



Notable Shifts in Panhellenic Sorority Recruitment Summer 2021

With the onset of COVID-19 a little over a year ago, life has changed in many ways. NPC realized very quickly last year that physical distancing and the reality of day-to-day activities being done remotely would require us to recruit differently in fall 2020 and beyond, including by virtual means. As a result, an NPC task force was created and a group of 19 women worked tirelessly for two months in late spring/early summer 2020, creating a sorority recruitment framework and educational resources that would allow our recruitment efforts to be successful during a global pandemic.

We have learned much over the last year through this experience, and along with the changing demographics of college-bound women and lower enrollments of women on many college campuses, we are going to continue to see shifts in how we recruit women to our sorority communities.

Recruitment styles

There are a variety of ways that young women can join a sorority. While most women participate in a fully structured process, more and more women are joining through a process with less structure or through continuous open bidding (COB).

There are three different primary recruitment styles recommended by NPC. NPC asks College Panhellenics to review their recruitment style as part of an annual recruitment evaluation. The three recruitment styles are:

- **Fully structured recruitment (FSR):** The most amount of Panhellenic structure and central process. This is likely the structure you are most familiar with. Many campuses may call this formal recruitment.
- **Partially structured recruitment (PSR):** Some amount of Panhellenic structure and a somewhat central process, allowing for more flexibility for potential new members [PNMs] and chapters.
- **Continuous Recruitment (CR):** No central process or structure from the Panhellenic. Each chapter hosts their own recruitment events in their own timeline

Please note: Continuous Recruitment is not synonymous with Continuous Open Bidding (COB). Continuous Recruitment is a primary method of recruitment, while COB is a supplementary method used alongside FSR or PSR for chapters to achieve total. Continuous Recruitment campuses do not use RFM and have no recruitment schedule or organized Panhellenic registration.

While many campuses use a fully structured recruitment and it is the best style for them, some campuses with a decline in enrollment, decline in interest in the sorority community or issues with retention can greatly benefit from a partially structured recruitment. It allows for more discussion time in recruitment, longer, less structured events and a more casual experience. This can be great for campuses where there are commuter students, student athletes or a dissatisfaction with the current recruitment process.

As alumnae volunteers and stakeholders, this is a key area where flexibility and an open mind can go a long way. Less recruitment structure, while it might seem scary and different, can be exactly what a sorority community needs to be as successful as possible for their chapter members and potential new members. As College Panhellenics also explore opportunities to promote their diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, recruitment style will almost certainly be explored.

Recruitment modality formats

Just as this year has helped some Panhellenics think critically and adjust their recruitment style, the year 2020 prompted nearly all College Panhellenics to host their recruitment in a completely virtual format. Many campuses surveyed reported a high satisfaction in a virtual space, and chapters and PNMs benefited from reduced cost and less stress. As more Panhellenics focus on student wellness and health, this is a great way to act upon these initiatives.

As the world resumes to what a “new normal” looks like, we are encouraging College Panhellenics to leverage some of what we learned recruiting virtually and host at least the first round of recruitment virtually. Some Panhellenics are already planning to do this for the foreseeable future.



Promotion of the Sorority Experience – (2020) POLICY

All sorority women including collegians, alumnae, College Panhellenics, Alumnae Panhellenics, inter/national organizations and the National Panhellenic Conference should actively promote the overall sorority experience and membership opportunities in organizations. This should be done through all forms of communication (e.g., print, digital, in person) in the spirit of Panhellenic unity and desire to reach out to all women to share the opportunity for sorority membership. College and Alumnae Panhellenic rules should not infringe on the rights of individuals, chapters and/or organizations in the content or forms of communication to promote the sorority experience.

One of the changes that might be changing quickly is the culture of increased communication with sorority women and PNMs/college bound women. All sorority women are expected to promote the sorority experience, including collegians.

This policy was created to help promote sorority growth and it is intended that every affiliated woman promote the sorority experience. However, verbal bidding and “dirty rushing” is still prohibited. This policy is intended to “squash” College Panhellenic restrictions at a local level that prohibited affiliated women from having contact with PNMs. Alumnae Panhellenics should let PNMs know that they might be contacted not only by the Panhellenic, but chapters as well and that they should engage in positive Panhellenic contact.

This policy IS:

- Intended to promote Panhellenic. Communication related to the broader sorority experience must be at the forefront of all messaging to PNMs and parents/caregivers. All communications should be in support of a PNM and her parents/caregivers learning more about the sorority experience and should direct her to the College Panhellenic’s recruitment process.
- Providing the ability for current and alumnae members to actively show their sorority affiliation and not be forced to delete social media accounts, cover up their association or be penalized for talking about their association. All local rules and regulations banning communications between PNMs and current/alumnae members must be removed. Members should not be asked to remove their affiliations from social media accounts, shut down any profiles or not communicate with PNMs on campus or in any normal circumstances.
- Members can accept and request friend requests from PNMs, like/comment on posts and answer questions about the sorority experience over social media. The only limitations of communication will be during the recruitment process when College Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors (if applicable) are disassociated, and during the time of strict silence only between the end of preference events and bid distribution.
- Providing the ability to promote the sorority experience, engage PNMs in conversations to sign up for the recruitment process and answer any questions PNMs and parents/caregivers may have about the sorority experience. These communications should ultimately lead PNMs to find more information about the recruitment process and registration from the College Panhellenic.

