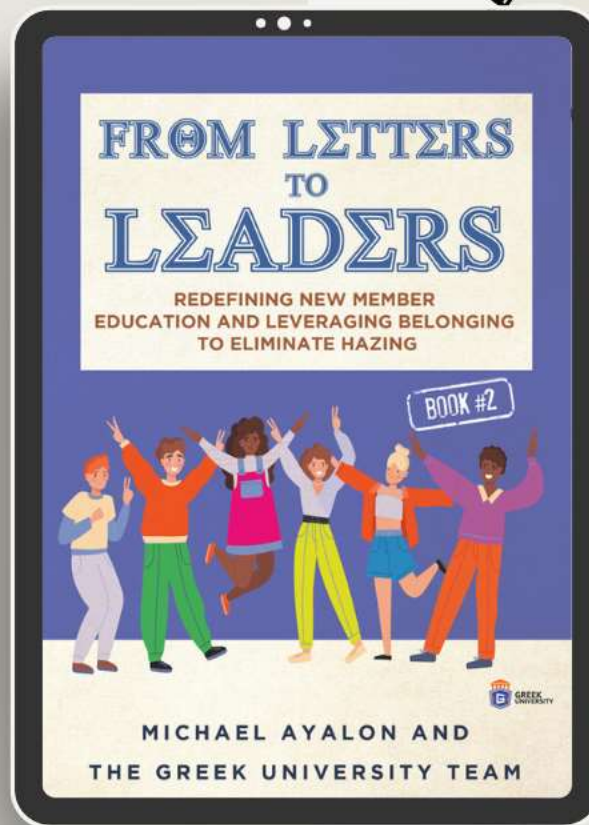




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facilitation guide



FOR FRATERNITY AND SORORITY
CHAPTERS, COUNCILS, & COMMUNITIES

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Facilitation Guide for *From Letters to Leaders*:

Redefining New Member Education and Leveraging Belonging to Eliminate Hazing

A Companion for FSL Educators, Chapter Advisors, and Headquarters Staff

Introduction: Rethinking New Member Education for the Next Generation

Learning Objectives

- Understand the purpose and philosophy of new member education reform.
- Reflect on how traditional “earning your letters” approaches can harm retention.
- Explore ways to customize membership education for Gen Z students.

Summary

Dr. Michael Ayalon sets the foundation by challenging outdated initiation models that emphasize hardship over belonging. He calls for replacing “earning your letters” with “living your values.” He proposes a four-year education model, continuous learning, and the integration of academics, service, leadership, and wellness throughout the member experience.

Discussion Questions

1. How does your current new member process reflect your organization’s stated values?
2. What parts of your program may unintentionally exclude or discourage participation?
3. What does a “customized” new member experience look like for today’s students?
4. How can your chapter build education around lifelong learning instead of short-term tests?
5. What should “earning your letters” truly mean today?

Activity

- *Membership Education Map*: Create a four-year outline for continuous learning opportunities—history, leadership, service, career preparation.

Values Connection

- Fraternity and sorority membership is not a test of endurance; it’s a lifelong pursuit of shared ideals.

Action Step

- Develop a one-page “Membership Syllabus” that clearly communicates expectations, GPA standards, and anti-hazing commitments for all new members.
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Chapter 1: Alpha to Omega — The Power of Sankofa in a Brief History of Collegiate Greek Letter Organizations (Tish Norman, M.Ed.)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the diverse history of Greek Life and its cultural roots.
- Recognize the interconnectedness of councils and traditions.
- Appreciate the concept of *Sankofa*—learning from the past to guide the future.

Summary

Ms. Tish Norman offers a sweeping history of fraternities and sororities across all councils, connecting heritage to modern identity. Through *Sankofa*, she reminds members to look backward to move forward—honoring past lessons while committing to inclusive and ethical growth.

Discussion Questions

1. What aspects of your organization's history are often misunderstood or overlooked?
2. How do race, gender, and culture shape fraternity/sorority identity today?
3. Why does knowing history matter for preventing hazing?
4. What does *Sankofa* teach us about leadership and responsibility?
5. How can chapters honor history while also evolving for modern needs?

Activity

- *Timeline of Belonging*: Create a visual timeline of your organization's major milestones, connecting each to lessons for the future.

