

## Supporting Chapters with Dual Council Membership

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As university fraternity and sorority communities continue to grow, culturally-based organizations are amongst the many to join our campuses. These organizations add new life and diversity to the community and provide an opportunity for students who may not have considered joining a chapter to mix leadership, service and social experiences with a cultural base. When these new organizations join a campus, the question always arises as to with which council the new chapters should affiliate. If your campus is without a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) or a Multicultural or Greek Council, there are options to find a home for these new groups.

Currently, there are at least eight inter/national fraternities that carry dual membership in two umbrella organizations. Fraternities may be a member of the [North-American Interfraternity Council \(NIC\)](#), as well as the [National Pan-Hellenic Council \(NPHC\)](#), [National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations \(NALFO\)](#), [National APIA Panhellenic Association \(NAPA\)](#) or the [National Multicultural Greek Council \(NMGC\)](#). As new groups join a campus, we want to provide them a landing place of support and a council in which they can contribute, grow, and learn. The following are suggestions for campus-based professionals with groups carrying dual membership.

### **Start a New Council**

Campuses should consider the addition of a new governing council with the expansion of a wide variety of culturally-based fraternities and sororities. Many umbrella organizations provide guidelines for the number of member organizations required in order to start a new council. For instance, NPHC recommends that when two or more NPHC organization chapters exist, that they should form a local NPHC (<http://www.nphcq.org/policies.htm>).

Other campuses, with input from the students, may consider the creation of a general multicultural or Greek council to serve as a home for new organizations. This may be helpful in times when culturally-based organizations may not be as large as NIC fraternities or National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) sororities, and may not feel as though the NIC and NPC processes for membership recruitment serve them. The formation of a new council can be a daunting process for both the campus-based professional and the student leaders of these chapters. Some helpful tips include:

- *Consider your resources.* Locate the constitution and bylaws of other multicultural or Greek councils on similar type campuses to use as a guide when forming your new council.
- *Involve the students.* Provide multiple opportunities for the chapters interested in forming this new council to give feedback and really make this council their own.
- *Ask for feedback from alumni.* Chapter advisors for these groups may come from another campus, and they may have experience in forming a new council or being a part of a multicultural or Greek council. Utilize their experience, and ask for their input.

### **Join an Existing Council**

Fraternity and sorority communities that have been established with primarily NIC and NPC organizations generally have some form of an Interfraternity Council (IFC) or Panhellenic Council on their campus. Within these councils, there may be an opportunity to join as either a full member or as an affiliate/associate member.



For the fraternities that carry dual membership, they could truly be a part of either their local IFC as an NIC member, and/or the local NPHC, MGC or Greek council. It is rare to see a chapter choose to hold campus membership in both councils, as this would require membership dues to both, attendance at both meetings, programs and events, as well as the requirement of abiding by two sets of governing policies. However, if chapters with dual membership are not finding their needs are being met within one council, it is nice to have the opportunity to explore full membership in another council.

Even if a fraternity or sorority does not carry dual membership on the national level, most local IFC, Panhellenic and multicultural or Greek councils may allow for associate or affiliate members to join. This may offer these chapters some rights, privileges and responsibilities of full member organizations while limiting their participation in the organization. Limitations may include voting privileges, ability to hold office, or participation in recruitment.

Regardless of which council with whom a chapter affiliates, there are questions to consider when assisting the chapters with their decision:

- Does your university require that chapters affiliate with a fraternity/sorority governing council?
- Which council would provide a comfortable atmosphere and welcoming environment for the member chapter?
- Which council most closely aligns with the chapter's ideals, practices, and processes?
- Is there a requirement of chapters within a council to fully participate in that council's membership recruitment processes?
- Do the local council bylaws have provisions for affiliate/associate membership with clear descriptions of the available rights and privileges?
- Does the inter/national organization recommend or require a local chapter to join a particular council if available on campus?
- If a fraternity holds dual membership nationally, should a local chapter consider being a part of both councils? If yes, is the chapter prepared to fully participate in both (attending both meetings, abiding by both bylaws and requirements, or paying dues to both)?

Every campus operates a little differently, but at the end of the day, the students' best interest is the key. Good communication with inter/national organizations, local alumni, and the students will help determine the best fit for the chapter and the student leaders. Making sure that we are assisting chapters in finding a home that is supportive and provides for growth of their organization and its members should be our ultimate goal.