



Removing Barriers to Joining

This resource helps College Panhellenics, fraternity/sorority advisors (FSAs) and NPC College Panhellenic area advisors identify common barriers that prevent college women from joining sororities. This tool provides a categorized overview of the barriers women may face when joining a sorority. By naming these challenges, more inclusive practices and action-oriented changes can be implemented in the future.

Reflection and Discussion

What Does This Look Like on Your Campus?

Use the questions to guide a discussion with your College Panhellenic community, FSA and area advisor.

- Which of these barriers do we observe or hear about on our campus?
- Which of these are discussed openly and which are ignored or assumed?
- Who is most affected by each barrier?
- Are we collecting any data or feedback from PNMs or chapter members about barriers?
- What assumptions do we make about who is "ready" or "right" for sorority membership?
- How are first-generation, nontraditional or transfer students impacted?
- What would we like to know more about and how can we find out?

Categories of Barriers to Joining

Timing and Scheduling

- Deferred or significantly delayed recruitment, for example, after midterms
- Recruitment that overlaps with religious or holiday breaks
- Split-weekend formats that fragment the experience
- Recruitment rounds or events that conflict with class schedules

Why this matters: Academic calendars, faith practices and campus culture all influence a student's ability to participate. Misalignment limits access and discourages involvement.

Marketing, Awareness and Perception

- Little awareness of sorority membership opportunities
- Misunderstanding the value and benefits of sorority membership
- Narrow or inaccurate social media portrayals
- Unkind or exclusionary gossip that influences potential new members (PNMs)

Why this matters: Students rarely explore what they do not understand – inclusive, transparent messaging matters, especially for first-generation and historically underrepresented students.



Cost and Financial Transparency

- Registration fees that seem out of reach
- Extra charges to move in early for recruitment
- Membership dues and unclear cost structures
- Few visible scholarships or financial aid options

Why this matters: Cost is a top deterrent. Clear, upfront information builds trust and reduces stigma.

Membership Requirements and Time Commitments

- Heavy time demands during the new member period
- Unclear expectations about chapter obligations or time commitments
- Hidden or misunderstood financial commitments

Why this matters: Students need clear expectations to make informed decisions.

Campus and Institutional Policies

- Required fraternity/sorority courses before joining
- Administrative restrictions that delay or block access

Why this matters: Campus policies can unintentionally gatekeep membership.

Knowledge and Education Gaps

- Misinformation or limited training for recruitment counselors
- Limited understanding of the membership recruitment acceptance binding agreement (MRABA) or how bid matching works (e.g., release figure methodology)
- Misleading statements from chapter members about rankings or bids
- Confusion about continuous open bidding (COB) versus primary recruitment

Why this matters: PNMs deserve clear, trustworthy information.

Accessibility and Inclusive Design

- Physical barriers at recruitment locations
- Event formats inaccessible to students with mental, visual or auditory needs
- Long distances between recruitment venues
- Disparities in event space quality or safety

Why this matters: True equity requires design that meets every student's physical, emotional and safety needs.