Values Connection

- *Sankofa* reinforces the value of heritage and accountability—both essential to fraternity/sorority life.

Action Step

- Host a Founders' Day educational event featuring a discussion on the organization's evolution and values.

Chapter 2: A Perversion of Greek Culture — The Decline of Healthy New Member Processes (Joseph Thompson)

Learning Objectives

- Identify how “earning membership” has been distorted into unhealthy behaviors.
- Understand the historical link between hazing and organizational decline.
- Learn how recruitment and mentorship prevent harm.

Summary

Joseph Thompson traces how positive fraternity ideals became perverted through hazing, exclusion, and power dynamics. He argues that hazing persists because of poor recruitment, nostalgia, and control—not tradition. Healthy chapters recruit by values, mentor intentionally, and eliminate “weed-out” cultures.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do some members justify hazing as “tradition”?
2. How can recruitment mistakes lead to hazing?
3. What’s the difference between initiation and indoctrination?
4. How can your chapter reward belonging instead of endurance?
5. What role do alumni play in reinforcing or dismantling harmful practices?

Activity

- *The Cycle Diagram*: Map your chapter’s new member journey. Identify where belonging thrives and where power imbalances occur.

Values Connection

- True initiation builds character, not fear.

Action Step

- Rewrite your new member education manual to explicitly identify and replace outdated or harmful elements.

Chapter 3: Peer Education and Intervention — A Viable Tool to Prevent Hazing (Dr. Jason Meriwether)

Learning Objectives

- Understand the power of peer-led prevention and accountability.
- Identify opportunities for bystander intervention in chapter settings.
- Learn how to embed education into peer relationships.

Summary

Dr. Meriwether explains that peer influence can either reinforce harm or prevent it. Through education and empowerment, peers can interrupt dangerous behaviors early and reshape norms through dialogue and support.

Discussion Questions

1. Why are peers often the first to notice concerning behavior?
2. What makes peer accountability challenging in Greek settings?
3. How can peer educators make anti-hazing education more relatable?
4. What does healthy confrontation look like among friends?
5. What support do peer educators need from staff and alumni?

Activity

- *Peer Pledge:* Have members write one way they'll hold each other accountable this semester.

Values Connection

- Brotherhood and sisterhood mean protecting one another—even when it's uncomfortable.

Action Step

- Create a chapter “Bystander Intervention Squad” that monitors risk and fosters safety education.

Chapter 4: “What, Like It’s Hard?” — Empathy and Authentic Relationships for Active Intervention (Jamie Devin Wilson)

Learning Objectives

- Develop empathy as a leadership competency.
- Understand emotional intelligence as prevention.
- Strengthen authentic connection among members.

Summary

Jamie Devin Wilson uses humor and reflection to teach that empathy fuels action. Authentic relationships make intervention easier and prevent isolation that leads to harm.

Discussion Questions

1. How does empathy relate to accountability?
2. What stops members from speaking up?
3. How can vulnerability improve brotherhood/sisterhood?
4. What does “checking in” look like in your chapter?
5. How can empathy transform conflict resolution?

Activity

- *Empathy Mapping*: Pair members to share personal challenges and identify ways the chapter can show support.

Values Connection

- Compassion and empathy are the cornerstones of fraternal values.

Action Step

- Introduce “Empathy Minutes” into chapter meetings—brief member check-ins before business begins.

Chapter 5: Hidden Harms — Exploring Risk and Dangers of Perceived Low-Level Hazing (Mel Lewis)

Learning Objectives

- Recognize how small hazing behaviors escalate.
- Identify “hidden harms” like humiliation, fatigue, and emotional trauma.
- Build a culture that refuses to normalize risk.

Summary

Mel Lewis explains that most tragedies begin with “minor” violations that become accepted norms. Prevention starts with awareness and courage to challenge seemingly harmless behaviors.

Discussion Questions

1. What does “low-level” hazing look like in your organization?
2. Why do members overlook small harms?
3. What role does tradition play in normalization?
4. How can leaders reset cultural expectations?
5. What stories from your chapter’s history illustrate hidden harm?

Activity

- *Scale of Harm*: List chapter practices from “harmless” to “harmful.” Discuss gray areas and decide where to draw the line.

