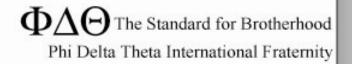
Alcohol-free Housing Does it Make a Difference?

A Whitepaper By Dr. Edward G. Wipple

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Alcohol-Free Housing

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Introduction

Historically, underage drinking, binge drinking, and disruptive behaviors that often accompany heavy alcohol consumption have been a concern and an issue for higher education institutions since the first colleges and universities were established in the United States (Wechsler & Wuethrich, 2002). Therefore, it is no surprise that it remains a topic of discussion in the contemporary institution. Significant research has been conducted since the 1990s regarding the use of alcohol consumption among college students, revealing that over 80% of students drink alcohol, two-thirds of whom reported "heavy episodic drinking," better known by the term "binge drinking" (Mitchell, Toorney, & Erickson, 2005; O'Malley & Johnston, 2002; Philpot, 1997; Wechsler, Lee, Nelson, & Kuo, 2002a; Wechsler, Lee, Kuo, Seibring, Nelson, & Lee, 2002b; Wechsler, Seibring, Liu, & Ahl, 2004).

Upon further examination, fraternity and sorority members have been identified as one of the key groups fostering a culture of drinking on campus (NIAAA, 2002). According to four Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Studies (CAS), 86% of students involved in the Greek system reported they used alcohol and a vast majority (approximately 83%) disclosed that they considered drinking to be a central part of the social life of fraternities and sororities. The CAS studies also disclosed that residency in fraternity and sorority houses resulted in higher rates of heavy drinking among members (Wechsler, et al., 2002b). Inherently, these results were alarming to both college administrators and to the governance bodies of the national and international fraternities and sororities. This prompted the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity to begin a reassessment of its risk management policy, resulting in the realization of alcohol-free housing (AFH) for all chapters.

The purpose of this "white paper" is to underscore the Fraternity's rationale behind compulsory implementation of alcohol-free housing for all Phi Delta Theta chapters. The impact this decision has had, directly and indirectly, on membership, academic performance, and insurance costs will be highlighted.

Definition of Alcohol-Free Housing policy

"All chapter facilities and properties in Phi Delta Theta Fraternity shall be alcohol-free at all times, and under all circumstances. The implementation of these procedures is a continuation of the ongoing educational efforts of the General Fraternity" (Phi Delta Theta Fraternity Risk Management Policies, 2004). It is understood in Phi Delta Theta Fraternity that this policy means that chapter properties are to remain free from alcohol by anybody, at any time, under any circumstance. The chapter property could be owned by a local house corporation, college or university, or other entity. If the property is considered the Phi Delta Theta "space" by constituencies on campus, the property is to be alcohol-free. This includes not only the structural facility, but the outdoor area, including the front and back yard, parking lot, and sidewalks.

Implementation Strategies

The Fraternity announced its revised Risk Management Policy regarding alcohol-free housing in March 1997. At that time, fewer than 12 chapters with facilities were alcohol-free. The announcement was communicated to students, parents, alumni, university officials, and the media. This announcement stated that "by the year 2000, every chapter of Phi Delta Theta will have alcohol-free facilities, or they will not continue to exist as a charter group. We are serious about this initiative; between now and the year 2000, each chapter will be expected to take specific steps to reach this goal" (White & Deloian, 1997). Through a series of financial incentives, several chapters voluntarily implemented alcohol-free housing before the July 1, 2000 deadline. Others followed, and by June 2000 all but 30 chapters with facilities had adopted the alcohol-free housing policy. To help educate alumni and students about implementation of this policy, a resource guide was prepared that included information on recruitment, social alternatives, enforcement procedures, education, and support materials. In addition, the Fraternity made available additional information at its summer Leadership Colleges and regional Alumni Summits about techniques to successfully implement the alcohol-free housing policy. On July 1, 2000, all chapter facilities were alcohol-free in Phi Delta Theta International Fraternity.

Reasons for Alcohol-Free Housing

The Fraternity articulated seven key reasons for the implementation of alcohol-free housing facilities. They were: 1) to return the focus to the founding principles; 2) to combat the alcohol-dominated culture; 3) to improve academic performance; 4) to stop the deterioration of our facilities; 5) to slow the rise in liability insurance costs; 6) to meet the needs of today's students; and 7) to re-involve alumni members. As one University president stated,

"We are taking these actions for one reason: because we care about the health, safety and wellbeing of our students."

-David L. Boren, University President, University of Oklahoma, *The Oklahoma Daily Newspaper*, January 18, 2005.

