**Student Focus Group Summary Report**

**Introduction**: Each student member of the Campus-Community Task Force was asked to recruit at least 4-5 students to participate in a student focus group on Wednesday, March 29 from 3:00 – 4:30 pm in the NE Union. Approximately 90% of the focus group participants were members of the Nebraska Greek community. Each student Task Force member facilitated a discussion using the following questions as a guide. Student opinions collected through the focus group are summarized below.

1. Think back to when you decided to join the Greek system/UNL.
   1. What were your social expectations?
   2. Have your expectations been met? Why or why not?

**Greek Member Summary:** Most social expectations were straightforward with regards to house parties and tailgates. In general, students expected alcohol to be part of college life. Most students found that any of the more extreme stories they were told were exaggerated. Most students found the social scene that they desired, meaning those who wish to take part in the drinking culture have been able to do so comfortably and those who wish to abstain or only drink moderately have been able to do so. Students acknowledge that a vocal minority attempt to influence the partying behavior of younger students.

**Non-Greek Member Summary:** Focus group participant response was mixed. Some expected off-campus parties, but some expected that they would socialize the majority of the time in the halls. In general, their expectations have been met. There are parties but not everyone attends. Students report a high level of support and caring for one another.

1. What were you told about chapter-hosted/house parties?
   1. Does your experience match what you were told?
   2. Describe the typical house party. How many people attend? What types of alcohol is available? How long do people stay? How prevalent is black out drinking?
   3. At what point do you believe someone has had too much to drink? How often do people exceed this level of drunkenness?
   4. What were you told about the game-day experience? Describe a typical game day party.

**Greek Member Summary:** The partying experiences described in the student focus groups closely match the data and previous task force discussions. The parties are heavily dependent upon female presence – both Greek and non-Greek members. Men attending the parties are generally from the same fraternity. The estimated numbers of guests range from 50 to 150 people. Game day drinking is more extreme and more dangerous than drinking that occurs with the typical house party. Drinks provided normally include a combination of beer, jungle juice, and vodka. Important issues discussed by students are that bystander intervention behaviors tend to vary by house but by in large, students intervene when they observe a friend drinking to excess. Issues with blackout and belligerent drunks are more prevalent and/or often made difficult when people unaffiliated with the houses hosting the parties show up. Most focus group participants reported that blackout drinking was less common than perceived. There can be tense relations within the chapter regarding their partying habits as a small, but vocal and influential minority craves the reputation that comes with being known as a party house. Meanwhile, other members are either indifferent to the actions of their fellow Greek brothers and sisters or want to create a good reputation for their house. Additionally, while there is variance between houses for providing sober monitors and designated drivers, few if any houses provide other safety measures such as food and nonalcoholic drinks for cost reasons. As fraternities host the house parties and provide all of the alcohol, they are opposed to purchasing any enhancements, as the costs are already too high.

**Non-Greek Member Summary**: By in large, parties described by non-Greek focus group participants include fewer guests with little blackout drinking. A variety of alcoholic beverages are available including beer, vodka and hard alcohol. Similar to the Greek experience, game day drinking provides an elevated level of risk.

3. Describe the perfect party? Is that your experience? If not, why not? With alcohol? Without alcohol?

**Summary:** While there is variance in exactly what kind of party people enjoy and how many people should be present, there is a general desire for more organization and safety to be present at parties. Greek members would like to see friends and chapter members regularly intervene in problematic situations. They want their parties to be completely free of non-affiliated guests and troublemakers. They appreciate sober monitors and designated drivers who do their job well. They would like to see better organization and coordination between Greek houses when holding joint events and to look out for each other. Of course, they do not want their parties interrupted by law enforcement. It does not seem that there is any student interest to restrict the kinds of alcohol consumed (although some students reported an interest in ‘nicer’ alcohol) or the manner in which it is consumed. They care more about the environment being fun and free of problems with over intoxicated people.

With regards to sober events: again, there is often disagreement between chapter members over hosting these events and the costs associated with them. Typically there are members who would like to host and/or attend these events in order to meet guys and girls from the partnered house. Problems in the past typically revolved around sororities not attending sober events which made fraternity men feel like they were wasting time, money, and missing on out on the social scene.

**Non-Greek Member Summary:** For focus group participants, the perfect party would be free from excessive drinking and include moderate amounts of alcohol, food, music and a manageable guest list.

1. How often does someone actually do something to intervene when a member has too much to drink?

**Greek Member Summary**: Greek members are very confident in their chapter’s ability and willingness to intervene when someone has too much to drink. They generally view other houses as being the problem when they co-host events as some chapters do no provide sober monitors or simply lack members willing to help.

**Non-Greek Member Summary**: Student focus group participants report that peers intervene with friends who have had too much to drink almost every time.

1. How often do you or others feel pressure to drink? How acceptable do you perceive it is to attend and not drink at a party?

**Greek Member Summary**: Most students responded that there is little direct pressure to drink for those who do not wish to. However, some houses create an atmosphere that pushes it as the expected norm. This generally falls back on the small minority who care the most about throwing large parties. Younger members who feel awkward being sober at parties either avoid this social scene completely or begin drinking.

**Non-Greek Member Summary:** Students report limited pressure to drink and most feel comfortable attending parties whether they choose to drink or not.

1. Have you observed rude or upsetting behaviors at formal venues? How often does a chapter member intervene in these situations?

**Greek Member Summary** *(only asked of Greek Focus Group Participants)*: Recognition of problems at formal venues varies. Many students witness rude and disrespectful behaviors, while others say that their events have always gone well. Different Greek chapters have different experiences. As many houses tend to partner with other houses for formals, many Greek members perceive the problems to be with the chapters they are paired with. Some are moving away from partnering, as they do not want their reputation to be tarnished by other people.

1. What are the chapter/University repercussions for a member/friend who is transported to detox or the hospital for intoxication?

**Greek Member Summary**: Repercussions vary greatly between houses. Some have made it somewhat common to receive small punishments like community service, issuing apologies, and serving as a sober monitor in the future after meeting with their chapter’s conduct board. Kicking members out has happened, but in general Greek members say that their chapters are hesitant to enforce serious repercussions, as students do not feel comfortable handing out serious punishments. Generally they like to take a more forgiving attitude and hope that the person will improve their conduct in the future.

**Non-Greek Member Summary:** Focus group participants reported that University repercussions for an alcohol-related transport to The Bridge or the hospital include meeting with the Residence Hall Director and community service.