Member Discipline Innovation Team

Final Report

May 2016
## About the Member Discipline Innovation Team

The Member Discipline Innovation Team (MDIT) was created to review, evaluate and make recommendations for Tri Delta's member discipline policies and procedures.

The 2014-2016 members include:

- Megan James, Millsaps *(Chair)*
- Maranda Avery, *Wichita State*
- Heidi Lambley-Leavitt, *Idaho*
- Guissoo Nabavian, *Adelphi*
- Joanna Webb, *Colorado*
- Bylaws Committee Liaison: Melissa Muller, *Wichita State*
- Executive Board Liaison: Kimberlee Sullivan, *Pepperdine*

## Size and Membership Qualifications

The MDIT shall consist of five alumnae members, the Bylaws Committee liaison and a non-voting Executive Board liaison. All members must be in good standing with the Fraternity and have experience with individual and chapter discipline. Members are appointed by the Executive Board for two years.

## Charge

- Review, evaluate and recommend an efficient and effective discipline process for our members
- Report conflicts and issues of chapter discipline to the Executive Board
- Work with the Bylaws Committee and Policy Committee to be aligned with current Delta Delta Delta policies.

## Study Chapters

During fall 2015, each MDIT member observed three collegiate chapters to study their current discipline process. By working with collegiate chapter officers and volunteers, the team was able to identify strengths of the current process and what areas need to be modified.

## Areas of Study

- Levels of discipline
- Academic policies
- Financial policies
- Technology
- Executive Board's involvement with discipline
- Staffing and volunteer support
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<th>MDIT Timeline</th>
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**Fall-Winter 2014**

- MDIT appointed by the Executive Board
- Reviewed the following resources/documents
  - Current Fraternity policies and bylaws
  - Fraternity policies from other NPC/NIC organizations
  - Discipline procedures from other member organizations and/or businesses
- Met in Arlington to discuss framework and initial recommendations

**Spring 2015**

- Hosted conference calls to collect feedback about current discipline processes, policies and procure
  - Outgoing leadership development consultants
  - Chapter development staff members (Lucy, Sarah, regional managers)
  - Outgoing collegiate chapter coordinators
- Reviewed 2012 Standards Survey information and EBI survey results

**Summer 2015**

- MDIT members attended VLC and presented during collegiate chapter volunteers track (CCCos, CDOs, AAs).
- Facilitated listening sessions with collegiate chapters volunteers
- Hosted VLC lunchworking sessions on the following topics: Chapter Operations, Governance, Volunteerism and Trends in Higher Education
- Created study chapter plan to gather feedback from collegiate chapter members

**Fall 2015**

- Study chapter plan implementation

**Winter-Spring 2016**

- Communicated with Fraternity Policies Team (Stefan Strickland) about updates to the document
- Collaborated with Diversity & Inclusion Innovation Team, Volunteerism Innovation Team and the Ritual Committee
- Finalized MDIT recommendations
- Evaluated the innovation team experience
**Individual Discipline Recommendations**

- **Create a Membership Review Board** to assume the responsibility of discipline issues currently overseen by the Executive Board. Create a standing committee in the Fraternity Bylaws, Article XI-COMMITTEES and amend Article XVII to reference the standing committee and disciplinary procedure. Creating a standing committee would define the scope of the Membership Review Board’s work so that when this committee is referenced later in Article XVII, it is a defined term.

- **Simplify the levels of individual discipline to:**
  
  - **Chapter Probation** - member is not in good standing – Chapter probation may be instituted by the standards committee as outlined in the standards committee manual. Chapter probation is overseen by the chapter Standards Committee.
  
  - **Fraternity Probation** - member is not in good standing - overseen by the Membership Review Board with input from the chapter. A member may be placed on Fraternity Probation with a recommendation from the Standards committee, an alumnae advisor, a fraternity volunteer, or a designee of the Executive Board.
  
  - **Fraternity Termination** - Membership termination may be recommended by the standards committee, an alumnae advisor, a fraternity volunteer, or a designee of the Executive Board. A member’s written request for a meeting must be received within seven business days. A member’s written statement must be received within seven business days. The Membership Review Board’s decision is final. Appeals will not be heard by the Executive Board.

- **Revise Standards Committee Manual**
  
  - Include tips for difficult conversations or “crucial conversations”
  - Including training sessions regarding crucial conversations for chapter officers and VLC (CLC, VLC, Convention) *(Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High by Kerry Patterson).*
  
  - Include Discipline Organizational Chart and Timeline
Investigative Probation Procedure

- Currently there is no specific policy or procedure that outlines an investigative probation procedure. In order to be more transparent with our membership, the MDIT recommends adding this section to the Fraternity Policies and Procedures.

