
Open Expansion

The North American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), through its President & CEO, takes a position on each of the critical issues within the fraternity industry.

Expansion

Within the fraternity industry there are two primary positions. Expansion is positive because it provides students more choices and opportunities, brings new influence to a campus fraternal community, and provides new leadership. For others, they see expansion as a negative change; additional choices for students may mean a loss of membership and may mean that growth and progress will leave them behind.

The principle of open expansion is supportive of the associational rights of students to freely associate with peers and organizations of their choice. The NIC supports the associational rights of its members, but encourages them to work as a good faith partner with colleges and universities. As we work together, the NIC and its member fraternities seek equity in the application of student policy that permits students to form groups and organizations through established student organization registration processes.

Expansion also represents an opportunity to elevate a fraternal community by bringing in new groups that will infuse energy into a community, challenge the status quo, and create additional opportunities for personal and leadership development.

The NIC responds to the major expressed concerns.

We aren't ready for another chapter.

Just as is the case with any student organization, students and student interest will decide if and when a campus is ready for another fraternity chapter. The NIC has confidence in the students deciding if a particular chapter is offering something of value to its members. If it is, then students will join the organization and if it isn't, then its longevity will be minimal.

There are only so many men to go around.

The pool of prospective members is the total number of undergraduate men in a campus community. On most campuses, the size of the fraternity community is between 10 and 20% of all undergraduate men. Furthermore, we know that approximately 60% of the undergraduate population can be categorized as a "maybe joiner" and would consider a fraternity experience that meets his needs. Until the number of fraternity men on a campus begins to approach 75% of eligible undergraduate men then this is an unfounded worry.

We have to build up the weak chapters before we expand.

Chapters become weakened due to many factors: Poor recruitment techniques, cliques, hazing, lack of enforcement of risk management policies, lack of interest, poor internal leadership, weak mentoring by alumni, financial mismanagement, etc. Students listen to what is being promised during recruitment and if it isn't delivered after they become a member then they become disenchanted and drift away. Membership at that point has lost its value.

The college/university and the fraternity/sorority advisor are not responsible for the success or survival of a chapter. Continued support for struggling chapters is only advantageous if there is a clear road to recovery and all parties are heavily invested in the process.

We don't have the resources to provide to another chapter.

A campus fraternity/sorority advisor, already overworked and overburdened, may think of expansion and become concerned about their ability to continue to support additional chapters. That shouldn't be the response. A new chapter is one more opportunity for developing leadership, and the development of lifelong friendships; which will result in more invested alumni for the college/university, and additional philanthropic and community service efforts.

Expansion represents an opportunity to work with an additional national fraternity, and in doing so, brings more resources and support to a campus community. NIC members view expansion as an investment in a group of men and a campus community. Through this, there are significant opportunities to develop long term partnerships that are beneficial to the organization, campus, and most importantly, the men that are seeking a fraternal experience.

We already have plenty of chapters for them to choose between.

A law of nature is that you can't force a friendship. No matter how hard you try, it doesn't work. Undergraduate students have the right to determine with whom they will associate, and if a particular fraternity experience is right for them.

The university won't recognize a new chapter because the IFC won't recognize them and vice-versa.

This circle is unprincipled and intended to protect those who restrain free-trade and protect their perceived turf. Additionally, it is an inequitable application of student policy. The role of the IFC is to advocate for the success of the fraternity experience, not to serve as a gatekeeper to membership. Institutions should not abdicate their responsibility for the registration and recognition of student groups to another student group. Any group of men, obeying the applicable laws and following the regulations required of any student organization, should be recognized by a college/university, whether public or private.

In Conclusion

Each fraternity chapter can be considered a small business whose products should be the development of lifelong friendships, the development of leadership qualities and experience, the achievement of high academic accomplishments, and the development of philanthropic and community service activities. Chapters that fulfill those promises will find long-term success. For chapters that fall short, the chances of success are dubious. We owe it to students to continue to provide them an opportunity to choose. Expansion creates competition that promotes growth and progress. Expansion builds opportunities for values based fraternal experiences that are a benefit to individual students, host institutions, and the local community.