# Cultivating a More Inclusive Recruitment Experience and Addressing Implicit Bias

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Resource Guide

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## FOSTERING A MORE INCLUSIVE RECRUITMENT EXPERIENCE

### Description

We ask potential new members (PNMs) and those involved in recruitment to bring their authentic selves to the process in an effort to ensure they find the group within which they will feel a genuine sense of belonging. Yet, the process can often feel staged and curated in ways that leave our members and PNMs questioning how they should show up. Whether virtual or in-person, we must be mindful that genuine conversations and leaving behind the frills (matching attire, décor, ring lights, specified background items, etc.) allow Panhellenic chapters and PNMs to be in a space that accepts and values what they are bringing to the table. As College Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors, our energies should be focused on inclusive language, the values of our Panhellenic sorority community and celebrating the sisters we have from all identities in an intentional way that supports them.

### Shared Language

**Diversity:** The blending of different identities, backgrounds, experiences and perspectives within an organization/community, all of which impact the way a person is perceived and received by others, as well as how they perceive and receive the world around them.

**Equity:** The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

**Inclusion:** Creating an environment of open participation from all individuals with different ideas and perspectives where everyone feels they have a voice, are valued and feel validated.

**Intent versus Impact:** A concept applied typically when there is a negative outcome or experience. Intent is a crucial aspect of our actions, and it does not negate the impact to ourselves or another whether intentional or unintentional.

**Identity:** The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.

**Microaggression:** Term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

**Belonging:** Desire to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships where one can be authentic and a part of something bigger than themselves.

### Things to Know

#### Start with Using Inclusive Language

Our language is a demonstrated action. Sororities ultimately are about people – we say we care about people and truly empowering women, which means all women. The language we use when we speak to PNMs reveals the values held by the Panhellenic community. Thinking about referring to "guest functions" versus "date functions" can be small changes with a major impact. Our language signals what biases we hold and is framed by our knowledge and experiences. Inclusive language is essential to our being able to hold space for all women and their intersectional identities that are different from our own. Working to not make assumptions about a PNM and demonstrating transparency with PNMs allows us to foster a connection. Our words are meaningful and impact our ability to maintain relevance and increase the

diversity of representation in our Panhellenic community. We cannot say that we value mental health and not recognize that our words can cause harm by creating anxiety or additional stress for PNMs. The language our College Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors use in conversations with PNMs, with each other and in social media posts, speaks to our commitment to making women from all backgrounds and experiences feel welcome.

## *Embracing Authentic Conversations*

Authentic conversations are genuine and serve as a bridge to the concepts of understanding, belonging and inclusion. Sometimes, in recruitment, recruiters and PNMs conversations steer clear of certain topics and can often feel surface level that may promote a façade that can lead to temporary belonging. College Panhellenic officers should promote opening recruitment conversations to topics previously considered "off-limits" for some, like exploring one's passions and sharing how a chapter's actions align with the organization's values, which can lead to greater realism. Centering the PNM in the conversation allows for us to truly get to know that person for who the PNM is, her interests and what makes her unique. That type of genuineness leads members to further understand a PNM and themselves, or vice versa. This level of understanding allows a PNM to feel welcomed.

## *Speaking Transparently about the Membership Experience*

College Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors should speak transparently about the costs of membership and disclose the time commitments involved. When PNMs inquire about the costs of membership, they can be labeled in the membership selection process as questionable because of a worry about whether they can afford membership. This can come from a place of care, because we do not want to place the individual in a potentially challenging situation. However, College Panhellenic officers need to challenge chapters on campus to question those assumptions when this occurs. With the increased number of first-generation students coming to college, these questions are likely to present more often.

## *Embracing an Authentic Panhellenic Identity*

We need to be honest about who the Panhellenic community is, as a collective. We will continue to seek temporary fixes to create a perception or avoid criticism around diversity, equity and inclusion if we cannot be truthful about where the community falls short and make actual systemic change that affects the root causes of the issues. Create opportunities to hear from everyone when there are issues, and when the most marginalized members share their thoughts, listen to them, take it seriously and elevate their concerns. We must also recognize that our "efforts" to avoid criticism or create a perception that we are diverse, through tokenism, is causing harm to our marginalized members who identify with whomever we are tokenizing. It also is likely off-putting to the underrepresented communities the Panhellenic community is attempting to reach.

In our efforts to be authentic, we should be knowledgeable about the many pathways to sorority membership on campus, especially the culturally based sororities on campus (e.g., National Pan-Hellenic Council, National Multicultural Greek Council, National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations or National Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Panhellenic Association). Our goal in recruitment should be to ensure PNMs find their place in the community, even if that is not within a Panhellenic chapter.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How would you recommend chapters that have never had discussions about diversity and inclusion begin to do so?

A great starting point is framing the need to engage in discussions about the need for the sisterhood to be more inclusive so that members can support one another in more meaningful ways. Not including "diversity, equity and inclusion" in the titling can help introduce the content in a less intimidating way for some. Having one-off conversations with individual members to discuss why these conversations are important allows one to build support within the chapter and/or Panhellenic community to start these conversations. Having the opportunity to explore one's identity often provides a path to understanding the lenses that different members bring to the table and the ones missing from the collective table. The Anti-Defamation League also has resources for programming available here that may be beneficial.

