

Initiative for Inclusive Excellence (IIE) Recommendations

Develop a Diversity and Inclusion Standing Committee.

In an effort to receive critical communication, focused on amplifying a diverse group of voices, Tri Sigma should establish a permanent standing committee inclusive of a diverse representation of women from across the sorority landscape. It is of great importance that the demographic makeup of identities represented on this standing committee be both broad and encompassing. This group should be charged with serving as an advisory group with clearly articulated responsibilities including, but not limited to development of diversity-focused resources and programs.

Revisit policies and standards to ensure complete alignment with diversity and inclusion goals.

As the consultants engaged with various populations throughout the sisterhood, a common theme emerged necessitating a review of Tri Sigma's policies, position statements, and standards that intersect with matters of diversity and inclusion. For example, some of Tri Sigma's members found the standards to be nebulous, ambiguous and highly interpretive. Others reported that their individual chapters often interpreted the seven standards in ways that were exclusionary to diverse groups. It is recommended that the executive leadership engage in a process focused on operationalizing and providing context to its standards.

Review policies to ensure that sanctions are clearly detailed.

As the organization focuses its efforts on ensuring that its chapters understand the benefits of a diverse and inclusive community, it is impossible to rid the organization of bias and discrimination. Focus should be placed on operationalizing its sanctions as a means of enforcing policy, particularly related to identity. Individuals who fail to meet the organization's expectation of engaging in a community where the "perpetual bond of friendship" can flourish should have a preemptive understanding of potential sanctions that may befall them.

After reviewing the preexisting inclusivity position statement, it is recommended that members of the executive leadership team think critically concerning how they will respond to matters of bias, discrimination and acts overtly grounded in intolerance.

Develop a comprehensive diversity and inclusion educational initiative.

As the sorority focuses on increasing its capacity for inclusivity, it is recommended that a Diversity and Inclusion learning module be constructed to focus on providing members with the critical tools that are needed to understand and appreciate differences, to challenge bias, inspire action, and provide an opportunity for individuals to learn promising practices related to communicating across difference. It is recommended that educational learning module be hosted at least once a quarter to provide members with the training that they need to enhance inclusion within individual chapters and to ensure that women have the knowledge and skills necessary for living and working effectively with a diverse group of individuals.

Increase communication and encourage dialogue with/amongst members concerning matters related to inclusion and diversity.

It is recommended that a communication plan be developed that outlines a clear organizational strategy for the dissemination of inclusion and diversity-focused messaging. A communication plan will improve the way in which inclusion and diversity messaging is disseminated to the organization's diverse constituencies. The plan should also outline a process for sorority members to provide feedback to the organization related to their potential experiences and a strategy that focuses on amplifying the positive strides that are being made by individual chapters. The creation of a comprehensive communication plan will also ensure that the organization is able to engage with its internal and external audiences in an authentic, direct, and targeted manner.

While it is recognized that the sorority will not be able to speak to every issue affecting every member, and that the scale of affected sorority members may be markedly different depending on the issue, it is recommended that a communication plan include how the organization will respond to issues affecting its diverse membership, particularly when a segmented population has been adversely impacted.

Moreover, while working with members of the subcommittee, some members reported that, related to matters of bias and discrimination, they seldom knew of the kind of support that they should seek out from the national organization and were limited in their knowledge of reporting bias and the organization’s stance. A robust internal communication strategy, replete with provisions for a mechanism where members could report concerns to the national organization will ensure the sorority is apprised of issues and more apt to respond to them.

Engage in a comprehensive benchmarking assessment.

It is critically important that the organization be apprised of contemporary diversity and inclusion strategies that other organizations are engaging in which explore identity and how they work to create healthy, inclusive communities. To better understand how sororities and fraternities are working to mitigate barriers to inclusion, it is recommended that the organization launch a comprehensive benchmarking assessment to be disseminated to other similarly situated sororities and fraternities. Engaging in a comprehensive benchmarking assessment process will expose the organization to innovative, strategic methods that similarly situated organizations are employing to create more-inclusive communities. If Tri Sigma is to continue in its quest to be an inclusive community for its diverse membership, it must earnestly adopt a culture of continuous improvement. While it is important to benchmark traditional organizations to which Tri Sigma has commonly been associated with, it is also advisable that benchmarking efforts be inclusive of organizations in various related councils throughout the interfraternal community.

