

## DEFINITION

To begin, we must have a clear understanding of what we mean when we refer to SigEp Learning Communities. A common definition for **Learning Community** is a group of people with common academic goals and attitudes who meet semi-regularly to collaborate on classwork. **Learning Communities** have become the model for a cohort-based, interdisciplinary approach to higher education. SigEp long ago announced that its mission is *building balanced men*. Our Fraternity recognizes those men are deeply influenced by their environment. This is where the SigEp Learning Community program is so powerful and how it fits into SigEp's mission.

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***The SigEp Learning Community is a program for high-performing chapters to establish and execute a safe learning environment for members and university stakeholders defined by SigEp's core principles. Our Fraternity delivers communities that faithfully partner with and engage faculty to enhance academic success, leadership education, ethical behavior and the practical application of knowledge beyond the classroom. Aligned with SigEp's values, SigEp Learning Communities create a collaborative, living-learning experience for our members.***

SigEp Learning Communities may take many forms — that is, they come in all shapes and sizes. The program isn't just an opportunity for SigEp chapters that own or rent a facility — it is designed for both chapters with facilities and un-housed chapters. While traditionally, we may conceive of a living-learning community created within a chapter house, it may also take the form of a dedicated learning space in a common area in a residence hall or a room assigned or rented elsewhere on a campus, such as in the library or student center. The important, defining characteristics are that whatever space is used, it is dedicated to academic activities that engage university staff and faculty and it remains substance-free at all times. The critical point is that the chapter secures and uses a dedicated space to deliver a living-learning experience.

Moreover, the SigEp Learning Community program is a community in the truest sense of the word. It takes sincere participation from chapter members, but also a number of other key individuals. Alumni and volunteers support the program; university faculty and staff provide mentorship and academic support; and community leaders and other content experts act as facilitators and guest speakers to bring Learning Community programming to life.

## THE SIGEP LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAM

Through the pursuit of a sound mind and sound body, the Balanced Man Program (BMP) is the cornerstone of the SigEp experience. The BMP promotes personal development for undergraduate members. Where the BMP focuses on individual growth and development, the SigEp Learning Community focuses on the chapter environment, emphasizing collaborative learning applied outside of the classroom.

The BMP and SigEp Learning Community are complimentary, working hand in hand to deliver the best fraternity experience possible for our members. The programs are designed to be mutually supportive of one another. Lessons learned in the BMP contribute to culture and collaboration developed in the SigEp Learning Community. Through a robust university partnership, the Learning Community creates the physical environment necessary for the BMP to fully flourish, including successful implementation of all four challenges — Sigma, Phi, Epsilon and Brother Mentor.

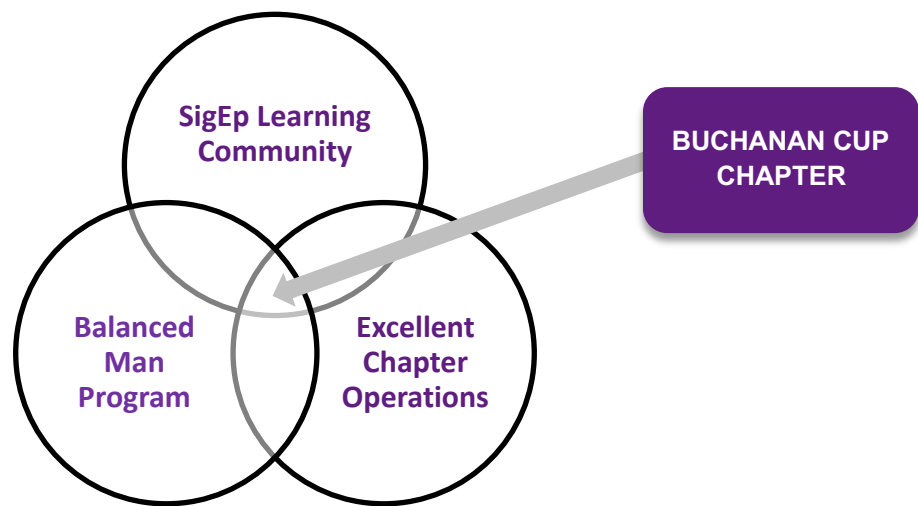
Research suggests that students who participate in learning communities report the following:

- Higher academic achievement
- Better retention rates in the fraternity and in college

- Greater satisfaction with college life
- Better communication and critical thinking skills
- Better understanding of self and others
- Greater ability to bridge the gap between academic and social settings

The SigEp Learning Community creates a chapter environment conducive to chapter growth and intellectual development through shared community programming, faculty engagement, active academic support and building a positive learning environment.