### How can we take this new information into our campus environment when the acceptance of diversity, equity and inclusion looks different, especially during recruitment?

Start with your individual, immediate span of influence. Talk as a Panhellenic Executive Board about why diversity, equity and inclusion are important and equip recruitment counselors, delegates and other Panhellenic officers to begin conversations within their respective chapters of affiliation. Find collaborators across the Panhellenic community or in other organizations to host programming for the campus. If there are resource centers who engage in cultural, identity-based or diversity and inclusion programs on campus, use your social media platforms to help amplify their messages. Speak to campus administrators about the needs on the campus. If your campus has a student government, hold them accountable as the advocacy arm for students to call attention to the issues that are not being addressed on campus. Host a Panhellenic community-wide program on the importance of having a diversity, equity and inclusion program tackling implicit bias and/or inclusive language prior to recruitment.

### How do you have these conversations on campuses that are Extremely White Institutions (EWIs) or Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)?

Drawing on the answer above, start with your self-work. Our work in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion should not be about us. If it becomes about us, then we need to step back from the action. When we are in positions of power, we need to ensure we surround ourselves with those who have different lenses than we have to allow us to be inclusion-focused. Learn from our own biases and fears. Taking the Harvard Implicit Association Test, or IAT, can be helpful to unmask our individual areas of implicit bias. Journaling, practicing and self-reflection allow us to be mindful about areas for continued development. Do not shy away from the challenge. Attend campus and community cultural, identity-based or other diversity, equity and inclusion programs while inviting others. Take advantage of moments when they present themselves to engage in the internal conversations within the chapter and beyond. Use your sphere of influence to build coalition and collaboration. Make sure your sphere is representative, and if it's not, work to remedy that element first.

## Resources

- Harvard Implicit Association Test, or IAT.
- YouTube series: What Not to Say (BBC Three).
- Active Ways to Help Make Fraternity/Sorority Life More Inclusive by A. Hillard.
- The Moment of Microaggression: The Experience of Acts of Oppression, Dehumanization, and Exploitation by Michael Dover.
- Racist is a Tough Little Word: The Definition has Grown Over Time by John McWhorter.
- Microaggressions in Everyday Life (4 minutes).

- [What Is the Biggest Misconception About Racism?](#) (3 minutes).
- [Stop Saying "That's So Gay!": 6 Types of Microaggressions That Harm LGBTQ People](#) by Dr. Kevin L. Nadal.
- [13 Microaggressions People with Disabilities Face](#) by Wendy Lu.
- [The Six Signature Traits of Inclusive Leadership: Thriving in a Diverse New World](#) by Deloitte University Press.

## What Can I Do Now?

It is crucial that we now start thinking about what we can do next. Here are three action items:

- Be vigilant. Learn from our own biases and fears. Take the Harvard Implicit Association Test, or IAT, to help to unmask our individual areas of implicit bias. Journaling, practicing and self-reflection allow us to be mindful about areas for continued development. Continue to read, learn, dialogue and grow.
- Check yourself. Our work in the areas of diversity, equity and inclusion should not be about us. If it becomes about us, then we need to step back from the action. When we are in positions of power, we need to ensure we surround ourselves with those who have different lenses than we have to allow us to be inclusion-focused.
- Name it. Being silent in instances where inappropriate jokes or actions are expressed, based on how people identify, is not enough. When someone commits these acts, you have to be prepared to name it, call it what it is – problematic. Phrases such as "That really is not funny," "Can I give you some feedback?," "Help me understand what you meant by that," or "Tell me more" may be helpful conversation starters to share the impact of someone's words or actions. Also, be willing to have conversations about your own actions and listen to how they may have impacted or harmed others.

## TACKLING TOKENIZATION WITHIN THE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH EXPERIENCE

### Description

In an attempt to be inclusive and market the Panhellenic experience, we often fall into the tokenization trap. We believe that if we share pictures or feature the stories of our marginalized members, those like them will want to join. Other times we are aware of the perceptions of Panhellenic sororities being sources of problematic beliefs (racism, homophobia, etc.), and we want to highlight that our women do not think or believe "that way." We then choose to use social media outlets or other forums to showcase our members who represent marginalized identities. Further, we think if we pair the two women who share one aspect of their identities (e.g., they are both lesbians) together during sisterhood round, that we are doing the right thing. This is, in fact, the tokenization trap. It's a symbolic effort that gives the appearance there is representation within the chapter or that the chapter is inclusive. We want to honor and embrace our members without singling them out or spotlighting them just because of the difference they bring to the chapter.

### Shared Language

*Tokenization:* The practice of doing something only to prevent criticism and give the appearance that people are being treated fairly or the space is inclusive by utilizing someone from a marginalized social identity group to ensure the perception of fairness or inclusivity.

*Power:* Ability to decide who will have access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself and/or the course of events.

*Intersectionality:* "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." - Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017)

### Things to Know

*Recognizing How and Why Tokenization Shows Up*

Tokenism shows up in a variety of ways:

- Asking someone to speak on behalf of an entire group.
- Using a person in your marketing or advertising materials to give the perception that the group, product, etc. is for that type of person.
- Believing that because you have one person from a social identity group, everything is OK.
- Applying your one friend with disabilities experiences to everyone within that community.
- A stereotyped character in the media.

