

## **NPC Process for Reviewing University Relationship/Recognition Agreements**

National Panhellenic Conference | @NPCWomen

The National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) and its member organizations desire a robust and collaborative relationship with our university partners and share the goals of ensuring student safety and providing a meaningful and compelling student development experience while at the same time protecting the rights of our members and organizations.

During the last two years, NPC has updated and streamlined its process for reviewing university relationship/recognition agreements. In the fall of 2017, NPC dissolved its University Document Review Committee and put in place a new process in which NPC member organizations forward any documents they receive to the NPC professional staff for review and counsel. NPC staff then communicates with all member organizations on a given campus and serves an important role as liaison between the inter/national organizations and the host institution, asking follow-up questions or effecting change, if needed.

When reviewing these documents, NPC is advancing and preserving the sorority experience by noting any policies or requirements that infringe upon the rights of private member organizations or individual undergraduate members. While ultimately the decision to sign the agreement rests with the member organizations themselves, NPC strives to help member organizations and their chapters and the institution reach consensus, wherever possible.

Some of the most commonly addressed items include:

**1. Prohibition on membership in single-sex organizations (*The term “single-sex” is used because “single-sex” is used within Title IX.*)**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits institutions of higher education from discriminating on the basis of sex; however, it does provide an exception for the membership practices of social fraternities and sororities. Campuses should not enact policies or practices that force our member organizations to become co-ed nor should they take adverse actions against students who want to be members of women’s only organizations.

**2. Required non-discrimination language**

In an effort to create more cohesive communities, campuses have been requiring student organizations (including collegiate chapters and College Panhellenics) to include non-discrimination language in registered/recognized student organization governing

documents. NPC member organizations do not discriminate in membership selection on any basis prohibited by law. Recognition documents should include a carve-out as allowed by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. [Example: *Pursuant to 20 U.S.C. 1681(a)(6)(A), social fraternities and sororities may limit membership on the basis of sex.*]

### **3. Organizational due process**

Many documents include language that allows an institution to hold an entire chapter (or possibly community) accountable for the acts of a few individuals. This is an unacceptable limit on students' rights to freely associate. Additionally, these types of actions disincentivize the following of policies, since responsible students are treated just like bad actors. We encourage colleges and universities to develop an organizational conduct review system that provides due process at all steps along the way and includes these details in the relationship agreement.

### **4. Time, place, and manner restrictions on recruitment**

Punitive measures that limit when a student can join an organization should not be imposed against sororities or against potential new members, particularly when the same limitation is not imposed on other student organizations or athletic teams. In particular, NPC is concerned about the growing trend to limit the ability of sororities to recruit first-semester or first-year students.

### **5. Naming volunteers as CSAs or Mandatory Reporters**

NPC member organizations oppose the designation of sorority alumnae volunteers and sorority employees as campus security authorities (CSAs) or mandated reporters (MRs). Classifying sorority alumnae volunteers as CSAs/MRs significantly changes the dynamics of the relationship between them and collegiate members, and in most instances the institution has required volunteers to take on this liability without providing appropriate training.

### **6. Request for internal chapter documents**

Campuses are increasingly requiring that chapters share internal chapter programs for administrator approval (e.g., new member education plans) or internal chapter conduct records for administrator review based on claims of concern for campus safety. As private organizations, these types of documents — conduct records, in particular — are protected. Additionally, campus administrators should not serve as appellate reviewers of our internal processes.

## **7. Insurance concerns**

Documents that include contractual risk transfer mechanisms, like hold harmless and indemnification statements, and coverage requirements are passed along for professional review by our insurance provider.

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*Questions about the NPC document review process can be directed to Dani Weatherford, chief executive officer, at [dani@npcwomen.org](mailto:dani@npcwomen.org).*