## HOW DOES THE LEARNING COMMUNITY CONCEPT FIT WITH OTHER KEY SIGEP FEATURES?

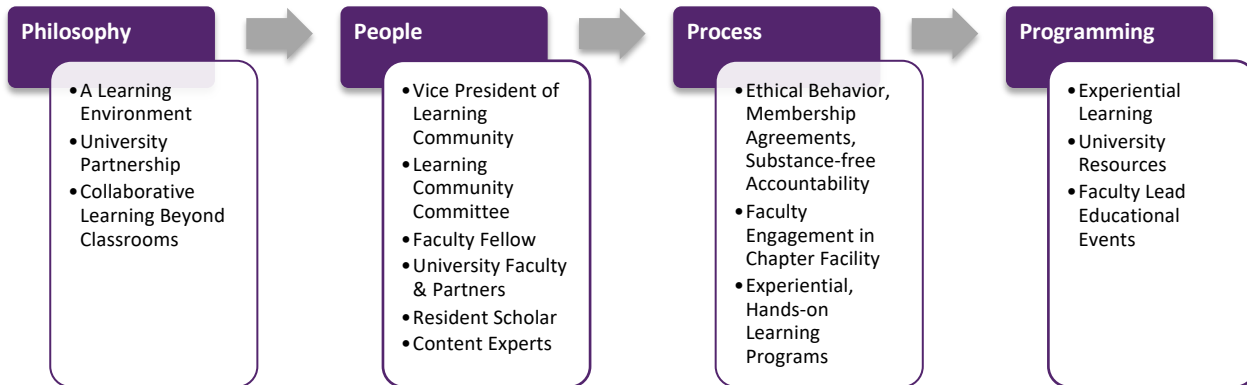


The diagram above shows how a thriving SigEp Learning Community program fits with other key aspects of a chapter's performance. Combined with excellent chapter operations, such as values-based recruitment, actions consistent with the teachings of the Ritual and a vibrant development experience through a well-executed Balanced Man Program, the addition of the Learning Community program defines the very best SigEp chapters. When these three ingredients are all present in a chapter at one time, it may be recognized as a Buchanan Cup recipient at Conclave — the highest award given to a chapter in recognition of outstanding performance.

# Learning Community PROGRAM FRAMEWORK

The diagram below lays out the SigEp Learning Community program — just like the Balanced Man Program — at its most basic level, outline along the four P's of philosophy, people, process, and programming. The four P's explain and outline the SigEp Learning Community program. As we flesh out the basic diagram above, the following components are highlighted.

