



# VCU

## Student Affairs

### Fraternity and Sorority Life

*2025-2026 Handbook*

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## FRATERNITY AND SORORITY LIFE STAFF DIRECTORY

Please contact the Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) staff via email at [vcugreeks@vcu.edu](mailto:vcugreeks@vcu.edu) for any information regarding the policies in this document or any other program pertaining to FSL at Virginia Commonwealth University.

### INTRODUCTION

Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) fosters an environment in which fraternities and sororities contribute value to the campus community and make a positive impact on the educational and social experience for VCU students. As a department within the Division of Students Affairs, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) is committed to cultivating the intellectual, social, and leadership development of student members of fraternity and sorority chapters. In this Handbook, a chapter refers to the student chapter of a fraternity or sorority under the oversight of FSL. The term “Fraternal Organization” as used in this Handbook includes the national and international organizations (the “National”) as well as its local chapter at VCU.

The FSL Handbook describes the relationship between the University and each chapter, including the benefits the chapter may receive from the University, when it meets the conditions set forth below. The FSL Handbook is an educational document intended to guide chapters in maintaining recognition at the university. This handbook provides a framework of policies, guidelines, and regulations that members in the FSL community, their chapters, and volunteers will abide by.

### REVIEW OF HANDBOOK

The FSL Handbook and contents including, but not limited to policies, regulations, and guidelines will be subject to review at the end of each academic year. The contents may be amended, expanded, or removed as deemed necessary and appropriate by FSL with reasonable written notice.

**This version of the FSL Handbook will be effective August 18, 2025**

### **Relationship between the Chapter and the University**

The University is an institution of higher education and each chapter is not part of the institution, but rather exists and operates independently of the University. The chapter is not an agent; servant or employee of the University, and neither has authority to act for the other or commit the other to any activity, transaction or agreement. The chapter and its members may be held accountable for their compliance with applicable policy by their respective governing council's judicial board and/or the University.

### **Use of University Logos**

The chapter may not use any University marks, symbols, logos, mottos, or other indicia of the University without the express prior written approval of the University through the Vice President for Student Affairs or designee; provided that the University will permit the use of its name as a part of the chapter's name exclusively and only in the form of the "XYZ chapter at Virginia Commonwealth University" or the "XYZ chapter at VCU." The chapter must obtain the express prior written consent of the University to use the University's name in any other form. "Virginia Commonwealth University XYZ Chapter" or any similar use of other University marks is not acceptable and may never be used in any form including as part of a top-level internet domain name.

### **Liability, Insurance, and Defense**

Although the chapter has members who are University students, and may have University employees associated or engaged in its activities and affairs, the organization is not a part of or an agency of the University. The chapter is a separate and independent organization. The University does not direct, supervise or control the organization and is not responsible for the organization's contracts, acts or omissions. The chapter directs and manages all of its own activities and affairs, including but not limited to transportation, travel, tournaments, fundraisers, or any other events. These activities or affairs may, at times, involve a certain amount of risk, and the chapter is responsible for any such risk. All persons associated with the chapter should ascertain whether they have adequate insurance independently or through the chapter to cover any such risk. Neither the University nor the Commonwealth of Virginia provides insurance coverage or legal defense for any claims resulting from the affairs or activities of a chapter.

The University, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and its employees and agents will not be liable for injuries or harm caused to anyone in connection with or arising out of the chapter's activities, nor will it be liable for any of the chapters' contracts, torts, or other acts or omissions, or those of the chapter's directors, officers, members, advisors, staff, activity participants, or any other persons associated with the chapter. Neither the chapter nor its directors, officers, members, advisors, staff, activity participants, or any other persons associated with it are protected by the University's or the Commonwealth of Virginia's insurance policies or self-insurance plans, and the University and the Commonwealth will not provide any legal defense for the chapter or such person in the event of any claim against any of them. It is the responsibility of the chapter leadership to ensure that all persons associated with the chapter fully understand these terms, including all of the chapter's current and prospective directors, officers, members, advisors, staff, activity participants and other persons associated with the chapter or engaged in its activities:

## **Taxes**

The chapter may not use the University's taxpayer identification number or the University's tax-exempt status in connection with any purchases or sales by the chapter, any gifts to the chapter, any interest or other income of the chapter, or any other activity or purpose of the chapter.

## **University Benefits**

University benefits available to the chapter are outlined in the [Handbook for Student Organizations at Virginia Commonwealth University](#). Chapters are responsible for reviewing these documents and others that describe their designation as a recognized student organization.

## **Student Organization Conduct:**

All student organizations and/or their members are subject to the requirements of applicable university policies, including the following policies:

- [Interim Student Code of Conduct](#)
- [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space Policy)
- [Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
- [Computer and Network Resources Use](#)
- [Honor System and Academic Standards](#)
- [Sex-based misconduct – Interim](#)
- [Title IX Sexual Harassment - Interim](#)
- [University Trademarks & Licensing](#)
- [Handbook for Student Organizations at VCU](#)
- [Concealment of Identity Interim](#)

Alleged violations of this Handbook or other policies should be reported through the [Incident Reporting Form](#). Student Conduct and Academic Integrity, in consultation with the university administrative unit responsible for supporting the student organization, will determine whether a reported violation is subject to action under the Student Code of Conduct or an administrative enforcement process.

