



# GREEK LIFE BRIEF

**Report on the Outcomes  
of the Greek Life Advisory Board**







## Acknowledgments

# ADVISORY BOARD

### Hilary Koster

*Alpha Gamma Delta, Eastern Kentucky University*

### Jordan Dicker

*Chi Omega, University of Rhode Island*

### Kayla DeAngelis

*Kappa Alpha Theta, Tulane University*

### Matthew Adjin-Tettey

*Phi Beta Sigma, Georgia State University*

### Maya Soundry

*Sigma Delta Tau, Brandeis University*

### Nora Palmer

*Alpha Gamma Delta, University of Illinois-Urbana*

### Samuel Dyer

*Phi Delta Theta, Case Western Reserve, It's On Us Fraternity  
Caucus Chair 2024-2025*

### Shahid Khan

*Phi Delta Theta, Pennsylvania State University*

### Timothy Page

*Alpha Sigma Phi, Ohio Wesleyan*

# STUDENT LEADERS AND PROFESSIONAL COLLABORATORS

### Ava Senne

*Temple University, It's On Us Sorority Caucus Chair 2023-2024*

### Kenyora Parham

*CEO at End Rape on Campus, Black Greek Letter Organization  
Alumna*

### Kyle Bernstein

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania, It's On Us Fraternity  
Graduate 2016- 2020*

### Louis Peter Di Pede

*Temple University, It's On Us Fraternity Caucus Chair 2023 -  
2024*

### Molly Kline

*University of Arkansas, It's On Us Sorority Caucus Chair 2022 -  
2023*

### Reilly Arford

*University of South Carolina, It's On Us Military Caucus Chair  
2023 - 2024 & Black Greek Letter Organization Member*



# TABLE CONTENTS

1	<b>Background</b>
2	<b>Goals and Purpose</b>
3	<b>Breakdown of the Board</b>
4	<b>Key Findings</b>
5	<b>Summary and Study Preview</b>

## **Authors:**

KYLE RICHARD, Director of Men's Engagement

M. COLLEEN MCDANIEL, Ph.D., Director of Research and Program Development



# BACKGROUND

Over the last two years, It's On Us has conducted and published three major research studies exploring how to most effectively engage college men in campus sexual assault prevention: Engaging Men Part I: National Campus Sexual Assault Attitudes & Behaviors, Prevention is a Team Sport, and Engaging Men Part II. Findings from these studies revealed the need for population-specific prevention efforts for subgroups of men on college campuses. One such subgroup identified is men in Greek Life.

Previous research has demonstrated that students in traditional Greek Life are at an increased risk for sexual violence. A number of studies have identified a culture of partying, binge drinking, and features of masculine peer groups as factors that contribute to this increased risk. While many studies have focused

broadly on such risk factors that contribute to disproportionately high rates of sexual violence among this population, few have focused on primary prevention efforts tailored to the unique structure of Greek Life organizations on campuses. It's On Us is conducting a multifaceted research study to develop a student-centric model of prevention education for men who participate in traditional Greek Life. Two research questions to guide this study are: What are the unique challenges and needs for engaging college men in Greek Life in sexual assault prevention education programs? What does a model prevention education program look like for college men who participate in traditional Greek life? It's On Us is leveraging a combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches to complete the project.





## GOALS AND PURPOSE

### What did we want to know?

In order to prioritize the experiential knowledge of students in Greek Life, the research team recruited current undergraduate students involved in Greek Life, from both sororities and fraternities, to participate in the It's On Us Greek Life Advisory Board. The purpose of the advisory board is to provide critical insight into how Greek Life organizations engage with the topics of sexual assault, dating violence, and prevention education, as well as Greek Life members' perceptions of their organization's role in preventing campus sexual violence. Board members were recruited from across the United States, sharing their perspectives on how Greek Life functioned on their campus and within their geographical region of the country.

