Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc.
Tau Zeta Chapter
New Member Education Plan
Spring 2017
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Sigma Gamma Rho New Member Education Plan

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I. What is T.O.R.C.H.?
In March 2002, the Board of Directors of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. met in Chicago, Illinois to make recommendations for a new membership intake program. The goal of the body was to design a program in which training would be received as part of the intake period rather than after the 28-day process (which was the case in the previous process), while still ensuring the safety and dignity of the prospective members. The recommendation from the body was to focus on “Teaching Obligations, Rights, Characteristics and History” or T.O.R.C.H.

At the national convention in 2002, the program was approved as a pilot. Minor changes were incorporated from suggestions and lessons learned during the pilot period.

At the 2004 national convention in Memphis, TN., the membership formally confirmed T.O.R.C.H. as the official membership intake process of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc., for all undergraduate and alumnae applicants.

II. Membership Requirements
New members of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. are accepted on both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Potential graduate members must hold a degree from a four-year accredited educational institution.

A woman may be admitted for membership in an undergraduate chapter only while in attendance at a four-year accredited college or university, or in a liberal arts/transfer program of a junior or community college, once they submit proof of intention to enter and obtain a degree from a four-year school.

Candidates may be accepted for undergraduate membership after successfully completing one quarter, semester, or trimester. The cumulative grade point average required for membership is 2.5 (on a 4.0 scale).

III. Membership Dues
Undergraduate Member - $665.00
Payments for Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. and Seven Pearls Foundation cannot be combined in one payment. Two separate payments must be submitted.

- $615.00 made payable to Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. for the induction fee, liability insurance, centennial fee and sorority pin.
- $50.00 made payable to Seven Pearls Foundation for the building assessment
• Regional and local assessments vary. The membership chair will provide you with the requisite information related to regional and local assessments.

IV. Hazing Policy
Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. prohibits the hazing of persons who aspire to attain membership in the sorority, is a participant in the membership intake program, or who has been inducted as a sorority member.

Hazing is defined as any activity or behavior towards another person that causes or threatens to cause emotional or physical injury or death, or which causes emotional and physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule. By way of example, such prohibited activities and behaviors include, but are not limited to: blindfolding; yelling at, berating or bullying an individual for any reason or purpose; personal servitude; requiring the running of errands or performing personal or maid services; activities likely to cause fatigue; physical or psychological challenges; treasure or scavenger hunts; purchase and/or wearing of designated types of apparel or apparel that is conspicuous and not normally in good taste; engaging in stunts, pranks, degrading or humiliating games and activities; late work sessions; physical or emotional assaults; drinking games; sexual activities; diet restrictions; the encouraged, required, suggested or forced consumption of any liquid, alcohol or other disorienting substances; activities that require complete or partial submerging in water; and/or any activity that may or can cause bleeding, bruising or lack of consciousness.

Any such activity is wrongful and violates the Sorority’s policy regardless of whether any person or persons involved in the conduct believes that the participants in the activities are doing so by consent. The Sorority also adopts and incorporates herein the hazing policies established by the National Pan-Hellenic Council.

V. T.O.R.C.H. Stage I: Pre-Recruitment
New members are an integral part of the growth and sustainability of the sorority. Each chapter has a responsibility to increase membership and must be active in recruiting the best and brightest women in our communities who can further the cause of the sorority. During Stage I, interested women are referred to as aspirants as they aspire to become women of Sigma Gamma Rho. Chapters must commit to developing a recruitment plan. “If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail.” So let’s plan to recruit.

First, identify your target audience, which should be your entire campus or community. If the focus is only on African American women, who may already be a small population on your campus or in your community, you are limiting the number of people who may actually learn about your organization. Like the old saying goes, “if you focus on the moon, you may actually reach the stars.”
Second, brand your chapter through an effective marketing plan by understanding the nuances between marketing, promotion and publicity. Simply put: marketing is bringing an event or program to the attention of your audience; promotion is keeping on-going activities and the organization on the minds of your audience; and publicity is being mentioned in the media. These elements have to be well thought out utilizing both print and social media, which must be consistent and constant, and it has to be widespread. Be sure your chapter’s website and/or social media pages are updated with current information. Be sure to utilize your campus or community newspapers for any large events your chapter may host. You can later use the article in your promotion effort.

Third, create a wish list or needs list of the types of characteristics, values, talents and skills that are needed for your chapter’s stability and success. Not everyone must have the same skill sets or personality. One success factor in an organization can be its diverse membership which provides various resources and skills.

Fourth, build relationships with those whom you have identified as potential aspirants. Many members join because of the relationships they build with current member(s) of the organization, which leads to the perception of a strong sisterhood within the organization. Sisterhood is one of the main reasons why women join. Building relationships serves two purposes: 1) they get to know the members of the organization, which can lead to a stronger commitment, and 2) you can determine if the aspirant meets the characteristics your chapter desires. One way to accomplish this is to assign a chapter member to an aspirant to begin building the relationship. Starting one-on-one relationships helps get the entire chapter involved with the recruitment plan, but also makes it easier for the aspirant to feel comfortable. Do not forget to discuss as a chapter what this will look like (i.e. coffee meetings, phone calls, Facebook® friends). Plan opportunities for all aspirants and members to come together to encourage relationship building. Remember to be authentic, genuine and personable.

Lastly, invite an aspirant to join the organization. People feel valued when someone actually recommends them for something. Simply put, people want to be asked. Make your intentions clear if your chapter is interested in a specific person for membership.