## **Administrative Enforcement:**

An organization that fails to comply with administrative requirements set forth in this Handbook or otherwise established by a university unit or department may face administrative enforcement action. In an administrative enforcement process, the university will notify the student organization of its intent to take administrative action by sending an email to the student representative of the organization that describes the following: the organization's noncompliance, the applicable administrative requirement, the intended administrative action, and a reasonable period for the student organization to respond to the notice if it wishes to contest the action. To contest administrative action, the student organization should provide additional, relevant information for consideration by the university official responsible for the administrative action.

VCU's Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity (SCAI) will investigate allegations of violations of the Student Code of Conduct by organizations and will adjudicate such allegations based on the investigative findings. VCU does not authorize the College Panhellenic Council (CPC), Interfraternity Council (IFC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), or Unified Greek Council (UGC), to investigate or adjudicate a violation of the Student Code of Conduct.

## RECOGNITION AND REGISTRATION

For purposes of this Handbook, VCU defines a social Greek-letter organization as an organization that exists to promote fraternal relationships and personal development; requirement for membership is not limited to a specific field of study, class year, or grade attainment beyond any grade and credit hour requirement described in this Handbook; members are not permitted to hold membership in other social fraternities or sororities at the University; the organization is affiliated with a(n) (inter)national organization; and the (inter)national organization has tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(7) of the Internal Revenue Code.

### **Registration and Recognition**

Recognition of a chapter will be conferred by FSL in partnership with the University Student Commons & Activities (USC&A) as part of the process of recognizing student organizations at VCU. In order to obtain or maintain recognition, all chapters must register each year through RamsConnect by the first week of classes in the fall term and remain in compliance with all applicable university requirements.

To register, each chapter must submit a copy of its inter/national and local governing documents to FSL. While FSL will treat these documents confidentially to the extent permitted by law, they are generally subject to mandatory disclosure under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The chapter or inter/national headquarters should redact any confidential information before submitting documents. Any group whose inter/national organization prohibits filing their constitutive documents may request permission to provide them only for review by university officials at the time of seeking Recognition and upon request within twenty-four hours at any future time. The documents provided must include:

- Inter/National Constitution and Bylaws.
- Local chapter Bylaws, Operating Procedures, and Chapter Code of Conduct, (If they differ from the Inter/National Constitution and Bylaws)
- Each chapter advisor's contact information as chapter must have an alumni/graduate chapter advisor

### **Nondiscrimination at VCU and Chapter Membership**

To be eligible for recognition, a chapter must comply with applicable university policies, including VCU's policy on Preventing and Responding to Discrimination, which states as follows.

*[VCU] prohibits unlawful discrimination in . . . any of its programs or activities on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin (including ethnicity), age, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth and related medical conditions), parenting status, marital status, political affiliation, military status (including veteran status), genetic information (including family medical history), sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or disability. This policy is designed to comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 . . . and other state or federal laws and university policies.*

However, Title IX does not apply to a chapter's membership practices if the active membership consists primarily of students in attendance at VCU and the chapter's inter/national organization is tax exempt. For more information, see guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/t9-rel-exempt/index.html>.



## **Governing Councils**

To maintain university recognition, the chapter must maintain active membership in its governing council, which requires compliance with the council's rules and regulations. Each governing council has a judicial body that sets and enforces standards of conduct for chapters in its membership.

### ***College Panhellenic Council at VCU (CPC)***

The CPC is the campus-level organization of the [National Panhellenic Conference](#) (NPC), and is made up of 26 women-only inter/national organizations and the world's largest umbrella organization specifically charged with advancing the sorority experience. The CPC has elected executive members to act as liaisons between the university and chapter members to create legislation, support recruitment of members, promote academic excellence, create educational programming, and more.

### ***Interfraternity Council at VCU (IFC)***

The IFC is the campus-level organization of the [North American Interfraternity Conference](#) (NIC) and is made up of men-only inter/national organizations. IFC's purpose is to advance fraternity on campus and provide interfraternal leadership to the entire community. Members of this council and prospective organizations pride themselves on completing community services projects and raising philanthropic dollars.

### ***National Pan-Hellenic Council at VCU (NPHC)***

The [National Pan-Hellenic Council](#) is the umbrella organization for 9 historically black fraternities and sororities both on the campus level and national level. The mission of NPHC is to foster cooperative actions of its members in dealing with matters of mutual concern. As community leaders, members of these organizations work on community service and ways to implement social change.

### ***Unified Greek Council at VCU (UGC)***

The United Greek Council is the newest governing body for culturally based Fraternities and Sororities. Membership is open to national fraternities who hold membership in [National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations](#) (NALFO), the [National Asian Pacific Islander American Panhellenic Association](#) (NAPA) and the [National Multicultural Greek Council](#) (NMGC). UGC's purpose is to unite its member organizations in order to share ideas/resources, promote mutual respect/equality and provide leadership opportunities for involved students.

## **CHAPTER VIABILITY**

### **Philosophy**

VCU promotes a vibrant fraternity and sorority community with sufficient numbers of membership opportunities for every student who has the desire and eligibility to join. For this reason, in order to maintain university recognition, VCU requires each chapter to maintain certain membership standards so it can meet performance expectations and for the continued health of the community.

### **Standard**

Per the Handbook for Student Organizations at VCU:

- a. *All student organizations must maintain a minimum of eight (8) members.*
- b. *A university department or unit supporting an Affiliated Student Organization or a Sponsored Student Organization or a governing council or association may propose an exception to this*

*requirement for a higher or lower minimum membership. The Director of The Commons will determine whether to make an exception to this requirement as proposed.*

To address the needs of some smaller social fraternities and sororities, FSL will coordinate with the Director of the Commons to allow a time-limited exception for a chapter that maintains a roster of five (5), active, undergraduate members (initiates and new members) at all times if the chapter submits a request demonstrating how such an exception is consistent with its membership goals and the FSL philosophy on membership viability.

