

Parent and Family Guide to Fraternity and Sorority Recruitment

By Fraternity and Sorority Affairs

At some point, most of our fraternity and sorority-affiliated students have uttered the phrase “*I never thought I would join a fraternity or sorority.*” They then follow with something like “...but then I found amazing friendships, leadership experiences, and ways to be connected to campus.” The initial statement, however, is telling. A survey of incoming Rochester students found only 4.4 percent expressed interest in joining a fraternity or sorority; however, approximately 24 percent of Rochester students are recruited to and join a fraternity or sorority. Whether many students had a preconceived notion of the fraternity and sorority experience, or even if they had no exposure to what these organizations actually were, at some point they learned the fraternities and sororities at the University of Rochester reflect perfectly the nature of our students: unique, proud, energetic, and driven. Fraternity and sorority membership offers opportunities for friendship, professional and personal development, leadership on campus and in the community, and greater connection to Rochester. Our fraternal community is highly regarded by students, faculty, alumni, and administrators, and it has won national recognition from higher education associations.

The fraternity and sorority community is supported by the College and plays a central role in student life and leadership at Rochester. If your student expresses interest in joining this award-winning community, we hope the remainder of this article will help you learn more about the recruitment process for fraternities and sororities and how you as a parent or family member can best support your son or daughter through this experience.

An overview of fraternity and sorority recruitment

For non-affiliated students, the image of being whisked away to a chapter house by 50 young strangers in matching t-shirts singing songs about how awesome they are is intimidating, if not downright terrifying. Thankfully, fraternity and sorority recruitment at the University of Rochester is nothing like that scenario. The University and its member fraternities and sororities have developed a structured recruitment process that helps students learn about fraternity and sorority life and choose to join the right organization at a time that is right for the student.

Students are eligible to join a fraternity or sorority during their second semester at Rochester. Special exception can be made for transfer students, but only after consultation with their academic advisor. We recognize that students need time to establish themselves on campus by developing interests in classes, joining clubs and organizations, getting involved in the community, and holding leadership roles before joining a fraternity or sorority. It is also important for them to observe the fraternity and sorority community and the value it brings to the campus. Students have an entire semester to meet fraternity and sorority members in classes, attend social, educational, cultural, and philanthropic events, and develop a true sense of the value and responsibility of fraternity or sorority membership. By the time they are eligible to join an organization, students should know a good deal about the organization they wish to join and, more importantly, about the men and women they hope to call brothers and sisters.

Every fraternity and sorority on our campus reports to one of three governing councils; these councils are responsible for setting recruitment guidelines for their member organizations.

Panhellenic Association (PHA)

Member Organizations: *Alpha Phi, Chi Omega, Delta Gamma, Gamma Phi Beta, Kappa Alpha Theta, Kappa Delta, Phi Sigma Sigma, Sigma Delta Tau*

The Panhellenic Association has the most structured recruitment practices of the three councils at Rochester. Women interested in joining one of these organizations will go through formal recruitment whereby they visit and learn about all seven organizations. Each prospective member is paired with a recruitment counselor, a woman in the Panhellenic community who remains unbiased and helps guide a potential new member through the recruitment process. After visiting every organization, a woman can be invited back to learn more about certain sororities. Through the process, potential new members narrow down the chapters they feel the most comfortable in. Eventually the women will indicate their preferences of which sororities they are interested in joining, and the sororities similarly choose the women they are most interested in extending invitations for membership. The women and sororities are matched based on mutual interest in one another. Although this mutually selective process is the most formal recruitment system of all the councils, it gives women the best opportunity to learn about each organization and find the one that is the best fit.

Students do not need to return to campus early to participate in Panhellenic Association recruitment; they will be able to sign up upon their return in January.

Interfraternity Council (IFC)

Member Organizations: *Alpha Delta Phi, Alpha Epsilon Pi, Beta Theta Pi, Chi Phi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, Delta Upsilon, Phi Kappa Tau, Psi Upsilon, Sigma Alpha Mu, Sigma Beta Rho, Sigma Chi, Sigma Nu, Sigma Phi Epsilon, Theta Chi*

Chapters in the IFC host structured informal and formal recruitment events over a two-week period where students can speak one on one with members of an organization, participate in social and service activities, and learn about the values and history of the individual fraternities. Students can choose to attend events at whichever fraternities they are interested, and the fraternities will extend bids for membership to individuals whom they would like to be brothers. While students are encouraged to meet and interact with fraternity brothers before the period of formal recruitment, this time gives students an additional opportunity to make connections with several fraternities and receive more information about the chapter and its values.

