

fraternity  
& sorority  
life

Senior Engagement  
Manual

University of Connecticut

2009-2010

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## **Fraternity & Sorority Senior Initiatives and Greek Senior Engagement Committee**

Joining a fraternity or sorority means membership for a lifetime. While members might not understand that significance when they take their oaths of membership in initiation as undergraduate students, that decision is meaningful. Chapter members are often heard complaining about seniors: “Our seniors never come to anything,” or “It will be so much better when the seniors graduate.” These complaints are problematic because it indicates a lack of involvement and contribution by chapter seniors.

Other chapters have highly engaged seniors that stay involved throughout their time as an undergraduate and anxiously await the opportunity to join a graduate or alumni/ae chapter. Either way, it is important for chapters to specifically think about and address the needs of seniors. The relevance of undergraduate involvement in a fraternity or sorority changes from the first year to the senior year. To that end, this manual was created to ensure chapters consider the senior experience and do what they can to create programming, recognition, and systems of accountability that help seniors feel their fraternity or sorority experience is still relevant.

In addition to the creation of this manual, to be used by chapter leadership in continued efforts to engage and involve seniors, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life has created senior engagement initiatives and formed the Senior Engagement Committee. This committee, made up of representatives from each of the four Greek governing councils, is designed to create programs of interest and to develop ongoing resources for seniors. A full calendar of senior programs is included in this manual and will be updated on a regular basis. Examples of resources designed by this committee include the senior webpage on the Greek Life website ([www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors](http://www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors)) as well as the Greek Senior E-News sent out via email each month to all Greek seniors.

### Committee's Purpose

The Senior Engagement Committee exists to intentionally create programming and recognition for fraternity and sorority seniors. The committee works to develop resources for seniors and provide insight to chapters so seniors can be supported at a chapter level. The group works to collaborate with offices across campus to provide Greek seniors with access to important networks and opportunities to better prepare them for life after college.

### Committee Membership

The Senior Engagement Committee changes on an annual basis. Each academic year a senior representing each of the four Greek governing councils is nominated to serve on this committee. Service on this committee is an honor. In addition to Greek seniors, representatives from Career Services serve on the committee to provide insight and partnership.

2009-2010 Membership

Lindsey Cunningham: Career Services, Career Club Connections Fraternity and Sorority Liaison  
Ben Regan: Lambda Chi Alpha, IFC Representative  
Yumi Iizuka: Kappa Phi Lambda Sorority, Inc., MGC Representative  
Michelle Kupersmith: Delta Zeta, Panhellenic Representative  
Akina Warner: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., NPHC Representative  
Ashley Reichenbach: Chi Omega, Career Services  
Lindsay Sell: Kappa Alpha Theta, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life Representative

## **Purpose of Manual**

### Transition Theory

Senior students are at a critical point in their college experience. Seniors often become disengaged at this time in their undergraduate Greek experience, requiring chapters and the Greek community to work to better meet their needs as they transition out of college. The North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) contends that Greek seniors are apathetic because the fraternity or sorority is no longer meeting their needs. The NIC has used student development theory to understand the senior year experience by looking to Chickering and Schlossberg's (1998) theories about student transitions. Chickering and Schlossberg (1998) stated that there are three issues facing students in transition: (a) Making a career connection, (b) Clarifying their newer identity as it relates to vocation, avocation, and lifestyle, and (c) Developing a life span perspective. The first issue helps seniors prepare for the "real world" and provides resources to deal with the transition. The second issue relates to a time of greater independence and a desire to become occupationally satisfied. The final issue deals with the student's ability to understand the skills, knowledge, and abilities they can take with them in the path that lies ahead.

Transitions can be challenging times. When students leave a secure place and move into an uncertain world, things often feel very unsettled. The good news is that these feelings won't last forever. Fraternity and sorority chapters can do a great deal to help seniors during this significant life transition. This manual provides chapters and senior members resources to help support and enhance the Greek senior year experience. Membership in a Greek organization is truly for a lifetime! The Greek experience doesn't end at graduation!