After conducting a literature review and consulting with student leaders and professional collaborators, the research team identified three major areas of experiential knowledge to discuss with advisory board members: (1) best practices for approaching Greek Life students as partners in sexual and dating violence prevention; (2) Greek Life students' lived experiences with sexual and dating violence and subsequent prevention/risk reduction strategies; and (3) concurrent factors that contribute to sexual and dating violence risk and protection among Greek Life members. While each of these areas have specific components that will be explored in-depth in the final It's On Us research report, the present publication focuses on key findings that will guide the next phase of the present study.

### Advisory Board Members

All board members are current members of social Greek Life organizations enrolled in an undergraduate program with at least three full academic semesters of Greek Life experience. Board members completed one virtual one-on-one discussion with a member of the research team and participated in two virtual meetings with the entire advisory board. Board members who completed all three member obligations received a \$100 gift card for their time and energy. A total of 14 board members were selected from a pool of applicants, and nine were retained for the entire length of the program. Due to limited participation from the five selected members who were not retained, only information from the nine retained members is reported here. Board members were selected based on merit – including demonstrated leadership in Greek Life and extracurricular experience – as well as diversity of U.S. region representation and campus settings – including private vs. public school and proportion of Greek Life population.

Table 1 represents the demographic breakdown of board members and their campuses.

## BREAKDOWN OF THE BOARD

**Table 1. Demographic Breakdown of Advisory Board Members and Their Campuses**

	<u>N Recruited*</u>	<u>% Recruited</u>	<u>N Retained</u>	<u>% Retained</u>
Year in School				
<i>Sophomore</i>	2	14%	1	11.10%
<i>Junior</i>	6	43%	3	33.30%
<i>Senior</i>	6	43%	5	55.50%
Avg. Semesters in Greek Life	4	28.50%	4	44.40%
Type of Organization				
<i>Sorority</i>	8	57%	5	55.50%
<i>Fraternity</i>	6	43%	4	44.40%
Predominantly White Organization	13	93%	8	88.80%
Black Greek Letter Organization	1	7%	1	11.10%
Type of University				
<i>Private</i>	7	50%	4	44.40%
<i>Public</i>	7	50%	5	55.50%
U.S. Geographic Region				
<i>Midwest</i>	4	28.50%	3	33.30%
<i>Northeast</i>	4	28.50%	3	33.30%
<i>Southeast</i>	5	36%	3	33.30%
<i>Southwest</i>	0	0%	0	0%
<i>West</i>	1	7%	0	0%

## **Key Findings**

### **Best practices for approaching Greek Life members as partners in sexual and dating violence prevention**

Advisory board members indicated the best framing for working with Greek Life students on issues related to sexual and dating violence was to avoid blame and shame by instead taking a positive and collaborative approach to the discussion. Members shared that Greek Life students do not want to be treated as if they are part of the problem, in particular because many student leaders within Greek Life have already positioned themselves to work towards violence prevention. Greek Life students also shared that it's important for students in this population to be validated as student leaders and as community members who have social influence across their campuses.

Advisory board members also shared the importance of recognizing that while some students join Greek Life seeking social gain, many students join because they are looking for community, friendship, and life experiences during their time in college. In fact, when asked in a one-on-one setting with a member of the research team, "Why did you join Greek Life?" all board members shared that it was because they were looking for meaningful friendship and community. A few board members even shared they had no intention of joining Greek Life prior to attending college. The research team sees this as a promising opportunity for working with Greek Life to explore community building as a means of violence prevention.

Additionally, advisory board members shared that many Greek Life organizations already have structures for community care (e.g., methods of building wellbeing and safety among community members). For example, board members shared safety strategies for events such as collaborative safety plans between fraternities and sororities, mandatory peer-to-peer prevention education trainings, designated sober event attendees, and check-in/check-out systems.

### **Greek Life members' lived experiences with sexual and dating violence and subsequent prevention/risk reduction strategies**

Advisory board members shared that sex and alcohol tend to be a baseline expectation – and, for some, the purpose – of social events put on by Greek Life organizations. They shared that the only time sex or dating is not the expectation is when students already have a dating partner. One board member compared events where fraternity members have girlfriends to a middle school dance where people are lined-up on either side of a wall, avoiding talking to each other so as not to appear like they are "stepping out" (or cheating) on their dating partners. Another board member shared that the best kind of parties are when the fraternity and sorority students are already friends because there is less pressure, and they can just have fun. When the research team asked, board members agreed that these expectations were a cause of sexual violence.