An active member is defined as an undergraduate student who is currently enrolled at the university with the minimum number of credit hours set by the University and the chapter's national headquarters, chapter, and council that the chapter is affiliated with.

### **Process**

1. FSL will review chapter rosters in December, May, and August to determine continued compliance with this policy.
2. Each chapter must submit all recruitment/intake/new member paperwork to FSL by the published deadline.
3. In the event a chapter thinks it will not meet the minimum membership standards, the chapter must meet with FSL to determine an action plan and submit a written request for an exception to the membership standard.

### **Action Plan to Address Low Membership**

1. Chapters who project that they will fall below the membership standard must work with FSL to outline an action plan to be approved for the following semester.
2. In creating an action plan, possible courses of action include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Limited programming
  - b. Increased advisor involvement
  - c. Recruitment and intake plan

### **Loss of Recognition**

1. If a chapter falls below the membership standard without an approved membership action plan, the chapter will lose university recognition.
2. A chapter that loses recognition for this reason is eligible to reapply for recognition through the FSL Establishment Policy after any waiting period of up to three (3) semesters imposed by FSL upon loss of recognition.
3. In the event of a(n) (inter)national moratorium, not at the fault of the local chapter, FSL will meet with student chapter leadership along with the local, regional, and/or (inter)national advisors to determine the next steps and continued eligibility for recognition by VCU.



## ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To join a fraternity or sorority, a student accepts a bid for membership. VCU students who meet the grade point average (GPA), credit hour and any other designated general requirements for participation in a fraternity or sorority shall be eligible for membership and, upon acceptance of a bid, shall immediately be made new members. A “new member” is an individual that has been given a bid from a fraternity or sorority and remains in such status for a defined period of time until becoming a full member. PRIOR to accepting a bid for membership, VCU students must meet the following eligibility requirements:

1. Regardless of incoming credit status or prior affiliation, successfully complete twelve (12) credit hours at VCU. Credit hours transferred from a previous institution do not count towards this eligibility requirement. Eligibility verification will be conducted by FSL.
2. Have a 2.70 cumulative GPA or higher.
3. Complete a required training for potential new members, which includes instruction on hazing prevention and bystander intervention.

## POLICIES THAT APPLY TO ALL RECRUITMENT/INTAKE AND NEW MEMBER EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

The following applies to all recruitment and intake activities regardless of council driven process.

1. All organizations must adhere to the following standards when conducting recruitment, intake, and new member education activities:
  - a. The presence and/or consumption of alcohol and/or drugs at any activity or event of any fraternity or sorority attended by new members is prohibited.
    - i. This includes all activities on and off-campus, continuous recruitment, and/or FSL events or council-sponsored events to promote recruitment/intake.
  - b. The organization must comply with all requirements of an inter/national organization and governing Council.
  - c. All activities and conduct must comply with the university's policy on [Preventing and Responding to Discrimination](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct- Interim](#), including endangering health or safety, which includes taking or threatening actions that endanger the physical safety, mental health, or life of any person(s) or creates a reasonable fear of such action.
2. The New Member Education Period shall not exceed four weeks (28 days). The New Member Education Period is defined as the period of time after a student has accepted a bid for membership and becomes a new member, until achieving full member status.
3. New members must be initiated as full members during the same semester they accept a bid for membership.
4. Recruitment, intake, and new member education activities may only occur during the fall and spring semesters while classes are in session.
5. New members may not participate in or attend any activity or event of any fraternity or sorority between the hours of 10:00 pm and 8:00 am on any day of the week or weekend.

6. The date, time, and location (address) of all recruitment/intake events must be submitted to FSL at least one week prior to the event taking place. This can be done in coordination with a council recruitment process or submitting this information through a form in Rams Connect.
7. Each chapter must report all new members to FSL before the New Member Education Period begins either through a form on Ram's Connect or through a council recruitment registration process.
8. All new member activities must be completed and all new members must be initiated as full members no less than two (2) weeks before the last day of classes for the semester.
9. Each new member must complete an acknowledgement of applicable policies and grade release form before initiation as a full member. This form, called the FSL Member Initiation Form, will be coordinated through FSL on an individual basis.
10. The New Member Educator, Membership Development Chair, or "Dean" of a new member intake class or "line" (all referred to as New Member Educator in this document) must be a current VCU Student and active member of the chapter. Chapters are required to submit the name and contact information of the New Member Educator at the start of the new member education process each semester. Chapters that wish to replace their New Member Educator with a member of a chapter advisory board must first get permission from the FSL Office before submitting any new member paperwork to their inter/national organization. For chapters that hold a new member presentation, the New Member Educator is expected to "bring out" the new members at their new member presentation show.

## **POLICIES THAT APPLY ONLY TO CHAPTERS CONDUCTING MEMBERSHIP INTAKE**

The following are policies that apply only to chapters that conduct a membership intake process. These chapters are typically members of NPHC or UGC.