Values Connection

- Dignity and respect are incompatible with hazing at any level.

Action Step

- Conduct a “tradition audit” with alumni to identify and eliminate risk-prone activities.

Chapter 6: Considering Identity During New Member Education (Robert Wilson)

Learning Objectives

- Integrate identity awareness into recruitment and education.
- Recognize intersectionality within fraternity/sorority life.
- Build belonging across diverse experiences.

Summary

Robert Wilson emphasizes that inclusive education builds belonging and retention. By understanding members' identities—race, gender, orientation, faith, ability—chapters create safety and equity.

Discussion Questions

1. How do identity and belonging intersect in your chapter?
2. What biases might appear in new member education?
3. How can rituals be inclusive without losing authenticity?
4. What does “seeing the whole person” mean to you?
5. How can education highlight underrepresented voices?

Activity

- *Identity Circles*: Draw circles representing major identities. Reflect on which are celebrated, ignored, or misunderstood in your organization.

Values Connection

- Brotherhood and sisterhood transcend difference through respect.

Action Step

- Update recruitment and education materials to reflect diversity and inclusive language.

Chapter 7: Supporting a Culture of Mental Health (Greg Vogt)

Learning Objectives

- Prioritize mental health in new member programs.
- Identify early signs of distress.
- Promote wellness over burnout.

Summary

Greg Vogt returns to stress the importance of psychological safety in fraternity/sorority life. Supporting members through transition builds stronger retention and community trust.

Discussion Questions

1. How does new member stress affect performance?
2. What stigmas exist about mental health in your chapter?
3. How can leaders model wellness?
4. What campus resources are underutilized?
5. How can your chapter respond to crises compassionately?

Activity

- *Wellness Contract:* Each member writes one personal wellness goal and shares accountability partners.

Values Connection

- Caring for members is foundational to lifelong brotherhood/sisterhood.

Action Step

- Partner with the counseling center on campus for a “Mental Health 101” workshop.

Chapter 8: My Legacy Is Not Your Legacy (Dr. Pietro Sasso)

Learning Objectives

- Reframe legacy as inspiration, not imitation.
- Encourage personal contribution to tradition.
- Balance respect for history with innovation.

Summary

Dr. Sasso urges members to redefine legacy beyond lineage and repetition. Healthy chapters evolve while staying rooted in core values.

Discussion Questions

1. How do alumni influence chapter culture today?
2. When does legacy empower vs. limit growth?
3. How can you honor tradition without replication?
4. What personal legacy do you want to leave?
5. How can legacy inspire innovation?

Activity

- *Legacy Tree*: Chart traditions that should stay, evolve, or end—and who's responsible for stewarding them.

Values Connection

- Legacy is leadership in motion, not stagnation.

Action Step

- Develop a mentorship plan pairing alumni with new initiates to share lessons and leadership.

Chapter 9: Making Connections Between Existing and New Members (Cassie Perry, Edson O’Neale, Tricia Benitez)

Learning Objectives

- Strengthen multi-year engagement within chapters.
- Build unity across classes.
- Combat the “pledge class clique” effect.

Summary

The authors promote connection between members through intentional engagement strategies—mentoring, service, and shared leadership—to ensure long-term retention.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do new member classes sometimes isolate from older members?
2. What builds trust between new and active members?
3. How can events or mentoring bridge class divides?
4. What does “whole chapter unity” mean?
5. How can upperclassmen reinvest in the community?

Activity

- *Cross-Class Challenge:* Pair senior and new members to complete a shared project or service goal.

Values Connection

- Brotherhood/sisterhood thrives when all members feel connected.

Action Step

- Create an annual “Chapter Unity Week” celebrating multi-year connections.

Chapter 10: A United Front — Collaboration Between Student Organizations and Campus Leaders (Dr. Michael Ayalon)

Learning Objectives

- Build strong partnerships between students and administration.
- Understand collaboration as hazing prevention.
- Promote shared responsibility for student safety.

Summary

Dr. Ayalon explains how unity between Greek organizations and administrators can transform risk culture into shared accountability and progress.

Discussion Questions

1. What barriers exist between chapters and administrators?
2. How can open communication reduce risk?
3. What shared goals unite staff and students?
4. How can FSL offices empower peer leadership?
5. What does “co-ownership of safety” look like?

