Plaid & University of South Carolina Partnership

Overview
Plaid, a professional services company specializing in personal and organizational development, is partnering with the University of South Carolina to provide a comprehensive community building program for the University of South Carolina’s fraternities and sororities. The program focuses on individual chapter health and how that affects the fraternity/sorority community and the overall university community. The University of South Carolina would like all fraternities and sororities to participate in the program.

For all programs, Plaid uses the assessment tool known as The Birkman Method. The Birkman Method measures perceptions and helps neutralize misperceptions that affect the performance of individuals who ultimately control the potential success of their organization.

Plaid’s use of a grounded assessment tool provides individuals and organizations insight into behavioral cause and effect within corporate structures, institutions, families and one-on-one relationships. Plaid provides both knowledge and a realistic means to manage positive, productive change and to assess change and organizational health.

Plaid is distinct among those who serve fraternity and sorority communities. No other firm brings together professionals with direct experience in organizational behavior, higher education and fraternity/sorority education to address cultural issues specific to fraternity/sorority communities. In addition, Plaid is the only existing firm that has professionals who are certified to use an assessment tool that specifically addresses organizational health and uses the tool to influence cultural change within fraternity/sorority communities.

Plaid will achieve this, in cooperation with the University and inter/national organizations, through implementation of its ACE program.

What is the ACE program?
ACE is Plaid’s flagship training and development program for fraternities and sororities. Its focus is on Authentic Chapter Elevation.

ACE is based, in part, on practical and theoretical approaches to the concept of authentic leadership which has been proven to contribute to positive outcomes (e.g., satisfaction and performance) at a higher level than other well-known leadership theories.

ACE is targeted at values-based organizations and addresses three primary types of organizational situations:

Resuscitation
A group “on the brink” that needs a complete rebuilding of their cultural, directional and operational foundation.
Reorganization/Organization
A group “in trouble” or a “new” group that needs to reassess/assess their culture, direction and operations.

Revitalization
A group that has a relatively strong culture and past performance but needs some direction and operational support

Through a focus on developing self-awareness, self-regulation, and person-organization values congruence (i.e. developing “authentic” individuals and organizations), ACE has proven successful in transforming the culture and improving the performance of organizations.

How does the program work?
Step 1 – Step 1 focuses on providing an overview of the program.

Steps 2 and 3- During Step 2, participants take the Birkman assessment and those responses are interpreted through group facilitation. Grounded in organizational behavior theory, Plaid believes that one must understand self to understand how self fits into a larger purpose. Plaid also believes in the basic goodness of people; this process allows people to take a critical look at themselves and their actions and examine how their actions are consistent (or not) with their espoused values and, in later sessions, the values of their organization (Step 3).

Steps 4 and 5 allow the participants to commit to their individual authenticity and then commit to the success of their organization.

A by-product of this, with fraternities and sororities, is that chapters are able to focus on major issues among today’s college students. Plaid strives to help the students achieve individual authenticity that translates into the health of their organization - allowing men and women to see how they can use their organization to promote the better individual.

What is the cost of the program?
The normal cost of the program is $45,000 per chapter and $125 per member for the assessment (the cost of the assessment for officers is $175) plus expenses

The program cost at the University of South Carolina is $17,000 per chapter and $35 per member for the assessment (the cost for the assessment for officers is $85). This price has been achieved through Plaid altering its cost structure and the University of South Carolina underwriting the cost of the program.
What is included in the cost of the program?
Plaid will work with chapters for a minimum of 12 sessions and each meeting is a minimum of four hours. The amount of time required varies depending upon the organization and the particular issues facing the organization. For each organization, the learning will spread out over the course of an academic year and will include both formal and informal meetings. Informal meetings will include advisors and officers as they learn to apply in their work what is being learned during the formal meetings.

Why is the cost of the assessment different for officers?
Officers will receive more detailed information about their behavior, as available through the Birkman assessment. All members can receive this but it comes at the higher cost as the report comes directly from the Birkman office. Therefore, Plaid has offered a lower cost for general membership. Organizations can elect to have the full assessment details for all members at the $125 cost if they choose. The same assessment is taken by all members; it’s the level of interpretation and information that is released by Birkman that differs.

Should advisors participate?
Advisors are encouraged to participate when their chapters are participating so they will have access to the information that is being used by students and Student Life staff. Advisors are encouraged, although not required, to take advantage of the more detailed Birkman results at $125 per person.

Who will staff the program?
Plaid will have a full-time staff member based in Columbia to shepherd the project and be available to students and advisors throughout the duration of the program. This individual will be accompanied by additional Plaid staff who have backgrounds in organizational behavior and higher education.

What have past clients said about the program?
“After completing the Plaid program there was a noticeable difference within our chapter. The level of commitment from our brothers toward the brotherhood had increased ten-fold. Brother events, Rush events and even social events saw a huge rise [in participation] close to 100%. The care for our house changed from being treated as an old trashy house to a storied house in which all our brothers maintained and cared for. The overall attitude of our brotherhood had changed, and we wouldn't exist today if it weren't for Plaid.”
Jonathan Radivoj, Chapter President at Georgia Tech

“I would like to personally thank [Plaid] for all of the work you have done for my chapter. Although most of us saw this as a dreadful experience in the beginning, you have truly changed our minds. I
can see the changes that have been made not only in myself, but the chapter as a whole. Your work has not gone unnoticed. Thanks for making this experience worthwhile.”

John Moore, Chapter President, UT-Knoxville

“The power of Plaid is in watching the undergraduates draw their own conclusions about their chapter, its dysfunctions and how the students will address and overcome their issues. Plaid is the catalyst for change but, perhaps for the first time, the students actually identify and own their issues, realize there’s a problem and take steps to get to a better place.”

Wynn Smiley, CEO, Alpha Tau Omega

"Working with the team from PLAID has been a great experience! They were able to assist a fraternity on our campus truly transform from a culture of apathy and mediocrity to a chapter that values engagement and accountability. The consulting team kept our staff informed on the progress of the group along the journey. The fraternity has grown to become one of the major players in the IFC community, for all the right reasons."

Tanner Marcantel, Director of Greek Affairs, Georgia Tech

“Our Board's desire to change the culture on our own often felt like 1 step forward and 2 steps back. The guys really did not fully buy into what it meant to be part of a life-long brotherhood. The Plaid program, combined with the commitment of our national fraternity and chapter advisor, put us on a more consistent path to long term, positive understanding. Today, our collective membership is building on our rich 120 year legacy at Illinois instead of simply borrowing from it.”

Jack Klues, Alumni House Corporation Chair, University of Illinois