## THE SIGEP LEARNING COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK

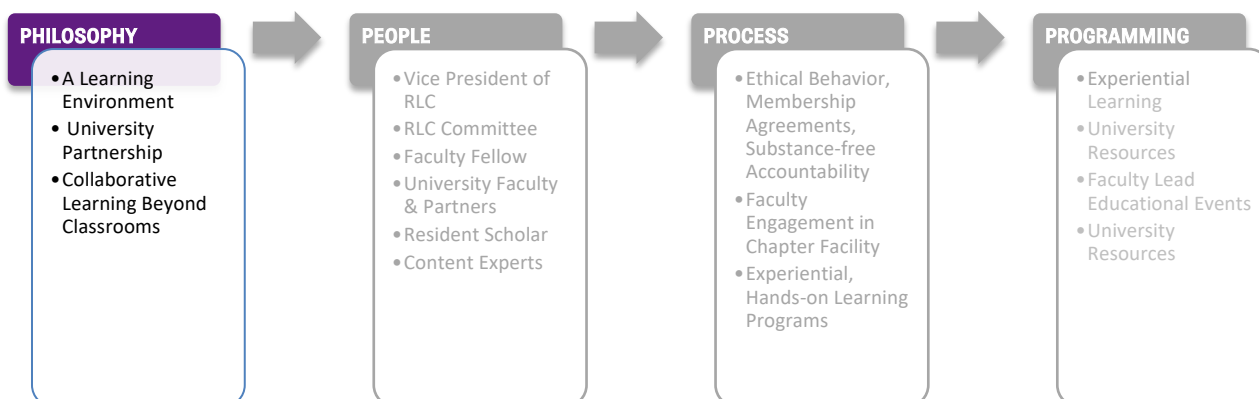


## PHILOSOPHY

The SigEp Learning Community program is grounded in fundamental, philosophical tenets that provide a foundation for a chapter's experience. As mentioned, the BMP focuses on the individual member experience, while the Learning Community emphasizes the collective or collaborative experience for a chapter focused on the environment in which it operates. These tenets are rooted in the founding values of the Fraternity. They guide every aspect of the SigEp Learning Community program and must be in place before a chapter can effectively focus on implementation. Understanding and putting the following three tenets into practice is the most important step in reaching the full potential of the Learning Community program:

1. **A Learning Environment**
2. **University Partnership**
3. **Collaborative Learning Beyond Classrooms**

## THE SIGEP LEARNING COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK



## THE THREE PHILOSOPHICAL TENETS

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**1 A Learning Environment** — *Chapter facilities and spaces are learning-conducive and substance-free*  
Substance-free environments promote intellectual development through healthy behavior, academic success and full BMP implementation. Chapter facilities, and campus spaces for un-housed chapters, meaningfully impact our members' academic performance in a positive way. Members who participate in a learning community are more likely to graduate and earn higher grades (see pg. 2). Building and sustaining a learning environment in our chapter facilities will:

- Provide shared learning opportunities not afforded inside the classroom
- Create a safer and healthier living environment for our members that reduces unnecessary risk and promotes academic achievement

**2 University Partnership** — *Linking higher education with the SigEp experience*  
Faculty and staff play a critical role in providing personal and professional support for our members, and they provide opportunities for intellectual development beyond academic courses. Faculty and staff guidance offers access to new and wide-ranging university resources. These on-site mentorship arrangements are paramount to building strong relationships with our host institutions. Creating and fostering robust university partnership will:

- Offer members interdisciplinary experiences, broadening the overall learning experience
- Build mentoring relationships with faculty and university partners
- Improve retention and graduation rates for members

**3 Collaborative Learning Beyond Classrooms** — *Putting academic lessons into practice*  
SigEp Learning Communities are the crucible for applying institutional knowledge and BMP lessons, from ethical and moral decision-making to key personal and professional skills. Programming components are intentionally focused on application of knowledge to make a positive impact in the real world. Applying knowledge from coursework and the BMP program will:

- Develop a chapter culture rooted in academic success, community engagement and ethical decision-making
- Create opportunities for further chapter-wide, experiential learning
- Provide opportunities for real-life, practical application of theoretical knowledge

