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## **Assessing the Online Management of Alcohol Policies and Alcohol Educational Programming Among Greek Student Organizations – a Content Analysis**

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# Russett and Oates: Assessing the Online Management of Alcohol Policies and Alcohol E

## ASSESSING THE ONLINE MANAGEMENT OF ALCOHOL POLICIES AND ALCOHOL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING AMONG GREEK STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS – A CONTENT ANALYSIS

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*College student drinking remains a public health concern and Fraternity/Sorority organizations have consistently documented higher rates of alcohol use than their peers. However, these groups are also likely to be proactive in addressing risk management of alcohol use. The authors conducted a content analysis of nationally recognized fraternity/sorority websites, aimed at identifying harm reduction strategies in place among these groups. While the majority of fraternities/sororities reviewed had readily accessible alcohol related policies, fewer organizations were identified as having adapted alcohol related education programs. Best practices suggest having strong policies and educational programming lead to reduced consequences related to alcohol use.*

For decades, college student drinking has been at the forefront of public health concerns among American colleges and universities as well as a primary focus of research. Among the leading concerns for this group continues to be rates of alcohol consumption, including binge drinking, and associated consequences of alcohol use (Wechsler et al., 2002). According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) almost 60% of college students ages 18-22 drank alcohol in the past month (SAMHSA, 2014) and about 20% of college students meet the criteria for an Alcohol Use Disorder (Blanco et al., 2008). Additionally, national survey results report 30% to 40% of college students engage in episodes of binge drinking (CORE, 2014; Johnston et al., 2015; SAMHSA, 2014), operationally defined in the research literature as “the consumption of five or more alcoholic beverages in a sitting by men and four or more in a sitting by women” (SAMHSA, 2014). Finally, consequences related to underage college drinking have been well documented, including academic concerns, health problems, accidental injuries, assault, sexual assault, and death (Hingson et al., 2005; Thombs et al. 2009). Despite ongoing concerns, positive trends have also emerged over the years. For example,

Monitoring the Future (MFT), a long-term epidemiological study of substance use among adolescents and young adults, showed college student binge drinking rates has dropped from 44% in 1980 to 35% in 2014 (Johnston et al., 2015). While a number of factors may contribute to this change, significant attention has been given to developing effective, evidence based, alcohol prevention, and education programs aimed at college-aged students. Programs deemed as evidence-based (EBP) have demonstrated the highest level of effectiveness and are most likely to produce positive outcomes if implemented with adherence to the developer’s model (SAMSHA, 2017).

Among the identified areas of best practices associated with reducing consequences related to college alcohol use is the integration of well-defined alcohol use policies combined with targeted alcohol educational programming (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2015). As such, the researchers set out to explore what policies and educational or evidence-based programs exist specifically within fraternities and sororities to address alcohol use. One means of communicating this information is through organizational websites, where essential information such as the mission

and values of the organization are promoted. Thus, a content analysis of fraternity and sorority websites was assessed with the goal of exploring these topics and learning how they are promoted to members.

### **Greek Letter Organizations in Higher Education**

Fraternity/Sorority organizations are significant in their historical and modern-day functions within the United States higher education system. They have existed as an integral part of the college culture, including engagement in the campus community, philanthropy, and leadership roles, for more than two centuries (CAS, 2014; North-American Interfraternity Conference [NIC], 2014-2015; National Panhellenic Conference [NPC], 2016-2017). Social fraternities and sororities in the North American fraternity system include those that do not promote a particular profession or academic discipline (CAS, 2014) and are the focus of this study.

Fraternity and sorority systems are comprised of individual chapters often affiliated with national or international organizations, and for the purpose of this study, will focus on social GLO's situated on several hundred campuses in North America. Specifically, this study focuses on groups affiliated with the NIC and the NPC, and did not include other Greek letter organizations affiliated with other governing bodies (e.g., National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO), National APIDA Panhellenic Association (NAPA), etc).

In order to further understand the Greek organizational structure, the major governing bodies of the fraternity and sorority systems are introduced. For men, this is identified as the NIC. Founded in 1909, NIC currently has 64 affiliated fraternities, with 5,500 chapters in North America on 800 different campuses (NIC, 2017). The purpose of NIC is to

provide consistent operational, academic, and achievement standards for all of the chapters, as well as advocating for the needs of its members (Gohn & Albin, 2006, p. 241). For women, Greek letter organizations fall under the NPC. This organization was founded in 1902, and is the umbrella for 26 sororities, 2,908 individual chapters on more than 620 campuses (NPC, 2016-2017). The purpose of the NPC is "to promote the values of and to serve as an advocate for its member groups in collaboration with those members, campuses, and communities" (Gohn & Albin, 2006, p. 242).