These and countless other examples occur in life, including the sorority experience. The tokenization trap can emerge from "good intentions" as we believe we are working towards inclusion. The reality is it can leave those individuals feeling like the identities they bring to the involved chapter or the Panhellenic community are the only ways that we see them. A classic example of tokenism within a Panhellenic sorority is highly encouraging and electing a marginalized member into your diversity, equity and inclusion leadership position when they may not have initially been interested.

## *Avoiding the Tokenization Trap*

A way to avoid tokenism is to focus on becoming an inclusive rather than a diverse space. If the space is inclusive, you are likely to draw in a more diverse population. Whether we like it or not, each chapter in the Panhellenic community reflects the other. Therefore, if it is not a community-wide effort, it will likely fail, and chapters will fall back into the stereotype of Panhellenic sorority women regardless of whether that is true for you. The reality is that because most of the PNMs we recruit are connected to us through Panhellenic, we must be active in community-wide reform as well.

In some instances, diverse chapters struggle with identity and retention because they lack the education needed to support the variety of experiences. They also tend to struggle with developing a chapter identity. If the chapter is focused on creating an inclusive space for people who are committed and willing to uphold the mission and values of the organization, that chapter is more likely to draw in more PNMs with a variety of social identities and a focus on the chapter's purpose. Inclusion ultimately will lead to diversity. Diversity *might* lead to inclusion, but it is unlikely to happen without several bumps in the road along the way.

Think about it this way – if we have Jewish members within our Panhellenic community, but we never consider ways in which we can be inclusive of their experience (e.g., avoiding programming on Jewish High Holidays), that is just diversity. However, if we work to ensure that we are actively avoiding all major religious holidays (Christian, Jewish, Muslim, etc.) in our programming calendar, then we are acting with intentional inclusionary practices. The first may lead to other Jewish women wanting to join through relationships with the current members you have who are Jewish. The second allows us to demonstrate active steps towards inclusion, which will likely attract others and does not exploit anyone's identities in the process. The point is to create an inclusive space regardless of the current members' identities. We want to create a space that is welcoming to all holistically and not just some.

## *Learning about Other Cultures Without Exploiting Our Members*

Using non-people resources (unless they are professionals in the diversity, equity and inclusion space) is a less burdensome way to engage in ongoing education efforts for our chapter and ourselves, when looking for information. This means read books, articles, blogs, watch TV shows and movies and use the internet to its fullest ability to find the answers we seek. Do not make your lack of knowledge the burden of marginalized people. In the recruitment context, this means not burdening marginalized people with conversations about potentially problematic themes or outfits. Instead of asking our members about the best T-shirt fit for each individual, we should seek out a fit that would be flattering for all of our members or offer multiple T-shirt cuts; this also helps with reducing the sameness in outfits.

## *Honoring and Celebrating Our Members*

We can avoid or prevent tokenization by educating ourselves and not relying on others, being honest about who is in our Panhellenic community and honoring and celebrating our members as a collective. Honoring and celebrating our members means being aware of our differences, respecting that difference in our language, decisions, themes (e.g., social and recruitment) and actions. We can honor our members by learning about their culture, their identities and how their everyday life is different from our own.

## *Infusing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion into Everything*

Lastly, if the Panhellenic community is truly committed to diversity, equity and inclusion work, we must not let this work fall completely to the diversity and inclusion officer and instead infuse the work into everything we do. Thinking about all aspects of the membership experience, not just recruitment, allows Panhellenic community chapters to explore areas of development, education and more sincere practices of inclusive leadership within their chapters and beyond.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *How can tokenizing be bad when I don't mean it that way?*

Tokenizing someone is self-interested and that is why it is harmful. You are using someone else for who they are for the gain of the Panhellenic community. If you are using someone on the Panhellenic social media outlets, or other marketing materials, to give the perception that the community is diverse, you distill that individual down to identities they cannot change for that chapter's, or the Panhellenic community's, gain. Tokenization effectively implies that one identity of the individual is what is most important to us, or the only thing we see about the person. This can impact a recruitment counselor's ability to engage with the group or offer feedback to PNMs about what kind of experience they may encounter based upon an identity group.

### *How do we avoid tokenizing a member?*

Be thoughtful about your intent. Ask yourself, "What are my intentions here?" Then, think about what the impact may be to others. If the intent is aligned with celebrating or honoring members for who they are, great. If not, rethink the initial idea/plan, spend some time researching other ideas to accomplish the same goal, or ask a friend/advisor who is not exactly like you but not exactly like the person you are worried about tokenizing for their thoughts/ideas.

### *How do I know when I've tokenized someone?*

Did you ask something just because the person is a member of a specific social identity group? Did you promote individuals on media platforms because of the difference they represent? Did you do whatever you did in order to avoid criticism from members or non-members? These are the types of questions we can be asking ourselves when we have concerns about tokenizing someone. You can also check in with the person you are concerned about tokenizing, and you must be prepared for the person to share frustration, hurt or other feelings/thoughts.

