

## Accreditation Program

Each year, the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life evaluates its fraternity and sorority chapters, to determine the impact that each chapter has on its members, council, the fraternity and sorority community as a whole, as well as the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and Richmond community. In the past, this program was formalized into a process that was known as “Shared Standards.” To complete the Shared Standards program, chapters submitted information every spring outlining what their chapter had accomplished for the academic year, through a binder. Based on a review of the chapter’s binder, the chapter would be awarded a standing: gold, silver, or bronze. This year, we will begin a new “Chapter Accreditation” program. This program will be tailored to each chapter’s individual needs and will allow for conversation surrounding the chapter’s contributions, or failures over the past year.

The purpose of this program is to better understand if a chapter is an asset, or a hindrance to the Fraternity and Sorority, VCU, and greater Richmond community. A recommendation will be made as to the chapter’s standing, based on what the Accreditation Committee feels is appropriate. In addition to re-evaluating each chapter’s standing within the community, this process will allow chapter’s to be nominated for Fraternity and Sorority Life Awards.

### Accreditation Committee

The Committee will be comprised of a group of twenty VCU faculty and staff members, brought together with a fraternity and sorority background. There will be 3-4 Committee members in each chapter presentation. In addition to taking notes and determining a chapter’s Accreditation standing, the Committees will be nominating chapters for Greek Awards, based on what is presented to them.

### Submission Materials

There will be certain information that will need to be submitted ahead of time – such as chapter service hours, chapter philanthropy money raised, and chapter grade point average. This will be a minimal amount of information, compared to the entire presentation. Additional materials will be provided through the chapter’s respective Council and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, including chapter GPA and any judicial incidents that the chapter may have had. The chapter may ask to see any information ahead of time that will be submitted on their behalf.

Additional documentation that should be included:

1. Headquarter Compliance
  - a. Letter from Headquarters of good financial standing
  - b. Letter from Headquarters of good standing
2. Chapter Service Events:
  - a. Name of Events
  - b. Members who participated
  - c. Hours of service given for each event
  - d. Letter from community partners who benefited from service
3. Chapter Philanthropy Events:
  - a. Name of Events
  - b. Members who participated
  - c. Amount of money raised
  - d. Letter from community partners who benefited from philanthropy

4. Chapter Programming:
  - a. Name of Events
  - b. Members who participated
  - c. Value of Event (educational, risk management, sister/brotherhood, etc.)
  - d. Were the events open to community members outside of FSL?
  - e. Were the events collaborative with another chapter, council, or student organization?
5. Leadership
  - a. Letter from Advisor with suggestion for chapter standing
  - b. Information about any leadership academy's attended (date, location, who attended, etc.)
  - c. Number of chapter members who hold leadership positions or are involved in other organizations on campus (name, organization, position held).

Ideas: Below are some ideas for some of the things that you can showcase throughout your Accreditation review. These are also good goals for you, in planning your chapter calendar. Please see "Submission Materials" for further information on how to correctly document these programs for Accreditation.

*Programing Ideas:*

- Hosting one program highlighting a controversial issue (one that has multiple points)
- Hosting educational programs
- Hosting philanthropic programs
- Hosting a Wellness or Safety Program
- Hosting a program on Academic Success for members
- Hosting a program on Career Development

*Partnership & Collaboration Ideas:*

- Programing with chapters outside of your council (NPHC, IFC, MGC, CPC)
- Partnering with a non-Greek organization to host an event
- Partnering with an Office on campus outside of FSL to host an event
- Partnering with an organization within the Richmond community

*Leadership Ideas:*

- Annual leadership training with headquarters
- Attending conferences, Lunch & Lead Series, etc.
- Executive Board Retreat
- Percentage of chapter members involved in something outside of membership in the chapter
- Having an active presence within your respective Council
- Holding leadership positions within your respective Council

*Office Partnership Ideas:*

- Chapter attendance at all FSL mandated programs
- Regularly scheduled meetings with FSL adviser
- Turning in all office documentation on time

## Presentation

The chapter will be given times and dates to sign-up to present to the Accreditation Committee. The chapter representatives should include the current chapter president along with anyone else the chapter deems necessary. The chapter advisor may be present at the meeting, but may not speak during the presentation. The chapter leadership will have a maximum of 20 minutes to speak on the chapter's behalf, to help the Committee better understand why the chapter is an asset to the VCU community. The representatives will engage in dialogue with the Accreditation committee, who will be provided with any documentation that the chapter has submitted on its behalf. The Accreditation committee will have access to the materials submitted ahead of time, as well as materials submitted by the respective Council and Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs.