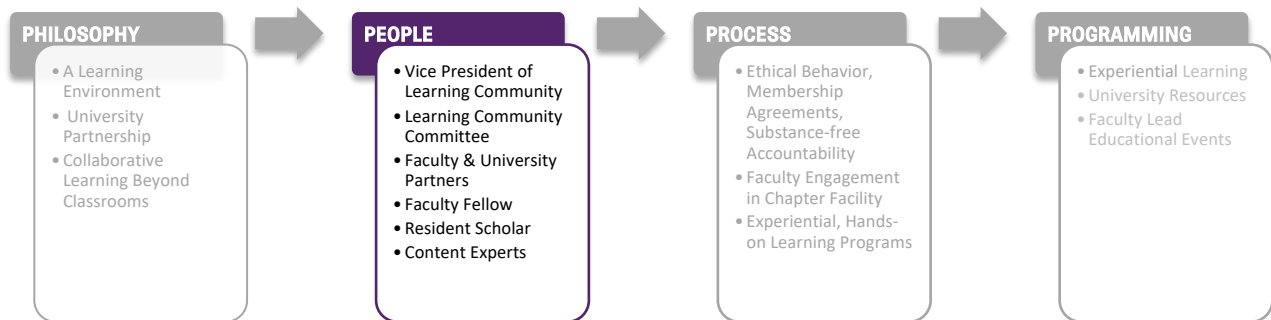
## PEOPLE

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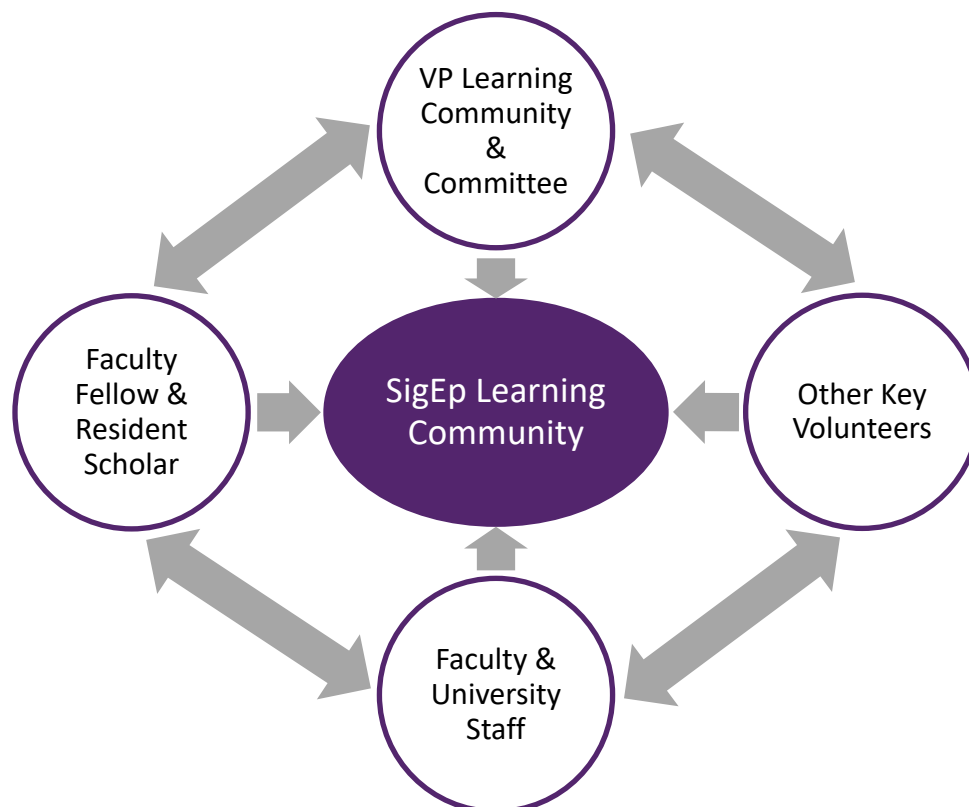
From the undergraduate vice president of the SigEp Learning Community to faculty and university staff, it is people who drive the success of the SigEp Learning Community program. The opportunities offered by the Learning Community program need people to bring them to life. These key individuals must embrace the philosophical tenets of the program to be successful in their duties. It takes a cross-functional team to create a successful learning community experience. The members of this team include:

1. **Vice President of the SigEp Learning Community**
2. **Learning Community Committee**
3. **Faculty & University Partners**
4. **Faculty Fellow**
5. **Resident Scholar**
6. **Content Experts (alumni, community leaders and other mentors at large)**

## THE SigEp LEARNING COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK



The SigEp Learning Community team is comprised of a number of important stakeholders: the undergraduate chapter, specifically the vice president of the Learning Community and his committee; the chapter's faculty fellow and resident scholar; the university faculty and staff working with the chapter; and various other key volunteers, such as content experts (alumni, local/community leaders). These people work hand in hand to ensure the success of the Learning Community program and, ultimately, the living-learning experience. The graphic below shows how each member of the Learning Community team supports one another to fulfill the philosophical tenets of the Learning Community and to execute high-quality programming for the chapter.



# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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## UNDERGRADUATES

### 1 VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SigEp LEARNING COMMUNITY

The vice president of the Learning Community is responsible for creating a learning environment, either in the chapter facility or on campus, and ensuring that the space is used by faculty and university staff. A majority of housed chapter's interaction takes place in a chapter home, and as such, it is the locus for programming that connects SigEp's values with a university's resources and faculty. The vice president of the Learning Community is the chief coordinator of the Learning Community program and is responsible for leading and implementing the Learning Community committee. Additionally, he is responsible for understanding and communicating to his chapter the various aspects of the Learning Community program.

**The top priorities of the vice president of the Learning Community are as follows:**

- ☐ Appoint the Learning Community committee.
- ☐ Meet with each member of the Learning Community committee and ensure they understand the expectations of their positions.
- ☐ Review the current Learning Community program, including all programming and partnerships.
- ☐ Determine why each activity occurs, its benefits and how it aligns with SigEp's mission of building balanced men.
- ☐ Develop a list of needed changes or improvements and a corresponding action plan to accomplish them.
- ☐ Set a regular meeting time for the Learning Community committee and prepare an agenda for each meeting.
- ☐ Set short-term and long-term goals for each committee member.
- ☐ Work with the vice president of programming to plan the learning community calendar for the year.
- ☐ If the chapter is housed, the VPLC will ensure the learning community space is meeting expectations of a LC.

**Vice presidents who excel focus on implementing the following best practices:**

- ☐ Report on all learning community events occurring within the chapter facility (or at another location if an un-housed chapter) and provide dates for upcoming events at the weekly chapter meeting.
- ☐ Update chapter officers on the progress of the Learning Community committee at the weekly executive board meeting.
- ☐ Hold weekly meetings with the Learning Community committee. Have each member report on activities in their area and follow up on action items and goals from the previous week.
- ☐ Attend Learning Community program activities to measure effectiveness and ensure all Fraternity policies and procedures are followed.
- ☐ Meet with the faculty fellow and resident scholar on a monthly basis.
- ☐ Ensure all guest facilitators are scheduled in advance and on the chapter calendar.
- ☐ Ensure that the chapter facility remains substance-free at all times.

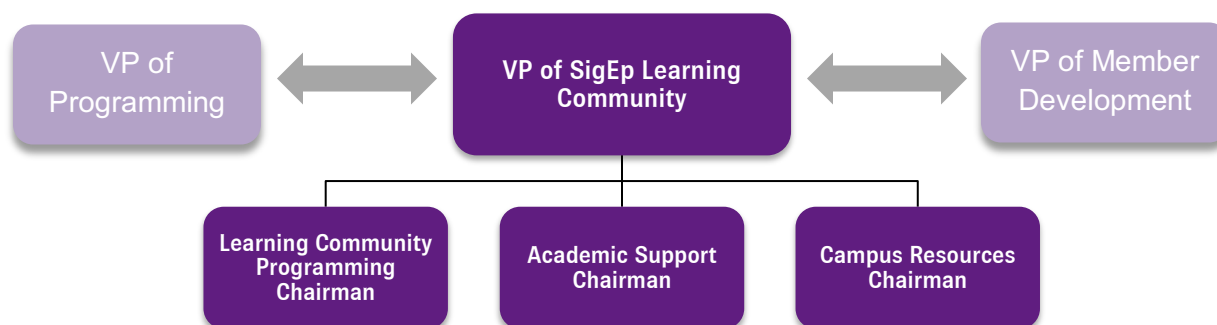
The quality of the SigEp Learning Community program greatly increases when the vice president of the Learning Community implements these priorities and best practices.

## 2 LEARNING COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

The Learning Community committee is charged with facilitating the development of the chapter as a whole through the SigEp Learning Community program. The vice president of the Learning Community serves as the committee chairman. He also works collaboratively with the chapter's vice presidents of programming and member development, since much of their efforts are intertwined.

It is important to note that the following organizational chart is a sample structure. Chapters should adapt the various chairmanships outlined to meet the needs of their chapter and their campus community. Learning communities are not a one-size-fits-all program. This flexibility is a strength: It allows the Learning Community program to remain dynamic, offering members the best living-learning experience.

Those chapter executive board members shaded in light purple directly support the implementation of the SigEp Learning Community program and coordinate their efforts with the Learning Community committee.