## Resources

- [8 Ways People of Color are Tokenized in Nonprofits](#) by Helen Kim Ho.
- [Tokenism: The Result of Diversity Without Inclusion](#) by Tonie Snell.

## What Can I Do Now?

It is crucial that we now start thinking about what we can do next. Here are three action items:

- We should all first start by thinking of examples of tokenization that we have perpetuated, been present for or experienced ourselves. Keeping an inventory of these memories can assist in avoiding the mistake in the future.
- If you are concerned about tokenizing someone, it is likely there is a reason to be concerned. Rethink your current plan. Figure out your "why" for doing what you are doing or how you are going about it.
- Ultimately, tokenizing someone is not proof of progress. We must actually address the systemic issues that caused the need to tokenize someone in the first place (e.g., not enough pictures of marginalized members on an Instagram page or a lack of knowledge about a specific identity group). We must ask ourselves, "What about our organization actually supports marginalized members?" We must also be constantly asking ourselves, "Are we doing this for the optics?" and "Are we doing this as a way to 'profit' as an organization?"

## BUILDING AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS IN VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON SPACES

### Description

As we grow the membership of our Panhellenic chapters and throughout the membership experience, our goal should be to engage in authentic relationships built upon respect and valuing each other's identities. At our core, every human has a desire to belong. Within sorority life, we offer a sisterhood that provides a sense of family away from home. Our ability to create spaces where every PNM and sister feels valued, validated and that their voice matters is embedded in the principles of integrity, respect and regard for others. Our abilities to support one another are based on our capacity to understand each other's experiences, and the lenses by which we view the world and it views us become essential. Being conscious and conscientious about getting to know another human, and allowing the person to get to know us, means we have to hold space that signals to the person – "Hey, I want to get to know you. The real YOU. Not just who you think you should be in this recruitment setting." And, "I want you to get to know me. The real ME." This is especially true for PNMs and our members who identify as Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) or other marginalized or minoritized group identities. In the virtual space, we need to be mindful that not everyone may be in a position to share all aspects of themselves. Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors need to also share with PNMs to make conscientious efforts to be aware of their bias (further discussed in the *Addressing Implicit Bias* section) when it arises.

### Shared Language

***Belonging:*** Desire to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive and significant interpersonal relationships where one can be authentic and a part of something bigger than themselves.

***Genuine conversations:*** These types of interactions are real, authentic and honest. They are non-judgmental and involve active listening, seeking to understand and giving grace.

***Understanding:*** The ability to empathetically and sympathetically be aware of others' experiences.

***Identity:*** The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a person is definitively recognized or known. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.

***Inclusion:*** Creating an environment of open participation from all individuals with different ideas and perspectives where everyone feels they have a voice, are valued and feel validated.

***Marginalized/Minoritized Groups:*** A community of people whose access to institutional and structural power has been severely limited regardless of the size of the population. As a result, the community is constantly being disenfranchised and disempowered by the dominant population.

***Intersectionality:*** "Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LBGTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things." - Kimberlé Crenshaw (2017)

### Things to Know

#### *Working to Intentionally Create an Inclusive Chapter/Community*

Active efforts to foster inclusion are needed to avoid exclusionary behavior. From initiating a relationship with a PNM to maintaining that authenticity throughout the membership experience means centering members and the identities represented within the decision-making, language used and ongoing efforts to

program in an intentional way. An example of that intentional work is in ensuring our programming calendars are built to avoid holidays from all faiths; and, if we have student athletes in our chapter, we work to avoid scheduling conflicts with their sports' calendar. If we have a chapter facility with food service provided, we should be working with the housing corporation, or college/university, to ensure that the food options provided automatically include gluten-free, kosher, vegan and non-pork options with each meal. When we engage with PNMs, our intentional efforts to value our current members sends a message to PNMs that there is a place for them within our organization. If we feature videos on our social media, do we take steps to provide a closed-caption option or automatically build in subtitles? Whether in-person or virtual recruitment is taking place, are we taking steps to be as inclusive as possible for disabled individuals who may wish to join our organizations? Sometimes this may mean revising the Panhellenic recruitment rules to refocus energy from frills to dismantling systems that promote exclusion. Remember, what we permit, we promote.

### *Avoiding Speaking Ill of Other Chapters*

If we are focused on building authentic relationships, then we should focus on engaging in conversations that promote sorority life and offering to PNMs that we want them to find their home within the community. College Panhellenic leaders and recruitment counselors should help chapters and PNMs understand that when they are negative about other chapters, it comes across catty and plays into the stereotype about Panhellenic sorority members. This is antithetical to what we should be focused on when cultivating a more inclusive recruitment experience. Instead, our focus should be on what makes each chapter unique or how the Panhellenic sorority experience differs from the culturally-based sorority experience. How do we support the campus and community? In what organizations are our members engaged? What steps do we take to promote anti-racism and educate our members?

