What if the value of the fraternity/sorority advisor was understood by all?
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Many fraternity and sorority professionals ask “what would it be like if my position was valued or understood at my institution?” This is an interesting question potentially based in a wide range of expectations and perspectives as it pertains to the campus based fraternity and sorority professional. It leads to the question of how others define the role and how the position is defined on campuses: educator, leader, babysitter, event planner, risk manager, keg tapper, mentor, expansion blocker, or cheerleader? Depending on the individual being asked, one might receive a wide range of answers. These divergent perspectives on the role and purpose of a campus based fraternity and sorority professional may provide some insight as to why the position is often misunderstood and not valued by higher education administrators, headquarters based professionals, alumni/ae advisors, students, and even the professional in question.

The question of “what if the role of the fraternity/sorority advisor was valued or understood by all?” does not actually begin with others, it begins with the individual in the role. One’s value as a professional working with fraternities and sororities should not be found externally; it has to be found within. Each of us needs to do the personal work to find our own worth as a contributor to the profession, and not allow others to dictate our value to the institution, the profession, or to students. Campus based professionals who develop a strong understanding of their role, purpose, and value will then lead others to the same understanding over time. It would be almost impossible for other people to place value and understanding on something not understood by the person assigned to advance and advocate in that role. Having an expectation others will inherently value the fraternity and sorority experience, or your role as a professional, should never be assumed as this is not a given in higher education.

So maybe the question really should be, “what if campus based fraternity and sorority professionals understood and valued their own role?” What if each one of us worked diligently every day to advance the fraternity and sorority experience, and seek affirmation of the value of that work through the impact of the learning, knowledge creation, advocacy, and engaging dialogue that ensues, instead of seeking affirmation in the form of a note from a vice president, an increase in recruitment/intake numbers, a successful Greek Week, or a gift from Council officers? What if each campus based fraternity and sorority professional developed a rock solid understating of his or her role and purpose, took the time to educate others about that role and purpose, and then went to work? Other people will develop their own understanding and value as it relates to the fraternity and sorority experience by witnessing the results of the professional’s work through the engaged learning taking place with students.

The campus based fraternity and sorority advisor has the potential to be central to the learning and development of the young men and women who choose to join fraternities and sororities at campuses across North America. Campus based professionals must know in their core their work is valued and important, even if no one at the institution shares that perspective. Professionals should seek expressions of value in the learning and development of the men and women being directly impacted by the experience, and then let those expressions assist them in telling the story to others.