- The **Learning Community programming chairman** focuses on implementing the Learning Community programs in coordination with the BMP and other chapter calendar obligations.
- The **academic support chairman** focuses on policies and practices designed to ensure members achieve good grades and succeed in the classroom.
- The **campus resources chairman** works to make tools and resources offered by the college or university to the chapter facility readily available to all members.

Additionally, the vice president of the Learning Community may appoint more members to his committee to meet the needs of the chapter.

A critical component of the undergraduate chapter structure for the Learning Community program is its academic support measures, which provide important assistance to members who may not be meeting minimum chapter expectations in academic performance. The academic support chairman ensures these men receive the resources and attention needed to be successful in the classroom. The academic support chairman leverages all of the opportunities available through the Learning Community program to ensure the future success of academically struggling members. This can be done through tutoring, university partners and staff serving as mentors, provision of additional campus academic resources, academic progress reports and peer-to-peer academic support — all typically outlined in an academic support document or set of guidelines.

To ensure Learning Community program success, a chapter must have the best people in leadership positions. The vice president of the SigEp Learning Community is responsible for finding the right brothers for the job. In order to do so, he must set eligibility standards for brothers to participate on the committee. These standards should include, but are not limited to:

- ☐ Being in good standing with the chapter as it pertains to behavior, finances and grades
- ☐ Having proven leadership experience (in the chapter or on campus)



The quality of the chapter's living-learning experience depends on the hard work and determination of this committee.

## FACULTY AND UNIVERSITY PARTNERS

**3** *Faculty and university partners are THE key people in a successful SigEp Learning Community program.* They provide the crucial link in the living-learning concept broadly and the Learning Community program specifically. Without dedicated faculty and university staff, the Learning Community concept simply would not work. Faculty and staff not only provide guidance to undergraduate members, but also apply classroom knowledge to real-life situations. They assist in developing the written Learning Community development plan. Engaged faculty and staff continually reinvigorate the SigEp Learning Community with new programs and opportunities. Faculty and university staff responsibilities are outlined below:

- ☐ Contribute to the development of the Learning Community written plan by the committee, ensuring inclusion of program balance and benchmarking standards.
- ☐ Connect chapter with on-campus learning/tutoring/academic success center resources.
- ☐ Expose members to new learning experiences through guest lectures, community resources and off-campus programs.
- ☐ Present personal research to chapter and/or encourage undergraduate members to present their research.
- ☐ Host educational workshops or activities, such as a mock debate or viewing a documentary video, for the chapter in designated learning space.
- ☐ Teach a course in the chapter facility or designated learning space.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers support the vice president of the Learning Community and the committee in fulfilling their responsibilities. Volunteers also maintain continuity from year to year. For many chapters, volunteers are key to the long-term success of the program, assisting with everything from adoption of philosophy to execution of programming. These key volunteers and their respective roles are outlined below:

## 4 FACULTY FELLOWS

The connection between undergraduate students and faculty is a critical part of the collegiate learning experience. Time spent with faculty outside of the traditional classroom makes a significant difference in the lives of college students.

A faculty fellow is a member of the university faculty or academic support staff who serves as a mentor and advisor to brothers in the chapter. The faculty fellow position is ideal for faculty and staff members who are passionate about finding learning opportunities with students outside of the classroom.

While there is no minimum time commitment for the position, chapters are encouraged to set and define the goals of the relationship with a faculty fellow when he/she agrees to support the chapter in the role.

### Overview of Role

SigEp faculty fellows can immediately engage with a chapter in a number of ways:

- ☐ Hold weekly office hours at the chapter facility.
- ☐ Attend chapter and Alumni and Volunteer Corporation (AVC) meetings to emphasize the importance of academics.
- ☐ Share meals with chapter members.
- ☐ Address academic concerns for individual members.
- ☐ Serve as a resource for on-campus academic support and university academic policies.
- ☐ Present sessions on best practices for academic success to new members of the chapter.
- ☐ Post the times they will be available either at the chapter facility or their on-campus office.
- ☐ Send weekly chapter-wide emails on academic-related topics.