### *Finding a Home Away from Home*

People are hard-wired to want to belong. One of the points we emphasize in the Panhellenic recruitment process is the fact that the sorority will function as a home away from home for individuals. We share that we believe that we all matter. The absence of belonging causes suffering and creates anxiety and self-doubt. When we move away from an emphasis on "fitting in" to a place of assessing how we make space within the Panhellenic community for women of all identities and backgrounds, we help PNMs feel they may be able to see themselves within a chapter or Panhellenic community as a whole. Allowing them to drive the conversation creates the opportunity for us to get to know them and the aspects of their viewpoints, perspectives and identities that are most salient to them.

### *Centering the PNM in the Conversation*

Lastly, College Panhellenic officers and recruitment counselors should work to avoid having the "same" conversation with each PNM and encourage chapters to follow suit. Likely, you can recall your own recruitment experience where maybe you answered nearly the same questions regardless of the organization you were meeting with. College Panhellenics and chapters often unintentionally create barriers to more authentic conversations, instead structuring things so on one day we have these conversations and on the next, we focus on these other typical questions. Instead you need to ask, how would you get to know someone? How would you want someone to approach you if the goal was to build authentic relationships? These answers are where we want to focus our energies. Think about how we can treat PNMs each as the unique individuals they are and will be if they accept membership in a Panhellenic chapter. If we don't actively seek to get to know them for who they are, then it will likely be difficult for us to diversify the chapters within the Panhellenic community. It will also be difficult for PNMs to identify where they most feel confidently themselves.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *What makes a conversation feel genuine?*

Being genuine and feeling a sense of genuineness is a major key to belonging and inclusion. After a while, the surface level talk gets old, and we have a significant need to dig deeper. Along with a need to take our conversations to the next level is also our ability to have conversations that allow us to learn from different perspectives. Genuine conversations are hard, because many times, we're waiting to respond instead of listening and truly attempting to understand the other person's point of view. We also get stuck in auto pilot and surface level conversations because of how we've been conditioned to communicate. A major reason why we have conversations that lack depth is because we aren't fully present or really sure what to talk about because we don't know the person across from us beyond the basics. That is why there is so much power in telling your story and hearing others'. Learning someone's story humanizes them, allows you to understand their perspective more and encourages you to be more inclusive of their experiences in the future.

### *How do I engage in genuine conversations during recruitment?*

Be mindful of potential distractions, especially if you are engaged in virtual recruitment. Work to actively listen and engage without distraction – physically and mentally. This increases your ability to recall information, especially when it comes to the member selection process. Acknowledge how your own lens, identities, experiences and biases may be impacting how you vibe with PNMs. Dig deeper into their perspectives to help you understand their lenses. Who are they at their core? What is important to them? How have they stayed connected to those who are important to them during this time? What does connection look and feel like to them? What are they looking for in a sorority experience?

## Resources

- *Daring Greatly* by Dr. Brené Brown.
- *Personal Conflict Management: Theory and Practice* by Suzanne McCorkle and Melanie Reese.
- Brene Brown: How Vulnerability Can Make Our Lives Better by Dan Schawbel.
- Lean Into Your Vulnerability With This 1 Chart by Lisa Olivera.
- 15 Reasons Our Actions are Incongruent with our Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion "Values" by Christina Parle.
- The Power of Vulnerability (20 minutes).

## What Can I Do Now?

It is crucial that we now start thinking about what we can do next. Here are three action items:

- Think about the majority of the conversations you have on a daily basis. How many of those feel genuine versus surface level? Remember that practice makes permanent. Thinking through how we can change the way we engage on the regular to practice more active listening skills is a necessary step.
- If your chapter will be conducting recruitment virtually, what is the best place for you to engage in conversations? Consider what you may need to remove from your environment so that you may be fully present. You may need to have conversations with family, roommates, etc. to share what recruitment is like for you and share what you need from them to be successful. Encourage PNMs to do the same.
- Audit your standard questions. What questions have been your "go-to" in the past in recruitment or were asked of you as a PNM that aren't really relevant or are problematic? Identify questions that you would want to be asked of you if someone were trying to get to know you. Then, vet those questions with whether they are open-ended, unassuming and foster space for authenticity.

## CULTIVATING EQUITABLE MEMBERSHIP GROWTH PRACTICES

### Description

Equity and equality do not mean the same things. If we are to examine membership growth through a lens that includes equity, then we have to acknowledge that there are major issues with power and privilege that play out within sorority life. Dr. Peggy McIntosh shared, "Access to privilege doesn't determine one's outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them." One of the unique selling points that we offer within sorority recruitment is that membership grants access to a network that exists beyond the collegiate years. Our responsibility is on working to cultivate equitable practices that render the value of women's empowerment within sorority more accessible and remove barriers from membership to serve in leadership. This requires us to engage with a critical lens and confront problematic actions within our organization and chapters, including some traditions and thinking outside the box.

### Shared Language

**Equity:** The fair treatment, access, opportunity and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

**Power:** Ability to decide who will have access to resources; the capacity to direct or influence the behavior of others, oneself and/or the course of events.

**Privilege:** Unearned access to resources or power only readily available to some people as a result of their group membership. Privilege exists on multiple levels – societal/cultural, institutional, interpersonal and individual.