1. Chapters must notify FSL of their intent to conduct membership intake within the first week of the beginning of each semester or before any informational events can take place.
2. Each chapter must submit all intake paperwork to FSL by the deadline, which is ten (10) business days prior to the date on which the process may begin. A chapter that misses the deadline may have to delay the start of intake activities.
3. Each chapter must report planned activities for the upcoming semester by the deadline and must report in a timely manner any updates to planned activities made after the deadline.
4. FSL understands that chapter members, new members, alumni and members of the graduate or alumni chapters all play a role in the new member process. While the university will hold any student accountable for violation of university policy, actions by any individuals participating in the process may have repercussions on the chapter's recognition or operations.
5. Any organization paperwork to be signed by FSL must be requested at least three (3) business days before it is due.
6. Flyers for the informational/interest meeting must be posted in the FSL office for a minimum of 7 business days before and can only be posted while classes are in session during the fall and spring semesters.

### **New Member Show Procedures**

1. New Member presentation shows will be scheduled by the FSL Office and not the chapter. There will be one weekend in the Fall and one weekend in the Spring in which all shows will take place.

Each chapter will be assigned a specific day and time based on a lottery system for both the Fall and Spring.

- a) If the chapter wishes to host a reception on campus following the new member presentations, the chapter president or intake coordinator must reserve this space via Campus EMS.
  - b) FSL encourages students to consider a broad audience at the university, including families, and promotes a healthy and positive sense of pride in the FSL and VCU community
2. If the show is taking place as part of the weekend schedule, FSL will determine the length of the show based on the schedule of the weekend, the number of chapters conducting a show, the limits and availability of the venue in which the show is taking place, among other factors. Otherwise, the duration of the show should be no longer than one (1) hour and 15 minutes if there are fifteen (15) or less members presenting. For each additional new member beyond fifteen (15), the show may be extended five (5) minutes per member.
  - a) For example, a new member presentation with fifteen new members cannot extend beyond an hour and fifteen minutes. A new member presentation with sixteen new members cannot be longer than one hour and twenty minutes, and a new member presentation with twenty new members cannot extend longer than one hour and forty minutes.
6. All university and event planning policies and procedures must be followed.

#### **New Member Show Expectations of the Sponsoring Chapter/Organization**

1. FSL staff will meet with chapter representative(s) at least three weeks before the show to discuss the following:
  - a) Inter/National, Regional and/or chapter guidelines regarding New Member Shows
  - b) Definition of Hazing and perceptions of Hazing
  - c) Risk Management
  - d) Presentation
  - e) Logistics, Time, and Date
  - f) Crowd Control
  - g) Requirements for events requiring university authorization (Major Events) as set forth in section II.B.1 of the university's policy on [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space).
2. To be approved, the chapter must meet the following minimum requirements:
  - a) Meet all deadlines for the event approval process, including the requirements of the Major Events section of the university's policy on [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space).
  - b) Guarantee the active presence of the chapter advisor or non-student representative of the organization serving in an advisory capacity.
  - c) Demonstration of an adequate plan for crowd control and safety. The plan for crowd control must include the use of physical barriers and identifiable crowd managers.
3. The content of the show and conduct of all student performers and audience members is subject to the [Student Code of Conduct- Interim](#), which prohibits assault, battery, disorderly conduct, endangering health or safety, harassment, hazing, and sex-based misconduct as defined therein. Further, all performers and attendees are subject to the General Prohibitions in the university's

policy on [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space).

4. If the chapter assigns line numbers to new members, the numbers should accurately represent the numbers of new members being presented (i.e. if there are five men being presented, the numbers should be 1-5, not 1,2,4,5, etc.) Any exceptions must be approved 48 hours in advance of the presentation.
5. No physical abuse will be tolerated. This includes but is not limited to: slapping, kicking, spitting, punching, pushing, poking, caning, etc.
6. The management of the chapter's members and guests is the responsibility of the chapter. This includes alumni, members from other campuses, families, and current members.
7. The university requires at least two police officers for each show. The costs associated with the police will be paid by the governing councils consistent with section II.B.4 of the university's policy on [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space).

## **RECRUITMENT/INTAKE POLICY VIOLATIONS**

1. Any individual may report alleged violations of recruitment/intake policy to the council judicial board or the university authority responsible for reviewing alleged violations of university policy. The council judicial board and/or university will notify the chapters of the alleged violation and follow applicable procedures.
2. Recruitment/Intake violations include but are limited to:
  - a. Intentional submission of improper paperwork (i.e., changing of dates on forms, falsifying original signatures, incomplete paperwork, etc.)
  - b. Holding recruitment, intake, and/or new member activities in violation of requirements set by the council or FSL.
3. Any violations of the Student Code of Conduct will be referred to Student Conduct & Academic Integrity.
4. Each council is responsible for setting recruitment, intake, and new member education requirements for its chapters and providing reasonable notice of the requirements to each chapter. All questions and concerns about council new member process requirements should be directed to the council or FSL by the chapter president and officer responsible for new member activities. FSL may provide guidance, including mediation, in the event of a conflict between a council and chapter regarding requirements. Below are links to bylaws, established by each council in consultation with their inter/national headquarters and FSL, which include any requirements for their new member process:
  - a. [NPHC Bylaws](#)
  - b. [UGC Bylaws](#)
  - c. [CPC Bylaws](#)

d. [IFC Bylaws](#)

## **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE REQUIREMENTS**

Fraternity & Sorority Life (FSL) is committed to student success by supporting fraternities and sororities that provide members with opportunities to enhance academic success. To achieve academic excellence, the standards set forth in this policy are designed to set the minimum expectations for FSL organizations and members. This policy drives the pursuit of academic excellence and ensures organizations and their members align with the mission, vision, and core values of the community. The Academic Excellence Requirements should be observed as the minimum academic requirement for all FSL chapter members; each fraternity, sorority, governing council, and inter/national fraternal organization may set their own higher academic requirement or policy above the FSL standard. FSL encourages each fraternity, sorority, and governing council to provide academic support to all members.

