CAS Standards: Access and Equity
Dan Bureau, PhD, University of Memphis

Access and equity – each present distinct challenges and opportunities for those administering Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs. To meet our responsibilities, it is important to know the expectations of us as professionals. Using the standards developed by the Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) for Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs (FSAP) can be one way to frame your approach to developing programs, resources, and services that are accessible and equitable and serve our diverse student population. This article focuses on the standards and guidelines for the FSAP and offers strategies for their implementation.

CAS identifies 43 functional areas within higher education, one of which is FSAP. CAS provides the same twelve General Standards to apply toward each functional area. Of these twelve CAS Standards, the seventh is Diversity, Equity, and Access. For more information on CAS, view the AFA CAS Website. It is important to remember CAS Standards are not for the fraternity and sorority community, per se (though some may be applied). Rather, they are developed for professional campus staff that has oversight for fraternity and sorority life. The extent to which they are applicable at the inter/national office or headquarters level should be examined by volunteers and staff responsible for the organization's management.

Standards
The following standards for diversity, equity, and access are required of FSAP that wish to be in alignment with the CAS Standards. Consistent with as displayed in CAS, they are bolded throughout the article. Content under the bolded sections provide ideas as to how you might accomplish this in your FSAP.

Within the context of each institution's unique mission and in accordance with institutional polices and all applicable codes and laws, Fraternity and Sorority Advising Programs (FSAP) must create and maintain educational and work environments that are
- **welcoming, accessible, and inclusive to persons of diverse backgrounds**
- **equitable and non-discriminatory**
- **free from harassment**

FSAP must not discriminate on the basis of ability; age; cultural identity; ethnicity; family educational history (e.g., first generation to attend college); gender identity and expression; nationality; political affiliation; race; religious affiliation; sex; sexual orientation; economic, marital, social, or veteran status; or any other basis included in institutional policies and codes and laws.

Institutional policies and procedures, as well as sound hiring processes, typically allow FSAP staff to fulfill this standard. Hiring processes should take into account the need for staff to reflect the diversity of the community and the institution. Expectations that the staff be a member of a fraternity/sorority are acceptable, as non-membership is not a protected right of

employment candidates unless specifically addressed by the institution's human resources department.

FSAP must
- **advocate for greater sensitivity to multicultural and social justice concerns by the institution and its personnel**
- **modify or remove policies, practices, facilities, structures, systems, and technologies that limit access, discriminate, or produce inequities**
- **include diversity, equity, and access initiatives within their strategic plans**
- **foster communication that deepens understanding of identity, culture, self expression, and heritage**
- **promote respect about commonalities and differences among people within their historical and cultural contexts**
- **address the characteristics and needs of a diverse population when establishing and implementing culturally relevant and inclusive programs, services, policies, procedures, and practices**
- **provide staff members with access to multicultural training and hold staff members accountable for integrating the training into their work**
- **respond to the needs of all students and other populations served when establishing hours of operation and developing methods of delivering programs, services, and resources**
- **ensure physical, program, and resource access for persons with disabilities**
- **recognize the needs of distance learning students by providing appropriate and accessible services and resources or by assisting them in gaining access to other appropriate services and resources in their geographic region**

The bullets above are part of the CAS General Standards; therefore, they are applied to *all* 43 functional areas. Some of these standards may seem less relevant to those in FSAP, such as the expectation for providing service to online students; however, as student affairs programs respond to increasingly diverse demographics, it is important to think carefully about how each of these bullets may be implemented.

Fraternities and sororities have the right by Title IX to restrict membership to those of one gender. However, FSAP staff must help students understand that by law they are prohibited to restrict membership based on any of the other demographics listed above such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and ability. Organizations are eligible to select membership based on criteria they developed, typically by the inter/national organization, and many now have non-discrimination clauses.