### *Alcohol Use by Students of Greek Letter Organizations*

As noted earlier, the concern of underage college drinking is well known, and its impact on fraternities and sororities are of no exception. With regard to alcohol consumption, past research clearly indicates members of social fraternities and sororities consume more alcohol more frequently, in larger quantities, and experience more alcohol related problems than non-members (Borsari & Carey, 1999; Borsari, Hustad, Capone, 2013; Danielson, Taylor, Hartford, 2001; Turrisi, Mallett, & Mastroleo, 2006; Wechsler, Kuh, & Davenport, 1996). For instance, binge drinking is higher among students in the fraternity and sorority community (Barry, 2007; Chauvin, 2012; Wechsler et al., 1996), and students who join a fraternity or sorority in their first year significantly increased their drinking and experienced more alcohol related consequences compared to those who do not join (Park, Sher, & Krull, 2008). Students in Greek social organizations were at a particularly high risk for alcohol related consequences due to heavy and frequent drinking patterns (O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Presley, Cheng, & Pimentel, 2004; Wechsler et al. 2002).

### *College Alcohol Related Policies and Programming*

Institutions of higher education have a

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responsibility to implement evidenced-based practices to address underage drinking, and many have made significant strides in changing the campus drinking culture. While we assess the role of North American fraternities and sororities in addressing policy and educational programming, it is by no means their sole responsibility. Also, it is significant to note the 1984 National Minimum Drinking Age Act prohibits persons under 21 years of age from purchasing or possessing alcoholic beverages (Toomey, Nelson, & Lenk, 2009), and much of the college population falls below the legal drinking age. Likewise, college campuses often impose additional regulations and consequences regarding alcohol consumption and use in an effort to prevent underage drinking (Nelson, Toomey, Lenk, Erickson, & Winters, 2010). Policies and programming established within fraternities and sororities work closely with already existing efforts on campus.

In 2002, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) published findings and recommendations in *A Call to Action: Changing the Culture of Drinking at U.S. Colleges*, both with regard to the relevance of interventions to college students and the degree to which they are empirically based. According to this report, the most promising approaches are multifaceted. Specifically, it identifies theoretical perspectives that incorporate motivational enhancement interventions, cognitive-behavioral skills, and normative clarification (NIAAA, 2002). In addition, this report found programming that was grounded in theory supported brief interventions, including motivational interviewing, that incorporates knowledge and education on alcohol use, skills training, and personalized, nonjudgmental feedback to enhance motivation, can be effective when utilized in a group format (NIAAA, 2002). Some of the most common alcohol education and prevention programs for college-aged students include harm reduction strategies; a public health approach to reduce the harmful consequences

for both the user and the community; social norms strategies; a method which emphasize discrepancies between student-perceived levels of alcohol consumption and most actual reported consumption, and protective alcohol-use behaviors such as alternating non-alcoholic drinks with alcoholic beverages, minimizing drinking games, and pacing drinking (Zografos, Krenz, Yarmo, & Alcalá, 2015).

Building on these recommendations, in 2015 the NIAAA introduced College *AIM* (Alcohol Intervention Matrix) for higher education officials to use as a guide in selecting effective evidenced-based prevention and intervention efforts to combat underage use. The guide provides a comprehensive list of effective strategies within two domains: one for environmental-level interventions that target the campus community as a whole and the other for interventions that target individual students, including higher risk groups.

The first domain, environmental-level interventions, aims at reducing underage and excessive drinking by changing key variables (i.e. places, settings, occasions, etc.) and the context in which alcohol use occurs, thereby reducing consequences (NIAAA, 2015). Embedded in environmental-level strategies are the use of established policies to support these interventions. While some strategies in this domain pertain more specifically to the campus as a whole, others that are identified as being most effective relate to smaller groups such as fraternities and sororities. Some of these include: restricting access to alcohol by enforcing the age-21 drinking age, enacting rules on social host provisions, endorsing responsible beverage service training, prohibiting alcohol use/service at social events, establishing amnesty policies, implementing safe-ride programs, and conducting social norms campaigns.