### **Potential New Members**

A potential new member (PNM) is a VCU undergraduate full-time student who is interested in joining a chapter, and will participate in rush, intake, or recruitment. For a PNM to be considered eligible to join any chapter, they must meet the eligibility requirements described above, including a 2.70 or higher cumulative GPA and at least 12-credit hours at VCU.

### **Council Executive Officers**

A council executive officer is a student who serves in a capacity in which decisions are made for their council and/or community as outlined in each council's constitution. Any student wishing to serve as an executive officer of a governing council must maintain a 2.50 or higher cumulative GPA. If a council executive officer falls below a 2.50 cumulative GPA, the member is eligible to be removed from their position. FSL supports councils setting a higher academic requirement for their executive officers.

### **Chapter Executive Officers**

A chapter executive officer is a student who serves in a governing role or a capacity in which decisions are made for their chapter as outlined in an individual fraternity or sorority constitution. FSL does not require a minimum standard for chapter executive officers but encourages chapters to set a minimum 2.50 cumulative GPA standard.

## **GRADE REPORTS**

In order to be included on the chapter grade report, a student must authorize FSL to release their grade information to the chapter. This grade release form is signed by a student when accepting a bid for membership or becoming a fully initiated member of a chapter. A student may, at any time, revoke this authorization. However, if a student does not authorize FSL to provide the chapter with verified academic information, the chapter may reevaluate the student's membership in accordance with the chapter's by-laws.

Grade reports are typically compiled for the fall and spring semester after the semester ends. FSL will not run a grade report for classes that occur between the end of the spring semester and the start of the fall semester.

### **Chapter Grade Reports**

The chapter grade report lists all individual members of the chapter at the time the report was queried. For each student, it includes the current semester and cumulative GPA for the student. FSL creates the report using academic data from the Office of Records and Registration, the University's office that oversees academic-record keeping. A chapter that believes their report contains an error may request review and should provide information describing the reason they suspect error.

### **Community Grade Report**

The community grade report lists all FSL chapters with more than ten (10) members in rank order (highest chapter semester GPA to lowest). Chapters with ten or fewer members will be listed without GPA information. This report will be published on the FSL website, and organizations may use it for inter/national reporting purposes.

## **STUDENT ORGANIZATION EVENTS WITH ALCOHOL**

VCU's policy on Student Organization Events with Alcohol is published in the Handbook for Student Organizations at VCU at the following link ([Handbook for Student Organizations at VCU](#)) and also copied below for your ease of reference. If there is any discrepancy between the information copied below and that in the Student Organization Events with Alcohol section of the Handbook for Student Organizations, the Handbook for Student Organizations controls. You should consult the Handbook for Student Organizations if planning an event with alcohol.

### ***Alcohol (Student Organization Events with Alcohol)***

*All student organizations at VCU, regardless of tier, are subject to the university's "Student Organization Events with Alcohol Policy," and students must comply with all local, state, and federal laws regarding the possession, consumption, and distribution of alcohol. If a student organization wishes to host an event with alcohol present, they must review the following policy:*

**Scope - Definition of Alcohol Event:** *This policy applies to all student organization activities or events where alcohol is present, including any activity or event hosted, sponsored or endorsed by the student organization, regardless of location. Student organizations include organizations with undergraduate and graduate/professional membership. Any activity or event described in this section is an Alcohol Event for the purpose of this policy.*

**Event Notification:** *All student organizations must complete the [Notification of an Event with Alcohol Form](#) in RamsConnect at least fourteen (14) days in advance of any Alcohol Event.*

**Requirements:** *The following requirements apply to the student organization and all members and guests for any Alcohol Event:*

1. *Comply with all federal, state, and local laws. For example:*
  - a. *No person under the legal drinking age (21) may possess, consume, provide, sell or be provided alcoholic beverages.*
  - b. *Attendance must not exceed local fire or building code capacity of the premises or venue.*

2. *Alcoholic beverages may be provided, served or sold only on a per-drink basis and by a licensed and insured third-party vendor (e.g., restaurant, bar, caterer, etc.).*
3. *Non-alcoholic beverages must be equally visible and available at every point of provision, service or sale as any alcoholic beverages. The student organization must ensure that the Alcohol Event host provides appropriate food items and sufficient quantities to last throughout the Alcohol Event as long as alcoholic beverages are present.*
4. *The presence of alcohol products above 15% alcohol by volume ("ABV") is prohibited.*
5. *Common sources of alcohol, including bulk quantities, which are not served by a licensed and insured third-party vendor, are prohibited.*
6. *A student organization must not co-host or co-sponsor an event with a bar, event promoter, or alcohol distributor; however, an organization may rent a bar, restaurant, or a private space within an establishment operated by a licensed and insured third-party vendor to host an Alcohol Event.*
7. *Attendance by non-members of the student organization at any Alcohol Event must be by invitation only, and the student organization must utilize a guest list system.*
8. *No alcohol is permitted at any event or activity related to the new member recruitment process. This includes but is not limited to, recruitment, intake, rush, new member activities, meetings, or initiation, "bid night," "Big/Little" events or activities, "family" events or activities, and any ritual or ceremony.*
9. *The student organization, members, or guests must not permit, encourage, coerce, glorify or participate in any activities involving the rapid consumption of alcohol, such as drinking games.*
10. *The student organization, members and guests must comply with applicable university policies, including the policies on Alcohol and Other Drugs and Reservation and Use of Space (see section II.B.1 on Major Events as any event on university property where alcohol is served).*