FSAP staff should help chapter leaders develop strategies to foster inclusive organizations while maintaining their rights to make decisions about whom they wish to add to their membership. Staff should provide opportunities for education on diversity and how opening access to diverse

members benefits the chapter and the overall fraternity and sorority community. Finally, FSAP should help students understand institutional approaches to equity and access.

FSAP must address the characteristics and needs of a diverse campus population when establishing and implementing policies and procedures.

FSAP must enhance members' knowledge, understanding, skills, and responsibilities associated with being a member of a pluralistic and global society. The program must provide educational efforts that develop appreciation of differences and cross-cultural competencies.

Fraternities and sororities have the right to select their members. As explained above, the FSAP should help chapters understand the legal implications of restricting access based on demographics other than the self-identified gender of the individual. Beyond the legal responsibilities, there is value in FSAP helping students and other stakeholders understand how diverse perspectives in their chapter will help them to be more culturally competent members of society. The FSAP should provide educational opportunities, including conversations with members, which help to realize this goal of increasing cultural competence.

Guidelines
The FSAP Standards also has a collection of guidelines that serve to reinforce such standards and are distinctive to this functional area. They are simply recommendations and are not required in order to be aligned with the CAS Standards. However, thoughtful leaders in the fraternal movement aided in the development of these guidelines; therefore, they represent best practices to increase the potential for access to the fraternity and sorority community, and equity in the potential for membership across diverse students. This section addresses these guidelines, and ideas for implementation are provided.

FSAP should cultivate a range of opportunities for students to gain membership into fraternities and sororities that have diverse purposes, including those that are cultural, social, and professional in nature.

FSAP should work with members to promote fraternity and sorority membership as a viable involvement option for all student populations. The FSAP should not interfere with the fraternity/ sorority's right to select membership based on Title IX criteria and its status as a private organization.

The intent of these statements is to ensure that there are numerous opportunities for students to join a fraternity/sorority based on their interests in membership. Providing multiple opportunities across types of fraternities and sororities can increase the extent to which the experience is accessible to any potential member. It is the responsibility of the FSAP to ensure that options exist. When opportunities do not exist, the FSAP should examine approaches to introducing new options.

The FSAP should work with members to ensure recruitment and intake processes are accessible to all who choose to take part.

A chapter is not required to extend membership to a person with a disability if that person is not a good fit for the chapter based on the criteria they have developed for membership selection. However, chapters cannot discriminate based on disability status. This includes potential physical and learning disabilities. One forum in which this can be particularly difficult is in Panhellenic formal recruitment. FSAP must work with stakeholders to ensure that the recruitment process, in part endorsed by the institution, permits students who have disabilities to participate. For example, if GPA information is a primary consideration in releasing potential members, the FSAP should have procedures for potential members to defend their academic performance, which may have been a result of a documented learning disability. Additionally, persons who use mobility devices should be able to get in and out of facilities. Matthew Gilsbach also explains in this issue of *Essentials* how recruitment processes must also be attentive to the needs of persons with hearing impairment.

FSAP staff should maintain current knowledge of student demographics and characteristics on their campus and higher education in general.

The FSAP should be able to explain the demographics of the campus at which they work. Additionally, they should be able to explain how the demographics of the fraternity and sorority community are or are not consistent with overall campus demographics. For example, it is important that FSAP can identify the number of students in terms of race and ethnicity. FSAP professionals should also be aware of first-generation status and the age of the overall student population. They should be able to convey to various publics how the fraternity and sorority community does or does not parallel the campus environment. For example, considering findings in Krista Soria's article in this issue of *Essentials* about social class, knowing your campus demographics relative to socioeconomic status is important as well. One way for FSAP to examine the extent to which socioeconomic status in chapters compares to the overall campus is to review Pell-grant status in both communities.

In closing, this review can help FSAP staff use the CAS Standards and Guidelines to promote access and equity, and to some extent diversity, in their fraternity and sorority community. It is the intent of the article that readers will consider these standards and guidelines for student affairs practice and implement them as they are able in the FSAP.