

Case 10

The Interfraternity Council

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Bill Conners, advisor to the Interfraternity Council, faced the challenge of developing a promotional plan to increase membership in the university's six social fraternities. Although the percentage of the male student body who were members of a campus fraternity was about 1.5 percent above the national average of 7 percent, other universities in the region had from 2 to 25 percent higher participation in fraternities (see Table C10.1). Bill felt that an effective promotional campaign could increase membership and help position fraternities as an important part of campus life.

Background

A fraternity is an association of men selected in their college days by a democratic process. A student expresses interest in a fraternity and, in turn, a fraternity expresses interest in a student in a membership recruitment process known as "rush." A mutual interest results in an invitation for membership, followed by a period in which the pro-

TABLE C10.1. Male Student Body Membership in Fraternities As a Percent of Total Male Student Body

Membership	Percent of total
Local	8.5
Regional	8.7-10.2
National	7.0

spective member “pledges” or undergoes a trial period to learn about the fraternity and its members as well as demonstrate at or above the required level for formal initiation into the fraternity.

Fraternities have existed in the United States since the early 1800s. Today, there are 61 national and international fraternities. Most fraternities place emphasis on four areas: (1) scholarship, (2) leadership, (3) philanthropy, and (4) social activities.

According to the National Interfraternity Conference, Inc. (NIC), the 1989 undergraduate membership in the sixty-one collegiate social fraternities in the United States was a record 400,000 students. This figure represents 300,000 undergraduate members and 100,000 new pledges or initiates. The percentage of membership is approximately 7 percent of the total male undergraduate population at U.S. universities and colleges.

Membership has been increasing in recent years, as has the number of chapters on campuses throughout the United States. In the 1989 *Fraternity Fact Book*, the National Interfraternity Conference provided the following reasons why record numbers of students are joining social fraternities:

- Develops interpersonal skills
- Offers mutual assistance and understanding
- Assists in orientation to college life
- Offers advice and counsel
- Encourages scholarship
- Increases social poise
- Provides leadership and business training
- Fosters high ideals

Supporting Information

Although there are nearly seventy national college social fraternities in existence, fifty-eight of them are grouped into an advisory body called the National Interfraternity Conference. This organization, which was formed in New York City on November 18, 1909, meets annually and concerns itself with many problems confronting the fraternities.

Fraternities have undergone many changes in organization. The National Interfraternity Conference indicates that there are nearly 2 million members of fraternities, with more than 7,000 active chap-

ters. More than 2,800 of these chapters own their homes with a value of better than \$150,000,000. Since World War II, nearly 100 colleges and universities have invited fraternities and sororities on their campuses; only one has eliminated them.¹

Basic Expectations

In an effort to lessen the disparity between fraternity ideals and individual behavior and to personalize these ideals in the daily undergraduate experience, Nine Basic Expectations of fraternity membership have been established by the National Interfraternity Conference.² According to these expectations, a fraternity member will

- know and understand the ideals expressed in fraternity ritual and strive to incorporate them in daily life;
- strive for academic achievement and practice academic integrity;
- respect the dignity of all persons by not physically, mentally, psychologically, or sexually abusing or hazing any human being;
- protect the health and safety of all human beings;
- respect property of others by neither abusing nor tolerating abuse of property;
- meet financial obligations in a timely manner;
- neither use nor support the use of illegal drugs, and neither abuse nor support the abuse of alcohol;
- acknowledge that a clean and attractive environment is essential to both physical and mental health; therefore do all in his power to see that the chapter property is properly cleaned and maintained; and
- challenge all his fraternity members to abide by these fraternal expectations and will confront those who violate them.

A Few Statistics on Fraternity Men

- 71 percent of those listed in *Who's Who in America* belong to a fraternity.
- Of the nation's fifty largest corporations, fraternity men head forty-three.
- 85 percent of the Fortune 500 executives belong to a fraternity.