### **Enforcement:**

*The Student Code of Conduct provides the adjudication process for any reported violation related to alcohol. Due to the nature of the risk involved with certain types of alcohol and activities, if any student or student organization is charged with violating this policy, VCU considers the following as aggravating factors, which will increase the severity of the sanctions issued to a student or student organization found responsible for violating this policy:*

1. *Serving alcohol to persons under the age of twenty-one (21)*
2. *Alcohol products above 15% alcohol by volume ("ABV");*
3. *Common sources of alcohol, including but not limited to, punches, bulk quantities, liquor handles (1.75L), etc.;*
4. *Games of rapid consumption;*
5. *Serving alcohol during recruitment events and/or new member activities;*
6. *Evidence of hazing related to the event.*

## **HAZING PREVENTION AND DISCIPLINE**

VCU's policy on Hazing Prevention and Discipline is available in the university's Policy Library at the following link: [Hazing Prevention and Discipline Policy](#). Certain information from that policy is copied below



for your ease of reference. If there is any discrepancy between the information copied below and that in the Hazing Prevention and Discipline policy, the policy controls. You should consult the Hazing Prevention and Discipline policy.

### **Hazing**

*Any mental or physical requirement, request, or obligation placed upon any person, through a situation created recklessly or intentionally, that could cause discomfort, pain, fright, disgrace, or injury; or that is personally degrading.*

*Hazing includes, but is not limited to, acts in violation of Virginia Code § 18.2-56 that recklessly or intentionally endanger the health or safety of a student or students or inflict bodily injury on a student or students in connection with or for the purpose of initiation, admission into or affiliation with or as a condition for continued membership in a club, organization, association, fraternity, sorority, or student body regardless of whether the student or students so endangered or injured participated voluntarily in the relevant activity.*

*Hazing also includes, but is not limited to, the following:*

- *Psychological Hazing: Any act that is likely to (a) compromise an individual's dignity; (b) cause an individual embarrassment or shame; (c) cause an individual to be the object of malicious amusement or ridicule; or (d) cause an individual emotional distress.*
- *Physical Hazing: All forms of physical activity that are used to harass, punish, or harm an individual.*

### **Consent**

*In accordance with Virginia law, an individual may not consent to being hazed, and a victim's voluntary or willful participation in hazing activities will not be considered evidence that a violation of this policy did not occur.*

### **Reporting**

*Anyone (a victim, a bystander, a witness, a friend, or any other person) may report a violation of this policy. The university can most effectively respond to reports when they are made as promptly as possible after the conduct has occurred. However, there is no time limitation on reporting alleged violations of this policy. Any suspected violation of this policy should be reported using the [VCU Helpline](#). In accordance with Virginia Code § 18.2-56, the university shall report hazing that causes bodily injury to the appropriate law enforcement agency.*

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Chapters, their members, and guests who are students are generally subject to university policies, including but not limited to the following policies:

1. [Interim Student Code of Conduct](#)
2. [Campus Expression and Space Utilization Policy- Interim](#) (formerly Reservation and Use of Space Policy)
3. [Alcohol and Other Drugs](#)
4. [Sex-based misconduct – Interim](#)
5. [Title IX Sexual Harassment - Interim](#)
6. [Handbook for Student Organizations at VCU](#)
7. [Concealment of Identity Interim](#)

Students with questions or concerns about the application of any university policy to chapter activities may consult FSL for guidance.

## FSL HOUSING STATEMENT

Virginia Commonwealth University does not recognize or provide specific housing for fraternities and sororities on-campus or off-campus. Any students who acquire off-campus housing must follow local laws, city ordinances, lease agreements/addendums, etc.

## CHAPTER ESTABLISHMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

- I. Purpose
  - A. The purpose of the Chapter Establishment Policy and Procedures is to outline the requirement and process by which fraternities and sororities establish chapters at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). This FSL policy is meant to complement any policy or process established by a Council or Umbrella Organization, as defined below. However, if there is any conflict, this FSL policy supersedes any policy of another entity.
- II. Definitions
  - A. Chapter- A membership unit of a national or international fraternity or sorority, established at a campus.
  - B. Council- A group of fraternities and/or sororities, acting through one or more representatives selected by the membership of each fraternity or sorority, which works together to support a common mission/vision. A Council can be grouped by affinity, history, goals, etc. Councils currently established at VCU are the College Panhellenic Council (CPC), Interfraternity Council (IFC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and Unified Greek Council (UGC).
  - C. Establishment period- The semester following the pre-establishment period, in which the first round of recruitment/intake activities may occur.
  - D. Inter/National Organization- The national or international organization that oversees local chapters generally, including a chapter at VCU. Representatives of the organization can include volunteers, alumni/ae, and staff.
  - E. Petitioning Organization- The organization working to establish a chapter at VCU.

- F. Pre-Establishment period-The time after the Petitioning Organization receives an establishment letter from FSL and before any recruitment/intake activities occur.
- G. Umbrella Organization-The national organizations that oversee councils and have member fraternities and sororities. The current umbrella organizations are the National APIDA Panhellenic Association (NAPA), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC), National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC).