Focus on Founding Principles

The Fraternity effectively used numerous media reports from various national, community and campus newspapers regarding the misuse and abuse of alcohol by college students. These articles demonstrated how the public perceived fraternities to be primarily focused on social events and alcohol. Thus, the attempt was made to return the focus to the founding principles of Greek letter organizations, including fellowship, academic excellence, leadership, high standards of conduct, and service. Within this context, emphasis was placed on what it means to be in a fraternity and what it means to be a brother in the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity. University senior student affairs officers supported this move.

"I look forward to helping the fraternities realize their potential and live by the principles on which their organizations are founded: leadership, service, brotherhood, and scholarship."

-Gene Tice, Vice President for Student Affairs and Campus Services, Western Kentucky University; WKU News Release regarding Western Kentucky University's decision to make all fraternity houses alcohol-free, January 19, 2005.

Alcohol-Dominated Culture

As mentioned previously, the CAS studies from the Harvard School of Public Health stated that approximately 86% of men and 80% of women who live in Greek housing are binge drinkers (Wechsler et al., 2002a). For a male, binge drinking was defined as having five or more drinks in one sitting. Misuse and abuse of alcohol was also associated with other image problems, including poor relationships with the host institution, the public, and alumni, as well as sexual assaults and date rapes. Alcohol also was found in most hazing situations, and too many deaths occurred due to the misuse and abuse of alcohol.

Improve Academic Performance

The use and misuse of alcohol has often times been tied to poor academic performance. Alcohol can affect the ability of undergraduates to adhere to the mission of the universities and to one of the core principles of Greek life, academic success. Missing classes due to alcohol consumption, along with the disruptions during the night, greatly affect academic performance. As one vice president for student affairs said, "the return of fraternal values of scholarship, leadership, service, and friendship will greatly be aided by the implementation of alcohol-free facilities."

-Elisio "Cheo" Torres, Vice President for Student Affairs, University of New Mexico; Letter to Fraternity and Sorority Chapters, Alumni Advisors, and House Corporations, March 25, 2005.

Deterioration of Facilities

The deterioration of living facilities and its correlation to the misuse and abuse of alcohol was also a concern. It was noted that these facilities were steadily deteriorating, due, in great part, to social events. Also, it was reported that alumni were not willing to donate funds to a chapter facility that is not maintained properly. Examples of property losses, and even deaths, had occurred as a result of fire and life safety hazards stemming from alcohol use.

Liability Insurance Costs

Information was made available to the Fraternity about the escalating liability insurance premiums and its relation to alcohol-associated incidents. Over 80% of all insurance claim payments were reported as a result of the misuse and abuse of alcohol. Millions of dollars have been spent by fraternities and sororities in alcohol-related claims and lawsuits. When the decision was made to implement alcohol-free housing in 1997, it was reported that since 1985, in all claims and lawsuits involving alcohol, only two involved individuals over the legal drinking age. In contrasting the fraternity insurance rates with sorority insurance rates that maintain alcohol-free facilities, the difference was dramatic. In 2004, the Fraternity Executive Association's annual survey indicated the average per-man rate for liability insurance for a men's fraternity was \$149, as compared to \$25 for the women's groups.

Needs of Today's Students

Traditional-aged students currently enrolled in our higher education institutions are known as "Millennials." "As a group, Millennials are unlike any other youth generation in living memory. They are more numerous, more affluent, better educated, and more ethnically diverse. More importantly, they are beginning to manifest a wide array of positive social habits that older Americans no longer associate with youth, including a new focus on teamwork, achievement, modesty, and good conduct" (Howe & Strauss, 2000, p. 4). Sax (2003) found that "compared to students just five or six years ago, today's freshmen are more academically optimistic, service-

oriented, and politically engaged. They also have less experience with alcohol and cigarettes than their recent counterparts" (p. 19). True to these stated characteristics, students entering college today often choose to live in a substance-free environment if offered. The data supports clearly that today's students want to make friends, do well academically, and have opportunities for service learning and leadership. Implementing alcohol-free housing was a timely and welcomed move, given the characteristics that define the Millennial generation and the desire within the Fraternity to begin changing the perception that being involved in a Greek organization correlates with alcohol consumption and abuse.