The second domain, individual-level strategies, aim to change students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to alcohol use. This strategy includes education and awareness

programs (values clarification programs such as Alone), cognitive-behavioral skills-based approaches (Alcohol 101 Plus, Alcohol Skills Training Program), motivation and feedback related approaches (Brief Motivational Intervention, AlcoholEdu, CheckYourDrinking, and College Drinker's Check-up), and behavioral interventions facilitated by health care professionals (screening and medication assisted treatments) (NIAAA, 2015).

### *Alcohol policies and programming related to fraternities and sororities*

College *Aim* suggests the greatest likelihood of creating a safer campus comes from combining both individual and environmental-level interventions (NIAAA, 2015). Therefore, it is important to first understand how these domains apply to fraternities and sororities. To begin, fraternities and sororities ascribe to risk management policies or specific standards, often set up by their national organization, to ensure the safety and well-being of their affiliated students are met. Often these policies are tied to insurance as a means to manage personal or institutional liability. For example, one insurance company reported 89 claims from campus fraternities and sororities within a four-year period, ranging from serious wrongdoings, to physical and sexual assault, to alcohol poisoning and hazing incidents, with 14% resulting in a monetary award settlement (Broe, 2009). While the focus of this study will review policies specifically related to alcohol use, risk management policies also encompass related concerns in such areas as hazing, sexual abuse and harassment, and fire, health, and safety. The Fraternal Information and Programming Group (FIPG) is a primary leader in addressing risk management policies among fraternities and sororities, with nearly 50 partners. First established in 1987 and after multiple revisions to its purpose, FIPG established its mission in 2001 to “promote sound risk management policies and practices and to be the leading resource of risk

*management education, programming and information to the broad-based constituency involved in all aspects of Greek life”* (FIPG, 2013, p. 4, italics in original). In addition to guidance from FIPG, the NIC and the NPC have proposed specific provisions to minimize the risk associated with alcohol use and other behaviors.

While addressing alcohol use through policy standards is not new, there have been new developments endorsed by the NIC to further address alcohol abuse within fraternities. In 2015, NIC established five strategic priorities to address the baseline health and safety of its members. In particular, it stated NIC member fraternities will provide educational programming including, but not limited to, a minimum focus on alcohol and drugs (including the prohibition of the use of alcohol and drugs in new member education and recruitment activities). Furthermore, NIC has developed enhanced health and safety standards to reduce the frequency and volume of alcohol associated with the fraternity experience. Building on these efforts, at the 2017 annual meeting, members endorsed the standard prohibiting hard alcohol from fraternity chapter facilities and events. Under this resolution, members will implement a policy by September 2019 that prohibits alcohol products above 15% alcohol by volume at any chapter event, except when served by a licensed third-party vendor (NIC, 2017). The newly endorsed standards were implemented on pilot campuses in 2017 with additional groups added in 2018 and anticipation of full participation by 2019 (NIC, 2017). It is significant to recognize the effort made at the national level to integrate research from substance abuse experts, best practices in educational programming, and continual assessment of program implementation. While these steps are noteworthy in creating a safer environment, little guidance is provided about how to implement these practices. For example, fraternities are required to provide educational programming to include select topics, however, no educational programs are identified by name,

presumably allowing each chapter to identify programs suitable for their needs.

For women, the NPC (2016-2017) “aims to partner with institutions of higher education to make campuses safe for all who attend”. NPC promotes their membership with the College of Higher Education Association for Substance Abuse Prevention (CoHEASAP) founded in 1983 to promote education, prevention, research, networking, and national initiatives to help eliminate substance abuse on college campuses (NPC, 2016-2017). Further investigation of the task force revealed scarce information on best practices or resources for educational programming. One of their primary initiatives is to encourage members to participate in National Collegiate Health and Wellness Week (with a focus on drug and alcohol education) during the second week of October, in which 800 campuses participate. In 2003 (revised 2014), NPC adopted standards with minimum expectations that each member organization would “educate its chapter members on all inter/national policies and expectations pertaining to alcohol, substance abuse and underage drinking.” (p. 2). Furthermore, the standards “encourage alcohol-free social activities and requires a policy of alcohol-free facilities for all housed chapters” (NPC, 2016-2017, p. 2). These standards go on to describe how frequent programming should occur (at least once per term) and that members should be held accountable for their behavior. However, similar to the NIC, no educational programs are specified by name or are suggested for implementation, leaving these decisions to the individual chapters. Similarly, it is unclear how these programs are funded, presumably these are the inherent responsibility of the individual chapters to support.

