A Consideration Guide for (Re)Branding Fraternity/Sorority Programming
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In a higher education landscape where our students have progressively less time, a shorter attention span, and higher standards for their co-curricular experiences, we as fraternity and sorority professionals are seeing an increased pressure to make our programming not only developmental and meaningful, but attractive and worthy of our students' time and energy. Though as a field we are deeply invested in developing tangible learning outcomes of our programming, curriculum based off current research, and material in line with student development theory, our students are more concerned with their time constraints, how they will see immediate effects from a program, and how it can serve them as they develop their professional resume. Though creating engaging titles, taglines, and graphics may seem supplementary to the content of the programming, effective branding can often be the answer to demonstrating that the programs not only fit the rising standards of the field, but will serve students and provide them with the tangible benefits they seek. However, before you brand (or rebrand) your leadership programming, you should ask yourself some essential questions to save yourself from the fatal flaw of providing students with programming for programming's sake.

1. **Why are you rebranding?** This is a natural starting point for your rebranding plan – clarify what prompted this motivation to brand or rebrand your programming. Are you trying to make your programming more attractive? Are you trying to inject an element of professionalism and clarity previously missing from your programming? Are you trying to signal a shift in the material, the focus, or the progression of your programming? All of these are great reasons to take on a rebranding project, but make sure you know why you are doing it, and don't lose sight of that core reason throughout the branding process. Without intentionality, you run the risk of wasting staff time and resources for making largescale changes that will ultimately fall flat of your goal.

2. **Will this have longevity?** As professionals in such a rapidly changing field, we are often eager to leave our mark when and where we can. However, if you are the professional leading the impetus for branding or rebranding your programming, ask yourself if you doing it to leave your mark on the program or to make an impactful change on the way your office promotes their programming. Before you reveal a new image for your programming, make sure it has the capacity for longevity, and that it will last beyond your tenure with the community. Poll constituency groups including students, administrative staff, and support staff to see if the branding has far reaching appeal and isn't topical or time-bound.

3. **Is your branding easy to remember?** This may seem like a no-brainer, but make sure your branding is not too complicated. It should be easy for staff and students alike to talk about regularly. Names should be short (ideally one word) and stick in the mind. That being said, don't be afraid to utilize subheadings when naming your programming! They can be the answer to ensuring your program titles are simple, memorable, and also

effectively represent the content of the program. This is when acronyms can be a great asset – you can ensure your titles have content while they are still succinct.

4. **Does your institution have branding and marketing standards you need to account for?** As fraternity/sorority advisors we often try to impress upon our students that they are a representation of their organization and their institution. The programming you develop should be held to the same standards. As such, it is critical to follow any branding and marketing guidelines laid out by your institution, whether that includes proper uses of certain images, utilizing university colors, following ADA compliant standards for font choices, etc. Model the way with standards compliance in program branding, as much as in all that we do.

5. **Is it themed?** If so, why? Theming the branding for your programming can be a great way to create identity, consistency, and even demonstrate a progression from one program to the next. It can also quickly make the programming seem dated or even cheesy if the theme is unrelated or topical. In order to avoid this, an excellent theme source could be university icons or traditions – can you work with the school colors, the mascots, parts of the creed or alma mater, etc.? If your fraternal community has developed values or a mission statement, this is also another great source from which to draw inspiration as you design your branding. For example, if your community's mission is to develop exemplary student leaders, you can design your programming with titles and taglines that embody the idea of excellence.

6. **Will your office buy into your new branding?** Even the best designed programming can quickly deteriorate if staff members are not willing to commit to new branding. If your staff doesn't take it seriously, repeatedly uses old language to refer to the programming, or simply dismisses the branding, your community will learn that they can do the same. Before introducing new branding, make sure to have a conversation with your staff about how their support of this new branding is vital to its success. Having polled their opinions early on in the process (see: longevity) will support their buy-in. They will probably get on board quickly, but a little group dialogue never hurt anyone!

Intentional branding can be the difference between presenting your programming as impactful rather than just more programming for programming's sake. Taking the time to think through the above questions before starting the (re)branding process can help you to avoid common pitfalls and experience greater levels of student interest and participation in your programs. That being said, while branding your programming is important and can be a strong use of resources, you also have to ensure your programing follows through – if you are going to make sure it doesn't sound like programming for programming's sake, don't let it **be** programming for programming's sake.