### III. Requirements

- A. The Petitioning Organization is responsible for adhering to all requirements as outlined in the Student Organization Handbook, the Fraternity and Sorority Life Handbook, and all VCU policies and procedures.
- B. Petitioning Organizations must be currently or previously affiliated with an Umbrella Organization as defined in this policy.
- C. VCU will authorize no more than two Petitioning Organizations during any particular Establishment Period.
- D. For any Petitioning Organizations that previously had a chapter at VCU, any organization conduct sanctions, such as suspension of recognition, must be completed prior to beginning the establishment process.

### IV. Responsibilities

- A. Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) Responsibilities
  - 1. Determine whether to authorize a Petitioning Organization for establishment in a particular Establishment Period.
  - 2. Support and facilitate the navigation of VCU processes and provide assistance to the Petitioning Organization during the establishment process.
  - 3. Work with the Council to plan any establishment process.
- B. Council Responsibilities
  - 1. Work with FSL to plan any establishment process.
  - 2. Provide complementary support of Petitioning Organizations in accordance with Council by-laws.
  - 3. Provide a reasonable portion of the council's student fee allocation to support a petitioning organization. The amount will be determined in collaboration with FSL and the council leadership.
- C. Petitioning Organization Responsibilities
  - 1. Work with Councils and FSL to plan establishment processes and activities.
  - 2. Provide FSL and Councils with the following information:
    - a) A comprehensive establishment plan to include short term (less than 1 year) and long term (longer than 1 year) goals, alumni/ae volunteer recruitment plan, and outline of inter/national organization support to newly established chapters.
    - b) Specific requests for support from Councils and/or FSL.
    - c) A central point of contact (no more than 2 people) representing the inter/national organization.
    - d) Complete any forms and provide documentation FSL requires for chapters.
    - e) Follow the specific Council recruitment/intake process.

### V. Establishment Timeline

- A. The first step to establishing a chapter at VCU is for the Petitioning Organization to reach out to FSL and begin initial conversations. These initial conversations should include the exchange of relevant recruitment/intake data, local alumni/ae interest, potential timeline for establishment, and any prior chapter history, including organization conduct sanctions, if applicable. Once a timeline has been proposed, FSL will document the start of this process via letter to the inter/national organization.
  - B. The Pre-Establishment period is the time before any recruitment/intake activities occur and after an establishment letter from FSL has been received. This time period should last no more than two semesters. During the Pre-Establishment Period the FSL office will sponsor the Petitioning Organization for using certain university resources. Petitioning Organizations may host events and programs for VCU students, conduct tabling activities, and hold informational sessions for interested students. However, during the Pre-Establishment Period, no chapter exists, and no student is authorized to join the Petitioning Organization. Petitioning Organizations may forego a Pre-Establishment Period if they desire. Failure to hold recruitment/intake activities at the end of the Pre-Establishment Period will result in the cancellation of the establishment process.
  - C. FSL will continue to sponsor the Petitioning Organization during the Establishment Period for use of certain university resources. During the Establishment Period, eligible VCU students may join the Petitioning Organization and the fraternity/sorority community. The Establishment Period should last no longer than two semesters. At the end of the Establishment Period, the Petitioning Organization should at least begin the new student organization recognition process, which requires a minimum of five (5) active student members. Failure to successfully complete the new student organization process will result in the cancellation of the establishment process.
  - D. By the end of the Establishment Period, the Petitioning Organization must:
    1. Have conducted recruitment/intake processes and have at least five (5) student members.
    2. Complete the new student organization recognition process.
    3. Participate actively in the fraternity/sorority community by attending programs and Council meetings/activities, paying Council dues, etc.
- VI. Exceptions to this policy may be granted by the Director of Fraternity & Sorority Life only after the Petitioning Organization has submitted a written request that includes what exception the Petitioning Organization is requesting, the reason for the request, and the plan to come into compliance with the standard policy within a reasonable time frame.

## **INTEREST GROUPS**

FSL does not support or recognize interest groups. An interest group is a student-led movement, with or without the support of national headquarters, petitioning to create a new social fraternity or sorority chapter. For a new fraternity or sorority chapter to join any FSL council, the specific council must be open for expansion, and the application to join must come from a national headquarters. Any national organization supporting an interest group outside of expansion policies will not be permitted to expand on campus and will have any application denied.

## **UNRECOGNIZED GROUPS**

An unrecognized fraternity or sorority is one that chooses to operate without university recognition as a student organization and is not subject to the VCU policies and procedures applicable to student organizations, including the requirements set forth by FSL. These unrecognized groups may have been previously recognized by the University and lost recognition for having violated university or inter/national conduct policies. Unrecognized groups may not receive any funding, training, or support by the university.

The university highly discourages students from involvement with unrecognized groups.

## **FAILED COLONY PROCESS**

In the unlikely event a fraternity and/or sorority colony fails to meet the standards set forth by VCU and/or the (inter)national organization, the colony must cease all operations. Furthermore, all ties with VCU including the use of official logos, names, nicknames, etc., must be removed from all marketing material including but not limited to social media and national websites.

The failed colony may return to campus only if they apply and are selected through the Chapter Establishment Policy and Procedures set forth above.

## GLOSSARY OF GENERAL FRATERNITY AND SORORITY LIFE TERMS

*Chapters and FSL commonly use the following terms. The definitions below are based on the understanding of FSL staff.*

Active - An initiated, dues-paying member who is enrolled in the university

Alumna/Alumnus - An initiated member who has graduated. Singular. (Alumnae/Alumni are plural)

Associate/New Member - A member of a fraternity or sorority not yet initiated.

