

EDITORIAL:
DEFINING A NEW IDENTITY THROUGH THE RATIONAL AND LOGICAL

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Over forty years ago Baciq and Sgan (1962) said, "Only an increase in the factual data about fraternities will raise the level from the emotional and anecdotal to the rational and logical" (p. 22). Packwood, Casse, Lyerly, and Moklebust (1972) concluded their study 10 years later by suggesting if trends were to continue, "Students may well ask, 'Why be Greek [sic]?'¹ If Greeks are able to define a new identity, then and probably only then will they survive" (p. 14). Anyone involved with fraternities and sororities needs to be prepared to answer hard, often antagonistic, penetrating questions before they are asked in this era of increasing evaluation and accountability.

With comments such as these, the 2000-2005 Strategic Plan for the Association of Fraternity Advisors (AFA) set out to professionalize our Association. During the Association's current planning process, the AFA membership suggested the Association "has made significant progress over the years" (AFA, 2004, ¶ 2). The AFA leadership continues to increase the value the Association offers to members and the sophistication and professionalism it brings to its activities and operations. One area in which the Association has made progress is research. In 2004, the Executive Board empowered a team of fraternity/sorority-focused researchers, administrators, and campus leaders to investigate the desire for and possibility of publishing a peer reviewed fraternity/sorority-focused research journal. Thankfully, technology caught up with the financial resources of the Association and we are now able to offer a publication electronically. We are proud to launch this inaugural issue of *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors*. *Oracle* will be published twice a year and will serve as the premier forum for academic discourse and scholarly inquiry regarding the college fraternity and sorority movement.

So why have we chosen the name *Oracle*? In ancient Greece, the oracle was a place where prophesies of the future were passed down, usually in response to specific questions and inquiries. Thus, an Oracle is a person or agency considered a source of wise counsel or prophetic opinion. It is our hope that this electronic journal will become the primary source of wise counsel and responses to specific lines of inquiry related to all aspects of the fraternal world.

As Boyer (1987) highlighted, out-of-class experiences such as fraternity/sorority involvement are most meaningful when they complement the formal education of the individual student. It is only by each of us working with substantiated data, applications in reality, and through effective partnerships that our undergraduate fraternity and sorority members, their chapters, and the host institutions can assure a quality educational environment.

¹ Since not all organizations adopted Greek letters, it is now customary to refer to such groups as fraternities or sororities rather than Greek-letter or Greek organizations.

In this inaugural edition, Dr. Billy Molasso of Northern Illinois University discusses his content analysis findings that the *Journal of College Student Development* and the *NASPA Journal* underrepresented research on fraternity/sorority matters over the past 10 years. Dr. Chuck Eberly of Eastern Illinois University presents basic concepts of research methods for a non research-focused audience and a rationale for supporting credible research on the college fraternity/sorority experience. Doug Case of San Diego State University, Grahaeme Hesp of Florida State University, and Chuck Eberly revisit Case's 1996 study on the motivation of gay, lesbian, and bisexual students for joining fraternities and sororities. The study investigates how membership affected students' sexual identity development and intimate relationships, the degree of homophobia and heterosexism they encountered, how sexual orientation affected the quality of their fraternal experiences, and the level of acceptance or rejection they faced. Finally, Dr. Mari Ann Callais, national president of Theta Phi Alpha Fraternity, investigates the importance of fraternity and sorority rituals and how those working with undergraduates can help students understand the daily meaning of these ceremonies.

It is the hope that *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors* will promote scholarly discourse among partners invested in the college fraternal movement and provide the primary repository for the factual data that Baciq and Sgan lacked in 1962.

I conclude with thanks to the those who brought this inaugural edition to life; including the original research task force and our interfraternal partners, the founding editorial and advisory boards, the authors of the articles published here that were reviewed by distinguished members of our peer review board, and to the AFA Executive Board and staff. Without all of them, there is no way this project would have taken flight. Please be sure to review the listing of all our board members and acknowledge their commitment and dedication to the fraternal movement.

Remember that this is the inaugural issue of *Oracle: The Research Journal of the Association of Fraternity Advisors* and as with any new endeavor, there will certainly be room for improvement. We look forward to comments, constructive criticism, feedback, and advice. Most importantly, we look for your manuscript submissions. Please contact us at journal@fraternityadvisors.org.

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