Presentation Prompts: It is highly recommended that the chapter representatives pick two of the following prompts to touch-upon during the Accreditation presentation (*Adopted from Drexel University, Fraternity & Sorority Life, Chapter Achievement Plan*):

1. *Improvement:* Discuss the current strengths and weakness of your chapter, areas in which you have improved over the past year, or challenges you have faced this year. Share specific examples of how you worked to address weaknesses or challenges.
2. *Innovation:* Describe any new ideas or programming your organization has implemented this year. How has this new initiative impacted your organization?
3. *Collaboration:* Describe the collaborative efforts your organization has made in the past year (ex. Other fraternities/sororities, councils, student organizations, university offices, chapters at other campuses, community partners, etc.). What worked? What would you do differently next year?
4. *Accountability/Bystander Intervention:* Discuss what your organization has done this year to ensure members are aware of, and held accountable to, their responsibilities as a member of your chapter. How have you worked to install the notion of "be your brother/sister's keeper" in your organization?
5. *Relevance:* Explain how your organization contributed to the University's strategic initiatives over the last year. The University strategic plan (Quest for Distinction) can be found at: <http://www.quest.vcu.edu/>.

## Chapter Standings

Based on the presentation and materials, the committee will be recommending the following chapter standings:

1. *Excellent Standing:* Chapters who meet an excellent standing have gone above and beyond in giving back to the community. These chapters have had little to no issues throughout the year and their members are striving for fraternal excellence, as shown through their actions. These chapters have above the average chapter GPA and are committed to membership development. These chapters have at least 50% membership involvement in other leadership positions on campus and are in good financial standing with their council and headquarters.

2. *Good Standing:* Chapters who achieve a good standing are an asset to the community. They are accomplishing their goals as a chapter, as well as giving back to the campus. These chapters are improving yearly and have a positive presence on campus. They have some things to work on, but strive to provide their members with a positive fraternal experience.
3. *Fair Standing:* Chapters who achieve a fair standing are not contributing to the fraternity and sorority community, but are not specifically viewed as a hindrance. These chapters are meeting the bare minimum expectations within their councils and are providing little to no programming, community service, and/or membership development opportunities for chapter members. It is highly encouraged that chapters with this standing meet with the FSL staff to gain an understanding and the support needed to grow and excel as a chapter.
4. *Poor Standing:* Chapters who earn a poor standing are seen as a potential hindrance to the community. These chapters are not giving back – whether through programming, involvement within their council, or overall presence on campus. These chapters are not providing their members with membership development and might not be in good standing with their headquarters. Chapters meeting this standing will need to meet with the FSL staff to determine appropriate steps, moving forward. Some consequences of achieving a poor standing might include, but not limited to: social probation, limited number of programs hosted per semester, membership achievement program, etc.
5. *Suggestion of Removal:* Chapters who are suggested for removal are chapters who are potentially detrimental to the fraternity, sorority, and VCU community. These chapters have potentially broken University or headquarter policy on a number of instances and do not seem to understand the ramifications for their actions. These chapters are not providing a well-rounded, positive experience for their members and are not good representatives of the fraternity and sorority community. These chapters are not able to articulate the benefits of membership in their organization. Any chapter on this status will be referred to their respective council president, the Assistant Director of Fraternity and Sorority Life, as well as the Director of University Student Commons and Activities for further review on their status as a recognized fraternity or sorority chapter.

Award Nominations: In addition to recommending chapter standings, the Accreditation Board will recommend chapters to be considered for the following Fraternity and Sorority Life Awards, based on the Accreditation presentations that they review:

1. *Diversity & Global Engagement Award:* Awarded to a chapter who supports and/or implements programming centered on diversity awareness and global experiences in the VCU community.
2. *Academic Support Award:* Awarded to a chapter who implements programming that supports academic improvement and GPA maintenance for its members. Chapter GPA may be taken into account; however, substantial chapter improvement, strong academic plans, and other factors will also be considered.
3. *Outstanding Philanthropy Award:* Awarded to the chapter who displays creativity, programming strength, and connection to the philanthropic cause in planning and executing their chapter philanthropy event. Philanthropic donations rose (measured by dollars per member) will also be taken into account.

4. *Outstanding Community Service Award:* Given to the chapter with the highest amount of hours per member (average) for community service efforts during the 2014-2015 Academic Year. Information or feedback on community impact on behalf of the partnering community organization will also be taken into account.
  
5. *Greek Collaboration Award:* This award is designed to recognize chapters that have collaborated with one or more fraternities or sororities to accomplish a stated goal or program. Multiple awards could be presented to multiple chapters within the FSL Community, or the award may be given to one event that involves numerous chapters.