Activity

- *Stakeholder Map*: Identify key partners (FSL, risk, alumni, advisors) and define shared responsibilities.

Values Connection

- Collaboration reflects the values of trust and stewardship.

Action Step

- Host a “Town Hall for Change” featuring campus and Greek leaders addressing prevention strategies.

Chapter 11: The Effects of Membership Recruitment/Intake on Chapter Culture

By Dr. Ed Dadez and Edson O'Neale

Learning Objectives

- Understand how recruitment and intake processes shape chapter culture.
- Explore the importance of values-based selection and education.
- Identify the dangers of prioritizing numbers over quality and alignment.

Summary

Recruitment and intake are sacred processes tied to an organization's Ritual and values. Dr. Dadez and O'Neale emphasize that recruitment should not simply be about increasing membership; it should be about selecting individuals who will live the Ritual for life. When chapters chase numbers, they risk weakening their foundation and identity. Both current members and new members must approach the process with authenticity, respect, and a shared understanding of what the organization truly stands for.

Discussion Questions

1. How does your chapter currently balance quantity versus quality during recruitment?
2. What values or characteristics define the type of member your chapter should recruit?
3. How do miscommunications during recruitment harm chapter culture?
4. What does "living the Ritual for life" look like in action?
5. How can chapters ensure consistency between recruitment promises and new member experiences?

Activity

- *Values Alignment Audit:* Divide into small groups. Create two lists — what your chapter *says* it values during recruitment and what your actions actually show. Discuss discrepancies and ways to realign.

Values Connection

- Recruitment should reflect the highest ideals of your organization's founding Ritual — integrity, honesty, and brotherhood/sisterhood.

Action Step

- Review your chapter's recruitment messaging and rewrite it to align directly with your organization's stated values and Ritual.

Chapter 12: Networking Opportunities during New Member Education and Beyond

By Dr. Michael Ayalon

Learning Objectives

- Recognize the lifelong professional and personal value of networking.
- Learn strategies for building genuine, mutually beneficial connections.
- Connect fraternity/sorority relationships to future career opportunities.

Summary

Networking is more than exchanging business cards — it's about building genuine human connections over time. Dr. Ayalon illustrates this through powerful real-world stories, showing that success often stems from showing up, being authentic, and helping others without expecting immediate returns. Within the Greek community, every member has the opportunity to network from day one — in chapter meetings, alumni events, conferences, and collaborations. Those who develop this skill early on will carry it into every area of their lives.

Discussion Questions

1. How can your fraternity/sorority be a launchpad for professional success?
2. What are examples of authentic versus transactional networking?
3. How does service to others build stronger relationships?
4. What opportunities for networking exist within your Greek community right now?
5. How does networking align with your organization's mission or creed?

Activity

- *“Network in Action” Exercise:* Each participant introduces themselves and shares one personal skill or project. Then, everyone identifies one way they can help a peer reach their goal.

Values Connection

- Brotherhood/sisterhood thrives on connection and collaboration — the same foundations of strong professional networking.

Action Step

- Create a chapter networking board (digital or physical) where members can post career goals, internships, and professional opportunities for others.

Chapter 13: COVID, College, Drugs, and Drink — Arming with the Shield of NO

By Dr. Louis Profeta

Learning Objectives

- Understand how social pressures and substance use intersect with college culture.
- Explore strategies for personal accountability and peer intervention.
- Recognize the power of “NO” as a tool for self-preservation and leadership.

Summary

Dr. Profeta speaks with unfiltered honesty about addiction, peer pressure, and risk culture in college life. He reminds readers that most students do not haze or harm others, but complacency and silence make tragedies possible. His message is clear: standing up and saying “NO” — to hazing, drugs, and reckless behavior — can save lives. Courage, clarity, and community are stronger shields than conformity.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it so hard for college students to say “no” to risky behavior?
2. How does peer pressure differ in Greek life versus other student groups?
3. What role does leadership play in shifting unhealthy norms?
4. How can your chapter normalize safer choices?
5. What does courage look like in your community?

Activity

- *Scenario Discussion:* In small groups, explore real-life situations involving alcohol, drugs, or hazing. Discuss how to intervene safely and confidently.