**System:** A set of things working together as parts of a mechanism or an interconnecting network.

**Systemic:** Relating to a system, especially as opposed to a particular part.

### Things to Know

#### Avoiding the "Perfect" PNM Myth

Let's just accept that there is no such thing as a perfect person. If we can do that, then it follows that there is also no such thing as a "perfect" PNM. When you find yourself drawn to the idea of who would best "fit" within your chapter, consider that people aren't puzzle pieces to complete the picture you have in your head for what any one chapter's image is. In fact, often we should be looking for women that will make us better, challenge us to take our game to the next level and leave behind any premise of what that person looks like on the exterior. When we go into recruitment with an open mind, we allow people to surprise us. Our goal should be to work toward understanding our own biases as explained in the next section of this guide.

#### Abandoning the Frills in Recruitment

Advocacy within the campus Panhellenic community should be towards abandoning the frills of recruitment, including signature virtual backgrounds, ring lights and/or specific items that individuals are encouraged to place in their backgrounds for PNMs to observe. If we are talking about in-person recruitment, is that signature food or drink truly how we want PNMs to evaluate our chapter? If that is what stands out to them, what does that say about what kind of sorority experience they are looking to have during their time? If we are going to drive our conversations towards authenticity, then we should be able to engage in meaningful events without all of the frills. These frills often drive up the costs for PNMs and the chapter thereby directly impacting affordability. We should be working towards establishing a cost structure that is aligned with what

is essential. If we don't critique our current practices, then we may further create spaces where individuals question our relevance.

### Encouraging Recruitment of Juniors, Seniors, International and Nontraditional Students

Membership in a sorority is for a lifetime, not just the collegiate years. It's time for some honest, truthful dialogue within our Panhellenic community about the "who" we are looking to have in chapters. This may mean that we need to consider having bilingual recruitment resources to allow students to share what sorority membership is and what it is not with their families if English is not the family's primary language. Whether that's working with the inter/national organization headquarters or a campus office to create these materials, doing so speaks to our readiness to accept PNMs who may not have a cultural equivalent reference point to sorority membership. There are so many media stereotypes that negatively portray membership, we need to take initiative to provide resources that accurately represent the value of membership. What conversations do we need to have about friend groups or new member class cliques that may currently exist within our chapter? If we are adding individuals who fall into any one of these categories, are we working towards achieving a membership that is inclusive at all levels? These are the areas that we need to address proactively.

### Discussing finances transparently

If we are worried about the costs of membership being a deterrent, then we need to evaluate our spending and budgeting to create a more affordable experience. The true member benefit in our sisterhood should not be based on superficial things. If COVID-19 has taught us anything, it should be that we don't need to have the most sensational socials to foster connection. Being prepared to speak to the financial and time obligations in an open manner provides the opportunity for PNMs who are on a budget to consider how they afford the experience. Our focus should be on how we grow and develop by virtue of our membership.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### How do we budget with affordability in mind?

Work to build your budget backwards. What is a reasonable cost of membership? Establish that as a baseline. Determine how much money that will bring in based upon your total membership. Identify the percentages of your budget that you want to allocate to certain categories. Challenge officers to then align their plans and event costs to what they have available based upon those amounts. This is a different way of thinking through finances but can often lead to a more affordable experience.

### How Can I Work to Change the Systems?

Research and familiarize yourself with who owns what system that you are trying to change. The way you go about dismantling systems is by first understanding the basis of the system and under whose control it currently rests. Is it an inter/national organization policy? Is it a National Panhellenic Conference policy or procedure? Or is it a College Panhellenic bylaw or recruitment rule? The answer is that it could be addressed in all three. Identifying what you want to change will help you determine how best to move forward with advocacy efforts. Simply creating a petition doesn't foster change alone. Being specific and intentional about what you want to see happen renders you more effective in your advocacy efforts.

## Resources

- 5 Myths (and Realities) about Zero-based Budgeting by Shaun Callaghan, Kyle Hawke and Carey Mignerey.

- Anti-Defamation League.

- [Human Rights Campaign.](#)

- [Human Rights Watch.](#)

- [NAACP.](#)

- [NOW.](#)

- [TASH.](#)

## What Can I Do Now?

It is crucial that we now start thinking about what we can do next. Here are three action items:

- Think of more systemic changes the Panhellenic community and chapters could make that is not just centered on achieving more diversity. Examples might be removing barriers to joining the organizations, encouraging and driving change within the larger Panhellenic community on campus or focusing on inclusion rather than diversity.
- Create space for authentic, original voices to speak for themselves whenever possible. If there is an opportunity for minoritized voices to speak for themselves? Then foster that space. We should not be speaking over others or telling their stories for them. Fostering equity means that we listen more than we speak. What voices are missing from our decision-making tables?
- Take on issues, do not take them over. There are times when minoritized groups are engaged in self-advocacy and we step in to try to help only to derail their efforts. We can take over an issue which can erase or silence their voices. Our goal should be to ask first, "What do you need?" or "How can I assist you?" as that is part of solid allyship and coalition-building.

## ADDRESSING IMPLICIT BIAS

### Description

Implicit biases are unavoidable but manageable. Circumstances such as recruitment increase the chances that implicit bias will impact the experience for everyone involved. Because recruitment is such a fast-paced event where we are having to make quick decisions about people, it significantly increases the likelihood that our implicit biases will play a role in the process. Implicit bias is the automatic associations we have, unintentionally and unconsciously, that impact our actions, behaviors and understanding. They are associations of stereotypes with people and/or situations based on our involuntary attitudes learned over time.