Returning to FIPG, they too have established a goal to become a resource for risk management education. However, similar to the national governing bodies for fraternities and sororities, FIPG does not promote or offer any guidelines for specific alcohol prevention/education

programming. While these influential entities support the provision for alcohol related programming, the groups provide limited or no information on how to go about selecting or implementing evidenced based programming despite the wealth of information available on this topic.

### Purpose of the Study

While extensive guidelines exist for risk management policies related to alcohol use among fraternities and sororities, there are limited (if any) recommendations about standards for selecting and implementing alcohol education/prevention programming for this population. With this in mind, the authors sought to identify what alcohol prevention and education strategies are most often utilized within fraternity/sorority organizations, and to what extent these approaches are evidence-based. In doing so, they sought to add to the knowledge base of professionals working with these groups and provide pragmatic resources for program implementation.

Based on the review of literature, it is evident national organizations supporting fraternities and sororities recognize the importance of risk management, as well as promoting substance use education to reduce potential associated risk. While delving deeper into this topic, what became more obscure was understanding what strategies were being used to address substance use, how members were receiving education or prevention programming, and how (or what) programs were selected. Through this inquiry, the following research questions emerged:

1. What risk management policies specific to alcohol education and prevention programs exist?
2. What evidence-based alcohol education and prevention programs are implemented in fraternities and sororities?

## Methodology

Data was obtained by conducting a content analysis of 71 websites using a representative sample of fraternity and sorority organizations across the United States. This study explored the type and extent to which alcohol programming is provided to students affiliated with undergraduate fraternities/sororities. To better understand these policies and programs, data were collected for this study using a content analysis of websites of identified national sorority and fraternity chapters. As an empirically grounded method, content analysis has been described by Krippendorff (2004) as “a research technique for making inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use” (p. 18). In this instance, analytical constructs arise in the form of specified websites. Risk management policies are often easily recognized links embedded on each website, and, as noted by Saichaie and Morphew (2014), “institutional websites are vehicles of communication that employ textual and visual components, content analysis is well-suited to attend to these artifacts” (p. 506).

Data were collected on websites for fraternities and sororities administered by their national offices. Both the NPC and NIC serve as national associations for the largest groups in postsecondary education; and while membership in these organizations is not a requirement, they provide guidance for review. Active sorority chapters identifying as members of the NPC, the umbrella organization for 26 national and international autonomous social organizations, were included in this study ( $n=26$ ). Active fraternity organizations identifying as current members of the NIC, or those who held prior member were also included in this study. Initially, the authors included 66 fraternities that identified as social organizations and serve the broad student body. Next, we removed any fraternity promoting a particular profession, academic discipline, or emphasis on a specific

religious or ethnic background which left us with a total of 45 fraternities ( $n=45$ ).

Each researcher completed an initial independent examination of selected sorority and fraternity websites, systematically reviewing individual risk management policies and education programs related to alcohol use. Most often, these could be found on the website under a tab identified as programs/policies or a general information tab about the organization. A database was developed where all identified programs or policies were systematically documented. To support internal validity, all websites were reviewed independently by each researcher on separate occasions with researchers coming together weekly to discuss findings.

When reviewing websites, researchers paid particular attention to the language and terminology used in the literature related to alcohol education and prevention programming and related policies. As such, terms used in the review specified alcohol, drinking, underage drinking, prevention, education, policy, and risk management. Though related terms such as drugs and substance use did arise, these were not the primary focus. College *AIM* provides a valuable summary of best practices and their level of effectiveness (NIAAA, 2015). For example, alcohol education and prevention programming falls under individual-level strategies with the specific aim to produce changes in attitudes and behaviors related to actual alcohol use among individual college students. Whereas, policy development and implementation fall under environmental-level strategies that aim to reduce underage and excessive drinking at the population level by changing the context in which alcohol use occurs (NIAAA, 2015).

## Results

Finding information on individual chapter websites related to programming and/or risk management policies and procedures specific

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to alcohol proved challenging. Most times this information was neither explicitly stated nor listed on a primary page of the website, but rather was found well embedded within other tabs or within multiple additional links within the website pages. Most frequently, content was found under terms related to collegiate

members, resources, programs, education or policies (see Table 1 and 2 for identifying links). A few sites included a search box which helped to more readily find related documents through a simple search or using key terms such as alcohol, drinking, policy or risk management.

