



Social Planning Guide

Hosting an event soon? Not sure where to begin the planning process? Well look no further than the Fraternity's [Social Planning Guide](#).

As your one-stop shop for creating a safe and balanced social program, the Social Planning Guide involves key officers such as the Commander, Risk Reduction Chairman, and Social Chairman. This resource is designed to walk you through every step of the event planning process from deciding a venue to selecting a theme to inviting guests.



Officer Transitions

At this time of the year many chapters are approaching officer elections. While outgoing officers may be looking forward to being relieved of their duties, it is important to realize they still have an important responsibility to complete – officer transitions.

Officer transitions are an essential, yet often overlooked, tool in sustaining positive growth and development of a chapter. When officer transitions are ineffective, the chapter either stalls or regresses while it waits for the new officers to learn how to effectively handle their responsibilities and duties. Effective officer transitions lessen the learning curve for new officers and put the chapter in a much better position to hit the ground running at the start of the spring semester.

[All-Chapter LEAD, Module B, Session 5: Officer Transition](#) offers a framework for an effective officer transition including an outline for an ideal officer binder and discussion points for an officer transition retreat. Your chapter's Leadership Consultant can also help in planning for an effective officer transition process.

For newly-elected Commanders, remember to register for the [January 5 – January 8, 2012 College of Chapters](#) in St. Louis. [Online registration](#) is now available. All Commanders should be registered by November 19, 2011. If you have any questions about College of Chapters, please contact Tim Braddick, College of Chapters Coordinator, at coc.info@sigmanu.org.

Risk Reduction Through Education

When I travel and work with Risk Reduction Chairmen, I always tell them that I firmly believe that Risk Reduction is 50% action and 50% education. However, many times we forget about the educational aspect of the office. In fact the [Risk Reduction Policy and Guidelines](#) outlines several recommendations in regards to education that the chapter and/or candidate class should participate in on an annual or semi-annual basis. One of the areas of education we often overlook is mental health. College for many students across the country will be one of the more enjoyable and trying times of their lives. That is why it is important for Risk Reduction Chairmen to encourage educating our members on mental health issues. *(continued on page 2)*

Initiation Week – A Time For Celebration?

Does your chapter have a special series of events the week leading up to initiation? What is the objective(s) of this week? Many chapters have an “Initiation Week” – a series of unique events and/or activities culminating in the initiation *Ritual* ceremony. Unfortunately, history tells us that Initiation Week (also referred to as “Honor Week”, “Hell Week”, “I-Week”, etc.), which should be about welcoming new members to the Legion of Honor, sometimes devolves into one final test comprised of physical and psychological hazing for candidates to prove their worth of joining the initiated membership.

I cannot imagine that Hopkins, Quarles, or Riley envisioned welcoming new members into the Fraternity by conducting acts contrary to the philosophical purpose Sigma Nu was founded upon, which was to stand against the hazing being conducted at VMI.

Ever wonder why you have issues with retention? Look at the data. According to data from Sigma Nu participants in the 2010-2011 GreekLifeEdu program, approximately 37% of members joined Sigma Nu to make friends and broaden their network through alumni connections. Furthermore, about 16% of our membership chose to join Sigma Nu due to its anti-hazing stance. Out of nearly 5,200 Sigma Nu members who participated in Survey 1 of the 2010-2011 GreekLifeEdu program, no one said “experience hazing” was the reason they joined Sigma Nu.

Regardless if it’s “Initiation Week” or “Big Brother Night,” hazing has no place in Sigma Nu. Our founders created the Fraternity with that intention and the data further proves that today’s college student is interested in the Fraternity experience our Founders’ envisioned – one that appreciates its members, regardless of tenure, and develops the mind, heart and character of the future leaders of our society.

For ideas on how to create a developmentally-based, hazing-free “Initiation Week,” check out the [“We Have A Situation” resource](#) and/or consult your Leadership Consultant and local Greek advisor. Also, make sure you understand Sigma Nu’s definition of hazing by reviewing the [Risk Reduction Policy and Guidelines](#).

Educating Chapter Members On Mental Health

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Let’s look at some numbers. According to the [PsychCentral website](#), suicide is the second leading cause of death in college students ages 20-24. 44% of college students report experiencing some form of depression; however, despite these statistics, over two-thirds of young people never seek help or assistance for mental health problems.

No one is saying that you should start diagnosing individuals; in fact that is discouraged for obvious reasons. What is expected, however, is that we educate our members on mental health problems and symptoms. On top of that, we should actively encourage our members to seek out the resources your campus or community offers for assistance. Many campuses offer free counseling services or even services at a discounted cost for students.

For some proactive ideas, consider hosting a workshop prior to finals week on how to manage stress, bring in someone from your counseling center to educate your chapter on mental health issues, and during the candidate process ensure all of your candidates understand where they can find resources on stress management or counseling. These are just some of the many ways you as Risk Reduction Chairman can begin to fulfill the other 50% of your office in educating members regarding pertinent risk reduction issues facing our members today.

If you have any unique ideas on how your chapter encourages the education of mental health issues, please let us know by submitting them to headquarters@sigmanu.org.