

Recognition and Governance of Fraternities and Sororities

RECOGNITION AND GOVERNANCE OF UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES

(Updated 5/15/2019)

West Liberty University values collegiate fraternities and sororities as an important component of the undergraduate student experience at the University. Over the years, they have undergone many changes, and they now take a variety of forms. These social organizations complement the academic and non-academic aspects of the University's community life by serving as a source of academic and social support as their members pursue their educational goals. The University also welcomes the important contributions fraternity and sorority alumni make to the West Liberty alumni family, to the undergraduate chapters on campus, and to the University community as a whole.

To acknowledge these and many other contributions, and to strengthen the presence of fraternities and sororities on our campus, the Office of Housing and Student Life has adopted the following policy on Recognition and Governance of fraternities and sororities, to be administered by the Office of Housing and Student Life with the advice and assistance of the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council. This policy is intended to define the relationship between fraternities/sororities and the University, to establish the framework for the fraternity governance, and to guide successive generations of fraternity and sorority members in maintaining the traditional strengths of the fraternal system within the University community.

I. FRAMEWORK FOR RECOGNITION

A. Definition of Recognition

1. Recognition is the formal process by which the University agrees that a social fraternity or sorority, whether residential or nonresidential, may function on the campus, enroll members from the undergraduate student body through recruitment activities, and identify its chapter with the University.
2. As detailed below, organizations covered by this recognition policy are in all cases independently incorporated. The University thus enters into agreements with them only within the basic principles applied to University affiliation with any externally-incorporated organization: there must be commonality of goals and standards; disclosure of principals; mechanisms for accountability; and provisions for the discontinuation of the affiliation should goals diverge or standards decline in ways that would expose the University to liability or loss of reputation.
3. At the same time, fraternity and sorority chapters are associations of students, operated to enhance the educational experience of students. Thus, it is appropriate for the University to provide support services that will help the chapters to function effectively for their members and will protect their stability over time given the inherent turnover of membership and leadership.
4. This policy therefore outlines the commitments the University makes to recognized social fraternities and sororities, as well as the obligations assumed by each chapter and its sponsoring

body to carry out its collective responsibility for the well-being of its members and for the chapter's performance and reputation in the University community.

B. Applicability of Recognition Policy

The term "fraternity" and "sorority" are used to designate honorary/professional societies as well as social/residential fraternities; this recognition policy applies only to the latter group. Whether residential or nonresidential, fraternal organizations reviewed for recognition under this policy will have all three of the following characteristics:

1. Their sponsoring bodies are legal corporations external to the University; in all cases, their chapter corporations, alumni corporations, and national/regional or local fraternal organizations are incorporated separately from the University. This applies to only national organizations. Current Local organizations must have proper Advisors in place to oversee the chapter and its functions in order to continue to be in good standing and are grandfathered into being a part of the community (2015).
2. Individually, they have organizational goals which are articulated by their sponsoring groups, and these goals are social/fraternal rather than honorary, professional, religious, or political. Collectively, they share elements of a fraternal ethos which emphasizes the personal bonding of members to the group to a degree which precludes membership in more than one such fraternal organization at once.
3. They are entitled to be subjectively selective in their membership within the limits of the University's nondiscrimination policies, and are entitled to single-sex membership under the provisions of Section 86.14 of the regulations promulgated under Title IX of the U.S. Education Act Amendments of 1972. (Section 1681.a.6.A)
4. Some local fraternal organizations have been founded at West Liberty, and the University continues to be receptive to the formation of embryonic groups with the expectation that such groups will become recognized fraternities within a reasonable period of time. As of Fall 2015, University will no longer accept the creation of local fraternities or sororities. If the campus is open for expansion based on the student climate and enrollment in other chapters, the Office of Housing and Student Life will explore partnerships with ONLY national organizations.

C. Categories of Fraternities and Sororities

1. Categories of Recognition - The University will grant recognition to social fraternities and sororities whose membership is drawn entirely from the student body of the University. They may be recognized as:
 - a. Social: This type of fraternity and sorority also has its chapter comprised of undergraduate (possibly graduate students based on organization standards) students, and is subject to all provisions of this Recognition policy except those relating to the maintenance of residential facilities.

D. Stages of Recognition

In addition to its designation as social, a fraternity or sorority is designated in one of three stages of recognition: Full, Provisionary, or Probationary. Such changes will be implemented by the Office of Housing and Student Life after consultation with the respective councils (IFC, Panhel).