Policies were most often listed under a separate

**Table 1**

*Fraternity Alcohol Risk Management Policies and Education Programs*

	<b>Number of Active Chapters</b>	<b>Content located on Website</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Alcohol Use Education &amp; Prevention</b>
Alpha Chi Rho	29	Resources	-Risk Management Policy -Informational link to addiction	N/A
Alpha Delta Phi	32	Resources/ Member Toolkit	-Risk Management Policy -NIC BYOB Guidelines -Party Themes -Pub/Bar Crawls -Sober Monitors -Tailgate	-Resource sheet “Caring for someone who has had too much to drink” -Resource sheet: “College drinking facts sheet”
Alpha Kappa Lambda	42	National Operations/ Resource Library	Risk Management Policy	N/A
Alpha Sigma Phi	115	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alpha Tau Omega	141	N/A	N/A	N/A
Beta Theta Pi	138	Resources/ Chapter Resources	Risk Management Policy	-Sober Monitor Resource -Substance Free Housing Transition Guide -BYOB checklist
Chi Phi	50	Resources/ Fraternity polices	Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Chi Psi	32	N/A	N/A	N/A
Delta Chi	53	Programs/ Resources	Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Delta Kappa Epsilon	53	N/A	N/A	N/A
Delta Sigma Phi	106	Programs	-Risk Management Policy -Policy prohibiting alcohol above 15% ABV	Greek Life Edu Substance free housing
Delta Tau Delta	130	Programs	-Risk Management Policy	Greek Life EDU (Called Delts Talking About Alcohol, DTAA)
Delta Upsilon	76	About/ Laws and Policies/ Programs	-Risk Management Policy	Greek Life EDU Substance Free Housing (2020)
FarmHouse	34	Resources	-Risk Management Policy	Substance Free Housing
Kappa Alpha Order	118	Active member	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Kappa Delta Phi	14	Member Resources	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Kappa Delta Rho	37	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kappa Sigma	321	N/A	N/A	N/A
Lambda Chi Alpha	195	Resources/ Harm Reduction	-Risk Management Policy	N/A

Phi Delta Theta	190	Health and Safety	-Risk Management Policy	Alcohol free housing
Phi Gamma Delta	160	Undergraduate/ Education/ Health & Safety	-Risk Management Policy	Alcohol free housing ASTP GreekLifeEdu
Phi Kappa Psi	105	Undergraduate/ Resources	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Phi Kappa Sigma	42	Undergraduate/ Manage Risk	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Phi Kappa Tau	86	About/ Prevention and Wellness	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Phi Lambda Chi	20	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phi Mu Delta	49	Undergraduate/ Risk Management/ Programs	-Risk Management Policy -BYOB Guide	N/A
Phi Sigma Kappa	81	Undergraduates/ Resources	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Phi Sigma Phi	11	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pi Kappa Alpha	225	Health & Safety	-Risk Management Policy	General information on alcohol and other drugs on the website
Pi Kappa Phi	178	Student experience/ Member development	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Pi Lambda Phi	33	N/A	N/A	N/A
Psi Upsilon	50	Undergraduate/ Policy	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Sigma Alpha Epsilon	219	Resources/ Health & Safety	-Risk Management Policy	ASTP
Sigma Alpha Mu	49	Resources/ The fraternity/ Educational Programs	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Sigma Chi	242	Resources/ Health & Safety	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Sigma Nu	135	Collegiate Members/ Educational Programs	-Risk Management Policy	GreekLifeEdu
Sigma Phi Epsilon	213	Resources	-Risk Management Policy	Substance Free Housing (2020)
Sigma Pi	116	About/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Sigma Tau Gamma	71	Fraternity/ Member Safety & Wellness	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Tau Kappa Epsilon	241	Resources	-Risk Management Policy -Policy to ban possession and/or consumption of "hard alcohol" while on Chapter property; alcohol over 15% ABV/30-proof	Information on alcohol and other drugs on the website
Theta Chi	160	Collegians/ resources	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Theta Delta Chi	29	Resources and Services/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Theta Xi	47	Undergraduates/ Risk management	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Zeta Beta Tau	90	About/ Governance/ Programs/ Health and Safety	-Risk Management Policy	ASTP GreekLifeEdu
Zeta Psi	51	About/Policies	-Risk Management Policy	N/A