Re-involving Alumni Members

Alumni volunteers were becoming increasingly frustrated with the condition of the chapter facilities and the negative image and focus on social life and alcohol. The alcohol-free housing policy offered alumni an opportunity to become re-involved with the undergraduate chapters and provide vital leadership and guidance to undergraduate members. As one Phi Delta Theta alumnus indicated, "the AFH housing initiative has clearly established a higher level of culture and expectation in our house and in the chapter, which has been respectably acknowledged by university administrators and parents. Not only is our house the cleanest and classiest on the row, but moreover the AFH initiative has created a house that evokes respect, honor and pride."

-Dr. Larry G. Baratta, M.D., Ph.D., Chapter Advisory Board Chairman, University of Miami; E-mail to Phi Delta Theta General Headquarters, May 19, 2005.

Media Attention

Following the March 1997 announcement of its alcohol-free housing policy, Phi Delta Theta was featured in over 1,000 different newspaper articles from local and national media outlets. In addition, over 10 national television spots and approximately 150 local television spots covered the announcement. Personal interviews were also given on the NBC Today Show, MSNBC, C-SPAN, and Fox National News. The media continues to request interviews from members of Phi Delta Theta regarding the implementation of its alcohol-free housing policy. Several newspapers also printed editorials that included comments such as:

"The decision of Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Nu Fraternities to ban alcoholic beverages from their houses effective July 1, 2000, is a wise one and not as daring as it may appear . . . Phi Delta Theta and Sigma Nu recognize that getting an education has become an increasingly serious business. Their policy change should be embraced by all campus organizations."

-Editor, Indianapolis Star, May 21, 1997

"Here's an example of putting your money where your morality is. The Phi Delta Theta Foundation of Oxford will distribute grant money totaling nearly \$470,000 in its plan to go alcohol-free . . . if Phi Delta Theta has success with its move, perhaps this will encourage other fraternities to think that "frat brothers" and "drinking buddies" don't have to be synonymous . . . Phi Delta Theta Foundation has put nearly a half million dollars toward its move to go alcohol-free. That's truly some earnest money. We think it's a good investment."

-In Our View, Robert W. Murphy, Publisher, and Dirk Q. Allen, Opinion Page Editor, Hamilton Journal, June 15, 1997

"The hard-drinking image of college fraternities is changing. Some colleges and universities have declared fraternity houses off-limits to drinking. Some chapters and national fraternities, including Sigma Nu and Phi Delta Theta, have set a deadline for their chapter houses to be alcohol-free . . . it may be difficult for some organizations to change, but an alcohol-free policy would benefit fraternity members as well as their schools. Phi Delta Theta's example should be followed by other fraternities."

- Editorial Page, Omaha World Herald, June 29, 1997.

"The stereotype of besotted college fraternity brothers making merry fools of themselves may be assuming in the movies, but in real life, it's no joke. Alcohol abuse is a major health problem on college campuses . . . the national organizations of several fraternities have decided as a matter of policy, to wean their chapters from alcohol as a social convention and to reemphasize scholarship and public service. That should make college life safer and more productive for everyone, including young adults learning to enjoy alcohol responsibly."

- The Salt Lake Tribune's Editorial Position, Salt Lake Tribune, May 19, 1997.

"In the past few years, several national fraternities have banned alcohol from their houses. These were bold and controversial moves, but the alcohol-free movement is continuing to gain members. The General Council of Phi Delta Theta Fraternity unanimously voted to eliminate alcohol from chapter facilities by the year 2000. In making this decision, the Council cited a strong desire to return to fraternity values and respond to the needs of today's students. The move by the Phi Delts to eliminate alcohol was welcomed by me. As a student at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, I was a proud member of Phi Delta Theta. I'm even prouder today."

- Robert Wallace, West Central Tribune, July 14, 1997

"I congratulate the Phi Delta Theta Fraternity for 'becoming the first dry Greek house at the University of Miami.' What a step in the right direction."

- Marino E. Carbonell, Coral Gables Gazette, October 14-20, 2004

Insurance Claims and Lawsuits

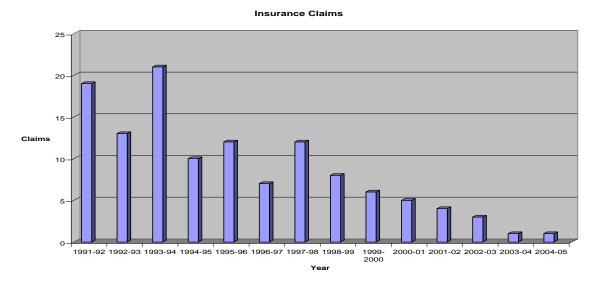
Phi Delta Theta Fraternity aligned itself with James R. Favor & Company in the early 1980s. This business partnership started as a response to growing concerns over liability in the Greek community. In 1985 the undergraduate membership was assessed its first per-man insurance rate of \$12. By 1990 increased premiums more than quintupled the rate to \$65 per man. Five years later the rate had already more than doubled to \$135 per man. As the rising prices of insurance became a larger concern, 1997 became the first year for different chapters to pay different perman rates. Chapters that participated in the Alcohol-free housing policy paid \$115 per man, while those that didn't participate paid a per-man rate of \$135.