Bid - A formal invitation to join a chapter.

Big Brother/Sister - An active who befriends and becomes like an older brother/sister to a new member.

Brother/Sister - A term used by active members in a chapter when referring to each other.

Chapter - A membership unit of a national or international sorority or fraternity.

Chapter Advisor - volunteer(s) selected by the chapter or inter/national organization, and is typically affiliated with the Greek organization that provides guidance and support to the chapter and chapter officers in several areas of operation.

Charter - The official document drafted by an Inter/National fraternity or sorority that allows for the creation of a local chapter that is affiliated with a college or university campus.

Class or "New Member Class" - A term used to name new members of a Panhellenic Council or Interfraternity Council organization who all joined during the same semester.

Colony - A new organization that is awaiting official recognition from their national to have a chapter at a campus.

Colors - The official pair or triad of colors that represent a specific Greek organization.

Council- A group of fraternities and/or sororities, acting through one or more representatives selected by the membership of each fraternity or sorority, which works together to support a common mission/vision. A Council can be grouped by affinity, history, goals, etc. Councils currently established at VCU are the College Panhellenic Council (CPC), Interfraternity Council (IFC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and Unified Greek Council (UGC).

Crossing - Ceremony during which new members of culturally-based and NPHC organizations become active, life-long members of their organization.

Crossing Date/Year - A term for initiating into a culturally-based Greek organization or NPHC organization. Usually used to refer to when a member joined their organization – the term and year they joined.

Crest - Insignia used by sorority/fraternity members. Most Greek organizations reserve the crest for initiated members only. Each crest has hidden secret meanings. Also known as a coat of arms or shield.

Divine Nine: Term used to describe the nine NPHC affiliate organizations. Also the title of the book that chronicles the history of NPHC groups.

Dues - The monetary costs of membership in a fraternity or sorority. Covers costs of operation, formal events, activities, and other events and varies by chapter.

Establishment period- The semester following the pre-establishment period, in which the first round of recruitment/intake activities may occur.

Expansion - When an organization is looking to expand and open a new establishment of a Greek-letter organization at a college or university.

Formal Recruitment - A time when fraternities/sororities sponsor activities seeking potential new members. Usually occurs in the fall semester, Informal Recruitment occurs in the spring.

Fraternity/Sorority - A group of individuals bound together by ritual, common ideals, and a strong bond of friendship and brotherhood or sisterhood. (The term "frat" should not be used when referring to a fraternity).

Founders Day - An event celebrated by fraternities and sororities to highlight the founding of their organization and celebrate its history. It's not necessarily held on the day the organization was founded.

Grad - A member of the organization that has graduated from college and continues to stay active with the organization by way of a graduate or alumni chapter.

Initiation - The traditional ritual or formal ceremony of induction, which marks the transition to full membership of a fraternity or sorority.

Intake - Term for the process by which Multicultural Greek Council and National Pan-Hellenic Council members are selected to become new members of an organization.

Legacy - Each organization has its own definition of a "legacy." It is generally defined as an immediate family member of an initiated member, such as a sister/brother or daughter/son. Some sororities also recognize extended family members as legacies as well.

Line name/number - The name given to a prospective/new member that represents them as a person, usually a noun, adjective or acronym. Culturally-based organizations and NPHC organizations also assign a line number to their new members (such as ace, deuce, tre, etc.)

Membership Intake Process (MIP) - The membership recruitment and induction process for the National Pan-Hellenic Council (historically African-American fraternities and sororities). MIP officially replaced pledging for NPHC groups in 1990.



Nationals - Fraternity and Sorority members often refer to their national/international headquarters or offices as "Nationals" or HQ. These offices are responsible for making policies for the individual organizations at all of colleges and universities where their organization recruits members.

Neo or Neophyte - A new member of a cultural organization or an NPHC organization.

New Member Educator - The liaison between the new members and the chapter, they are responsible for implementing and monitoring the new member program and preparing the new members for initiation.

New Member Presentation - Also referred to as a probate, is a presentation that celebrates and welcomes new members in the Multicultural Greek community or NPHC community.

Petitioning Organization- The organization working to establish a chapter at VCU.

Philanthropy - Philanthropy is a term used to describe charitable events performed by Greek organizations.

Pi Chi - A Recruitment Counselor, better known as a Pi Chi, is a member of the Panhellenic community who has chosen to disassociate from her own chapter to help unbiasedly lead a group of PNMs through the primary recruitment process.

Potential New Member - A student who is interested in joining a Greek-letter organization, and will participate in rush, intake, or recruitment; often abbreviated to PNM.

Pre-Establishment period-The time after the Petitioning Organization receives an establishment letter from FSL and before any recruitment/intake activities occur.

Ritual - The traditional rites and ceremonies of a fraternity or sorority; these are almost always private and known only to initiated members of a fraternal organization

Step Show - A show often performed by National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations. Also called stepping.

Stroll - A dance, normally done in a line of active members of cultural Greek organizations.

Stepping - Stepping is a tradition where members synchronize their moves so that they are in a sense performing their own dance moves, without music. In stepping the members will clap, stomp with their feet, jump, chant and create their own beat by doing so.

Umbrella Organization-The national organizations that oversee councils and have member fraternities and sororities. The current umbrella organizations are the National APIDA Panhellenic Association (NAPA), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), National Multicultural Greek Council (NMGC), National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC).