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DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS

The National Panhellenic Conference

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Celebrating its centennial year in 2002, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) has a strong tradition of leadership, values and friendship. The earliest meetings of women's fraternity representatives were held in Boston in 1891. Their agenda topics included discussions on inter-fraternity courtesy and etiquette, cooperation in purchasing fraternity jewelry and stationery, and planning for an exhibit at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair where the 2nd Women's Panhellenic Congress convened. However, today's NPC traces its roots back to the first Inter-Sorority Conference held in Chicago in 1902, 7 years before NIC held its first gathering. It was there that NPC established its first "agreements" that no invitations to pledging be tendered before the second Friday in December, that no pledging take place before the student matriculated, and that no initiation ceremony could take place in public. From this first "official" meeting, the NPC member organizations have expanded from 7 women's fraternities to today's 26 member groups and have worked harmoniously together to speak in a unified voice on behalf of women's fraternities.

Throughout its existence, NPC has sought to provide the college woman with the opportunity of a special sisterhood, created for women, by women. The women's fraternity system does not operate in a vacuum. As college campuses change, as the face of higher education changes, and as women's roles change, so do our organizations. The early women pioneers in higher education set a direction for all who came after them and credit must be given to the women who made the National Panhellenic Conference a reality. Through the years, the NPC has sought to keep the women's fraternity a vital and respected part of North American college life. The mission of the NPC adopted in fall 2000 succinctly captures both the on-going programming and collaborative spirit of the NPC:

"The National Panhellenic Conference supports its women's fraternities by promoting values, education, leadership, friendship, cooperation, and citizenship."

Structure:

NPC serves as an umbrella group for its member organizations. An Executive Committee of five (Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer-on rotation-and College Panhellenics Chair and Alumnae Panhellenics Chair -by appointment of the NPC Chairman) carries on the business of the conference between annual meetings held each fall. The NPC Chairman (in consultation with the other Executive Committee members) makes the committee appointments. During the annual meetings, the various conference committees meet to set goals for the biennium, plan out project timelines and responsibilities and discuss topics of interest. These committees are Academic Excellence, Advisory, Alumnae Panhellenics, Archives, Awards, Budget and Finance, By-laws Review, College Panhellenics, Educational Development, Extension, Housing, Liaison, Long Range Planning, Minutes Review, Publications, Public Relations, Research, and Resolutions.

Each NPC member organization is represented by a delegation of four women (the NPC Delegate and three Alternates), who have considerable fraternity experience as past or current inter/national officers. These delegation members serve the NPC on the various NPC Standing and Special Committees. The NPC delegation members also serve their organization internally as the point people for Panhellenic issues within their respective national organizations.

Governance:

The Unanimous Agreements provide the philosophy and foundation for NPC policy and practice. To adopt a Unanimous Agreement requires all member groups to agree initially. To amend a Unanimous Agreement requires a 5/6 vote. At the annual meetings there is an opportunity to adopt, amend, or revoke Unanimous Agreements (very rare) and/or pass resolutions that make or revise policy and practice. These votes are taken in the general sessions with all member groups in attendance. The votes are subsequently approved by the governing councils of the 26 member groups, and the Inter/National President of each group signs the Unanimous Agreement as binding on her organization. All College and Alumnae Panhellenics must incorporate the Unanimous Agreements into their procedures. The Unanimous Agreements create a sense of fair play on a high interfraternity plane, set the tone of high ideals and fellowship, and delineate procedures, jurisdictions and inviolate principles.

The Unanimous Agreements are grouped into 9 areas:

- **The Panhellenic Creed** - outlines a unified membership statement of aspiration
- **Jurisdiction of Panhellenic Associations** - states the requirement to conform to the Unanimous Agreements and restricts actions infringing on the sovereignty, rights and privileges of individual fraternities
- **The Panhellenic Compact** - includes the policies dealing with pledging and membership agreements

- **Standards of Ethical Conduct** - addresses the importance of obeying the letter and spirit of the Unanimous Agreements and handling of Panhellenic difficulties
- **Agreement on Extension** - explains the appropriate procedures when a College Panhellenic is considering adding a new chapter
- **College Panhellenic Association Agreement** - provides procedures to assure orderliness and harmony in the conduct of Panhellenic processes including establishing the College Panhellenic, adopting recruitment policies, preferential bidding, Continuous Open Bidding
- **College Panhellenic Association Judicial Procedure** - describes the required procedure for recruitment infractions and appropriate penalties for infractions of recruitment rules
- **Agreement on Questionnaires** - covers an area regarding confidentiality of information and the procedure for obtaining approval of questionnaires and proposed research which specifically surveys members of NPC organizations
- **NPC Declaration for Freedom** - clarifies our First Amendment rights which guarantee the freedom to "peaceably assemble" which makes possible voluntary associations

It is essential that all sorority advisors are familiar with the Unanimous Agreements for they give the spirit and detail to administering a College Panhellenic Association that meets the expectations of the National Panhellenic Conference and its member organizations. All sorority advisors should review them, ask the NPC Area Advisor questions about the Unanimous Agreements where he/she needs clarification, and continually refer to this section in the NPC Manual of Information as a resource.