- Forty of forty-seven U.S. Supreme Court justices since 1910 were fraternity men.
- 76 percent of all congressmen and senators belong to a fraternity.
- U.S. president and vice president, except two in each office, born since the first social fraternity was founded in 1825, have been members of a fraternity.
- 63 percent of the U.S. president's cabinet members since 1900 have been fraternity members.
- An NIC report shows a majority of the 600 NIC fraternity chapters are above the All-Men's scholastic average.
- A U.S. government study shows that more than 70 percent of all those who join a fraternity/sorority graduate, while less than 50 percent of all nonfraternity/sorority persons graduate.
- Less than 2 percent of an average college student's expenses go toward fraternity dues.
- Over 85 percent of the student leaders on some 730 campuses are involved in the Greek community.
- Many celebrities were fraternity or sorority members, such as: Johnny Carson, Cindy Crawford, Michael Jordan, George Bush, George W. Bush, David Letterman, Bill Clinton, Anne Klein, Liz Claiborne, Jimmy Buffett, John Elway, Lou Gehrig, Martin Luther King Jr., Frank Gifford, Ted Koppel, Neil Armstrong, Amy Grant, Donna Mills, Elvis Presley, Jane Pauley, Faith Daniels, John Goodman, and Candice Bergen.³

The University's Six Fraternities

Bill was advisor to the six campus fraternities: (1) Delta Sigma Phi, (2) Delta Chi, (3) Kappa Alpha, (4) Kappa Sigma, (5) Pi Kappa Alpha, and (6) Sigma Nu. Fraternity membership represented about 7.5 percent of the male students enrolled at the university. Average costs for joining a fraternity at the university are shown in Table C10.2.

Research Data

As part of a marketing research class project, Bill worked with a student research team in conducting a survey of male students enrolled in courses at the university who were not members of a frater-

TABLE C10.2. Average Cost for Fraternity Membership

Fees for membership	Cost
<i>One-time fees</i>	
Pledging fee	\$35
Initiation fee	135
<i>Monthly fees</i>	
Pledge dues	\$30
Active dues	45

nity. The survey sought to gain insight into why these male students chose not to join. Bill furnished the group with a printout of all male students enrolled in the spring semester who were not members of a campus fraternity.

The research team working on this project drew a random sample of 150 students with local area telephone numbers. Of this sample, eighty students were surveyed using a questionnaire that sought (1) personal data on age, family income, high school activities, etc.; (2) awareness and knowledge of fraternities including the number on campus and cost of membership; (3) sources of influence on the decision not to join a fraternity; and (4) attitudes toward fraternities and fraternity activities.

The major findings of the study included the following:

1. Most respondents (70 percent) had little knowledge of the number of fraternities on campus or the cost of joining.
2. Juniors and seniors had more favorable attitudes toward fraternities than did freshmen and sophomores.
3. Most respondents (66 percent) had not read any material on fraternities before deciding not to join.
4. The most influential factor in the decision not to join was personal perception of fraternities (see Table C10.3).
5. Respondents saw fraternities as: (a) a good way to meet people, (b) helping people in the community, (c) being helpful when looking for a job, and (d) a brotherhood (see Table C10.4).

TABLE C10.3. Mean Scores on Level of Influence

Level of influence (descending order)	Mean value
1. Personal perceptions	2.6
2. Fraternity reputations	2.2
3. Finances	2.0
4. Peer influence	1.8
5. Family perceptions	1.8
6. Advertising/publicity	1.7
7. Religious beliefs	1.3

Scale: 1 = none; 2 = not too much; 3 = significant; 4 = most

TABLE C10.4. Mean Scores on Attitudinal Dimensions

Attitudinal dimensions	Mean value
1. You have to be rich to belong to a fraternity.	2.2
2. Fraternities are "rent-a-friends."	2.6
3. Fraternities are a good way to meet people.	4.3
4. Fraternities are a brotherhood.	3.6
5. Fraternities can help when looking for a job.	3.7
6. You do not need good grades to be in a fraternity.	2.6
7. You have to be a jock to be in a fraternity.	1.9
8. You have to do drugs to be in a fraternity.	1.6
9. You have to date sorority girls to be in a fraternity.	1.9
10. Only fraternity guys can date sorority girls.	1.9
11. Being in a fraternity is just for the time you're in college.	2.9
12. Fraternities help people in the community and on campus.	3.8
13. You have to drink to be in a fraternity.	2.2

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree.

The student research team analyzed the responses in Table C10.4 by student classification. This analysis revealed a significant difference between the attitudes of juniors and seniors as compared to freshmen and sophomores. Juniors and seniors had more favorable

attitudes toward fraternity membership than did freshmen and sophomores. The student research team concluded that continued exposure to fraternity members and their activities resulted in an increased positive attitude toward fraternity membership.

Promotional Plan/Budget

Bill was still undecided about (1) the target for marketing efforts, (2) what promotional strategy to undertake, (3) the content of promotional messages, and (4) how large a budget request to submit. The council did have about \$5,000 accumulated over the past three years for development. He felt he could gain council approval to use this over the next three years. He also had access to the university-wide area telephone service (WATS) line so he could use telemarketing as a part of the promotional effort.