Considerations for Virtual Recruitment: Part One

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many College Panhellenic Associations need to shift some or all of their structured recruitment to a virtual platform. While that shift allows some typical recruitment functions to be eliminated, the smooth execution of the remaining functions is key–and how to do that in a virtual format is new territory for everyone involved in the recruitment process.

While no single vendor or platform exists to fulfill every need associated with a virtual structured recruitment, the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC) is working to vet solutions and facilitate conversations to ensure that the most commonly used solutions work well together, and that College Panhellenics and chapters understand their options and limitations on the path forward.

In the coming weeks, NPC will share a resource for College Panhellenics that indicates the vendors/platforms and functions that align well with the virtual recruitment process. We also will focus on facilitating (and stress testing) seamless integration between the two primary recruitment management platforms and the four most commonly used videoconferencing platforms mentioned below.

In the meantime, we have two key items for your College Panhellenic to consider:

1. **Select your videoconferencing platform**. This is the most critical, yet untested, function in the virtual sorority recruiting context. Our survey responses from fraternity/sorority advisors indicate that most College Panhellenics have already decided they will be using Zoom (a supermajority of responses indicated this), WebEx, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet. If your campus already has a shared videoconferencing account made available to you, that platform will often be the logical vendor to use for both simplicity and cost. We suggest you check this chart to confirm the platforms you are considering have sufficient capacity to accommodate the expected attendance in each chapter event and the ability to host breakout rooms. Chapters and College Panhellenics should secure premium accounts if necessary. Ideally your entire community will use the same videoconferencing platform.

2. **Continue to rely on your existing recruitment management platform—typically ICS or CampusDirector—for invitations and scheduling**. While newer vendors and platforms provide forms of scheduling and participant management functionality, history tells us the learning curve is very steep in terms of how College Panhellenics and chapters handle these functions. The lead time for developing software tailored to our community often takes years, not weeks or months, which is why we recommend using existing providers.

Some additional considerations as you establish your virtual setup:

- Brainstorm what the experience will look like for PNMs. Can you create one landing page or dashboard where links are provided to meet their needs? Can you do that via your College Panhellenic website? Through the campus' Canvas or Blackboard system?

- Consider where PNMs, chapter members and College Panhellenic officers will be physically located during virtual recruitment. Is the computer infrastructure and bandwidth sufficient in those locations given the number of women who will be online?
- Work now to identify and secure tech support during recruitment. Each chapter and the College Panhellenic should have at least one identified tech lead/manager. You will also want 24/7 tech support available through identified channels (chat, phone, etc.) during the entirety of recruitment.
- Host several rounds of virtual rehearsals before recruitment begins for the chapters as well as the College Panhellenic. Facilitate chapter practice in receiving guest lists and creating their virtual breakout rooms. Establish protocols for handling the inevitable missteps, such as PNMs entering the wrong virtual events and disruptive participants.

Finally, engage in a specific effort—perhaps by designating a standing workgroup—to consider the accessibility of your recruitment experience from the perspective of your PNMs. Their life situations may differ dramatically not only from one another, but from where they themselves were only a few months ago. This means facilitating access to hardware and sufficient bandwidth to fully engage in the recruitment process, and ensuring students who are immunocompromised (or whose family members are) or those with low vision or hearing loss can effectively participate in the process at a distance. Other factors beyond the "tech" scope should also be considered, including the mental health and well-being of students engaging in yet another virtual process.