Pursuit of Excellence Program

Chapter Improvement Plan Guidelines
Updated August 2024

The Pursuit of Excellence Program structure includes three standards with ten subcategories in which chapters are assessed in their development towards excellence. **Chapters achieving a rating below "Acceptable" in any area (i.e., rating of Poor, Substandard, or Fair) should use the guidelines in this document to create a plan for improvement in each deficient area.**

Table of Contents

Improvement Plan Requirements

Per the Pursuit of Excellence Program, as adopted by the 63rd Grand Chapter (2008), **any chapter receiving an achievement level below Acceptable in a subcategory must submit a plan of action for improvement in that area to the General Fraternity**. Improvement plans will be reviewed by General Fraternity staff to ensure viability and to ensure that, if followed, the plans will result in the chapter achieving ratings of at least Acceptable in the next assessment.

Plans for improvement should be generated, or at a minimum confirmed, by the chapter membership prior to their submission. The chapter as a whole will be responsible for achieving any plans created and submitted. Creation of improvement plans should be a result of a chapter's completion of the Pursuit of Excellence Program's **Strategy Session**.

After review, plan(s) for improvement will be returned to the chapter and shared with the Leadership Consultant, Chapter Advisor, Division Commander, and Campus Fraternity/Sorority Advisor. Plans should be reviewed by the chapter leadership, members, and above listed advisors throughout the academic year.

The standard areas and Acceptable criteria can be found on the following pages. Required improvement plan items are also included. Finally, available resources are indicated at the end of each subcategory.
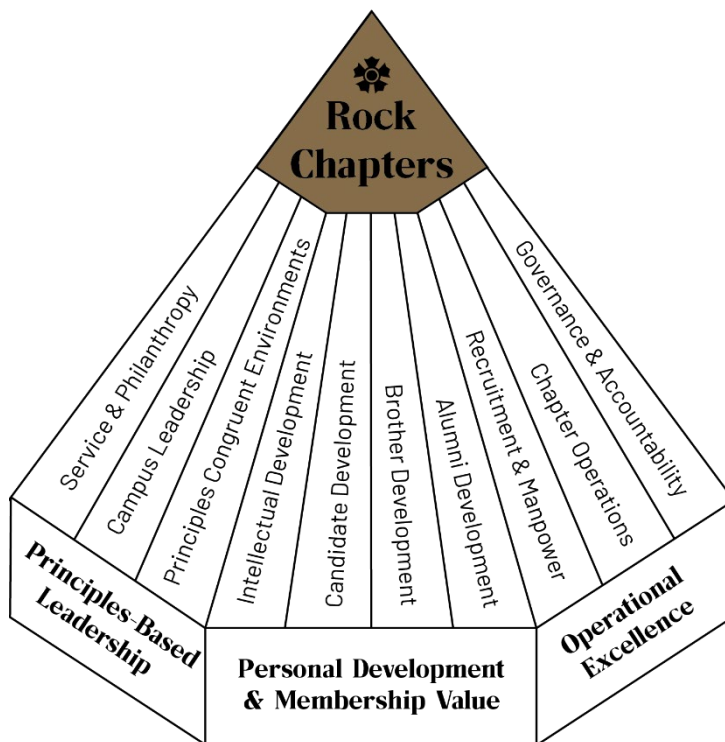
Submitting Improvement Plans

Improvement plans should be submitted to the General Fraternity by September 30th.

Failure to submit by this time may result in a suspension from participation in events with alcohol until viable improvement plans are submitted and reviewed.

Should a chapter fail to submit viable improvement plans by October 30th then all chapter activities may be suspended.

Digital submissions are required and will be accepted at pep@sigmanu.org .

Developing Improvement Plans

Chapters are required to create and submit improvement plans, at minimum, for any areas that received a rating of Poor, Substandard, or Fair.

Improvement plans should be submitted to **pep@sigmanu.org** for review by September 30th. Viable improvement plans will be returned to the chapter leadership and shared with the chapter's key advisors. Chapters are expected to update advisors on their progress towards achieving goals and completing tasks as outlined in the improvement plan.

- Use the **PEP Strategy Session** to answer discussion questions pertaining to each area. This session will help the chapter determine the vision and goals for each area, leaving appropriate officers to follow up in the creation of specific objectives and plans for action to achieve the chapter's vision of reaching excellence in this area.
- Review the **PEP Evaluation Guidelines** to determine where the chapter currently stands and to identify key benchmarks for improvement within the next six-to-twelve months.

  - **Improvement should be directed at improving deficient areas to Acceptable levels.** In other areas, the chapter is encouraged to create plans directed at either maintaining current levels of performance or improving performance to the next level (e.g., from Acceptable to Good).