Chickering, A. W. & Schlossberg, N. K. (1998). Moving on: Seniors as people in transition. In J. Gardner and G. Van derVeer (eds.), *The Senior Year Experience*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

North-American Interfraternity Conference. (2001). *Transitions*. (unpublished paper).

### Value of Institutional Memory

Throughout a senior's involvement within their Greek organization, they undoubtedly contribute to your chapter/council in countless ways. Institutional memory is referred to as the collective set of facts, concepts, experiences, and everyday "know-how" held by a group of individuals. This knowledge surpasses the individual level and requires the ongoing transmission of these memories by members of the group. Institutional memory can preserve the group's character and goals.

Typically, seniors have institutional memory to be passed on to younger members of the organization. Again, this information and knowledge is irreplaceable and should be shared.

This manual may provide some suggestions on how to connect with senior members of your chapter as well as how to ensure the transmission of important information occurs. The value and worth of senior members should also be recognized! Please consider how your chapter can avoid losing the essential institutional memory senior members can provide.

### The Senior Year Experience

The senior year experience is certainly unique. Regardless of a senior's choice to pursue a career, graduate school, or something else entirely, the tasks being undertaken and the emotions being felt by seniors are distinctive. This manual encourages chapters to consider this singular experience and develop programming, resources, and recognition to meet senior members where they're at. The following questions may help guide your understanding of the fraternity and sorority senior year experience specific to your chapter. Ask yourself these questions or send this out via a survey to senior members. The answers to these questions may inform the type of programming and resources you provide to your senior members.

- What three things are graduating members most satisfied with in our chapter?  
(How might these areas of satisfaction be incorporated in the development of dedicated alumni/ae?)
- What are the three most important complaints that our members over the years have had about their experience as they graduate?  
(What has the chapter done to try to alleviate these problems? How might these problems affect future alumni/ae development and recruitment efforts?)
- What do our graduating seniors know about being an alumna/us or about our alumni/ae association/graduate chapter?  
(How do we as a chapter make this information available to our members? What ways can we provide this information accurately and effectively?)
- What do we currently do to celebrate seniors and their many contributions to our chapter?
- What are the two biggest benefits or incentives for recent graduates to become involved as alumni/ae?  
(How do we communicate these benefits to our graduating seniors? How can we as an undergraduate chapter ensure that these benefits exist?)

## Senior Statement of Recommitment

The following letter can be sent to senior members of your chapter at the beginning of the academic year. The letter highlights the importance of senior involvement and encourages seniors to recommit to their fraternity and sorority experience.

Dear (BROTHER/SISTER):

Congratulations on reaching your senior year! It is probably hard to imagine that your undergraduate experience at the University of Connecticut is coming to an end. The good news is your opportunities with the fraternity/sorority are just beginning.

Remember your initiation when you made a promise to lifelong membership in (AFFILIATION)? As an undergraduate member it is hard to realize just what that means. It is because of these lifelong obligations every member takes on that we are asking for your recommitment as a senior member of our chapter. We hope that even though your time in our chapter is coming to a close that you will be as involved and engaged as ever. Most importantly, we hope to learn from your knowledge and memories. We hope new members of our organization can look to you as the shining example of what a member of (FRATERNITY/SORORITY) is like.

We also promise to help make your senior experience in our chapter relevant and worthwhile. One of the ways you can benefit from our chapter as a senior is through senior “perks” in the way of special programs, opportunities and recognition. As a (AFFILIATION), you can take advantage of the following opportunities:

(insert some specific senior information from your chapter)

Another way to remain involved now and in the future is simply through keeping your address current with our inter/national organization this year and after you graduate. As a result, pertinent information can reach you in a timely manner and you can stay connected. You will be able to learn about our chapter’s latest successes as well as current initiatives of the (FRATNERITY/SORORITY).