Multicultural Greek Council (MGC)

Member Organizations: *Alpha Kappa Alpha, Delta Phi Omega, Delta Sigma Theta, Lambda Pi Chi, Lambda Upsilon Lambda, Omega Phi Beta, Phi Iota Alpha, Sigma Lambda Upsilon, Sigma Psi Zeta, Theta Nu Xi, Zeta Phi Beta*

Recruitment for the MGC does not always occur during a scheduled rush period. Rather, organizations hold informational sessions for prospective members to learn more about the chapter. They also ask individuals to participate in the fraternities' and sororities' social, cultural, and educational programming as well as community service activities. Through these encounters, students can decide whether they share interests and values with the members of the organization. At a time when both the student and members are ready, the student can be offered an invitation for membership.

We encourage your student to learn about as many organizations as possible in searching for the best fit for both the student and chapter.

Helping your student through the recruitment process

Parents and families play an instrumental role both in helping a student decide whether to join a fraternity or sorority and in supporting a student throughout recruitment and membership. Here are some ways you can help your student make more informed, values-based decisions about joining the fraternity and sorority community.

Learn the terminology. Fraternity and sorority life comes with its own unique culture and terminology. Here are some words you are likely to hear during recruitment:

- **Big:** Short for “big sister” or “big brother;” an active member who serves as a mentor for newer members.
- **Chapter:** A local group of the larger national organization. This refers to the group of men or women at the University of Rochester who are a part of that particular fraternity or sorority.
- **Informational:** A session where an individual can learn more about an organization and see if his or her values and goals are aligned with those of the organization.
- **Invitation to Membership/Bid:** A formal offer to join a fraternity or sorority.
- **New Member Program:** The period of learning about fraternity and sorority life prior to initiation. In addition to learning the history of the organization, new members may attend presentations on topics such as study skills, substance abuse awareness, hazing prevention, and other important issues.
- **Potential New Member:** A common term for students going through recruitment and pursuing membership in fraternities or sororities; frequently abbreviated as PNM.
- **Preference Night:** The final evening of Panhellenic Association recruitment where the women attend their last recruitment events and express which sororities they are most interested in joining.
- **Recruitment Counselor:** A woman in the Panhellenic Association who temporarily disaffiliates from her sorority in order to provide unbiased guidance to students interested in Panhellenic Association recruitment.
- **Recruitment (Rush):** A specified period prior to offering a bid where the organizations hold structured events to educate unaffiliated students about the organization and its members and values.

Do your own research. Go to the [Fraternity and Sorority Affairs Web site](#) and read about the resources provided for our organizations, the FAQ for membership, and descriptions of each organization on our campus. You can review the [status](#) of our organizations to see which have received awards/recognition and have been accredited through our standards process. If your student is interested in a particular

organization, [go to that organization's chapter website](#) to learn its history, activities, and goals. Look particularly for leadership roles, scholarships, philanthropic projects, and social opportunities provided by the organization. Some sites also have resources designed especially for parents and answer questions they may have about the organization. Each site also has the contact information for a student leader in the organization who can provide you with more information directly about his or her organization. You can also contact Fraternity and Sorority Affairs for more information.

Ask questions to your student about his or her interest in a fraternity or sorority. Our goal is for students to join a fraternity or sorority that will enrich their experience at the University of Rochester and provide them with long term membership benefits. We recognize that you have helped them develop their interests, goals, and values, so you can provide critical advice in selecting an organization consistent with their identities. Here are some questions you may pose to help your student further explore this decision:

- What are you hoping to gain from membership in this organization?
- How does the fraternity or sorority support your own values and beliefs?
- How will the organization help you pursue your own educational goals?
- What time commitment will membership require, and will it fit into your schedule?
- In what ways does the organization support campus involvement and community service?
- What leadership opportunities will the organization provide, both locally and nationally?
- Is the organization in good standing with the University? With other fraternities and sororities?
- How will becoming a member make your Rochester experience more enjoyable?

If your student does join the fraternity and sorority community, stay involved. Ask regularly how the fraternity or sorority is doing, read the organization's magazines and newsletters, and attend family events during Meliora Weekend. The more you know about the organization, the better you can continue helping your student. We had a young woman join a Panhellenic Sorority a few years ago, and two years later her mother joined the same sorority as an alumnae member. By staying involved, you too are likely to gain something from your student's membership and help him or her get the most out of the fraternal experience.

Fraternity and sorority recruitment is an exciting time for many of our students. We hope you can continue helping students make informed personal decisions that enrich their time at Rochester. Please contact our staff in Fraternity and Sorority Affairs for additional information about our chapters, the recruitment process, or the fraternity and sorority community in general. We look forward to hearing from you!

For more information, contact John DiSarro, Director of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs, at (585) 275-3167 or john.disarro@rochester.edu.