- Create specific goals, with detailed plans of how the chapter will achieve these goals, in this area to improve to, at minimum, the Acceptable level within one year. Use the **Strategic Planning and Action Plans Overview** to assist with the goal setting and action planning process.

Improvement Plan Format

Action Plan templates are available to address all PEP areas. **Submit a completed action plan for this academic year as your improvement plan**.

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATES

- Service and Philanthropy Action Plan
- Campus Leadership Action Plan
- Principles Congruent Environments Action Plan
- Intellectual Development Action Plan
- Candidate Development Action Plan
- Brother Development Action Plan
- Alumni Development Action Plan
- Recruitment and Manpower Action Plan
- Chapter Operations Action Plan
- Governance and Accountability Action Plan

PEP Action Plans

PEP Action Plan templates are available to support chapters in developing a comprehensive plan for achieving Excellence in each of the ten (10) subcategories of the Pursuit of Excellence Program.

Each plan facilitates the establishment of officer and committee expectations, tasks, goals, and operational strategies.

Chapter officers should update their respective action plan each academic term.

Service and Philanthropy

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter conducts three (3) or more service activities with participation from most members.
- Each member completes at least three (3) hours of community service each semester.
- Chapter incorporated education about the cause being supported into at least one fundraising event (e.g., brochures about the cause, or a speaker on the issue).
- Chapter incorporated the principles of Sigma Nu into all service and philanthropy events.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Service and Philanthropy Action Plan

SERVICE AND PHILANTHROPY RESOURCES

- Service and Philanthropy resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/cspchairman
- Community Service and Philanthropy Chairman Manual
- Best Practices Library
- LEAD Phase I Session 11: Community Service
- Helping Hand Initiative – sigmanu.org/helpinghand

Future leaders are transformative throughout the communities they interface with. Service to others, through the donation of time, talent, and treasure, is a core mechanism for creating leaders as engaged citizens in their local community.

Campus Leadership

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter participates in campus sponsored activities and leadership development programs at least once a semester, if such programs are offered.
- At least 60% of chapter members are involved in other student organizations.
- Chapter meets all IFC requirements.
- Chapter meets with fraternity/sorority advisor once per semester.
- Chapter has actively assisted members in becoming involved in other organizations or campus programs.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Campus Leadership Action Plan

CAMPUS LEADERSHIP RESOURCES

- Campus Leadership resources
- Best Practices Library
- LEAD Phase I
  - Session 3: Leadership & Working in Groups
  - Session 8: Leadership: The Basics
- LEAD Phase II Session 8: Living Our Values
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B, Session 6: Campus Involvement
- Community Service and Philanthropy Chairman Manual

Members of the Fraternity enhance their host institution by becoming engaged as leaders in campus and interfraternal activities and organizations.

Through their leadership, members advance the purpose of both the Fraternity and their institution. This is recognized as a contribution to the greater good.

Principles Congruent Environments

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter has not been in violation of The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc. or the *Risk Reduction Policy*, or college/university policy in the last year.
- Chapter creates a safe and healthy social environment.
- Chapter Candidates complete the Risk Reduction session from LEAD Phase I.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Principles Congruent Environments Action Plan
- Chapters with confirmed violations of Fraternity policy in the past academic year receive an automatic deficiency in this area. Chapters that have already completed a Plan of Action to address their violation(s) should provide the following:

  - Confirmation of continued use of any operational items created as part of the Plan of Action (e.g., crisis management plan, risk reduction plan, candidate program, internal judicial procedures). Any updates to these plans should be noted.
  - Action steps or protocols the chapter has put in place for the current academic year to ensure recent violations are not repeated.

PRINCIPLES CONGRUENT ENVIRONMENTS RESOURCES

- Principles Congruent Environments resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/riskreductionchairman
- Risk Reduction resources – sigmanu.org/riskreduction
- Best Practices Library
- The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.
- *Risk Reduction Policy*
- LEAD Phase I Session 5: Risk Reduction
- All-Chapter LEAD

  - Module A

    - Session 1: Wellness
    - Session 6: Diversity
  - Module C
- Sigma Nu Talks...Social Issues

The physical and social environments created by the Fraternity foster positive growth and development and the establishment of lifelong friendships. This includes the promotion of a safe and healthy lifestyle.

The chapter will foster a brotherhood that respects the dignity of people while embracing the free exchange of ideas.

