

Academics 101

AFLV Central 2022



Presenter

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Program Outline

- History of Gamma Sigma Alpha academic honor rolls
- Research on fraternity & sorority academic achievement
- Measuring academic achievement
- Academic incentives
- Roles we play with regard to achievement
- Best practices
- Developing your scholarship plan



Gamma Sigma Alpha



- Founded in 1989 at Univ. of Southern California
- Mission: “recognize academic achievement of fraternity men & sorority women”
- Launched a GPA Honor Roll for F/S Communities in 2000 whose GPA is above their Campus GPA
- Asked communities for the Best Practice for achieving academic success
- Launched Graduation Honor Roll in 2019 for F & S Communities whose Graduation Rate is higher than their campus

Academic Achievement Research

- Retention & Graduation:
 - Greek affiliation is positively correlated (Feldman & Newcomb, 1973).
 - Peer group influence is positively correlated (Feldman & Newcomb, 1973).
- Greek students have lower academic ability as measured by standardized entrance tests, than residence hall non-Greek students,
 - but yet have higher retention and graduation rates further supports the value of group living (Strange, 1980).



Academic Achievement Research

- Positive socialization function that on campus living offers students, particularly those with Greek affiliation (Strange, 1980).
- Student living groups provide an interpersonal environment that tends to foster or inhibit the academic performance of freshmen members (Schrager, 1986).
- Greek affiliation has a negative effect on GPA, but a positive effect on retention & graduation (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).



Academic Achievement Research

- Greek-affiliated white men had significantly lower end-of-first-year scores on standardized measures of reading comprehension, mathematics, critical thinking (Pascarella & et al, 1994).
 - Greek affiliation were much less prominent during 2nd & 3rd years (Pascarella & et al, 1994).
- Positive significant relationship between academic dishonesty and fraternity/sorority membership (McCabe & Bowers, 1996).
- Frequency of cheating is significantly higher among men than women (McCabe & Bowers, 1996).



Academic Achievement Research

- Factors that are significant to 1st year GPA: SAT Score, Fraternity GPA, & Aspiration Level (Binder, 1997).
- Greek members exceeded their predicted GPAs,
 - fall new members were slightly lower than their predicted GPAs,
 - spring new members exceeded their predicted GPAs (DeBard, Lake, & Binder, 2006).



Gallup Study: F/S Members...



- ✓ Significantly more involvement in extracurricular activities
- ✓ More emotionally supported
- ✓ Have more experiential & deep learning experiences
- ✓ As graduates are more likely to:
 - ✓ Be engaged in work
 - ✓ Thriving in all five elements of well-being (purpose, physical, social, financial, and community)
 - ✓ Donate to your alma mater

Measuring Academic Achievement

- Term/Semester GPA
- Cumulative GPA
- One-year Retention rate
- Time to degree
- 6 year graduation rate
- F/S Report Card
- Build relationship with institutional research office
- Builds credibility/adds to your credibility
- Code Greeks on Univ. Student Info. System (Banner)
- Accurate rosters
- Need several years of data



Academic Incentives



- Academic environment of student groups effects achievement (Moose, R.)
- Incentives need to be meaningful
 - Member
 - Chapter
 - Council
- How much you spend (\$) = How serious you are about academics
- Academic Incentives (*handout*)
 - <https://gammastigmaalpha.org/resources-for-current-chapters/>

Academic Incentives



- List of all the classes members have taken so that other members know who to go to for advice
- Establish chapter standards to hold office, play intramurals, attend socials, big brother/sister etc.
- Have academic resources available for new members: Writing Center, Math Center, Tutoring Center, etc.
- Make Scholarship the first emphasis in your publications, especially recruitment
- Include the Greek Report Card in recruitment publications
- Have a potential new member GPA higher than the council's
- Mention at every chapter meeting some item relating to the importance of good scholarship
- Social events are not scheduled during mid-terms or finals



Academic Incentives

- Provide chapter members with a calendar each semester with all required chapter events so members can plan ahead for schoolwork
- Share schedules to hold members accountable for missing classes
- Faculty advisor works with the chapter on academic issues
- Invite a faculty member to discuss their expertise
- Invite the Career Center to do a resume/interview seminar
- Invite an academic advisor to talk about scheduling for classes
- Incorporate study skills as part of new member education program



Academic Incentives

- Create a scholar of the week which scholarship chair selects
- Reward members who improve their GPA by .20 or more
- Reward members who achieve a 4.00 or Dean's List status
- Advertisement listing those who achieved Dean's List
- Reduced dues for members achieve high GPA 's
- Preferential room picks based on GPA
- Have a Skip Jar (\$1 for each class missed)
- Have a "Pi" dessert, rewarding those with 3.14 GPA or higher
- Dean's List Dinner



