

Top 10 Tips for Every New Campus Professional Working with Fraternities and Sororities

Colleen Dallavalle, Seton Hall University

The first day of any new job can be intimidating. Remembering names, figuring out campus structure, even trying to know where and when to eat lunch can be difficult. However, walking into a position that is steeped in traditions, values, and an internal structure that is internationally bound by governing organizations' rules and rituals when you have never been a member poses a real challenge. In the first week of any position you go through the entire decision-making process again, asking yourself, "Was this the right move?" "Am I doing everything correctly?" "Do the students like me?" and most commonly, "What did I get myself into?" Fear not new professionals of tomorrow, after a year of ups and downs, I can offer some tips for you to use on your new journey into the amazing world of student affairs.

10. Have you met my friend...the Manual of Information? Some may laugh at this now, but this guide will save you on the long, stressful nights of college Panhellenic recruitment. Coming into a position blind is never helpful, but if you have not had the experience advising a specific council (whether you are unaffiliated, or you are a member of a NPHC organization and now advise IFC, CPC, NALFO and/or NMGC, for example) it is important to learn everything you can about each council and its protocols. Do not be afraid to call organizations' inter/national offices if you have questions or concerns. Not only does that allow you to have a personal relationship and network with IHQ staff member or volunteer, but your questions will be answered.

9. "No, I don't need another T-shirt," This is what I found myself saying after the first month of the academic year. Students, however, flock to any spot that has giveaways. Word of advice - if you can afford to provide a takeaway that promotes student leadership/involvement as well as your area(s) - go for it! It will be seen again, again, and again around campus - probably for years after an event has taken place.

8. Say hello to everyone- This is an important piece of advice. It may be repetitive, and you have probably heard it before, but if it keeps coming up there must be some truth to it. Think of yourself as a first-year student. You are starting all over in a new place, new environment, new rules, new everything! You have nothing to lose! If you do not take anything else away from this list, try saying hello to everyone from the security guard at the gate, to the student studying in the hallway, and see what happens!

7. Find a friend- Everybody needs somebody! As social creatures, it is important to find another administrator with whom you can confide and laugh. On the hardest days, sometimes a smile and laugh is just what the doctor ordered.

6. Keep your eyes open- For your first year, take everything in. Observe the interactions between students, advisors, faculty, administrators, and even your department. Once you can clearly see how everything operates, change/tweak what you want to and look at the differences. Administrators who start a new position and completely change a program that was pre-existing may overlook a portion that worked for everyone.

5. Find your balance- In this field there are no "regular" hours. There will be weekend getaways with friends you will miss, nights you will be working until the wee hours of the morning and long days. You need to make sure you are keeping tabs on yourself and your health and relaxing when you can.



4. Be fair- Consistency will be your best friend. Risk management is something that we all have to consider. By being fair and consistent you will show everyone that you have an equitable stake in their success.

3. Get involved- Take any opportunity you have to serve on committees, meet new people, and go to university events. Go to a basketball, football, or soccer game; walk around campus during peak hours; eat in the dining hall. Most importantly, mix and mingle with the students. They will begin to see (1) you are a human being and not a robot, (2) you are invested in the campus, and (3) you are approachable and pleasant. Students will respond to you, and the university community will be able to recognize you when you need volunteers for committees or events you may host.

2. Don't sweat the small Stuff- HAVE FUN! In all seriousness, we are the luckiest people alive - we stay in college for the rest of our working lives! Enjoy it! No one is perfect, so accept that fact and move on.

1. Be Yourself! You were hired for a reason. Have confidence in yourself and your belief that you will do an amazing job!

The first year is never an easy one, but for me, after those long days and nights, endless questions about recruitment, extension/expansion and risk management conversations, it is all worth it. Coming into this field with no previous affiliation allowed me to come to the table with an open mind and unbiased perspective. It also showed the students that I'm truly here for their success and benefit. Use these tips but also know that you are entering a field filled with dedicated professionals, both new and seasoned, who are only a phone call or email away.