Intellectual Development

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter earned a GPA above both all-male and all-fraternity averages, or chapter GPA was above a 3.0 for the most recent fall term.
- Chapter sets a minimum GPA for candidates, initiates to remain in good standing, and officers.
- Scholarship Committee and/or advisor provide individual support for members who are struggling academically (at minimum, those not meeting chapter minimum standards).
- Chapter has a written scholarship plan with defined goals.
- Chapter provides incentives OR recognition for academic success.
- Chapter helps members connect with campus services for academic success.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Intellectual Development Action Plan

INTELLECTUAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Intellectual Development resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/scholarshipchairman
- Scholarship Chairman's Manual
- Best Practices Library
- Scholarship Plan Components resource
- All-Chapter LEAD Module A Session 3: Scholarship
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 6: Campus Involvement
- orderofomega.org
- odk.org

Chapter will positively impact intellectual development by promoting the importance of academics and by supporting its members through activities which develop the intellect and support critical thinking.

Candidate Development

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter utilizes LEAD Phase I and may incorporate some guest facilitators.
- Chapter initiates at least 70% of candidates (excluding those de-pledged for disciplinary reasons).
- Chapter articulates to all members and candidates that Sigma Nu is an anti-hazing organization, and all members understand the definition of hazing as described by The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc., and the *Risk Reduction Policy*.
- Candidates complete a service project OR individually complete two (2) or more hours of service (in-person or virtual volunteerism).
- Chapter has clearly defined expected outcomes for their Candidate Education Program, described as part of a written candidate program.
- Chapter has measures in place to appropriately address any member violation of the Fraternity's anti-hazing policy, including expectation of candidate reporting of mistreatment to appropriate chapter officers/advisors.
- Chapter reinforces the messages communicated through Principles-Based Growth with members serving as role models of the mission & principles of Sigma Nu.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Candidate Development Action Plan
- Chapter's written candidate program

CANDIDATE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Candidate Development resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/marshal or sigmanu.org/leadchairman
- Marshal's Manual
- Candidate Education Program Components document
- Best Practices Library
- Big Brother Program resource
- LEAD Phase I Session 11: Community Service
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 6: Campus Involvement
- The Recruitment Bluebook
- The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.
- *Risk Reduction Policy*

Through a variety of learning and mentoring experiences, candidates are prepared to be initiated members of the Fraternity with a commitment to the principles and purpose of Sigma Nu.

Brother Development

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter utilizes two or more phases of LEAD with guest facilitators.
- Chapter members attend campus or interfraternal leadership development programs (i.e., UIFI, IMPACT, LeaderShape, and officer training programs), if such programs are available.
- Chapter has multiple officers attend the Sigma Nu Institute (virtual or in-person event).
- Chapter attends College of Chapters and Grand Chapter.
- The position of LEAD Chairman is an elected, major office.
- Chapter has compiled a list of possible guest facilitators and their contact information.
- Chapter sponsors an Officer Transition session as part of its transition plan each semester.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Brother Development Action Plan

BROTHER DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Brother Development resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/leadchairman
- The LEAD Program – sigmanu.org/lead
- Best Practices Library
- LEAD Chairman's Manual
- LEAD Session Inventory
- Sigma Nu Institute
- College of Chapters
- Grand Chapter
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 5: Officer Transition
- Undergraduate Interfraternity Institute (UIFI)
- LeaderShape

The chapter prepares brothers to be effective in leadership roles within Sigma Nu and other organizations and experiences. In addition, initiated members are prepared to be successful alumni.

Alumni Development

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter has an active Alumni Advisory Board or Chapter Advisor.
- Chapter communicates regularly with Alumni Advisory Board or Advisor.
- Chapter provides at least an annual update to alumni through either a traditional newsletter or email format.
- Chapter uses one or more virtual platforms (e.g., social media, email, website) to communicate with general alumni on the activities of the chapter.
- Chapter submits news to the General Fraternity (i.e., "Tell Us Your News") at least once per year.
- Chapter sponsors one alumni event each academic year.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Alumni Development Action Plan

ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

- Alumni Development resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/alumnirelationschairman
- Alumni Relations Chairman's Manual
- Best Practices Library
- Alumni Advisory Boards
- Alumni Newsletter Guide
- LEAD Chairman's Manual

Sigma Nu shall identify and engage alumni and volunteers to support the success of the chapter, develop and perpetuate fraternal leadership, and increase the value of lifelong membership.