1. Full Recognition- Full Recognition accords the fraternity/sorority all the rights, privileges, obligations, and University resources available under the University's recognition process as follows:
 - a. Identification of the chapter with West Liberty University and use of the University's name along with, but not in place of, identification of the sponsoring body. Use of the University's name by fraternities and sororities is subject to approval of the Office of Housing and Student Life.
 - b. Endorsement by the University that the fraternal organization provides a positive experience for its members, that it is truthful in its representation to the students it recruits as members, that it is meeting its obligations to the University and the community.
 - c. Participation in the University's Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council, as those organizations relate to the self-governance of the fraternity/sorority system at West Liberty University.
 - d. Participation in any official University-wide recruitment or membership solicitation program, as articulated and monitored by the Interfraternity Council and Panhellenic Council.
 - e. Receive the assistance of various University offices in communicating with the alumni of the local chapter. This shall include, but not be restricted to, advice and assistance provided by the Offices of Alumni Relations.
 - f. Participation in the athletic, social, and educational programs and activities of the University which are provided for fraternal organizations.
 - g. Assistance of appropriate University offices in protecting the fraternity and its property from disruptions, thefts, intrusions, etc.
 - h. Advice and assistance of the Office of Housing and Student Life and other appropriate University, offices in the conduct of the fraternity's business affairs, its housing operations, maintenance, and renovations, and its short-term and long-term financial planning. Some of these services are provided by the University in accord with agreements which are negotiated from time to time between the University and the fraternity/sorority.
2. Provisional Recognition- Provisional Recognition describes the University's conditional approval for a specified period no shorter than one year after fulfillment of the criteria and procedures for recognition described in Section II; a maximum period for Provisional Recognition may be specified by the Campus Activities Coordinator. At the end of the period of Provisional Recognition, a review of the status of the fraternity/sorority shall be conducted by the Office of Housing and Student Life. Upon completion of this assessment, the Office of Housing and Student Life will designate the fraternity to have full recognition, continued provisional recognition, or to have recognition withdrawn, as specified in these guidelines. Normally, provisional recognition will be applied during the establishment of a new fraternity/sorority chapter or the reestablishment of a formerly active fraternity/sorority chapter at West Liberty.

3. Probationary Recognition - Probationary Recognition describes the university's conditional withdrawal of certain University services/benefits and/or its applying specific sanctions against the chapter. Probationary recognition signifies that the chapter has failed to abide by University standards, codes or guidelines, by state or local or federal laws and statutes, and/or has failed to comply with the procedures and criteria articulated in this policy statement. In most instances, the fraternity's local/national sponsoring groups will be asked to supervise the chapter during the entire probationary period, the length of which shall be specified by the Office of Housing and Student Life. At the end of the probationary period, an intensive analysis of the status of the fraternity/sorority shall be conducted by the Office of Housing and Student Life in consultation with the IFC/Panhel. Upon completion of this assessment, they will designate the fraternity to have full recognition, continued probationary recognition, or to have recognition withdrawn, as specified in these guidelines. Unless there is substantial progress recorded in those areas where the fraternity or sorority falls short of its goals under this policy, the chapter will lose its recognition status at the end of the probationary period (see Section V of this document).

II. Criteria and Procedures for Initial Recognition

A. General Criteria for Initial Recognition

All fraternal organizations must fulfill the following criteria in order to secure initial recognition by the University:

1. Eligibility Demonstrate eligibility for recognition (as outlined under "Applicability" in Section I.B) by providing evidence of non-University and alumni affiliation and support. Such evidence will take the form of:
 - a. A statement and pledge of sponsorship by an approved national group(s) or association(s); (i.e. no new local organizations are to form, a new group would need to be associated with a national group)
 - b. Identification of an active advisor which maintains ongoing supervisory relations with the undergraduate chapter; It shall be the responsibility of the chapter advisor to monitor the operations and activities of the undergraduate fraternity chapter, to make recommendations to the Office of Housing and Student Life, which will strengthen the chapter, and to assist in ensuring the fraternity's continued compliance with all terms of this recognition policy and to assist in ensuring that all activities of the fraternity comply with University regulations and guidelines, as well as local, state, and federal laws and statutes.
2. Coherence of goals with the University's mission
 - a. The statement of purposes and goals of the fraternal organizations;
 - b. Constitution, by-laws, and governance structure;
 - c. The local chapter's document, as well as constitution and by-laws, and statement of purpose and goals;
 - d. Policies and standards for the selection of members, the education of new members, and the initiation of new members. These documents must conform to established University standards and policies as may be found in official University sources.

