

## Life after UIFI

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Going to UIFI and LeaderShape gave me hope that there are other people like me who want to change the world for the betterment of humanity, not just personal gain. UIFI and LeaderShape have been the best experiences of my life to date, especially UIFI. I left UIFI with insight into what “going Greek” really means.

I went to UIFI in the middle of July. Since we did not get back to school until the second week of August, I had a solid month of being bottled up with inspiration and ideas that would improve Oklahoma State University’s fraternity/sorority community and my chapter. I asked myself a lot of questions: how do I keep this feeling; how do I even make the changes I want to make? Ideas for the fraternity/sorority community were flowing through my head. For example, I was thinking about similar philanthropy events coming together to decrease the amount of programming and to create excitement around the value of philanthropy rather than the events just being a requirement. Thoughts flooded into my head about my chapter collaborating with other chapters and about reminding my sisters to uphold the character outlined in our purpose.

I realized I could have all the thoughts I wanted to have, but actions were the only thing that would actually create change. I am Type A, so I did what all Type A people like to do—I made lists. I began to prepare and envision what I wanted the fraternity/sorority community to look like. It is extremely difficult to make a change without two things: hard work and resources. I am naturally a hard worker; it is in my blood. However, at the time, I was not the president of my organization nor was I on my campus’s Panhellenic Executive Council. I was only the Panhellenic Delegate for my chapter. This was no excuse to not reach out, but I figured the Panhellenic Executive Council already had their goals for the year and would not fully understand and appreciate my ideas. I spoke to others about my ideas and my vision for the fraternity/sorority community, but it seemed like a distant dream. Then, I was lucky enough to be enrolled in a leadership class entitled “Student Development and Leadership in Fraternities and Sororities.” It was in that class where the information I absorbed during my time at UIFI and LeaderShape was reinforced. In class, I began to refine my plan and to network with other like minded leaders.

I am still waiting to find someone who will truly share my vision with me. The officers in my chapter have been working on our chapter internally to better our members, and I believe that is the root to all our problems. Respect for other chapters leads to understanding of other chapters, and this leads to collaboration. Therefore, in order to realize my vision, I plan to run for a position on the Panhellenic Executive Council next year and, with a team of allies, launch the changes I feel are necessary (with the approval and buy-in of the other chapters, of course).

Research has indicated that fraternal involvement improves interpersonal skills, as well as communication and leadership skills, all of which are essential to post-graduate success (Kelley, 2008). While I did not decide to participate in recruitment for the leadership opportunities (I desired the close-knit relationships I did not have in high school), I found so much more than just a sisterhood. Being a sorority woman has given me many opportunities to grow as a leader and as a woman. There is more to being in a sorority than matching T-shirts, sisterhood retreats, and date parties; being a sorority woman means becoming a better version of one’s self and creating meaningful, accountable relationships that last for a lifetime. For me, attending UIFI and LeaderShape are a part of that journey.

Change is like a domino effect. The fire that is lit inside of me has grown through a series of events. First, the Panhellenic community gave me the confidence to figure out I could be a leader. My chapter, seeing my leadership potential, gave me a leadership position where I was in constant communication with the Panhellenic Council, which finally leading to the opportunity of attending LeaderShape and UIFL. Give a hard worker encouragement and opportunities, and they can make the change others only dream of seeing.

### Reference

Kelley, D. R. (2008). Leadership development through the fraternity experience and the relationship to career success after graduation. *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors*, 3.1.