Academic Incentives

- Reward the chapter if the GPA is above the all-undergraduate, all-men's, or all-women's average
- Reduce Council dues if the F & S GPA is above campus average
- Create an honor roll of brothers/sisters with high GPAs
- Brag board to recognize those earning A's and B's on tests/papers
- Pair members with the highest & lowest GPA and reward the team with the best GPA
- Establish a GPA competition with another chapter on campus
- Inform chapter members of local & national scholarships
- List member's majors on the roster
- Pay for member's initiation fees for Honor Societies

Roles: FSL Staff

- Set the tone of importance
- Regularly make groups aware of institution's policies & expectations
- Access institution's statistics & share
- Highlight achievement to all stakeholders
- Hold workshops for low achieving chapters
- Provide information on how chapters can utilize tutoring services for their members who need it
- Host a study-a-thon at midterms & end of semester



Roles: FSL Staff

- Rewards for high achieving chapters
- Encourage councils to hold events & seminars on academics
- Encourage chapters to work with low achieving members
- Utilize resources of umbrella organizations (NIC, NPHC, NPC, etc.)
- Meet with faculty advisors each semester
- Provide faculty advisors individual member GPAs
- Encourage chapters to have faculty advisors (*handout*)
 - <https://gammastigmaalpha.org/resources-for-current-chapters/>



Roles: Councils

- Designate an academic officer & a budget for the officer
- Meet with chapters that are below a designated standard
 - Work with them to develop an academic plan
- Set a minimum PNM GPA to go through recruitment
- Establish regular academic announcements
 - Scholarships available
 - Deadlines for dropping classes with grade of W, etc.
 - Honor societies available (i.e. Gamma Sigma Alpha)



Roles: Councils

- Set aside 10% of the council budget to reward chapters
- Provide a study skills/time management seminar for all new members
- Select Scholars of the Week
- Faculty appreciation event
- Report high achievement to respective umbrella organizations (NIC, NPHC, NPC, etc.)
- Help chapters recruit faculty advisors
- Establish a Faculty Advisor of the year award
- Utilize NPC Academic Excellence Month



Roles: Chapters



- Select responsible academic officer & provide a budget
- Set aside 5% of the chapter budget for incentives
- Have VP Scholarship meet with those who fall below a designated GPA to develop a personal academic plan
- Enforce & share national organization academic policies
- Set a chapter GPA goal each semester & provide the chapter an incentive
- Don't schedule social events during mid-terms, week before finals or finals
- Challenge other chapters to a GPA contest
- Utilize resources of learning centers, tutoring centers



Roles: Chapters

- Encourage scholars to join honor societies & apply for prestigious scholarships--Marshall, Rhodes, etc.
- Pay for member's membership fee to honor societies
- Contest where you pair low & high achieving members
- New members attend a study skills/time management program
- Invite faculty members to a chapter meeting to discuss their latest research or book
- Hold programs recommending classes and professors close to registration time
- Select and utilize a faculty advisor (*handout*)
 - <https://gammastigmaalpha.org/resources-for-current-chapters/>
- Review individual GPA's with the faculty advisor each semester

Roles: National Organizations

- Make academic policies user friendly
- Obtain institution academic report and assist/commend chapters as needed
- Put a faculty person on your chapter advisory boards
- Honor high achieving chapters at regional/national meetings prominently
- Set an academic challenge for your chapters--GPA and/or improvement (+.03, etc.)
- Take low achievement seriously especially if it is a strong recruiting chapter
- Set a GPA chapters must achieve to maintain their charter



Best Practices



- Chapter dedicates 5% of their budget to reward individuals
- Council dedicates 10% of their budget to reward chapters
- Chapter hosts a “Pi” day (rewarding everyone with a 3.14 or higher)
- Council reduces dues if the community beats the campus GPA
- Council publicizes (social media, newspaper, etc.) all members who achieve dean’s list
- Council tracks how much chapters spend to reward members for good scholarship

Best Practices



- FSL Office computes, publishes F/S overall & chapter Graduation rates
- F/S report card is emailed to all faculty/staff/students
- Host Academic Resources meeting for new members
- Faculty Advisor meets w/ new members to check on academics
- Faculty Advisor meets w/ members who fall below 2.50 to map out an academic plan
- National organization requires chapters to beat the campus GPA to remain in good standing

Develop Your Plan

- Using all the information just presented, develop a 3 year plan for improving achievement (*handout*)
 - <https://gammastigmaalpha.org/resources-for-current-chapters/>
- You pick the organization (Chapter, Council, System, HQ)
- Share your plan



Starting a Gamma Sigma Alpha Chapter

- Easy way to honor academic achievement
- It's easy
 - ✓ Each semester invite Jrs. & Srs. who achieve a 3.50 to apply
 - ✓ Collect national one-time fee of \$35/member
 - ✓ Chapters may choose to charge more (most charge \$50)
 - ✓ Send to GSA headquarters
 - ✓ Present certificates & pins at a Council meeting
- \$9,000 in scholarships to attend grad school for members
- GSA honor roll: school's whose Greek GPA is above their campus GPA
- For more information go to GammaSigmaAlpha.org