There are many ways you can stay involved after you graduate including joining an alumni/ae/graduate chapter in the area in which you move or by serving as a chapter advisor. We hope that you will truly make this year count by remaining involved and consider what life after college looks like by ensuring (FRATERNITY/SORORITY) continues to be part of your life.

For information about being a Greek senior and to access more resources and information, visit [www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors](http://www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors). There is a lot of great programming available to Greek seniors that we hope you will take advantage of as a perk of being a Greek senior!

Once again, congratulations on reaching the end of your time at UConn! We look forward to celebrating this final phase in your time as an undergraduate member of (FRATERNITY/SORORITY). We wish you luck

Loyally,

Insert name of chapter officer or committee

## **2009-2010 Greek Senior Calendar of Events**

### Friday, October 30, 2009: Greek Senior Kick Off

3-5pm, Wilbur Cross North Reading Room

Come and celebrate your senior status with other Greek seniors, enjoy some yummy Halloween fare, and pick up your official **Greek Senior T-Shirt**. Supplies are limited, so the first seniors in attendance will receive their shirt. Costumes are optional!

### Thursday, November 12, 2009: Job Searching in Difficult Economic Times

5-6pm, CUE 134

Difficult, but not impossible: This is the best time to learn the skills of the job search and how to market yourself.

### Tuesday, November 17, 2009 Fraternity and Sorority Résumé Writing Workshop

8-9:30pm, SU Ballroom

Ever wonder how you can effectively incorporate your Greek involvement in your résumé? Need help ensuring your résumé is in good shape as the job or graduate school search begins? Come to this résumé writing workshop hosted by Career Services specifically for fraternity and sorority members. Individual résumé critiques will be available at the program.

### February 2010 TBA: Fraternity and Sorority Interviewing Workshop

Co-sponsored by Career Services

### March 2010 TBA: Fraternity and Sorority Etiquette Dinner & Networking Reception

First priority to attend this event goes to Greek seniors. The dinner will be an opportunity to learn common etiquette that will prove helpful through a professional career and the chance to network with fraternity and sorority alumni/ae.

### Greek Week 2010 TBA: Greek Senior Celebration Event

Stay tuned for more details about our final senior recognition and celebration event planned for Greek Week 2010. This is your opportunity to celebrate the conclusion of your undergraduate Greek experience and learn about ways to stay connected to UConn and the fraternity and sorority community.

Check [www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors](http://www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors) for a continually updated list of senior events.

## **Resources for Chapters**

### How to Support & Utilize Your Senior Members

Seniors are often quick to become distant from the chapter because they begin to feel as though their involvement is not valuable to the chapter or is no longer relevant to their desired fraternity/sorority experience.

Past officers are replaced by newer officers, the chapter's programming is more focused on the needs and wants of the younger members (often new members!), issues outside of the chapter start to take priority, and seniors' needs may be written off by the chapter.

Senior members should be considered some of your most valued members. They are your immediate link to the past. They have established relationships with UConn staff and faculty, other Greek leaders and organizations, other campus organizations, and alumni/ae that most members of the chapter may not have had the opportunity to yet develop. These connections can be a great resource for the chapter. Senior members are often the most willing to teach what they have learned to the younger members.

Utilize senior members in your new member education program. Invite them to mentor younger members and share their insight in chapter meetings. Support and validate the feelings they have about leaving their undergraduate chapter, and encourage them to share their memories. Assign seniors responsibilities instead of assuming they are "too busy" all the time or "not interested." Engage them in the life of the chapter and make that engagement an expectation! Ensure that their needs are being met by the chapter and allow their voices to be heard – ask them what their needs are.

### Recognizing and Engaging Seniors

Celebrating the accomplishments and acknowledging the involvement of your senior members is essential. There are numerous ways to recognize members that can raise chapter morale and encourage higher levels of performance. Opportunities to distinguish seniors should not only be planned for the end of the school year, but can be integrated throughout the academic year.

