

Forgotten But Not Alone: Finding Solace in Interfraternalism

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We all are so thankful for what our organizations have given us, and we often want to try to give back what we have received. But what if we cannot? What if we want to give back, but our organization does not need us or sometimes doesn't want us?

We all know the people who seem to be always traveling. They travel for organizations to facilitate a session such as an Alcohol Skills Training Program, helping to develop curriculum, or they constantly seem to be presenting at a regional conference. But the question is: How often is it for their organization?

Those who work in this profession are familiar with the hustle involved in volunteering for an organization. The six hour drive roundtrip or flying ten hours for a two hour facilitation. Spending a weekend presenting at a regional conference for a fraternity for three days and paying their own way to do it. Being asked to spend time with another fraternal organization to review their curriculum to be used for undergraduates. They do this for a variety of organizations, but at the end of the day they feel as though they have to beg their organization to simply return an email.

The story above is not all that uncommon for many of us campus based professionals.

If given the opportunity, I would spend our entire convention donating my time. If asked, I would spend the whole convention working a table, setting up events, or handing out information. I currently spend my time volunteering for everyone else, but would drop it all if my organization asked me to do something for them.

This used to always weigh on my heart as I "wanted to be wanted" by my organization. Then I realized one day I should not be sad my organization does not want/need to utilize me as a resource in a way other organizations do. I came to realize my interfraternal brothers and sisters were investing in me and for that I should celebrate, be grateful, and be a good ambassador for them. These organizations have spent time and money on my professional development as well as trusting me to enhance their members' experiences. I realized I need to be thankful for these opportunities, and I have embraced these organizations wholeheartedly.

I began to shift my perspective instead of focusing on what was missing and focus on appreciating what I have: organizations investing and inviting me to work with their members. While I may feel happier, it is challenging to still not feel a sense of something missing.

I do not come from a large rock star chapter or have the credentials of a successful businessman. I have never won an award from my organization (not even Brother of the Week in my chapter) but instead have been blessed with a variety of thanks in a variety of ways from a variety of organizations. If you walked into my office you would think I am a member of an

organization besides my own based on the decorations hanging. But if you spent five minutes with me, you would know what my organization is and how passionate I am about it.

When you begin in this field you have such passion to help and to create change. So you start by volunteering your time to get involved as that often is the advice we get: take advantage of volunteer opportunities, reach out to others, and ask. You worry about looking too ambitious or being too forward or needy when it comes to your headquarters. You worry trying so hard to be involved will result in the same way you have seen it result for others: being ostracized.

Often we are knowledgeable of a situation occurring in higher education, or we have connections to the people who are the most qualified and we believe we need to be at the table because we could help over the people currently there. We need to be okay with not always being at our own table and instead, take advantage of all the opportunities presented at other tables. Every once in a while, you have to create your own table and invite the change to come along with you.

If your organization does not ask for your help, I encourage you to find your own way to give back. I started off by volunteering to serve as the Scholarship Advisor for my chapter and was soon asked to serve as the Chapter Advisor. Through this opportunity, I took the time to involve others that often felt the same as I did. Sometimes we want to give back at the largest level, but we forget we can sometimes make a greater impact at the smaller level. Being an advisor, attending events, and being a present source of encouragement can often do more than serving on a regional or inter/national committee.

Dr. Lori Hart once told me, "Sometimes our organizations forget about us because we are always there." I used to completely agree, but after this past year I would amend it to say, "Sometimes our organizations at the highest level forget about us because we are always there, but the individuals we spend time with never will." No matter the organization or the student, make the impact so they will never forget you.