

## Fraternity Recruitment for Adults

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Once the degree has been obtained, the cap, gown, and expensive piece of paper has been gathered, and the job obtained; we officially call ourselves fraternity and sorority professionals and graduate students. We did it! Now in these newfound roles, days are filled with member meetings, risk management strategizing, and yes, recruitment. No, we are not talking about advising fraternity or sorority formal recruitment on a campus. Our role as a fraternity/sorority professional introduces a new type of recruitment that doesn't look the same as it did as an undergraduate member. This time we are recruiting fraternities for our campus and there is a different name for it: expansion.

Last August, an informal qualitative research project was conducted with Innova Marketing and Phired Up Productions to interview twelve fraternity and sorority professionals on recent fraternity expansions on their campus.\* Over a forty-five minute interview, professionals were asked to explain their expansion process, priorities for selection, and any struggles they faced. Many themes emerged from the conversations including ambiguity in the relationship between campus professionals and headquarters staff. It became clear somewhere between undergraduate experiences and professional positions the idea that recruiting is rooted in relationships was lost (Chatten, 2017).

Wrapped up in the ambiguity of how to conduct expansion in a way that follows policies therein, acts in the best interest of the university, and allows growth opportunities for our students, the personal touch that allows the partnership between a fraternity headquarters and university to be successful has disappeared. In undergraduate recruiting experiences, days were spent getting to know members on a personal basis. We uncovered their passions, learned about their values, and assessed if the person was the right "fit." In expansion, "fit" is evaluated based off introductory letters, packets, or on-site presentations where we look at how many alumni are nearby, how many staff will support the new chapter, and how many nearby chapters there are. It feels cold. In the transition from recruiting chapter members to recruiting a fraternity, relationships are being replaced with facts and numbers. We teach our students to select members off of personal connection and values, so shouldn't we do the same in expansion?

It's time we start taking the lessons taught to students about recruitment and apply them to expansion. All it takes is a little communication to bring positive interfraternalism back to the expansion process. Here are three quick tips taken from the research project conducted:

### **1. Create a relationship in advance**

If you know your campus is looking to expand soon, start talking to headquarter staff members early. Think AFA Annual Meeting Fireside Chats or meet and greet opportunities at IFI. Even if your expansion may not be happening for a year or two down the road, you can skip the stack of interest letters and narrow down your options to the headquarters you have already developed relationships with.

## **2. Be the lead of the relationship**

Part of our job is to offer opportunities for development of students, and it feels natural to allow student leaders to be key decision makers in the expansion selection process. However, a majority of the leaders on expansion selection teams are in their last year or two of their undergraduate career. While their opinions should be valued and weighed, the partnership in expansion is between the campus and the fraternity headquarters with the goal of lasting beyond one or two years. Our students should offer input, but in the end, the campus-based professional who will lead this relationship and foster and support the incoming group, should make the final decision.

## **3. Do a needs and values assessment**

Interview some students informally or send out a survey to ask the questions:

- What are our community's values?
- What makes us unique?
- What do our chapters have in common?
- What is the community missing?

Take the common themes you are hearing to create an overview of your community. Use your needs and values to weigh whether or not a certain organization is the right partner. Share this overview, along with the community commonalities and unique qualities with expansion teams so they understand what you are looking for.

Expansion does not need to be an overwhelming process with cold interest letters, informational packets, and time-consuming presentations that cost headquarters an arm and a leg. Instead, open expansion can be a process that fosters relationships between a campus and headquarters, creating a partnership worthy of the investment on both sides.

\*The conducted research project is not a reflection of the majority opinion or practices on expansion but a small sampling to encourage a larger conversation. It is encouraged to reach out if your practices differ from the themes in the research as described.

## References

Chatten, E. (2017). *IFC Fraternity Expansion Research Summary*. Phired Up Productions & Innova Marketing. Carmel, Indiana.