The National Panhellenic Conference conducts all business through resolutions. These resolutions generally concern the affirmation of a recommendation or subject that is not addressed in the NPC Manual of Information. It is critical that each Panhellenic Advisor has the most recent edition of the NPC Manual of Information as a fingertip desk reference for Panhellenic operations.

At each NPC annual meeting, resolutions are adopted which become recommended practice for College and Alumnae Panhellenic administration as well as expected behavior for the total combined NPC membership-both individually and collectively. Copies of resolutions adopted at the annual meetings are distributed by mail to College and Alumnae Panhellenics shortly after the meeting has concluded to ensure that policy updates are sent widely. Usually there is a workshop session at the NIC/AFA Annual Meeting where the latest resolutions are explained in intent and rationale.

Resources:

The NPC Office in Indianapolis provides services and publications to NPC member groups and College and Alumnae Panhellenics. A fraternity/sorority advisor would contact the NPC Office to order NPC publications and Panhellenic officer badges or to find out the name and contact information for their NPC Area Advisor. The NPC website can be accessed at www.npcwomen.org.

NPC Area Advisors (designated geographically) provide a network of support from experienced fraternity officers currently serving on their organization's NPC delegation to over 630 College Panhellenics. Each Area Advisor serves as a liaison between College Panhellenic, NPC and fraternity officers of chapters on a given campus. She interprets policies and procedures established by the NPC, particularly the Unanimous Agreements. She is available to offer information and assistance to College Panhellenics in her area as a resource for clarification on questions of NPC policy and practice, a speaker for workshops and a neutral party sounding board for Panhellenic issues. She is available as a consultant upon request of a Panhellenic Advisor or Panhellenic officers. She may help with the planning of campus or area workshops. She also collects information through annual reports which are used to chart trends and emerging issues. Usually, the Area Advisor will attend the regional conference (MGCA, WRGC, NGLA, SEPC) where she will hold meetings with her region and/or her College Panhellenics. When an Area Advisor has a question or is unavailable, the 4 NPC Area Advisor Coordinators or the Chairman of the College Panhellenics Committee can be reached to assist the Panhellenic Advisor. The NPC College Panhellenics Committee Chairman develops NPC training for the NPC Area Advisors and serves as the final authority on interpretation of the Unanimous Agreements and College Panhellenics practice.

Each Panhellenic Advisor should establish contact (through email or phone) with his/her NPC Area Advisor and develop a solid working relationship with her. She can be a real asset during formal recruitment administration, when working out challenging recruitment infractions, in revising Panhellenic bylaws and countless other situations.

The NPC provides a variety of resources for College and Alumnae Panhellenics which are very useful to refine current programming, distribute to potential members and their families and as guides to adapting to your own institutional culture. Several publications on topics ranging from recruitment, public relations, recruitment counselors and academics can be ordered through the NPC Office at a nominal cost. The NPC also has badges for Panhellenic officers and Recruitment Counselors. These pins give officers both a tangible and intangible sense of their wider Panhellenic identity and responsibility.

A College Panhellenic is established at each institution where 2 or more chapters of NPC member organizations have chartered a chapter. New College Panhellenics are established when the second NPC member organization charts its chapter and can be officially recognized by the NPC when they have had their Constitution, Bylaws, and

Recruitment Rules approved by the NPC Advisor to New College Panhellenics in their region.

The College Panhellenic provides a forum for discussion and decision-making. Each sorority is represented by a delegate who speaks for and casts the vote of her chapter. Each College Panhellenic is responsible for writing and approving its own constitution, bylaws and recruitment rules. It coordinates activities and provides for educational programming in addition to organizing the formal membership recruitment process. It should promote good public relations with the administration, faculty, other interfraternal organizations and non-affiliated students. It should encourage the highest possible academic, social and moral standards among its members and serve as a role model for the women in the institution's population. It should give service to the community and the university. In all of these aspects, the College Panhellenic should promote friendship, harmony and unity among members and chapters.

NPC provides some onsite resources for College Panhellenics. "Something of Value" is an interactive risk management program that begins with a mock trial on an issue which is particularly pertinent to your institution. A series of focus groups with chapter members/officers follows to determine the most critical risk management issues to be addressed and create the strategies most effective for your institution. Since students are in fact investing in the challenge and the solution, "Something of Value" has been very well received. There is some cost associated with this program and the College Panhellenic would invite the "Something of Value" program to their campus after a formal Panhellenic vote.

Another interactive campus-based program that NPC provides is the NPC Consulting Team. After a Panhellenic vote, a group of 3 NPC "experts" visits your institution and conducts a series of interviews with various leadership constituencies and administrators and presents a written report on how to strengthen your particular College Panhellenic. The Consulting Team can focus on recruitment, other pertinent topics or do a broad analysis of Panhellenic operations. Panhellenic advisors usually are not part of the focus group discussions. There is a fee connected to the NPC Consulting Team program as well as housing and food for the consultants who participate.