Recruitment and Manpower

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter meets or exceeds the average manpower size for the college/university.
- Chapter has exhibited healthy growth in the previous year OR chapter maintains a healthy manpower for its campus environment.
- Chapter's recruitment efforts are focused on Sigma Nu's Principles-Based Growth program and show some emphasis on the principles and purpose of the Fraternity.
- Chapter has a written, year-round, recruitment plan.
- Chapter can articulate what type of member they target to achieve their stated purpose as an organization.
- Chapter uses a Master Prospect List to track interest and fit to identified new member characteristics (e.g., GPA, prior leadership experience).
- Chapter financial information is advertised to potential new members during the recruitment process. This information should include the candidate and initiation fees, semester/quarter dues, and housing fees (if applicable).
- Chapter conducts a recruitment skills workshop with all members at least annually.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Recruitment and Manpower Action Plan

RECRUITMENT AND MANPOWER RESOURCES

- Recruitment and Manpower resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/recruitmentchairman
- Principles-Based Growth resources
- Best Practices Library
- The Recruitment Bluebook
- Recruitment Skills Workshop

The manpower of a chapter must be sufficient to maintain all successful chapter operations in a manner which provides a positive fraternal experience. Further, Sigma Nu will strive for growth through an innovative, principles-based growth program that engages new members who are committed to the founding principles of the Fraternity.

Chapter Operations

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter operates on an annual budget that is developed by the finance committee, approved by the chapter, and includes a revenue over expense margin sufficient to cover operating expenses and collection costs.
- Chapter has no past due balance with the General Fraternity.
- Chapter has no more than 10% of accounts receivable in excess of 30 days after accounting for payment plans and initiates suspended for financial delinquency.
- Chapter keeps all financial records electronically.
- Chapter files the applicable Form 990 for the preceding fiscal year on time.
- Chapter utilizes two signature checks, and the approved signatories are the Commander and Recorder.
- Chapter utilizes *The Ritual* for each chapter meeting as well as proper induction and initiation ceremonies.
- Chapter utilizes an outside financial service to collect dues AND/OR collects at least 75% of annual billings.

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Chapter Operations Action Plan
- Copy of the chapter's written strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives.
    - Chapter Strategic Plan Template

CHAPTER OPERATIONS RESOURCES

- Chapter Operations resources
- Chapter Strategic Plan Template
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/treasurer or sigmau.org/chaplain
- Treasurer's Manual
- Lt. Commander's Manual
- Chaplain's Manual
- Best Practices Library
- The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc. (Article 4, Section 7 and Article 7, Section 5.4)
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 1: Goal Setting
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 4: Strategic Planning

Sigma Nu will ensure the necessary structures, systems, and resources are in place in support of the Fraternity. This includes fiduciary responsibility, organized administration, and effective planning to best achieve the aims of Sigma Nu.

Governance and Accountability

ACCEPTABLE CRITERIA

- Chapter utilizes the Trial Code Procedure of <u>The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.</u> when necessary to discipline chapter members.
- Chapter has not been in violation of <u>The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc.,</u> or the *Risk Reduction Policy* in the last year.
- Chapter has not violated college/university policy in the last year.
- Chapter bylaws are reviewed by a committee and distributed to the chapter at least annually.
- Chapter operates under a written strategic plan with measurable goals and objectives that are reviewed annually by the chapter.
- Chapter has a written Crisis Management plan and members are educated on the plan at least annually.
- Chapter operates on the committee system – with at least 25% of brothers serving on a committee – and the committees meet at least monthly to discuss business.
- Chapter has an accountability and discipline system in its bylaws (e.g., honor/judicial board, standard punishments for misbehavior).

IMPROVEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS

An updated action plan for the current academic term is required. The Chapter may supplement this action plan with additional resources, as desired and appropriate.

- Governance and Accountability Action Plan
- Chapters with confirmed violations of Fraternity policy in the past academic year receive an automatic deficiency in this area. Chapters that have already completed a Plan of Action to address their violation(s) should provide the following:

  - Confirmation of continued use of any operational items created as part of the Plan of Action (e.g., crisis management plan, risk reduction plan, candidate program, internal judicial procedures). Any updates to these plans should be noted.
  - Action steps or protocols the chapter has put in place for the current academic year to ensure recent violations are not repeated.

GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RESOURCES

- Governance and Accountability resources
- Officer Resource Page – sigmanu.org/ltcommander
- Lt. Commander's Manual
- Best Practices Library

Effective governance structures and measures of accountability must be in place within the Fraternity. These measures should complement the principles of the Fraternity while maintaining integrity to the purpose of the organization.

Additional Resources

- Risk Reduction Chairman's Manual (section on Crisis Management Plan)
- Honor/Judicial Board Structure resource
- All-Chapter LEAD Module B Session 7: Accountability
- The Law of Sigma Nu Fraternity, Inc. (Trial Code)
- Trial Code Procedures Checklist and Visual Trial Code
- *Risk Reduction Policy*