

## **The New FSAP CAS Standards: Aligning Enduring Principles of Higher Education with the Fraternal Movement**

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Many of you may be familiar with the Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS). Every three years it publishes "The CAS Professional Standards for Higher Education," a collection of standards for diverse functional areas in higher education. The fall of 2012 will showcase the eighth edition of the publication. The eighth edition will be available in August for purchase at the CAS Website ([www.cas.edu](http://www.cas.edu)); however, associations such as the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA) are permitted to provide free access to their membership in relevant functional areas.

The eighth edition marks the first time in over a decade that the [Fraternity/Sorority Advising Program \(FSAP\) Standards](#) have been revised. In this article I provide a short overview of the revision process, primary changes and how the FSAP Standards help us to progress toward aligning fraternities and sororities with higher education priorities.

### **Revision Process**

Each functional area has 12 categories of standards and consists of three types of statements: general standards, functional area specific standards, and functional area specific guidelines. General standards are "must" actions that all functional areas should employ. Therefore, the FSAP has some of the same standards as Academic Advising, Campus Safety and Residence Life to name a few. The CAS General Standards are reviewed every three years and changes are incorporated into functional area standards upon publication of the latest edition.

Functional area standards are distinctive to the functional area in which they are found and assert expectations for good practice specific to that area. Guidelines are "should" statements and provide explanations of how standards could be implemented. For a more thorough overview, visit the CAS page at the [AFA Website](#) and listen to the June [Advance U webinar](#).

FSAP is just one of 41 sets of different functional area standards. CAS enlists committees from its board of directors to revise a functional area's standards over a two-year period. Standards are typically revised every 10-12 years with about four to six sets of standards done annually. Revision committees solicit feedback from non-CAS Board members who are functional area "experts" and from the respective association. To that end, over 40 fraternity and sorority life professionals, including the AFA Executive Board, had the opportunity to review and provide recommendations to the revised FSAP.

### **What has changed?**

In addition to edits to the CAS General Standards, the roles played by staff in FSAP have changed since the Standards were last revised in 1998. Therefore, some changes were made. These include:

1. An emphasis on values education as a primary function of the FSAP;
2. Increased attention to the value of collaboration, particularly with headquarters staff and organization volunteers;
3. An increased sense of how the diversity of today's fraternity/sorority community influences the work of FSAP professionals;
4. Modifying the language about relationship statements and accreditation programs to be more in tune with current trends; and

5. Attention to the diverse types of interactions we have with fraternity/sorority community constituents at the levels of the individual student, chapter, fraternity/sorority community, campus community and inter/national structure.

### **FSAP CAS Standards in Practice: Aligning our work to higher education priorities**

I believe the new FSAP reflect today's approach to increasing the relevance of fraternities and sororities on a college/university campus. CAS, by its nature, is aligned to higher education priorities. Because AFA seeks to help us strengthen the fraternal movement's positive connection to higher education, I also believe the FSAP CAS Standards are a tool to move the mission and vision of AFA forward:

#### *AFA Mission*

AFA enhances its members' abilities to foster impactful fraternity/sorority experiences.

#### *AFA Vision*

AFA is the catalytic force in aligning the fraternity/sorority experience with the changing dynamics and enduring principles of higher education.

When we consider this mission and vision in our own work, we can focus on what matters most in higher education. How does the CAS FSAP help us to do this?

1. The CAS FSAP Standards **provide the framework** for us to meet our end goal of providing impactful fraternity/sorority experiences. These standards are vetted by a consortium of AFA leaders. We know CAS Standards reflect what industry leaders view as higher education and student affairs priorities. For example, when you review the CAS Standards, there are no longer questions about the importance of developing learning outcomes or conducting assessment – it is clear that these are things we must do.
2. The CAS Standards provide direction on what **competencies and standards** we should have as professionals. The FSAP Standards align well with other guiding documents within AFA such as the Core Competencies for Excellence in the Profession (AFA, 2010).
3. We can **measure our progress**: simply saying that we do or do not do something that is a standard or guideline in CAS is a good way to start our efforts to increase alignment. Once we know that we do or do not do something, the next step is saying "how can we be better?"
4. CAS allows for a **common language among colleagues**: when we know what we are all aspiring toward, we may be more inclined to help each other get there. For me, it is even better that the shared language is within the fraternal movement and throughout the world of higher education. The CAS Standards cut across diverse functions. It is nice to know that we are working to common end states versus always staking the claim that our functional area is so different from those who work in other areas such as academic advising or career services, for example.

### **Conclusion**

CAS has existed since 1979 as a means to promulgate standards across functions of higher education. The FSAP have recently been reviewed and revised to reflect some of the priorities within the fraternal movement, particularly the goal of becoming more aligned with the enduring principles of higher education. When we use the FSAP to examine our practice, we find that they provide a framework, indicate needed competencies and standards, allow us to measure progress and provide a common language to collaborate for the success of students as individuals, in their chapters, in the fraternity/sorority community, on their campus and in our global society.