Recruitment can be fun, effective and efficient, but it has to be seen as a necessary tool for the growth, stability and success of the sorority. The only way to ensure that we induct the future leaders of our chapters

VI. T.O.R.C.H Stage II: Education and Induction Timeline
a. Formal Rush and Interview, March 20, 2017, 8 PM, Maginnes Hall
i. Aspirants are congratulated for being identified as potential candidates for membership. There are light refreshments and a brief overview of the sorority. The chapter will review in detail the membership packet and the items needed for the interview. Aspirants should bring a resume, an unofficial transcript and letter of recommendation to the interview. If interviews will occur the same day as the Formal Rush, Aspirants should bring two copies of their official transcripts. Aspirants are to be allotted time to complete the entire membership application package during the Formal Rush. The Membership Chair shall retrieve the completed membership application packet from each Aspirant at the conclusion of the Formal Rush. These items should be used in the final selection. Chapters should use the “Interview Sign-up” sheet for aspirants to sign-up for an interview time, unless those times were assigned prior to the day of Formal Rush. Additionally, aspirants should be given a timeline of the total T.O.R.C.H. program to begin scheduling it into their own calendars.

b. Selection, March 24, 2017
   i. The chapter has 24 hours to review interview notes and documents submitted by the aspirants to make a final decision as to who should be recommended for membership.

c. Response Letters, March 25, 2017
   i. A letter of approval or denial for membership should be sent to each aspirant within 72 hours of the Selection meeting. The letter can be sent as an attachment via email, but only if the letter is in a portable document format, or PDF.

d. Workshop 1: Anti Hazing, March 30, 2017, 6:00 PM, Maginnes Hall

e. Workshop 2: Conflict Resolution, March 30, 2017, 7:00 PM, Maginnes Hall

f. Workshop 3: Time Management, April 5, 2017, 6:00 PM, Maginnes Hall

g. Response from Headquarters, April 7, 2017
   i. Headquarters will contact the Anti-Basileus and/or Advisor for undergraduate chapters with final clearance of aspirants. This clearance allows the chapter to begin conducting education modules (1-4) of the TORCH process. Additional clearance is not required to begin Module 4.

h. Induction Fees, April 8, 2017
   i. Aspirant induction fees are mailed as a group by the chapter to International Headquarters via signature priority mail. Induction fees cannot be combined. Postal expense is the responsibility of the chapter. Chapters must stress to aspirants that induction fees are non-refundable.
i. Module 1: Formal Rush, and History & Structure, April 8, 2017, 7:00 PM, Maginnes Hall
   i. Traditionally, a formal or afternoon tea was a much-needed pause in the day and/or hectic life of a lady. It was also the preferred manner of catching up with and entertaining friends, as well as showcasing one’s refinement and hospitality. As such, the tea, as ritual, is a befitting way to showcase the sophistication and class of our beloved sorority while setting the standard and tone for the administration of the T.O.R.C.H. process in its entirety.

   Candidates will learn about the sorority’s national, regional, and chapter history, as well as pertinent pieces of American history that contributed to the development of the organization. Candidates will also learn about the historical purpose of fraternities and sororities. Lastly, candidates will learn about the sorority’s operational structure and elected officers.

   Daily assignments begin the day after the Module 1 meeting.

j. Module 2: Greater Service, Greater Progress, April 15, 2017, 7:00 PM, Maginnes Hall
   i. Candidates will learn about the sorority’s national, regional and local programs and how to effectively implement a community service project. Candidates learn the elements to successful marketing strategies. Additionally, candidates will learn the importance of community service, community involvement, and social justice.

   Candidates begin daily assignments for Module 2 the day after the Module 2 meeting.

k. Module 3: Sigma Image & Member Expectation, April 19, 2017, 6:00 PM, Maginnes Hall
   i. Candidates will learn the importance of image as an individual and a group of women and how those images reflect on the reputation of the sorority. Additionally, candidates will learn the rights and expectations of all members that aid in the sorority’s ability to function. Candidates will learn about sorority symbols that are meaningful to the sorority. Lastly, candidates will learn of the appropriate attire for sorority events, programs and ceremonies.

   Candidates begin daily assignments for Module 3 the day after the Module 3 meeting.

l. Module 4: Circle of Sisters & Final Presentation Prep, April 25, 2017, 6:00 PM, Maginnes Hall
i. Candidates will learn about the sorority’s national, regional and local programs and how to effectively implement a community service project. Candidates learn the elements to successful marketing strategies. Additionally, candidates will learn the importance of community service, community involvement, and social justice.

Candidates begin daily assignments for Module 4 the day after the Module 4 meeting.

m. Final Presentation, Final Exam and Induction, April 30, 2017, 5:00 PM, University Center

i. At the end of the week, the candidates will receive membership by being formally inducted into the sorority. The sorority’s Induction Ceremony is one of the most sacred ceremonies and should be a dignified and meaningful event. The Anti-Basileus, Alumnae Advisor (in the case of an undergraduate chapter) and the chapter Basileus conduct the ceremony along with other designees from the chapter. (Note: In the case of a new chapter, the Regional Syntaktes or her designee conducts the Induction Ceremony).

The sorority’s Induction Ceremony is to be private and attended only by sorors who are financial, whose T.O.R.C.H. certifications are up-to-date and who have no pending disciplinary action or are not serving any disciplinary sanctions for the current sorority fiscal year.

The induction ceremony cannot be conducted without the Induction Clearance from the International Headquarters.