*Data points are from January 2019 and are exclusive to substance use. It should be noted other programming may address this issue as well.*

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**Table 2**

*Sorority Alcohol Risk Management Policies and Education Programs*

	<b>Number of Active Chapters</b>	<b>Content located on Website</b>	<b>Policy</b>	<b>Alcohol Use Education &amp; Prevention</b>
Alpha Chi Omega	194	Resource center; governing/ membership experience/ programming	-Risk Management Policy	ASTP
Alpha Delta Pi	154	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alpha Epsilon Phi	50	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alpha Gamma Delta	190	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alpha Omicron Pi	138	About/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy -Alcohol policy -Drug policy	N/A
Alpha Phi	164	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alpha Sigma Alpha	185	Collegians/ Chapter Commitments/ Policy	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Alpha Sigma Tau	90	Collegians/ Programming	N/A	GreekLifeEdu
Alpha Xi Delta	127	About/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy -BYOB Procedures	GreekLifeEdu
Chi Omega	181	Educational Resources/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Delta Delta Delta	145	N/A	N/A	N/A
Delta Gamma	150	News/Resources/ Programs	-Risk Management Policy	ASTP
Delta Phi Epsilon	110	N/A	N/A	N/A
Delta Zeta	165	Global Citizens	N/A	National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week
Gamma Phi Beta	141	Real Leadership/ Member Programs	N/A	REAL Leaders Practice Safe Drinking
Kappa Alpha Theta	135	Members/ Programs/ About Theta	-Risk Management Policy	ASTP
Kappa Delta	163	N/A	N/A	N/A
Kappa Kappa Gamma	140	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phi Mu	139	N/A	N/A	N/A
Phi Sigma Sigma	115	About us/ Policies	-Risk Management Policy -Alcohol/Drug Policy	
Pi Beta Phi	208	Collegians / Policy and Position Statement	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Sigma Delta Tau	106	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sigma Kappa	124	Collegiate / Membership Responsibilities	-Risk Management Policy	N/A
Sigma Sigma Sigma	112	Meet Sigma, Sigma, Sigma/ What we Stand for	-Risk Management Policy -Alcohol/Drug Policy	GreekLifeEdu Alcohol Abuse Prevention (Prevention Institute)
Theta Phi Alpha	53	N/A	N/A	N/A
Zeta Tau Alpha	168	About/ Programming		Generation Rx GreekLifeEdu

*Data points are from January 2019 and are exclusive to substance use. It should be noted other programming may address this issue as well.*

tab, most explicitly stating *alcohol policy* or found under *risk management* or were embedded in the mission, vision, and values of the chapter. Of the 26 sororities, 15 (or 57%) did not have readily accessible policies, meaning they were either not included on the website or were not able to be located. Of the 45 fraternities examined, nine (or 20%) did not have explicit policies; again, with likelihood they do exist but are not readily accessible. While most alcohol policies were related to risk management, some chapters did include more specific policies including for example: drug and alcohol use, bring your own beverage (BYOB), parties, tailgating, Good Samaritan policy, and designating alcohol by volume (ABV).

Alcohol related policies were found to follow the Risk Management Policy of the Fraternal Information and Programming Group (FIPG). As discussed earlier, nearly 50 fraternities/sororities partner with FIPG, which operates as group purchaser of insurance to address risk management policies among fraternities and sororities. While the majority of risk management policies followed FIPG guidelines verbatim, some chapters also included additional information in their policy statement pertaining to state or local laws such as in line with local laws and the rules of the host institution, or all applicable laws of the state, province, county, city and university apply.

With regard to alcohol prevention or education programs, both individual and environmental strategies were identified. Individual strategies defined by NIAAA (2015) are those aimed at decreasing an individual's alcohol use (e.g., frequency, quantity, or blood alcohol concentration) and were predominately identified by two well-known evidence-based programs in which six sororities (23%) and sixteen fraternities (35%) participated. Programs specified for sororities included Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP) (three sororities); GreekLifeEdu (two sororities) and one sorority included a combination of ASTP

and GreekLifeEdu. No other programs targeting substance use specifically were identified with the exception of one sorority that offered Generation Rx, a program that targets the misuse of prescription medication including mixed use of prescriptions and alcohol. A greater number of evidence-based alcohol prevention or education programs were identified among fraternities (36%). Thirteen fraternities (28.88%) identified as participating in GreekLifeEdu and three fraternities (7%) participated in ASTP. Other strategies found at the individual level included efforts at increasing individual knowledge base and providing information and awareness. This was facilitated by providing informational content on topics such as how to care for someone who has had too much to drink, sober monitoring resources, how to identify alcohol poisoning, and other general fact sheets on the risks of college drinking.