"From an insurance perspective, underwriters support alcohol-free housing because it limits the accessibility to alcoholic beverages. This has resulted in fewer claims and lawsuits, and helps to reduce the cost of liability insurance."

-James R. Favor, Owner, James R. Favor & Company; Personal Communication to Phi Delta Theta General Headquarters, May 25, 2005.

For the next three years, chapters that participated in the AFH policy continued to pay less than those chapters that kept alcohol in their chapter facilities. 2001 marked the first year that all chapters fell under the AFH policy, and the per man rate steadied at \$115. The past two years have seen the Fraternity charge undergraduates a per-man rate of \$150, and at this time it is believed that the 2005 rate will be maintained at \$150 per man.

The Fraternity's experience with rising insurance rates virtually paralleled the number of claims and lawsuits against the Fraternity. In 1991 the fraternity had 19 open claims (including lawsuits). This number increased to 21 in 1993, and it was at 12 in 1997. As the AFH policy was implemented, claims (including lawsuits) started to decrease. The year 2000 resulted in only five claims, and 2003 produced one minor claim. During the 2004-2005 insurance year there were no claims filed.



The decrease in the number of claims and lawsuits shows a correlation with the implementation of the alcohol-free housing policy. Stabilization of the per-man rate has also occurred as a result of this important policy change. Insurance premiums are difficult to control, and with an insurance market that has been recently constricted, progress has been made. Issues like the September 11th tragedy and other organizations negative claims history affect how much everyone pays; however, the Fraternity is in control of its future insurance rates. The continued improvement of our loss ratio will show a further stabilization of rates that are more than competitive.

While the Fraternity can only hypothesize about what the insurance rates would be if it had not moved to alcohol-free housing, the premise is frightening. Prolonging the claims experience and insurance rate increases into the early 2000s without the alcohol-free housing policy would have likely yielded dire results. Claims would have likely stayed the same, and the loss ratio would have continued to increase. This would have ensured that insurance rates climbed, and undergraduates would be facing per-man rates of over \$200. One chapter president articulated it well: "While all the other fraternities on our campus struggle to redefine their purpose under

alcohol-free housing, Phi Delta Theta has made great strides to achieving our true purpose as an organization and is excelling in nearly ever area of chapter and campus life as a direct result."

-Donald Bowers, Chapter President, University of Oklahoma; E-mail to Phi Delta Theta General Headquarters, May 19, 2005.

Membership Trends

The impact of alcohol-free housing on membership has been relatively minimal. In 1980, 3,525 individuals were reported to have joined Phi Delta Theta chapters. In 1990, that number grew to 4,158, and by 2000 it had dropped to 3,162. In 2004, four years after all chapters had implemented the alcohol-free housing policy, 3,102 new members were reported. This trend parallels similar experiences for other national and international fraternities.

Comparatively, over the last 15 years, Phi Delta Theta's membership size has been well above the average sizes of all other fraternities, factoring in all new undergraduate members. While the membership trends for all fraternities continue to indicate a decline, Phi Delta Theta has continued to be well above the average of all fraternities in initiates, new members, and total chapter size. Statistically, Phi Delta Theta has held steady against this trend since the implementation of alcohol-free housing. This is indicated by the averages of new members for other fraternities compared to the average for Phi Delta Theta:

Year	Other Fraternities (average)	Phi Delta Theta (average)
1990	3,636	4,158
2000	2,530	3,162
2004	2,415	3,102

Average New Members

The margin between the average chapter size of all other fraternities has also grown substantially. In 1990, Phi Delta Theta chapters were 18% larger than the average fraternity chapter, and in 2004 they were 30% larger.

In 2004, Phi Delta Theta was one of only 13 national and international fraternities to show an increase in total undergraduates from the previous year with a 4.2% increase. From a competitive standpoint, Phi Delta Theta's stance within the top ten of all fraternities in new members has held steadfast, as it ranked ninth in 1990, eighth in 2000, and ninth in 2004.