#### Develop Senior "Perks" and Incentives

- What benefits do seniors get in your chapter? Are dues reduced? Opportunities expanded? Why do members look forward to being a senior in your chapter?
- Create programs and positive incentives so seniors are excited to be engaged in the life of the chapter and continue contributing. Develop a system for seniority that encourages senior accountability but also recognizes their unique status in the chapter.

#### Target Member Education to the Needs of Seniors

- Often weekly or ongoing member education focuses on the needs of younger member (who are often the ones conducting the education). Seniors need to be engaged in the same way all members do.

- What specific educational topics or speakers can be employed within the chapter to ensure seniors would be interested and engaged with a relevant topic?

#### Have High Expectations

- While seniors may have “paid their dues” as members of the chapter, they are still members of the organization and are expected to uphold the same high standards as every other member.
- Make this expectation clear in the chapter and establish a tradition where seniors are the best representatives of the organization’s values. Seniors should be role modeling positive behavior and living up to high standards.
- Maintain the expectations you have for every other member for seniors and hold them accountable. This includes member behavior, paying dues, and scholastic standards.

#### Ask Seniors for Help

- Seniors often have a lot of great experience and knowledge. Ask them for their insight and the historical view they might have on the chapter.
- Invite seniors to share their wisdom and insight during officer transitions or ask them to facilitate a program for the entire chapter.
- Invite seniors to be a part of chapter committees and plan events. When members are part of the process, they’re more likely to be engaged.

#### Establish an Alumni/ae Mentor Program

- Pair seniors with interested alumni/ae that want to serve as mentors.
- Pairings can be based on a course of study, career interests, and activities.
- Seniors can benefit from this program as it helps them conceptualize life after college and make valuable “real world” connections that may prove helpful later.

#### Develop a Senior Project

- Start a new tradition that allows seniors to pick a chapter improvement program of their choice. Encourage seniors to leave the chapter a better place than they found it through their project.
- Examples can include house improvements, donations to a scholarship fund, planning a signature service event, planning a leadership program for chapter officers, etc.
- Have a senior report on the project’s progress at chapter meetings.
- Allow seniors to determine the “how” and “when” of the presentation of the final project.

#### Offer “Senior Spotlights” at Chapter Meetings

- Recognize a different senior at each chapter meeting.
- Highlight their accomplishments and what they have done for the chapter throughout their membership. Allow others to share memories.
- Give the recognized senior an opportunity to share their memories and their future plans. Ask the senior to give their “words of wisdom” to the chapter.
- Plan a senior “roast” to appropriately commemorate a senior’s involvement in the chapter.

### Create a Senior Week

- Plan a senior banquet to recognize seniors as part of the week's events. Allow people to say goodbyes. Present awards and small gifts for graduating seniors.
- Invite alumni/ae and advisors to various events to talk about lifelong commitment.
- Make seniors the focus of chapter meeting for that week. Create/utilize a ritual service for seniors which focuses on the organization's values and lifelong membership. This can provide closure to a senior's experience and help them transition to the alumni/ae or graduate member stage of the organization.
- Allow seniors to plan a seniors-only event.

### Nominate a Senior for the Outstanding Greek Senior Award

- Each December applications are available for chapters/individuals to nominate members for the Outstanding Greek Senior Award presented to one sorority woman and one fraternity man at the annual Fraternity and Sorority Life Awards event held in late February.

To submit other ideas for senior programming and engagement to be included in this manual, email Lindsay Sell at [lindsay.sell@uconn.edu](mailto:lindsay.sell@uconn.edu).

### Life After UConn

Joining a fraternity or sorority is different from joining any other student organization because membership is for a lifetime. It is often easy to forget this fact during the undergraduate experience, but helping graduating seniors understand this lifelong involvement is critical. Seniors have a great opportunity to continue their involvement even after graduating.