3. Responsibilities- Acknowledge responsibilities within the University by submitting a written statement of adherence to the principles and guidelines defined in this document.
4. Membership- Provide full membership information, including names, addresses, ID numbers, and telephone numbers of the fraternity's/sorority's national organization officers, its local alumni corporation and board(s) and its undergraduate officer(s) and chapter members. Active membership in the undergraduate chapter is defined as the individual's right to participate in any formal activities of the chapter or to reside in the chapter house, in the case of a residential fraternity. Membership in the University's chapter shall (a) be restricted to individuals who are matriculated undergraduate or graduate students at the University, and (b) be large enough to assign, without undue burden upon any individual member, the responsibilities prescribed by the Office of Housing and Student Life pursuant to this policy. In reference to their Council By Laws groups must maintain a eligible membership to be in good standing.
5. Governance Structure- Provide a governance structure for the fraternity/sorority, indicating assignment of responsibility for the fraternity's/sorority's financial activities, program planning, compliance with University disciplinary standards and regulations, orientation and selection of new members, communication with the University's administration, housing operations and arrangements (if appropriate), and participation within the University's Interfraternity Council, and PanHellenic Council.
6. Financial Plan- Present a financial plan for the fraternity/sorority which addresses the following issues: income and cost expectations and projections, estimated number of members for chapter viability; proposed schedule of financial reporting in-house and to the University, appropriate insurance coverage as mandated by the University (e.g., liability, personal property, automobile, etc.) and designation of responsibility for the financial supervision of the fraternity/sorority.
7. Plan for projected services and activities- Submit proper paperwork for programs and activities for members as well as a plan for the educational, social, charitable, community service, and athletic programs and activities to be offered to members to the Office of Housing and Student Life.
8. Evidence of academic performance- The chapter, as a group, will be expected to maintain a chapter cumulative grade point average of 2.25. Any student who is not in good standing with his or her school may not retain active membership status and/or be put on a scholarship program as stated by their chapter/ council in order to get back on active membership.

B. General Procedures for Initial Recognition

To secure provisional recognition status the following sequence of procedures will be completed normally within the period of one year:

1. An authorized representative of the fraternal organization will submit a formal application for recognition to the Office of Housing and Student Life and Greek Council, including all information requested in Section A, "Criteria for Recognition."
2. Upon receipt of application, the Campus Activities Coordinator will assess the application for recognition. Advice may also be sought from the Officers of the Interfraternity Council and PanHellenic Council; such consultation may be sought individually with each group and/or with their Executive Board.
3. If the information submitted is judged to be acceptable, the Campus Activities Coordinator will issue a letter of provisional recognition together with a listing of any specialized terms of conditions, to the applicant.

4. Written acceptance of the offer of recognition will be furnished by the president of the fraternity/sorority to the Office of Housing and Student Life.

III. Maintenance of Recognition

A fraternity's/sorority's recognition shall continue annually so long as it maintains the standards set forth in this policy, and further:

1. Provides an activity report each semester to the Office of Housing and Student Life in the format requested, but also noting any changes in the items listed in Section II of the policy, and updating all required statements of responsibility. Any changes in information, filed under Section II, occurring during the academic year must be reported to the Office of Housing and Student Life within two weeks of the change.
2. Reviews bi-annually with the Campus Activities Coordinator the general progress and contribution which the fraternity/sorority has made during the previous academic year regarding house viability, compliance with University goals and standards, issues of collective responsibility, projected planning and programming needs, and specific needs for advisory services by the University.
3. Reports each semester to its national and/or graduate/alumni sponsoring fraternal organization (if applicable) regarding the status of the undergraduate membership. The national sponsoring group – or the local sponsoring group in the absence of a participating national organization – shall communicate regularly with the Office of the Housing and Student Life on its evaluation of the chapter.
4. Provides a new member education plan each semester when recruiting any new members.
5. Provides any other reports/paperwork as stated by the Office of Housing and Student Life.
6. Fulfill all IFC or Panhellenic Regulations and Office of Housing and Student Life regarding Risk Management Policy/events and Community Service.

IV. Obligations

A. Obligations of the Fraternity/Sorority to the University

By undertaking the process of recognition, the fraternity or sorority assumes certain obligations and responsibilities to the University community:

1. To maintain the University's standards for fraternities and sororities as articulated in this recognition policy.
2. To accept collective responsibility for the activities of individual members of the undergraduate chapter as they relate to the following:
 - a. Academic performance of both individual members and the group as noted under Section II.
 - b. Conduct of members and conduct of guests of members which is knowingly tolerated by the members of the fraternity and is in violation of the University's Code of Conduct;
 - c. Obligation to cooperate with the administrative and law enforcement functions of the University;
 - d. Educational and student development programs of the fraternity or sorority. Including one risk management and one community service event per semester.

