

Checklist for a Climate of Acceptance

Diversity educators advocate setting a standard of acceptance and appreciation as a normal part of an institution's daily activities. This approach to fostering inclusiveness and respect calls for attention to diversity in all aspects of an organization's routine. One or two token diversity programs each year will not fulfill the need for education. Building a climate of acceptance in fraternities requires a commitment at all levels, ranging from individual members to the group's headquarters and including the university administration. The following checklist is suggested as a guide for creating a climate of acceptance in fraternities – a climate in which a brother who is gay may feel a sense of safety and support among his brothers.

Individual Members

- ___ 1. Refrain from ridiculing persons on the basis of sexual orientation, such as through jokes, name-calling, and display of demeaning images or messages.
- ___ 2. Confront others who may ridicule or harass persons on the basis of sexual orientation.
- ___ 3. Be committed to learning about sexual orientation, as shown through participation in educational programs and personal study.
- ___ 4. Assume responsibility for learning how to respond to a brother who is gay and wants or needs to talk.
- ___ 5. Insist that leaders of the chapter state their commitment to diversity, including that pertaining to sexual orientation.

Chapters

- ___1. Include expectations for appreciating diversity in training for pledges and actives.
- ___2. Create a diversity statement, either from national headquarters or locally developed, that promotes respect for all people, regardless of sexual orientation.
- ___3. Display prominently the diversity statement in the house and/or in printed materials about the chapter.
- ___4. Develop a procedure for addressing harassing behaviors, including those directed at persons on the basis of their sexual orientation.
- ___5. Contribute to the education of other chapters on campus by modeling acceptance and appreciation of diverse members.
- ___6. Support individual members who wish to state publicly their support for persons who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered.
- ___7. Sponsor and support events that contribute to understanding of sexual orientation issues.
- ___8. Encourage brothers to be honest with each other by creating an atmosphere of support for differences. Remember: This leads to a stronger sense of brotherhood.
- ___9. Have policies that apply to guest and alumni, making it clear that it is not acceptable to use demeaning language or harass members on the basis of sexual orientation.
- ___10. Periodically review traditions, such as songs and events, to be sure that language and actions are not demeaning to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered.

National Headquarters and Professional Fraternity Associations

- ___1. Promote understanding about sexual-orientation issues through educational materials that have been prepared at the national level and made readily available through publicity to chapters.

- ___2. Publicize a strong statement about appreciation for diversity and respect that includes sexual orientation.
- ___3. Provide resources to assist chapters with educational initiatives that are designed to increase understanding about sexual orientation. National chapter consultants who travel to various college campuses should be prepared to address problems and questions about sexual-orientation issues.
- ___4. State an expectation of zero tolerance for harassment of any kind toward people on the basis of sexual orientation.
- ___5. Establish procedures for holding chapters accountable if they condone or tolerate harassment based on sexual orientation.
- ___6. Highlight the accomplishments of gay brothers in national publications.
- ___7. Review periodically any publications, rituals, and traditional events that include text or behaviors that ridicule or demean people on the basis of sexual orientation and take steps to ensure that such text and behaviors will be discontinued.
- ___8. Communicate with university personnel the commitment of the fraternity to fostering an environment of inclusiveness, respect, and appreciation for diversity and offer to work with university personnel in responding to any incidents that may occur in the fraternity that would contradict this commitment.
- ___9. Provide strong leadership in working with other national headquarters toward encouraging a climate of respect and inclusiveness.

University Personnel

- ___1. Communicate university standards and expectations in regard to diversity to all student organizations, including fraternities.
- ___2. Make sure you are available to fraternity leaders to assist with planning educational efforts to increase understanding about diversity, including sexual orientation (i.e., develop a diversity peer education program).

- ___3. Develop a procedure for responding to incidents of harassment based on sexual orientation and communicate to fraternity members that such procedures are available.
- ___4. Assert a position in support of diversity and individual rights when faced with political pressure to exclude gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered persons from regular university life, including jobs and benefits.
- ___5. Provide educational sessions for house directors and housing corporation boards to explain the university's standards and expectations in support of diversity.
- ___6. Review periodically all institutional publications and policies to ensure that language that ridicules, demeans, or excludes people because of sexual orientation is eliminated.
- ___7. Support establishment of a Delta Lambda Phi (a national fraternity for gay and progressive men) chapter on your campus.
- ___8. Inform faculty and staff who present educational programs in fraternities about human sexuality, sexually transmitted diseases, and related topics not to be heterosexist and assume all members of fraternities and sororities are heterosexual.
- ___9. Ensure that staff in campus resource offices, such as counselors, health professionals, and advisers, are trained about sexual-orientation issues.
- ___10. Provide leadership for creating supporting campus environments for other institutions and policy makers.

Source: Shane L. Windmeyer and Pamela W. Freeman, Lambda 10 Project.