



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sigma Sigma Sigma National Sorority Announces Women of Character Initiative

Tri Sigma commits to character education partnership with Josephson Institute for Ethics

Woodstock, VA – September 1, 2011 – Sigma Sigma Sigma National Sorority (“Tri Sigma”) announces the ***Sigma Sigma Sigma Women of Character Initiative (“The Initiative”)***. Tri Sigma has engaged in a lengthy and strategic dialogue and training with the Josephson Institute for Ethics to determine avenues for character education that would cultivate an exceptional, transformational Tri Sigma experience. ***The Initiative*** emerged as a bold and decisive response to Tri Sigma’s core mission which, by definition, demands an organizational and widespread commitment to character development. From the mission of Tri Sigma, “To establish among its members a perpetual bond of friendship, to develop in them strong womanly character, and to impress upon them high standards of conduct.”

The Women of Character Initiative was originated to ensure that Tri Sigma’s mission, vision and values are relevant and actionable, and seeks to align the five core values of Tri Sigma within a character education model. It is a long term strategy with a multi-year planning timeline, to ensure integration into all elements of Tri Sigma’s larger organizational culture. Our organizational priorities will reflect a furthering commitment to developing women of character devoted to ethical and values-based leadership.

“The Women of Character Initiative will provide our entire membership with the foundation upon which they can build their lives. We are extremely excited to announce this significant and deliberate partnership with CHARACTER COUNTS! and look forward to what the future holds for the women of Tri Sigma.” - Kaye Schendel, National President

Contemporary culture and today’s undergraduate environment demands that fraternal organizations commit to activities in alignment with their core values and larger purpose.

The Women of Character Initiative, which commits to character education on the “Six Pillars of Character”, offers a framework for ethical decision making at all levels of the organization, and offers specific language to describe what we expect Tri Sigma women to be, and how Tri Sigma can impact the larger culture.

Since 2008, Tri Sigma has used assessment, strategic planning methods, and responses from our members at all levels to investigate a recommitment to relevant and powerful membership experiences rooted in shared values. Our commitment to the Josephson Institute for Ethics and their educational program, CHARACTER COUNTS! was investigated in early 2009.

“Working with the Josephson Institute for Ethics and their CHARACTER COUNTS! program has been amazing. What the Josephson Institute does, and what the Institute offers is so tightly aligned with our mission and who we are as Tri Sigma. It has been extraordinarily easy and incredibly exciting to develop this initiative. Not only is this going to provide Tri Sigma with great direct service opportunities for our communities, it is going to help our women really *live* lives of strong character in a contemporary culture that demands integrity.”

– Chris Smithhisler, Director of Programs

A 26-woman advocacy team consisting of members of Executive Council, staff, and more than 15 alumnae and collegian members of Tri Sigma participated in a 3-day Character Development Seminar in May 2011 facilitated by the Josephson Institute. A Lead Advocacy steering committee developed a set of outcomes and objectives. From those conversations, the development of a timeline and set of priorities were established.

Some Key Questions:

*How will **The Women of Character Initiative** Impact Tri Sigma?*

The Initiative commits to finding daily relevance and action-oriented elements of the Tri Sigma mission and vision; and our programming, professional culture, activity and relationships will reflect a larger strategic focus and priority on developing women of character. Resources of time, talent, and treasure will continue to be assigned to **The Initiative** at all levels of the organization. The development of Tri Sigmas as women of character committed to ethical and values-based leadership is the cornerstone of Tri Sigma’s heritage. **The Initiative** is designed to transcend life-stage and size, type, or culture of chapter, and will provide additional avenues for members to flourish as community servants within their respective communities.

Our members, both alumnae and collegiate, will see many additional opportunities to learn more about CHARACTER COUNTS!, participate in membership education, direct service initiatives, and national leadership programs designed to engage members at all levels in the development of skills related to ethical decision making.

What programs does Tri Sigma host currently that align with the Initiative?

Tri Sigma currently hosts five unique leadership programs that naturally align with **The Initiative’s** goals and objectives. The Tri Sigma National Leadership Programs are offered to women at all ages and life-stages, and speak to a variety of leadership styles. The Officer’s Academy, CAB and Volunteer Summit, Dunham Women of Character Institute, the Labyrinth Leadership Experience and our National Convention offer numerous avenues for character education as a backdrop for leadership development.

What is CHARACTER COUNTS!

The CHARACTER COUNTS! character education program is two things: an educational framework for teaching universal values and a national coalition of organizations that support each other. It is managed by the Josephson Institute for Ethics. Tri Sigma is an official Coalition member. The Coalition includes more than 900 organizations globally, engaging in character education in a multitude of ways. CHARACTER COUNTS! uses the Six Pillars of Character as a framework for decision-making and ethical leadership. The Six Pillars of Character are Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring and Citizenship. All six are well matched to Tri Sigma's larger mission, vision, and values. The pillars are universal values, and are not political, religious, or culturally exclusive.

CHARACTERCOUNTS![®]

The biggest character education program in the nation.
Get trained and get started today!

Note: CHARACTER COUNTS! and the Six Pillars of Character are registered trademarks of Josephson Institute

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Sigma Sigma Sigma was founded in 1898 at Longwood University in Farmville, VA. Tri Sigma strives to prepare women for life after college by advocating bonds of friendship, developing strong character in its members, and promoting the highest standards of conduct. Currently, there are over 100,000 members and over 200 alumnae and collegiate chapters. The Sorority supports play therapy for hospitalized children and assists in providing playrooms for hospitalized children in Chapel Hill, NC and Dallas, TX through funds contributed to the Sigma Sigma Sigma Foundation.



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