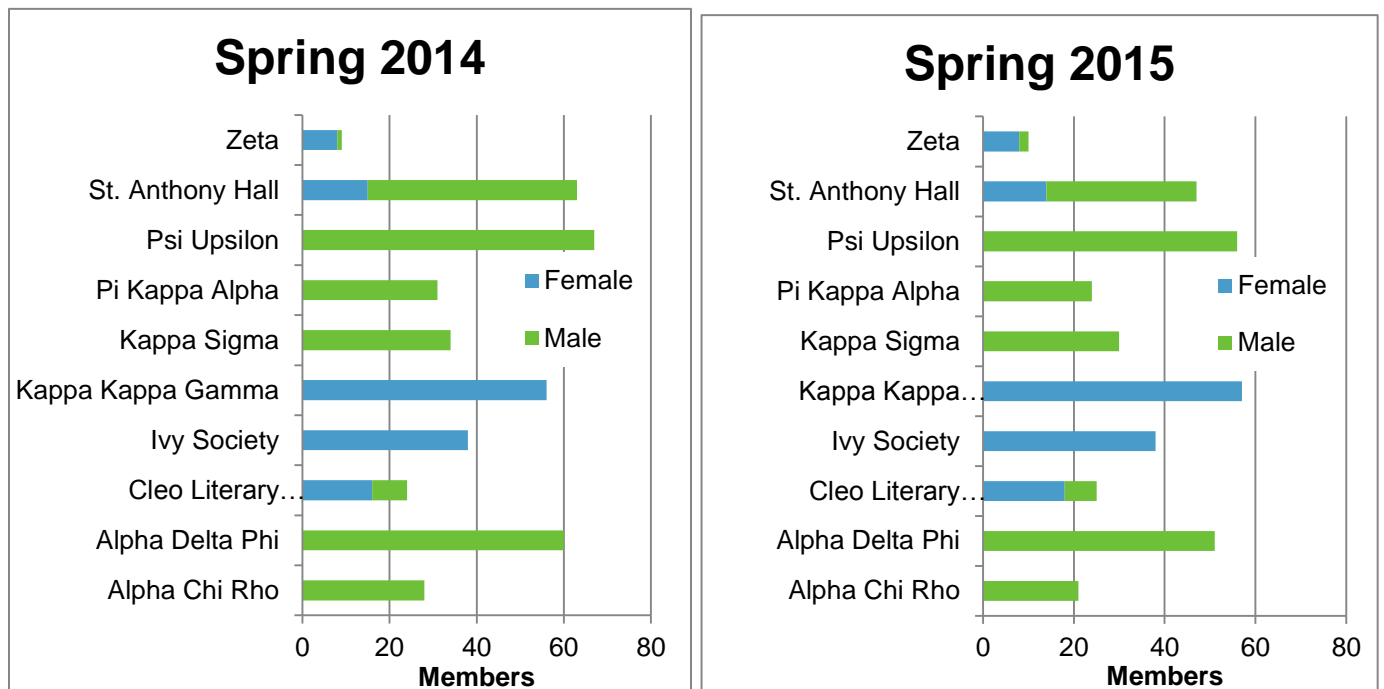
the expectations the organizations have of the College. The agreement should also make explicit the College’s expectations of alumni advisers.

- **Education/Training:** There is a limited amount of education and training provided to GLOs by the College around the subjects of relationship wellness, alcohol safety, and social event management. As resources allow, the scope of the education and training offered must be expanded in a manner that resonates with – and is accessible to – students.
- **Social Alternatives:** The Office of Student Activities, Involvement and Leadership is working to expand late-night social offerings across campus. These efforts must continue so the GLOs are not perceived as the primary social option.

As the second review period comes to a close, and in preparation for the 2015–2016 cycle, the committee needs clear direction concerning the coed mandate and the application of the “demonstrable progress” standard. Organizations with national affiliation will lose their charters under the coed membership policy as it is currently written. This would result in closure of 50 percent of the Greek system. Further, the College would lose the sororities in this process. Given the small number of sororities on campus, female students would be disproportionately impacted under the coed membership policy, and this is inconsistent with the College’s current Title IX-related efforts. Trinity’s president recently has announced a Campaign for Community at Trinity designed to identify means of addressing social climate issues. The newly designed Bantam Network, along with the restructuring of the College’s Student Affairs Division, will connect individual students to the broader campus community. These initiatives place ongoing support and strategic reform of social organizations within the overall campus climate and properly contextualize the issues raised in this report.

While it is evident the GLOs have made significant progress in many areas, there has been no actual movement toward compliance with the coed mandate, as the charts below demonstrate. And, it must be emphasized that the national organizations will not permit the chapters here to become coed without losing their charters.

**Gender Composition of GLOs**



It is clear that most of the GLOs will not, and in some cases cannot, be in coed compliance by the fall 2016 deadline. Therefore, the committee must recommend that the president and the Board of Trustees evaluate the situation and provide specific guidance about proceeding through the third year of this review process.