### Explain the Role of Alumni/ae/Graduate Members

- Provide educational programming that helps seniors understand what role alumni/ae or graduate members play in the organization.
- Provide a list of ways seniors can be involved with their organization even after graduating.
- Share with seniors the importance and necessity of being involved after graduation. Most members of your organization are *not* undergraduates. There is still a good amount of time for members to enjoy their membership after they graduate. It lasts forever!

### Share Information about Alumni/ae or Graduate Chapters

- Research the process for seniors to join alumni/ae chapters or graduate chapters after graduating. Make staying involved easy.
- If seniors are planning on moving to distant locations, look up local alumni/ae or graduate chapters in which the senior can get involved.
- Help seniors understand how to keep their information current with the inter/national organization even after they graduate.

### Network with Alumni/ae/Graduate Members

- Provide ways for seniors to network with alumni/ae and graduate members of the organization. This helps them gain a perspective of membership after graduation and may inspire them to remain involved.
- Organize an alumni/ae mentoring program for your seniors so they can continue to connect and network with alumni/ae.
- Invite your alumni/ae and graduate members to attend events for seniors in your chapter throughout the academic year so you can begin to bridge the transition from undergraduate to alumni/ae/graduate member.

## **Campus Resources for Seniors**

Greek Senior Information: [www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors](http://www.greeklife.uconn.edu/seniors)

This webpage from the Greek life general website provides fraternity and sorority specific information and provides a calendar of relevant events for Greek seniors. In addition, the page has link to essential links to websites for graduating seniors and a copy of the Senior Engagement Manual.

Career Services: [www.career.uconn.edu](http://www.career.uconn.edu)

(860) 486-3013

Do you have a career related question? Having difficulty picking a major? Want help finding an internship or a full time job? Need to write a resume or practice for an interview? Our Department can assist with these and many other career questions. Stop by the office, located in the Center for Undergraduate Education (CUE) Room 217. No appointment needed. (Except Winter and Summer session, appointment required.)

Senior Transitions and Engagement Programs: [www.sye.uconn.edu](http://www.sye.uconn.edu)

(860) 486-2265

The Senior Year Experience promotes a successful transition for college students to the world beyond the University. This program, balanced with academic and programmatic initiatives, provides an opportunity for reflection to determine the meaning and value of the undergraduate experience and the student's growing role as a productive and valued citizen and university alumnus.

UConn Alumni Association: [www.uconnalumni.com](http://www.uconnalumni.com)

(888) 822-5861 or (860) 486-2240

The University of Connecticut Alumni Association strengthens lifelong bonds between all members of the UConn family by inspiring pride and providing quality programs and services which enhance the diverse university community.

UConn Foundation: [www.foundation.uconn.edu](http://www.foundation.uconn.edu)

800-269-9965

The University of Connecticut Foundation is a tax-exempt corporation that operates exclusively to promote the educational, scientific, cultural, and recreational objectives of the University of Connecticut. As the primary fundraising vehicle for the University, the Foundation's mission is to solicit, receive and administer gifts and financial resources from private sources to support UConn's pursuit of excellence in teaching, research and public service. Private gifts support students, faculty, research and programs at all of UConn's schools and colleges in addition to its world-class research centers and model athletics program.

Commencement Information: <http://www.sye.uconn.edu/commencement.html>

**Congratulations!** You're graduating! There are several 'house keeping' things that need to be done and deadlines to be aware of. This link includes some important dates and 'to-dos' for any graduating senior in step by step order.

Office of Student Financial Aid Services:

[http://financialaid.uconn.edu/index.php/Graduating\\_Seniors](http://financialaid.uconn.edu/index.php/Graduating_Seniors)

This webpage from the Office of Student Financial Aid Services targets frequently asked questions about student loans for graduating seniors. Specific content includes loan information, interest rates, requirements for graduating student loan borrowers, making payments, and consolidation.