NPC gives awards to College Panhellenics on a biennial basis in overall excellence, outstanding public relations programming, excellence in community service, excellence in membership recruitment, academic programming and achievement and overall improvement. There is also a biennial award given to an Outstanding Panhellenic Advisor. Awards information packets are sent to College Panhellenics early in the winter/spring term and are usually due in May. First, second and third places are awarded in each category as warranted by the entries. Sponsoring organizations provide trophies and plaques presented to the winners. First place winners receive tickets to the NPC

Awards Banquet and hotel accommodations for the Panhellenic President and Panhellenic Advisor to receive the award in person. Winning notebook entries are bound and displayed at the NPC meeting, the NIC/AFA Annual Meeting and other regional Panhellenic conferences.

In the area of academic enrichment, NPC provides several on-going programs such as the Day/Week/Month of the Scholar celebrations, a faculty relations manual, a general academic programming manual, and the Scholar newsletter. Panhellenic academic recognition options include the NPC Academic Honor Roll (for Panhellenic academic achievement above the all-women's average at an institution) and the NPC Academic Challenge (for academic improvement of the all-sorority average of .1 or better from one term to the next).

Most exciting is NPC's leadership in the alcohol-free initiative. In 1998, the NPC adopted a resolution that encouraged all member groups to support only alcohol-free cosponsored social events in fraternity chapter houses by fall 2000. The leadership of women's fraternities knew that a culture change as extensive as the alcohol-free initiative would need the unified support of our combined membership to fully implement it.

Positions:

While the Unanimous Agreements of the National Panhellenic Conference provide the philosophical foundation for fair and effective Panhellenic operations, NPC has taken a position on numerous issues which affect its members and its role in the greater interfraternity community. Among these positions are the following—those in bold have been adopted as Unanimous Agreements and must be supported:

- NPC holds the position that an individual may only be initiated into one of its organizations as a lifetime member and there can be no transfers of membership from one NPC member group to another.
- NPC supports a separate Panhellenic Council with its own membership recruitment process, extension procedure, and judicial system, independent from a Greek Council
- NPC does not approve of ratings by college administrations and/or other agencies or constituencies
- NPC prohibits the use of alcoholic beverages and the participation of men during recruitment and this extends to the 24 hours of Bid Day
- NPC prohibits spending any College Panhellenic funds on the purchase of alcohol for any Panhellenic purpose
- NPC has affirmed and re-affirmed a no tolerance position on hazing
- NPC strongly favors an early fall recruitment schedule with continuous open bidding in progress the remainder of the year as needed

- NPC expects each College Panhellenic to have a scholarship officer and achieve an all-sorority grade point average above the all women's average at that institution
- NPC expects College Panhellenics to make Panhellenic decisions through a formal vote after referral of the matter to the chapters for discussion
- NPC expects that all College Panhellenic delegates, officers, committee members and recruitment counselors be in good standing with their chapters and enrolled in the institution where the chapter is located
- NPC continues to work toward a streamlined recruitment process which professionalizes the image of women's fraternity membership and adapts its recruitment structure to various campus situations
- NPC encourages philanthropy as an integral part of the formal membership recruitment process
- NPC acts in partnership with other health-related agencies to continually educate its membership on eating disorders, stress, women and lung cancer, and has underwritten research at the University of Missouri through Research Initiatives I-IV.

Over 250 Alumnae Panhellenics have been established to stimulate a continuing interest in Panhellenic affairs, and to inform fraternity women of current trends, to promote the fraternity system and to improve the Panhellenic image in the local community. Many Alumnae Panhellenics provide scholarships for affiliated women and also do outreach programs to promote interest in membership among recent high school graduates. If there is an Alumnae Panhellenic in your vicinity it could be beneficial to do joint programming with collegians to role model lifetime membership and Panhellenic spirit and encourage alumnae involvement after graduation.

Women's fraternity leaders are knowledgeable partners in the dynamic environment of higher education. Their combined continuing vision to facilitate a Panhellenic community known for fellowship, excellence and high standards has been the mantra of women's fraternity organizations since their first inter-sorority meeting at the end of the 19th century. The NPC provides the coordinated leadership, service and resources needed to assist your institution in developing a fraternity/sorority community of the 21st century that resonates with the timeless ideals stated in the Panhellenic Creed:

"We, as Undergraduate member of women's fraternities, stand for good scholarship, for guarding of good health, for maintenance of fine standards, and for serving, to the best of our ability, our college community. Cooperation for further fraternity life, in harmony with its best possibilities, is the ideal that shall guide our fraternity activities.

We, as Fraternity Women, stand for service through the development of character inspired by the close contact and deep friendship of individual fraternity and Panhellenic

life. The opportunity for wide and wise human service, through mutual respect and helpfulness, is the tenet by which we strive to live."

Reference:

From *Advising Fraternities and Sororities Manual*. Association of Fraternity Advisors.