

What if we were successful in advising councils to create more impactful cross council relationships?

Jared Pacileo | The University of Alabama

Fraternity and sorority advisors constantly navigate the struggle of creating a unified community within the different councils. Although there is no 'magic wand' that can be waved to accomplish this goal, there are a few strategies advisors can utilize to create more impactful relationships across different councils.

Model the Way

As advisors are meeting and developing relationships with students throughout the year, they need to keep in mind the influence they have on students. Advisors, who themselves should be knowledgeable about the different councils in the fraternity and sorority community, can encourage students to learn more about experiences different from their own. Moreover, in offices where there is more than one fraternity/sorority advisor, advisors need to invest in and build relationships with the advisors and students who make up the other councils. Students aren't likely to invest in building cross council relationships if they don't believe their advisor cares about other councils or doesn't build relationships outside of their council affiliation. As fraternity and sorority advisors, we need to understand life is a series of developing relationships, and we need to model this for our students.

Create Opportunities for Your Students

Two things are certain when talking about college students: everyone loves free food, and everyone has to eat. Providing times for students to interact organically before or after council meetings, on random class days, and at office-led events are important to developing relationships. Students are busy with day to day activities consuming their time, but by creating opportunities (such as a meal) for your students to network between councils, you can increase your turn out. In addition to this, you can make existing opportunities more available to the entire community. Fraternities and sororities are constantly having events throughout the year. Although these are advertised internally through council meetings and on social media, advisors can intentionally share these opportunities with students on different councils.

Assessing Your Students

Assessment is a good way to gauge if something is succeeding or failing, changing or staying the same. Another way advisors can work to create more impactful relationships across councils is to assess the students. Having students fill out surveys on their knowledge of different councils or cross council interaction can give you a baseline of how your community looks. Also, polling students through daily interactions is a quick, easy, and informal way to get great information. If students don't know about programs or initiatives you feel are important, rethink how you are spreading the word. If students don't know individuals within other councils, rethink how you are modeling the way and take a look at

what opportunities are available for them to come together. The easiest way to know if cross council relationships are being created or sustained is to ask the students.

Cross council relationships are vital to a thriving fraternity and sorority community. The presence of good relationships offer students a diverse fraternal experience; likewise, the absence of good relationships can yield an isolated experience. As the school year begins, fraternity and sorority advisors need to prioritize modeling the way for students to create relationships outside of their council, continuously look to create a space for student interaction, and check in regularly with students throughout the year to gauge their experiences.