Values Connection

- True leadership means protecting one another — even when it’s uncomfortable.

Action Step

- Start a “Shield of NO” pledge program where members commit to speaking up and supporting peers who make healthy choices.

Chapter 14: Challenging Cultural Appropriation and Blackface on Campus — A Beginner’s Guide to Anti-Racism

By Dr. Shyam K. Sriram and Stacy Cavanaugh

Learning Objectives

- Define and understand cultural appropriation and systemic racism.
- Recognize how privilege and ignorance perpetuate harm in Greek life.
- Identify concrete ways to become active allies and anti-racist leaders.

Summary

Dr. Sriram and Cavanaugh challenge fraternity and sorority members to confront racism and cultural appropriation within campus traditions and social events. From themed parties to costumes, ignorance is not an excuse. The chapter unpacks key terms like privilege, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy, providing an accessible entry point to anti-racism work. Greek members must take responsibility for their influence and lead by modeling cultural awareness and inclusion.

Discussion Questions

1. What examples of cultural appropriation have you seen or heard about in college life?
2. How does intent differ from impact in these situations?
3. How can your chapter educate its members on cultural awareness?
4. What does it mean to be an “anti-racist” versus “not racist”?
5. How can fraternities and sororities promote authentic cultural celebration?

Activity

- *Privilege Walk (Virtual or In-Person)*: Use a guided reflection exercise to help members understand privilege and empathy. Follow with a discussion on how awareness leads to action.

Values Connection

- Diversity, equity, and respect are foundational to any fraternal community built on love, truth, and justice.

Action Step

- Review all social event themes and chapter marketing materials to ensure they honor inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.

Chapter 15: Tools for Change — Introduction of a New Model for Member Initiation

By Dr. Kim Bullington

Learning Objectives

- Rethink the purpose of initiation and lifelong membership development.
- Explore alternatives to traditional short-term new member programs.
- Commit to building a continuous education model rooted in belonging.

Summary

Dr. Bullington proposes a transformational new model for member initiation — one that replaces the outdated notion of “earning your letters quickly” with a holistic, four-year developmental journey. Instead of hazing or harmful practices, this model emphasizes mentorship, belonging, and leadership growth throughout the college experience. The ultimate goal is to raise the standard for membership and restore the true meaning of fraternity and sorority life.

Discussion Questions

1. How could extending member development beyond initiation improve chapter culture?
2. What should initiation truly represent in your organization?
3. How can belonging be built intentionally throughout college?
4. What barriers exist to implementing a long-term education model?
5. What traditions or practices align with lifelong learning?

Activity

- *Four-Year Map*: As a group, design a sample member development plan that includes learning, service, and leadership milestones each year.

Values Connection

- The Ritual’s teachings are not meant to end at initiation — they are meant to evolve with every stage of life.

Action Step

- Begin a pilot initiative in your chapter where seniors mentor new members through their first semester, continuing through graduation.

Call to Action: Redefining Greek Life for the Next Generation

By Dr. Michael Ayalon

Learning Objectives

- Translate lessons into long-term leadership change.
- Commit to reimagining Greek Life through belonging, education, and safety.
- Take ownership of the future of fraternity and sorority culture.

Summary

Dr. Michael Ayalon concludes by challenging readers to transform insights into sustained action. The goal is not to abandon Greek Life but to evolve it — into something more inclusive, safe, and impactful. Every student, advisor, and alumnus has a role to play in rewriting the story. This call to action demands courage, consistency, and collaboration to ensure the next generation inherits an organization that truly lives up to its values.

Discussion Questions

1. What changes will you commit to in your chapter this year?
2. How can you make belonging a measurable part of your culture?
3. Who will you mentor to continue this work after you graduate?
4. What would a “future-ready” fraternity or sorority look like?
5. How can national organizations reinforce these commitments?

Activity

- *Vision Board Exercise:* Create a visual representation of what the future of Greek Life could look like on your campus if belonging and values guided every decision.

Values Connection

- The Ritual calls members to be catalysts for good — the true essence of leadership.

Action Step

- Host a campus-wide “From Letters to Leaders Summit” to share ideas, celebrate change, and inspire collective accountability for the future of Greek Life.

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