### Shared Language

*Bias:* A preference for or prejudice against a person or group of people.

*Explicit Bias:* Operates on a conscious level; often arises as the direct result of a perceived threat. Expression of explicit bias (e.g., hate speech, discrimination) occurs as a result of deliberate thought.

*Implicit Bias:* Operates on a subconscious level; often runs contrary to your conscious beliefs; triggered through automatic mental associations we make between people/idea/objects and the attitudes and stereotypes we hold.

*Social Identities:* The groups that we fall into and that we associate ourselves with based on identities we cannot change. Social identities can provide people with a sense of self-esteem and a framework for socializing, and it can influence their behavior.

*Personal Identities:* Encompasses our personality traits, things that are special to us and things that make us distinct from other individuals. Focused on the individual, fluid over time, self-categorization.

*Unlearn:* Discard (something learned, especially a bad habit or false or outdated information) from one's memory.

### Things to Know

#### We All Have Implicit Bias

Recruitment is a highly interactive process because members can typically see and converse with a PNM and the PNM sees and converses with the member. This level of interaction invites implicit bias especially because this is likely a first encounter with the other person. When we hear, see or experience new things, our brains are working to make meaning of this new experience. In making meaning, our brains are searching for previous interactions to help inform the current one. This is where we experience implicit bias. Our brains are just trying to help us out but sometimes that help is problematic because of our previous experiences and what we have been taught and learned over time.

This also means every single person has implicit biases. We develop our implicit biases through what we see, hear, what we have been taught by family, friends, school and the media. We do not want to confuse explicit and implicit bias. The specific difference between the two is explicit bias is conscious and typically involves intentional forms of bias or hate, whereas implicit is done on an unconscious level and is the result of associations our brains make. Implicit bias is *normal*, and we have a responsibility to check our biases. Many people may confuse implicit biases with assumptions and although they are connected, implicit biases are involuntary associations and sometimes do not reflect how we actually feel. They are also typically rooted in stereotypes we have been taught or developed throughout our lives. Many times, our implicit bias shows up in the form of assumptions.

A good example might be that a PNM is talking about the person she is dating, and we automatically think the individual referenced is a man. Again, that is rooted in what we have personally learned or experienced and is the majority experience that dominates the culture in our country. It is *OK* we have been taught that, but we have a responsibility to unlearn some of the information we have been taught in order to be more inclusive of others.

## How and When Implicit Bias Emerges

Implicit bias is likely to emerge throughout our conversations with PNMs, and we have to acknowledge and attempt to block those automatic associations. As mentioned before, this happens because many recruitment-related interactions are firsts, so our brains are trying to figure the person out. Whether we are in person or virtually, implicit bias is highly likely to impact the experience. In regard to virtual recruitment in particular, implicit bias might just generally be heightened due to the new form of recruitment. Specifically, because we are entering PNMs spaces in new ways, we are opened up to additional opportunities for our implicit biases to impact the conversation. We are likely in some personal space of theirs virtually (e.g., home, local coffee shop) rather than being in the "controlled" environment of in-person recruitment. This virtual experience opens up new opportunities for our brains to make meaning in a way that might negatively impact the PNM.

Another area that implicit bias tends to show up is with matching during recruitment. Whoever is managing the matching process is also likely to experience implicit bias that needs to be checked and not acted on. Many times, the individuals who are tasked with matching members and PNMs believe that social identities are an appropriate reason to pair two people; however, matching should be focused on their ability to connect. Just because two women are Black does not mean they will get along or have anything in common to discuss. Every individual deserves to be seen in all of their social identities. We do not get to choose our social identities; it's just who we are. Many times, it's more beneficial to bring people together because of their personal identities and the things they have chosen to be or engage in. People must have the choice to participate in social identity-specific spaces instead of being forced into them.

## Steps to Checking Implicit Bias

It is important to acknowledge our own implicit bias, because if we do not, it will likely become more ingrained in our actions, behaviors and understanding. Once we have noticed it, we have two options; course-correct in the moment, or take a note to work to unlearn that implicit bias later. We must normalize saying, "I'm not sure why I said that/believed that/assumed that." Apologize if necessary and commit to being better. Providing ongoing education and opportunities for exploring different backgrounds and identities should become part of the fabric of the sisterhood and membership experience. In this manner we "normalize" opportunities to learn more and are better prepared to check implicit bias in the membership growth experience and beyond.

## Intent versus Impact

Lastly, it is important to acknowledge that many times we are well-intentioned in our actions. Even when our implicit biases are affecting our comments and behaviors, we still are likely not consciously hurting or stereotyping anyone. However, the reality is our intent does not invalidate our impact. We do not get to decide how something makes someone else feel, and we must take responsibility for the impact our actions and behaviors have on others and situations.

## Frequently Asked Questions

*But I don't even really feel that way, why would my brain just automatically make those connections?*

Likely something in your past has led you to believe the automatic connection. Again, these do not have to be memories you are actively aware of or beliefs you align with in your conscious decision-making. Nonetheless, your brain has made that connection, and you are responsible for engaging in new information to develop new associations.