**Recommended Procedure**

A request for an Investigative Probation may be initiated by:

1) A chapter advisor
2) Any designated Fraternity representatives, including staff members and volunteers
3) A campus official
4) Any member of the Executive Board

The implementation of Investigative Probation should be reserved for emergency type situations where the chapter needs to suspend all activities immediately for the health and safety of its members and/or to limit media attention to a specific issue.

A written outline of the events or issues causing concern shall be forwarded to the Collegiate Chapter Coordinator. The CCCo will then forward all pertinent information to the Regional Manager.

The Investigative Probation may be instituted with the approval of the Executive Director.

An Investigative Probation should not last longer than one month; however, the Fraternity reserves the right to extend the length of the investigation.

During the Investigative Probation, the Regional Manager shall lead the investigation.

A chapter’s failure to comply with the terms of Investigative Probation may lead to the withdrawal of the charter by the Executive Board.
General Probation Recommendations

- The MDIT reaffirms that probation terms should focus more on educational and developmental terms rather than sanctions.

- Chapters in the process of beginning probation should have an informed volunteer, CDC or other Tri Delta representative present to meet with the chapter to address questions and to insure the news of chapter probation is delivered in an appropriate manner. It is still the responsibility of the chapter officers to deliver the news and terms of the probation. This recommendation was made repeatedly during various focus groups and study chapter feedback.
### Academic Policies and Procedures Recommendations

- The MDIT affirms the need for academic requirements for all collegiate members. We believe that as Tri Deltas, we hold our members to a higher standards and our purpose (specifically “to broaden the moral and intellectual life”) can guide us in this instance.

- The Executive Board should discuss and come to a consensus regarding the vision of academic standards. Over the past 5 years, the membership has received mixed messages about the vision of academic standards and expectations.

- Currently, each chapter is expected to set a minimum overall GPA and/or semester GPA required for membership. The chapter should also have a chapter academic plan that is reviewed and approved by the CDO. When a member does not meet the academic standards set by the chapter, the Standards Committee and the Academic Development Chair will work with each individual on an academic support plan. Unfortunately, the majority of CDOs we spoke with do not approve academic plans. If this procedure is something the Chapter Development staff members would like to continue, there needs to be more accountability with staff members (CDCs, Regional Managers, etc.) Improved academic support resources need to be provided to the chapters.

- Members should be recommended for Fraternity or chapter discipline when:
  1. The member does not take school or classes seriously
  2. The member disregards the individualized academic support plan
  3. Depending on the academic standards set by that chapter, the member continually fails to meet the minimum GPA expectation.

Many chapters and advisors asked for a clear academic policy such as the 30-60-90 policy. An alternative option and one that was mentioned frequently throughout the focus group and study chapter process is:

**1st Semester Below Bylaws** - Chapter should follow the academic excellence plan and give member guidelines to help her achieve higher grades.

**2nd Consecutive Semester Below Bylaws** - Member should be placed on Chapter Probation and will not be in good standing. The member should continue to follow the academic excellence plan.

**3rd Consecutive Semester Below Bylaws** - Member may be considered for Fraternity Termination by the Standards committee.

**3rd Non-Consecutive Semester Below Bylaws** - Given the individual circumstances, the Standards committee should consider Chapter probation or Fraternity Termination.
## Financial Policies and Procedures Recommendations

- The overall 30-60-90 day system works well. It is clear what action will be taken at each stage and what the consequences are for each stage. Our review also showed several areas where the procedures could be revised to provide greater clarity and help with consistency.

- The MDIT recommends removing the Executive Board must vote on financial terminations. The 30-60-90 procedure is outlined in the Fraternity policies and procedures as well as the collegiate bylaws (Article VIII Section 6). If the Fraternity policies and procedures are amended, along with the collegiate model bylaws, to read that a member “is subject to termination by the Executive Board, or designated Fraternity representative” then the EB can appoint someone, like the staff member that processes the terminations, for example, to review the file and complete the termination paperwork from the financial team. This change would eliminate the additional work of the EB and simply the process overall.

- Remove requiring the Executive Board to approve EFS requests for members who have not been a chapter member for one semester after initiation. Add: If a member has not been a member for one full term following her initiation, the standards committee may seek approval from the financial specialist, CDO and CCC to allow the exception.

- Remove the restriction that a member requesting EFS has to do so within 3 weeks of the emergency. Instead, the member must be in good standing with the chapter at the time of the request.

- The MDIT recommends that EFS requests not be taken the chapter for vote. The team recommends the request be reviewed and approved by the Standards Committee, by the AA/FA, and by the FS after review of the financial impact to the chapter budget.

- For clarification purposes, change the term “payment plan” to “installment plan” for approved members to pay regular dues installments vs. a single payment. In addition, change the term Probationary Payment Plan to Payment Extension Agreement.

- A Payment Extension Agreement can be requested once a member is 30 days past due (previously a member was not eligible to request a Probationary Payment Plan until they were 60 days past due). All other provisions of a Probationary Payment Plan will remain at previously defined.