3. To affirm annually the fraternity's commitment to the University community and this Recognition Policy document.
4. To maintain chapter viability through sound financial management of the fraternity/sorority and supervision of the chapter.
5. To participate actively in the University's fraternity and sorority governance system through active membership in the Interfraternity Council, PanHellenic Council.
6. To contribute positively to the University community and to the development of the individual fraternity member in his role as a student at the University.
7. To abide by all lease or other written agreements or contracts which the fraternity enters into with the University.
8. To abide by all appropriate rules/regulations of the University and all local, state, and federal laws and statutes.

- Failure to comply to any of the above may result in judicial sanctions by the Campus Activities Coordinator, Housing & Student Life Office, and/or University Judicial System. See Section V. for further detail.

B. Obligations of the University to the Fraternity/Sorority

Through recognition, the University agrees to the following:

1. To provide those benefits outlined under the description of "Full Recognition," Section I.
2. To communicate with the national sponsoring fraternal organization and/or local sponsoring corporation board as required regarding the status of the chapter at the University.
3. To provide necessary guidance and resources to the undergraduate chapter and its officers so that they may fulfill their leadership roles within their chapters and within the University community.
4. To provide the undergraduate/graduate student chapter with supportive activities and programs for fraternity/sorority members and fraternal organizations and to provide those activities with appropriate resources (e.g., intramural sporting events and equipment).
5. To assist in the mediation or resolution of conflicts between fraternal organizations and to provide appropriate resources as circumstances require.
6. To abide by all lease or other written agreements or contracts which the University enters into with the fraternity.

V. Changes in Recognition Status

Once recognized by the University, a fraternity or sorority is assumed to be in good standing as long as the organization meets the expectations articulated in this policy.

1. When it is determined that a chapter has failed to meet the obligations articulated in this policy, then alterations in the fraternity's status may be implemented by the University, upon written notification to

the fraternity's undergraduate chapter, and the local alumni/graduate as well as national sponsoring organizations (see Sections 1 through 4, below).

2. On any finding that the chapter has jeopardized its recognition status through failure to maintain the standards in this policy, the Campus Activities Coordinator/Office of Housing & Student Life may implement any of the following actions:
 - a. Administrative Warning. This warning will suggest a reasonable time frame for corrective action. If the schedule for correction is not met, then the Office of Housing and Student Life may invoke probation of recognition. (Administered by Campus Activities Coordinator)
 - b. Chapter Probation. Probationary Recognition is for a determined period of time and may or may not include suspension of specific privileges for the fraternity (see Probationary Recognition, Section I.D). Under the terms of probation the fraternity may be required to suspend the active membership of one or more individuals within the chapter. In the case of any further infractions of the University's Recognition Policy standards or if a schedule for corrective action is not met, the Office of Housing and Student Life may implement suspension or withdrawal of recognition. (Campus Activities Coordinator, Housing & Student Life Office, and/or University Judicial System)
 - c. Suspension of Recognition-suspension is for a set time period during which all activities of the chapter may be suspended and privileges revoked. During this period the organization will be required to produce a written plan or corrective action to be taken so that the chapter will meet the criteria established by this policy. (Campus Activities Coordinator, Housing & Student Life Office, and/or University Judicial System)
 - d. Withdrawal of Recognition. At the time of withdrawal, the fraternal organization will cease its operations of a chapter, terminate residence for members of the fraternity (if applicable), and revoke all privileges and authority for the undergraduate chapter to function. Current individual members registered at the University could be liable for suspension from the University for failure to comply in accordance with any such Withdrawal of Recognition. Withdrawal of Recognition terminates all agreements between the University and the undergraduate chapter of the fraternity. (Campus Activities Coordinator, Housing & Student Life Office, and/or University Judicial System)

- if any or all of the above was to be brought upon a chapter, the chapter and its individuals are also subject to judicial sanctions from their governing Council (as an organization only) and the University (as individuals & as a group).

VI. Amendments or Alterations

Recommendations for amendments to or alteration of this policy, in order to meet changing needs, may originate with the Interfraternity Council, PanHellenic Council, or individual fraternal organizations as well as with the Office of Housing and Student Life. Recommendations shall be reviewed by the Interfraternity Council, PanHellenic Council. Any amendments or alterations in this policy shall be issued in writing by the Office of Housing and Student Life, with a specified grace period for compliance by fraternities and sororities already in recognition status.

VII. The New Member/"Pledging" Regulations

Hazing is forbidden as being inconsistent with association of equals and scholars. In addition, hazing is illegal. Refer to Anti-hazing Regulations in the Student Handbook.