This policy is NOT:

- Granting permission to actively recruit PNMs to one organization. All conversations must promote the Panhellenic experience and be focused on encouraging PNMs to register for the recruitment process.
- Granting permission to bid promise, give gifts or in any way lead a PNM to believe she will automatically become a member of an organization. The Values-Based Recruitment – POLICY continues to ban these actions. This also includes talking poorly of other chapters, telling PNMs to think singularly about one organization and not keep an open mind and saying anything that could be misconstrued as offering a bid or guaranteeing her membership in a chapter.
- Encouraging activity that might single out a PNM, making her feel uncomfortable or overwhelmed. The PNM experience should continue to be at the forefront. Always consider how a PNM might feel in when receiving communication. Could a PNM feel left out by not being tagged in a social media post? Could a PNM feel no longer interested in the sorority experience if an entire chapter’s membership sends her a direct message?



Additional NPC Legislation:

Many notable changes to sorority recruitment fall into buckets relating to cost related or scheduling/timing related.

Tiered Recruitment Registration Fees (2021) – POLICY

College Panhellenics will not use tiered or “early bird” recruitment registration fee pricing nor will they institute a late fee.

Many College Panhellenics have a tiered recruitment registration fee, or an “early bird” registration fee in an effort to encourage early recruitment registration. The impact of these fee structures creates an inequitable experience where potential new members familiar with sorority membership and are aware of recruitment will register early, and those who are unfamiliar with sorority membership and unaware of recruitment are paying higher fees simply for learning about the opportunity to register later. College Panhellenics have enough budget data to accurately estimate recruitment registration participation without needing to penalize those who are unable to register months prior to recruitment.

If your Alumnae Panhellenic recommends that women register early to lock at an early-bird rate, please know that this policy goes into effect for Panhellenics who have recruitment beginning Jan. 1, 2022.

Primary Recruitment Scheduling (2021) – BEST PRACTICE

NPC encourages wherever possible that primary recruitment occur following the start of classes. Where this is not possible, the College Panhellenic will make every effort to limit additional costs and to market to all audiences the sorority experience.

Access concerns related to the timing of recruitment are prominent. When recruitment occurs prior to classes beginning, students face additional financial costs of time off work to move in early and costs associated with housing and meals. Additionally, students without sorority connections miss out on the opportunity to participate as they are not specifically marketed to, or introduced to the sorority experience until they arrive on campus. This best practice decreases financial and marketing barriers that may hinder women from joining.

As your Alumnae Panhellenic works to help support collegians either through sorority informational events, collegiate chapter support or College Panhellenic support, please note that NPC hopes to see more campuses moving recruitment to after the start of the academic term. While it is not a requirement, it is a step College Panhellenics can take to increase access and equity in their communities.

An updated best practice also asks that College Panhellenics only charge an administrative fee to participate in recruitment. By adjusting the timing of recruitment, Panhellenics can move closer to just charging a small administrative fee and spend less money on lodging and meals prior to the start of the academic term.

Member Organization Shifts:

While some policies from NPC impact collegiate recruitment, member organization policies and practices are evolving too. NPC does not play a role in member organization policies related to letters of recommendation/references or legacy policies, but we wanted to make you aware of these changes that can impact your interactions with PNMs and/or collegiate chapters.

Letters of Recommendation (1992, 2009, 2020, 2021) – POLICY

Any membership recruitment information distributed by College and/or Alumnae Panhellenics must not include reference to letters of recommendation as a requirement to participate in recruitment. Member organizations that accept/request letters of recommendation have the responsibility to educate members and potential new members about their policies. Additionally, member organizations that do accept/request letters of recommendation must clarify that letters will not be accepted that are procured by a potential new member or her family in exchange for any type of compensation.

While each organization has their own policies and practices for letters of recommendations/references, please do not infer to college bound women that letters/references are required to participate in recruitment. This creates undue stress of PNMs and their families/caregivers and creates more hoops for a process meant to be wide-cast and open. If an organization requires recommendations/references, it is that organization’s responsibility to promote and secure such requirement.



As an alumna, be mindful that these policies are shifting in inter/national organizations. Make sure that the information you are sharing is current and accurate to allow for the most transparency to the potential new member. You can do this by contacting your inter/national organization to learn more or referring the potential new member to organizations they are interested in.

Legacy policies

Just as organizational policies are rapidly changing, legacy policies are changing, being updated or sometimes going away entirely. This varies by NPC member organization and NPC plays no role in this. While Alumnae Panhellenics do not play a role in communicating or promoting legacy information to PNMs, it is still a great note to have and share so PNMs/caregivers can be aware that legacy may mean something different than it did last year or ten or twenty years ago, and know if a young woman is not a legacy, it does not impact her chances of joining a sorority and participating in recruitment.

As an alumna who may be helping to guide young women to the Panhellenic recruitment process, if you are sharing information about letters of recommendation, legacy status, legacy policies and organizational implications, make sure to have the most up-to-date information from your organization to allow for accuracy and transparency for the potential new member.

Continuous open bidding (COB)

With chapters focusing on equity and access, many College Panhellenics will set total in a way that will allow for growth. This can create COB opportunities. An increasing number of women and chapters will likely participate in COB.

If there are women you know who miss the recruitment registration deadline, encourage them to participate in COB opportunities. These can begin as early as Bid Day. Those women can be directed to the College Panhellenic, the Greek life/student life office or directly to chapters themselves. COB spaces may vary based on where total is set, so be cautious to not make any organizational promise to young women.

How You Can Help:

- Promote the sorority experience. Share your sorority experience with college going women and their families and caregivers. Help share accurate information of what today's sorority experience is.
- Focus on sharing expectations and benefits of membership.
- Decrease emphasis on letters of recommendation—these can be seen as barriers to entry.
- Host sorority information events using NPC resources.
- Think about equity and access as it may relate to selecting a physical location for an event and how you can help maintain safe practices in this “new normal.”

For more information on NPC Recruitment, please visit www.npcwomen.org.