

One-Size Does Not Fit All

Kari Murphy | Ball State University
Kennedi Jarvi | Radford University

It has become common practice for many campuses and headquarters to require chapters to participate in a chapter review, standards and expectations, a star scoring system process, etc. Each of these campuses and national organizations is looking for ways to have chapters' report what they are doing to determine areas of strength and improvement. Many of these programs also honor high achieving chapters with awards. The Ball State University (Ball State) fraternity/sorority accreditation program is similar in theory, but different in practice.

The accreditation program at Ball State is the process of reviewing chapters for the attainment of minimum expectations as well as **chapter-focused** outcomes. The purpose is for chapters to set goals relevant to their inter/national organization, governing council, and Ball State; this is an individualistic approach. Each of the three governing councils has seven areas chapters are scored in. Of those areas, five have minimum expectations included that chapters must complete. Beyond those minimum expectations, each chapter sets their own goals based on their chapter's needs. Chapters appreciate the opportunity to use the inter/national organizations expectations, aims or feedback from a consultant, or volunteer or inter/national representative reports to help guide their goals for the year. The opportunity to tie these in as well as their own goals as a chapter provides a feeling of ownership to the accreditation plan.

Each chapter is assigned a staff accreditation advisor through the Office of Greek Life (a graduate assistant or professional) who help guide the chapter through this process. This allows chapters to have one-on-one support from the staff while giving the staff the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of how individual chapters need to be supported. Graduate assistants are assigned at least one chapter in each of the three councils to provide them varied experience with chapter coaching. The program creates a mutually beneficial system where each advisor gains a variety of experiences with chapters that have different strengths, weaknesses, and leadership styles, while chapters have the opportunity to learn from someone with a different perspective and background. Each graduate staff member is assigned chapters to work with throughout their time as a graduate assistant in the office for consistency of support for each chapter.

Chapters set goals in January with the help of their accreditation advisor, submit the goals for feedback in February, and documents completed goals electronically each November. Chapters must also create a 10-12-minute presentation about one or two areas where they felt they

excelled that year. This presentation is given to a committee that includes the Director and Assistant Director of Greek Life, an active student representative, and an alumni representative from their council. Prior to the review of documentation and presentations, each committee also weighs the categories for each council based on what they feel is most important and is the greatest need for chapters in their respective council. Thus, the weight for each council, ([IFC](#), [NPHC](#), and [PHA](#)) are different.

The process of working with chapters looks different based on the chapters' needs. Accreditation advisors are tasked with knowing what areas the chapter has historically needed extra support and guiding the chapter representative responsible for ensuring this process is completed (typically the chapter president or accreditation chair). Goals are set in the beginning of many student's leadership positions, so the advisor is able to use past accreditation plans and scores to help the new leaders understand their chapter's unique areas of strength and places to improve. The students are encouraged to design their regular meetings around their needs as a leader.

Some students will use the accreditation meetings as a space to discuss chapter and personal challenges and successes. Others use the meetings as a simple check-in to keep track of their accreditation to-do list. In one meeting, an advisor may talk a chapter president through addressing an underperforming executive officer, plan the next chapter alumni event, teach them how to track service hours, and how their last exam went. The accreditation chair might scroll through their documentation and want feedback about what they have for each goal. It is the advisor's role to help every type of leader think about how each of the seven areas is important to their continued success as a chapter on campus. Not only is this process unique for each chapter, but it allows younger staff to fine tune their advising styles and understand how they can adjust their advising styles based on needs and wants of the student and organization.

In November and December, chapters are scored on their presentation and the documentation they provide to prove they completed the goals. Documentation can range from a letter from a community agency thanking the chapter for completing X number of community service hours, chapter minutes from presentations given on specific topics, or flyers and pictures from Week of Events programming. Students have the opportunity to be creative; sharing proof of their accomplishments in a way that helps the committees assess their success.

Scoring is based on percentage of goals completed in each category and overall. Chapters must complete 60% of the chapter goals for the year to reach be in good standing. Chapters are then awarded in categories where they scored "Meets Expectations" or above (completion of 75% of

goals or higher) at the annual Grand Chapter Awards Celebration. The Outstanding Chapter Award in each of the three councils is given to the chapter that completed the highest percentage of their goals. If chapters tie, the weighted categories determine which chapter scored higher to determine one recipient.

Chapter advisors have found this process to be helpful as they transition new advisors, helping them understand the trends of the chapter over recent years. This program also allows for an in-depth look at chapter programming and activity, to be able to tell the full story of each organization.

It is important to note this process works at Ball State because of the amount of direct advising the fraternity/sorority staff is able to provide. Each of the five graduate assistants has between 5-7 chapters to support. Professional staff do some advisement for a select few chapters, but in addition to reviewing and scoring each chapter's presentation and final documentation.

The Ball State fraternity/sorority accreditation program allows chapters to set realistic goals and dismisses the idea of a one-size fits all approach. It provides a space for chapters to think critically about areas where they excel and where they should focus their energy. This program sets theory into motion to create process through practice.

Kari Murphy currently serves as the Director of Greek Life at Ball State University (Chirp Chirp). In this role, Kari works directly with National Pan-Hellenic Council and the Panhellenic Association and serves as an advisor to Ball State University Dance Marathon. She holds a bachelor's degree in Public Relations from Valparaiso University and a master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of the Pacific. She is a runner, golfer, traveler, and a Cheese Head (Go Pack Go)!

Kennedi Jarvi recently completed her master's degree in Student Affairs Administration in Higher Education (SAAHE) at Ball State University. As a graduate assistant in the Office of Greek Life, she was a graduate advisor to the National Pan-Hellenic Council, Greek Peer Advocates, Ball State Dance Marathon, and served as the accreditation advisor for five chapters. Kennedi earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Central Oklahoma. This July, she started her first professional position as the Coordinator of Fraternity and Sorority Life at Radford University.