Another theme that emerged when asked about causes of violence in Greek Life was the power dynamic between fraternities and sororities. Because many sororities are barred from having alcohol in their houses or at their events, the fraternities must host parties. This means that the party is at the fraternity house and that the alcohol is often controlled by the fraternity. One board member shared an experience where she saw rooms in a fraternity house with nothing but mattresses on the floor that were designated spaces to bring drunk sorority women. Additionally, board members shared that on some campuses, a higher concentration of sororities vs. fraternities has led to a dynamic where fraternities have control over sororities' reputations by choosing only certain ones to "throw" events with. According to board members, this power dynamic renders sorority women more vulnerable.

When prompted to discuss how Greek Life students feel when there is a reported case of sexual assault, board members shared that reputation is very important to them because it affects their ability to recruit new members and relationships with other organizations. The ability to host events with other organizations determines who they socialize with. Board members shared that they felt, "one person can ruin it for everyone else." In addition, they felt there is unfair treatment when an entire organization gets "canceled" for not removing one member who has committed violence. They shared that the member removal process is difficult and often out of their control. The decision to remove a member often lies with the national organization, typically run by alumni, rather than the local chapter itself.



## **Key Findings continued...**

### **Concurrent factors that contribute to sexual and dating violence risk and protection among Greek Life members**

When asked what topics are important to cover, board members shared alcohol is a lead contributor in the issue of sexual violence. They shared that the culture of binge drinking and competitiveness around alcohol consumption was likely contributing to dangerous and risky sexual encounters.

Additionally, board members cited hazing as relevant to the overall discussion of sexual and dating violence because recruitment and traditions set the expectations for the culture of the fraternity or sorority. One board member said, there is a mentality of “You can haze me just don’t hurt me,” implying that hazing rituals are often seen as a rite of passage and demonstration of commitment to the group. They felt some rituals were a part of team bonding, but collectively agreed that dangerous rituals are unnecessary.

Finally, advisory board members pointed out that social norms within the fraternity are important. One member felt that even though it might be one guy who has committed harm, the whole fraternity will typically claim responsibility because they may have previously let him get away with saying certain things, or they normalized “creepy” behavior as a joke. This same board member shared that not all fraternity men feel this way, and that they often view the person who committed harm as an anomaly, out of the control of the rest of the group.

## **Summary and Study Preview**

In summary, the It’s On Us Greek Life Advisory Board provided vital guidance to the research team on challenges and opportunities to explore when researching how to engage Greek Life in sexual and dating violence primary prevention on campus. This winter and spring, the It’s On Us research team will conduct focus groups and surveys to continue to explore the research questions described herein.

### **Challenges**

The present study will explore challenges that Greek Life students face regarding sexual and dating violence, including:

- Some fraternity men may believe that they do not have influence over men who commit harm, and therefore may not feel responsible for the actions of members who perpetrate.
- Campus communities “canceling” fraternities who have an incident may isolate or polarize members of the fraternity rather than encourage reflection or behavior change.
- Fraternity and sorority members may feel limited when incidents occur because of policies and procedures from campus and national leadership.
- Fraternity and sorority students may not know how to effectively respond when an incident occurs.
- Heavy drinking and hooking up is deeply embedded in the culture of many Greek Life organizations.
- Well-intended policies to limit alcohol consumption may result in a power imbalance where fraternities have control over alcohol and party setting.
- Non-Greek Life students participate in ranking sororities and fraternities based on reputation.

### **Opportunities**

The present study will also explore the opportunities for successful sexual and dating violence primary prevention that Greek Life students already have, including:

- Most fraternity men disapprove of sexual and dating violence, but need more education on the role they can play in its prevention.
- Many Greek Life organizations have community care practices and are already involved in some form of prevention.
- Greek Life students already have strong community foundations, such as a sense of belonging and trust.
- Greek Life has a built-in peer-to-peer leadership structure.
- Greek Life organizations may already partner with sexual and dating violence prevention and response professionals on their campuses.
- The recruitment process is a formal way to establish expectations upfront.