Environmental strategies defined by NIAAA (2015) are those aimed at reducing underage and excessive drinking at the population level by changing the context, such as places, settings, occasions, and circumstances, in which alcohol use occurs. The most significant evidence of this was ascribing to substance free housing. While all 26 NPC groups have maintained alcohol-free housing for many years, fraternities are just coming on board. To date, seven fraternities (16%) explicitly stated they provide alcohol free housing or plan to do so by the year 2020.

Other programs and policies were identified that although are not exclusively related to alcohol use, could impact alcohol-related negative consequences or outcomes due to the correlation between the consumption or abuse of alcohol and behaviors. For instance, one fraternity has a designated program called *My Brother's Keeper* which focuses on four domains of healthy behavior (alcohol abuse, drug use, dating violence, and mental health) but did not specify the use of evidence-based programming. Many other fraternities and sororities also have programming and policies that address issues

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including hazing, sexual assault, mental health, and suicide risk, all behaviors that could be impacted by alcohol use. Additionally, overall larger chapters were more likely found to have multi-levelled programming.

### Discussion

Reports from NIAAA (2002) recognize successful interventions in reducing high risk college drinking among college students must include multiple strategies across different domains, including individuals, student groups, and the greater college community. Upon reviewing chapter websites of fraternities and sororities, it makes logical sense that strategies are primarily geared toward the student group as a whole. One of the recommended approaches by NIAAA (2002) includes developing and implementing explicit policies related to substance use. This is a strength for Greek letter organizations as nearly a quarter of the sororities (24%) and the majority of fraternities (84 %) reviewed that had readily identifiable policies related to alcohol use were found to have policies. It is also quite likely given the majority of fraternities/sororities are affiliated with FIPG that most, if not all, have existing policies, but that they were just not as easily identified or publicly acknowledged.

Another recommendation by NIAAA (2002) is the implementation of evidence-based substance use programming. Although more fraternities than sororities were found to promote the use of alcohol education programs, overall relatively few (31%) included these programs on their websites. Of those that did, sixteen fraternities and six sororities identified GreekLifeEdu and Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP) as programs used. It should be noted the use of specific programming identified may be a result of the availability of what is offered or accessible to Greek student organizations, as well as funding available to provide these programs. Likewise, campuses offer a range of customized programs

that may not be noted on the chapter websites and health educators or other professionals on campus may offer additional programming to the campus at large at the same time. Finally, these results should not be an endorsement for these particular programs, as other evidence-based programs do exist, but rather a recognition that the two programs discussed are the most well-known programs for this population.

*GreekLifeEdu:* This is a commercially available online program that addresses alcohol awareness, in addition to sexual assault, and hazing. The program provides interactive scenarios and feedback embedded in health behavior change theory. Through the interactive web-based services, students gain information about alcohol use and its consequences, develop skills to practice safer decision making in social environments, and reflect on individual values and strengths and how the use of alcohol fits into an individual's life. Wall (2007) found high-risk student populations (such as individual members of fraternity/sorority organizations) who participated in GreekLifeEdu received fewer negative consequences related to alcohol, engaged in fewer days of heavy consumption, exhibited lower intentional risky behavior, and were more likely to disagree with the positive expectations of alcohol use.

*Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP):* This program is based in the premise that college students drink and rather than imposing an abstinence-based perspective, ASTP recognizes any steps toward reduced risk are steps in the right direction. ASTP is grounded in cognitive behavioral skills training and motivational interviewing techniques designed to help students develop tools to change their behavior. The curriculum includes basic information on alcohol use combined with cognitive-behavioral skills training and is offered in a style that is engaging and meets students where they are with regard to their drinking behavior. Results from this program demonstrate a decrease in alcohol consumption and consequences for high-risk

drinkers (Parks & Woodford, 2005).

Finally, a shift with endorsing substance free housing is noted. While sororities have had a long-standing recognition of this policy, fraternities are just beginning to make this shift. Research indicates the location where drinking occurs, specifically in fraternity/sorority housing, is associated with higher risk drinking and increased frequency of drinking (Lewis et al., 2011, Park et al., 2008; Turrisi et al., 2006) and students attending these events have been found to have higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels (Glindemann & Geller, 2003). Additionally, with the exception of off-campus parties, students consume larger quantities of alcohol at fraternity/sorority parties than any other context (Paschall & Saltz, 2007). With seven fraternities either already offering substance free housing or transitioning to do so by 2020, the context of drinking in fraternity housing is changing.