The number of chapters was reported as: 147 (1980); 183 (1990); 173 (2000); 167(2004). It is believed that the alcohol-free housing policy establishes a higher standard of performance and, hence, less tolerance for the misuse and abuse of alcohol by the Fraternity that has resulted in more chapter closings. The following number of chapters were closed: 1(1980); 3(1990); 10(2000); 2(2004). However, since the implementation of alcohol-free housing, Phi Delta Theta has undergone one of its largest "growth spurts" in the history of the modern fraternity. A recent study conducted in May 2005 for the FEA Directors of Expansion of various fraternities, revealed that Phi Delta Theta had colonized and chartered the second most chapters among all those who participated since 2000, when alcohol-free housing was implemented (Prahoda, 2005).

This indicates a renewed demand for a values-based organization from students who see a true benefit in alcohol-free housing and its role in their collegiate experience. Expansion efforts have enabled Phi Delta Theta to return to former campuses and new campuses alike. The Fraternity's Director of Expansion summarizes it well:

"The alcohol-free housing policy makes Phi Delta Theta a much more marketable product to all audiences. Without alcohol in our chapter facilities, students, universities, parents, and alumni all see a venture that has a very low potential for risk and a high potential for leadership development. Our new chapters started with the alcoholfree housing policy have incredible longevity based on the quality of the individuals who start them, and the subsequent foundation they build. Further, the niche market of men looking for a values based organization is one met by the advantages of our policy."

-Sean Wagner, Director of Expansion, Phi Delta Theta Fraternity; E-mail to Executive Vice President Robert Biggs, May 29, 2005.

Academic Results

Since the implementation of AFH, the Fraternity has seen an incremental increase in the academic performance of its membership. For example, in Fall 2000, the average chapter grade-point average was 2.73 (on a 4.0 scale) and in 2004 it was reported as 2.93. The grade-point average for members and pledges increased during this time. Furthermore, the average chapter grade-point average has been above 2.9 for the past three semesters. Chapter leaders see the difference:

"Alcohol-free housing is more than risk management; it's a way to reserve the chapter house for its intended purpose--brotherhood. More and more each day, I realize that AFH is not an alternative but rather a necessity for chapters that want to experience 'fraternity' in the true sense of the word. I see this in our active, engaged brothers and our recruitment of high quality men who look for more than what a 'frat' can offer."

-Stephen Glass, Chapter President, University of Virginia; E-mail to Phi Delta Theta General Headquarters, May 19, 2005.

Conclusion

Overall, the redefinition of the risk management policy to include alcohol-free housing facilities has been a positive move for the Fraternity. It has helped to advance the Fraternity's goals of returning the focus to the founding principles, combating the alcohol-dominated culture, improving academic performance, stopping the deterioration of our facilities, slowing the rise in liability insurance costs, meeting the needs of today's students, and re-involving alumni members. However, given recent results of the CAS study, alcohol-free housing is not the solution to the problem; it is only a forward step. The Fraternity must not be shortsighted of the fact that the drinking culture on most college campuses, and within Phi Delta Theta, is strong.

Arnold and Kuh (1992) speak to the idea that, in order to change a strong culture like this, a number of environmental changes are required. Some of these changes include:

- 1. Conducting cultural audits of local chapters using insiders and outsiders;
- 2. Adapting culture-change strategies;

- 3. Holding members of the local chapter responsible for bringing about cultural change;
- 4. Redoubling efforts to recruit new members from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups;
- 5. Selecting live-in advisors committed to the institutional mission and culture change; and
- 6. Eliminating organizations that are unwilling/unable to change.

Many chapters have already implemented several of the recommendations listed above. The Fraternity is finding that, in many cases, it is the perception among our members and others that the use, and in some cases the abuse, of alcohol is a rite of passage within social organizations (Higher Education Center, 2005; Kellogg, 1999; Meilman, et al., 1998; Presley & Meilman, 1992; Wechsler, 1995; Wechsler, et al., 2002b). This is an exceptionally detrimental perception to the organization, and one that is not easily dispelled.

In every case, education is the key to change. Continuing to promote and implement strategies that emphasize healthy social norms will be essential to managing this issue. The membership and leadership of the Phi Delta Theta International Fraternity has always been a forward-thinking brotherhood committed to promoting and furthering the Fraternity's principles. Ongoing promotion and implementation of cutting-edge programs and initiatives regarding substance abuse prevention will continue to set Phi Delta Theta apart from other organizations, and will sustain the achievement of the Fraternity's affirmed long-term objectives.

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