- Include “members requesting installment plans must make the request to the Standards Committee prior to invoices being issued”.

- Add the verbiage “members on a Probationary Payment Plan will remain not in good standing with the chapter until the completion of the schedule.” This clarifies the difference between a standard payment plan where the member remains in good standing and a probationary schedule for payment where the member would return to good standing after the schedule is complete.
Financial Policies and Procedures Recommendations

- Remove EMS 2. **EMS** is an area that was noted in a lot of the feedback including VLC and the Study Chapters as not being flexible enough or clear enough. EMS 2 causes lot of misunderstanding. To make it clear, if a member is not enrolled, she should not be participating in Chapter functions unless invited as a guest. It appears that chapters see EMS as a catch all for all financial issues that do not qualify for EFS which is not the intent.

- Implement sending a 30 day notice to members to advise them they are no longer in good standing. This was mentioned by the study chapters and would be a great reminder if we can find a way to automate the process.

- Remove a member on a payment plan will become delinquent if she does not pay the specified payment by the due date. If the member defaults on her payment plan, the entire balance is due in full. This is beyond Billhighway’s capabilities and difficult to enforce. Note policy states - A member is not allowed to receive a payment plan for fees that the chapter will be responsible for to either the Fraternity or House Corporation, with the exception of the resident fee. This is beyond Billhighway’s capabilities.
### Volunteer Structure and Communication

- Create a discipline organizational chart. Include clearly defined roles for each volunteer and a timeline. This chart should be shared with volunteers and collegiate members (perhaps in the updated Standards Committee Manual).

- Improve communication with collegiate volunteers when member discipline policies, procedures or staffing related positions are changed. Volunteer should receive this information either before or at the same time as collegiate members so they are equipped to answer questions.

- Incorporate more videos for education when programs or new policies are announced at events such as CLC or Convention
One theme that emerged throughout this process was the need for an improved website and way to submit discipline forms. Improved technology resources improves collegiate volunteers’ experiences as well as collegiate officers. The EO staff has worked diligently to address this issue. The following recommendations were submitted to the staff in August 2015. While many of these recommendations were addressed, some areas still need small improvements.

- Require discipline forms to be complete before being submitted (an incomplete form will highlight missing items and not allow the user to move on until it is complete).
- Have all forms in one location/information system
- When notices to chapter members are sent by the Standards committee (ex: 60 day notices, appearance at a meeting, etc.), they should be sent directly to the member’s email address. Currently members receive a notice to login to Deltas Only. Many members are using this as an excuse to not respond/appear at a meeting.
- Create a way to link Standards Committees minutes together (ex: member A's minutes reports poor behavior on member B. Member B should not have access to the minutes but EO staff members and volunteers should be able to find them quickly and easily.)
- Forms should be more concise and clear.
- Standards Committee minutes should be searchable by member name.
- Standards Committee minutes should be available for the collegiate career of the member.
- Standards Committee minutes should be located in a menu that is easy to find and navigate.
### Additional Recommendations

- Move away from using the term “discipline” to “member accountability”. This idea was mentioned during a recent Fraternity Council meeting. The MDIT supports this idea for educational resources but is split over an across the board change. This change may be challenging with governing documents.

- The issue of whether or not chapter members should vote on Fraternity probation and termination was introduced to the MDIT after the conclusion of our focus groups. This type of change would require major amendments to the Fraternity Bylaws, Article XVII. The team recommends this issue be considered for additional study during the next biennium. If we do continue to have chapter members vote, there must be a clear script of what can and should be said. The MDIT learned that during the past year or so, many chapters have been told not to say the member’s name nor anything about the reasons for the recommendation.

- The MDIT supports the Chapter Development staff team’s recommendation to discontinue the reading of names of members not in good standing during chapter meetings. Members in good standing should still be notified by the Standards Committee of their status privately. This recommendation was also shared with the Ritual Committee. The ritual book, page 2 of the Model for a Formal Chapter Meeting, would need to be amended to reflect this change.

- Add language in Fraternity Policies, Section 8 “Confidential and Privileged Nature of Communications,” to protect mandatory reporters.
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<tr>
<th><strong>2016-2018 Member Discipline Strategic Priorities</strong></th>
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<td>• Establish Membership Review Board</td>
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<td>• Study the need for a chapter vote for Fraternity probation and termination</td>
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<td>• Consider moving away from the term “discipline” to “member accountability”</td>
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<td>• Continue to evaluate the current staffing and volunteer roles in terms of discipline</td>
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<td>• Continue to discuss the role and responsibilities of volunteers who are mandatory reporters. Explore the possibility of having a specific exemption for confidentiality for mandatory reporters in situations that require a report. Members should be encouraged to let police investigate situations without interfering with the case. If our organization investigates issues before the police, it could possibly harm a future case if that person seeks justice in a court of law.</td>
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