*How does implicit bias impact our conversations?*

Implicit bias can impact our conversations, because it can lead us to believe, assume or think something about someone or their situation without confirmation of that information from the individual. If there is a time where we notice an implicit bias emerging, the best thing we can do is acknowledge it, check in for clarification as applicable and work to think about the root cause of that implicit bias. If/when our implicit bias is pointed out to us, we do not need to contextualize our intent. Rather, we apologize for the impact, determine what harm occurred that needs to be repaired and commit to not repeating that action in the future.

## Resources

- [Implicit Association Test by Project Implicit.](#)
- *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* by Anthony Greenwald and Mahzarin Banaji.

## What Can I Do Now?

It is crucial that we now start thinking about what we can do next. Here are three action items:

- Pay attention to your brain. Acknowledge your unintentional associations. Engaging in self-reflection and/or journaling can help you begin to identify if there are patterns to your thoughts and actions to raise your level of awareness.
- Actively work to unlearn the stereotypes and information that informs our implicit and explicit biases. A good first step in unlearning is taking an inventory of all the information you consume. Who are the authors of the books you are reading? What are the demographics of those closest to you (friends, family, mentors, colleagues, etc.)? Who do you follow on social media? What news, TV shows and movies do you watch? These are just a few questions you could start asking yourself and then identify the gaps in identities you rarely or never engage with. This might require you to change your daily routine, make significant changes to the information you consume and engage in uncomfortable situations; do it anyway! Engaging in this journey will assist you in normalizing the experiences of others.
- Don't let this work end with recruitment. Apply it to all facets of sorority life and your own personal life.

Q: I am in the process of creating a Diversity and Inclusion Committee of women in different chapters on my campus. How should I go about creating an application and what questions do you think I definitely need to have on it?

A: We recommend using a Google form or other survey option for individuals to share their thoughts in responding to the questions posed. You may want to inquire with other Panhellenic leaders who have established committees, as well. We recommend the following question prompts:

- Why is diversity, equity and inclusion important to you?
- What identities, experiences and ideas would you bring to the group?
- What goals would you like to see this group work toward?
- Have you served in similar positions for other organizations, or areas of campus? If so, where?

Q: How do we know if our Panhellenic community is headed in the right direction to make people involved more comfortable?

A: Assessments are essential to the work of knowing if you are headed in the right direction. Conducting a climate assessment to ascertain whether there are differences in quality of membership experience based upon social groups is an example. Remember, data tells a story – are you creating the opportunity to hear those stories. Use the data to inform the approach taken with educational programming, marketing, budgeting, etc.

Q: My council is in the process of adding a Diversity and Inclusion Committee. However, my advisor is worried that this will come across as pandering. Do you have any advice on how to implement this committee successfully?

A: Diversity, equity and inclusion is not a fad or trend. It's not going anywhere. In fact, the opposite is true. Determine the committee's charge or purpose. Recognize that the efficacy of the committee's work is based upon the Panhellenic community's willingness to engage in the work. Be certain to provide the necessary resources for the committee to execute.

Q: I know some of our rituals might have a Christianity component, how do we effectively include our sisters of other faiths into our ritual?

A: Have conversations about what ritual means to individual members in a secular way. Be mindful to place those parts of ritual within the context of the history of the organization. Inquire with the inter/national organizations what efforts are being made to cultivate a more inclusive ritual experience for individuals from all faiths.

Q: This isn't related to recruitment but I'm curious. I am the multicultural chair of my organization, but I am finding it hard to come up with virtual programming for my chapter to make it both fun and educational. I feel like now more than ever there are resources for learning but is there a good way to bring awareness to our sisters so that we can work on inclusion in our own chapter?

A: Watch a movie or video together, listen to a podcast or do highly active and engaging exploration together like the personal and social identity wheel, implicit association test, etc. Then, divide into discussion groups or pairs to share stories. Have groups share their takeaways or lessons learned. Survey your chapter to

explore aspects of identity they want to learn more about as a whole, then identify external resources for that exploration.

Q: How do you determine when an intervention is necessary? My school has a higher socioeconomic background for the most part and those women speak out a lot louder than people with lower socioeconomic statuses. How can we become inclusive if the majority of the members think we already are inclusive because it includes their population?

A: Creating an inclusive space means being intentional about inviting all voices to the table, validating the experiences shared and valuing the perspectives of those individuals. Based upon what you described, a candid conversation is needed when the majority is drowning out those minoritized people. This can also be where data can tell a part of the story. Doing an anonymous climate assessment can be truly helpful.

Q: Aren't our organizations inherently exclusive just based off the fact that only women are permitted to join? This also results in our organizations functioning in very heteronormative ways. (ex. we mix with fraternities, we cover photos of boys during recruitment — assuming that the women going through recruitment are straight). How can we be completely inclusive?

A: Yes, NPC sororities are exclusive to women and will therefore not be "completely inclusive." With that said, having a women's-only space allows the unique opportunity to explore that aspect of one's identity, and if done well, gain confidence. Achieving an inclusive space requires us to unlearn heteronormative concepts. There is evidence to show that women's affinity spaces are helpful.