### Recommendations

Fraternities and sororities each have their own means of ensuring members are informed of the risks associated with alcohol use and adopting their own methods to safeguard their members through alcohol education programming. As high-risk drinking remains a concern among college aged students, having solid and transparent policies combined with educational programming is essential. By adopting these best practices and acknowledging them publicly, fraternities and sororities are demonstrating their responsibility and dedication to protect their members from potential harm. While the majority of organizations (66%) had identifiable policies related to alcohol use, it is recommended these policies are positioned on chapter websites in a way that makes them more transparent and readily accessible to members and the greater community. This simple step may help sororities and fraternities demonstrate their commitment to keeping their members safe. It

also acknowledges the role of alcohol use among members and presents a unified front among all fraternities and sororities. A potential implication in doing so may result in chapter's experiencing less stigma associated with promoting and/or condoning alcohol use and presenting a cohesive message.

As fraternity/sorority organizations are often perceived, accurately or not, as the conduit for social events on campus. As Danielson et al. (2001) denote "the perceptions of many within and outside academia place Greeks at the center of alcohol problems, especially binge drinking" (p. 451). As such, the university has a responsibility to support alcohol programming for all students.

A second area to consider is the expansion of the use of evidence-based alcohol education programming such as GreekLifeEdu and ASTP. Research supports such programs as promoting significant positive results, both to affiliated members and to the campus at large, yet more chapters could be committed to these programs. One potential barrier to implementation may be the cost associated with these programs. Perhaps with the membership fees provided to NIC and NPC, the national organizations could develop a program utilizing the identified concepts posed through best practices and tailoring a program to meet member needs. As more programs are implemented, further research needs to be conducted to compare the rates of alcohol use and consequences of fraternities and sororities that engage in such programming with those that do not. Furthermore, given what is known about the efficacy of these programs as a whole, they should be promoted and encouraged that all sororities and fraternities to adapt such programming, or other comparable programs. Similarly, with emerging substance free housing being endorsed among some fraternities by 2020, it will be important to assess how these changes impact alcohol use and related consequences. It would seem using substance-free residence halls as a comparative sample may provide further

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While this study provides a broad overview of some policies and educational programming occurring among fraternities and sororities at a national level through a content analysis, closer examination of individual chapter's is warranted. This could occur by investigating a single sorority or fraternity across the United States and comparing programming within, or by assessing multiple Greek letter organizations within a single state and integrating interrelated state policies.

## Limitations

As with any study, several limitations are noted. The experiences of the researchers contributed to the development, data collection, and interpretation of the study as both professional/student and affiliated/non-affiliated sorority membership. The selected sample is restricted to fraternities and sororities with a primary social focus and is not representative of all fraternities and sororities. With regard to methodology, the content analysis relied on web-based sources including only information obtained from electronic websites which are restricted both to a particular point in time as well as content deemed appropriate or necessary by site administrators. The analysis of content on websites does not provide a comprehensive assessment of what organizations are doing to address alcohol use among its members, additionally, there are often member-only pages that could not be accessed. It is unknown how programming is funded, whether institutionally, nationally, or by other means; therefore, programming may vary based on level of monetary investment. Finally, there are likely chapters using a variety of tools which are not publicly acknowledged or promoted on the website, as well as campus-based education and prevention programs embedded into the college culture that are not accounted for; therefore, it is impossible to capture all of the efforts through a website analysis. The content analysis is not

meant to provide a complete picture of all the efforts taking place among fraternities and sororities but does provide a glimpse into how these efforts are publicly promoted.

## Conclusions

Fraternity/Sorority organizations have worked hard to protect their members from the potential risks of alcohol use by developing strong policies and guidelines. Central to abiding by the risk management procedures includes alcohol education and prevention programs. Several national evidenced-based alcohol education and prevention programs have been identified as demonstrating potential efficacy for change among secondary education institutions, however, are sparsely implemented across fraternity/sorority organizations. As sorority and fraternities continue to serve an essential role in the social community among college campuses, further development of best practices for harm reduction related to alcohol use among college students is essential in creating a safe environment.

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