To further enhance the chapter's academic environment, faculty fellows can:

- ☐ Teach a class or seminar in the chapter facility and encourage other faculty to do the same.
- ☐ Promote student/faculty interaction through cultural and educational programming like debates, “fireside chats” and guest speakers.
- ☐ Meet with chapter officers to review the chapter's academic progress, standards and incentives.
- ☐ Bring other faculty members and administrators to the chapter house for informal interactions with members.
- ☐ Identify students who are academically at risk and suggest proactive measures.
- ☐ Spearhead a faculty dinner for brothers to invite their favorite professor to attend.
- ☐ Attend events of Fraternity members involved in other student-organized activities, including intramural competitions, university athletics, service events and fine arts performances.

Faculty fellows are not required to have previous affiliation with a fraternity or sorority. As volunteers for Sigma Phi Epsilon, they are protected by the Fraternity's general liability insurance policy.

### **Faculty Fellows and the SigEp Learning Community**

Faculty Fellows directly support the execution of Learning Community programming. To reach the full potential of the SigEp Learning Community program, the Learning Community committee must rely on “experts” to help deliver quality, academically focused programming. Faculty fellows are those experts. They do this through facilitating discussions, teaching important skills and challenging members to live a balanced life inside and outside of the classroom. Faculty fellows:

- ☐ Help chairmen brainstorm programming ideas to meet the needs of all chapter members.
- ☐ Assist the Learning Community committee in the execution of programs and activities.
- ☐ Facilitate discussions/learning sessions for chapter members.
- ☐ Help the sound mind programming coordinator/academics chairman build an academic plan to aid members who are struggling academically.
- ☐ Attend chapter programs and provide encouragement and tips to help succeed inside the classroom.
- ☐ Meet monthly with the sound mind programming coordinator/academics chairman to check in on his progress and provide support.
- ☐ Recruit additional faculty to help execute programming within the SigEp Learning Community program.

## **ACTION ITEM**

**Recruit a chapter faculty fellow who is a faculty member, university staff member or even a doctoral student. (SigEp Learning Community application criterion #1)**

## **5 RESIDENT SCHOLARS**

A resident scholar is a full-time graduate student who resides within a chapter facility (if applicable) to provide the chapter with daily mentorship. Resident scholars focus their efforts on helping younger brothers manage the transition from high school to college, mentoring the chapter's executive officers in leadership and facilitating high academic achievement through scholastic programming.

Potential resident scholars can be male or female. They can be a SigEp alumnus, an alumnus from another Greek organization or not previously affiliated with a Greek-letter organization. The potential resident scholar can be either be a recent graduate or an older alumnus returning to school for an advanced degree. The individuals selected for these positions will be evaluated on the following criteria: academic area of interest, prior work and fraternity experience, prior leadership roles, and overall character and maturity.

### **Overview of Role**

A resident scholar has the following primary responsibilities:

- ☐ Assist new members in their acclimation to collegiate life.

- ☐ Help older members prepare both personally and professionally for life after college.
- ☐ Mentor a chapter's executive board to affect its ability to improve chapter operations and the membership experience.
- ☐ Communicate the chapter's progress, goals and metrics to the AVC, the SigEp Headquarters staff and the university.
- ☐ Work collaboratively with the chapter's faculty fellow to aid in academic and developmental programming for all members.
- ☐ Work one on one with chapter brothers who may be struggling inside or outside of the classroom.

## ACTION ITEM

**Recruit a graduate student to serve as the chapter's resident scholar, or for un-housed chapters, a "graduate scholar." (SigEp Learning Community application criterion #1)**

## 6 CONTENT EXPERTS

Content experts assist the Learning Community committee with the execution of their duties in the Learning Community or serve as subject matter guest speakers. These volunteers leverage their experience and expertise to support a specific Learning Community programming area. Content experts can be graduate students, alumni or even leaders in the local community. For example, your chapter could recruit a tutor to specifically improve members' writing skills, or a local banker may offer financial planning advice to chapter members. The top priorities of content experts are to:

- ☐ Meet regularly with Learning Community committee to select appropriate programming opportunities in their area of expertise.
- ☐ Assist the faculty fellow, resident scholar and Learning Community committee to identify resources and facilitators to support their programming needs.
- ☐ Facilitate programming opportunities, such as serving as guest speakers, in their area of expertise.

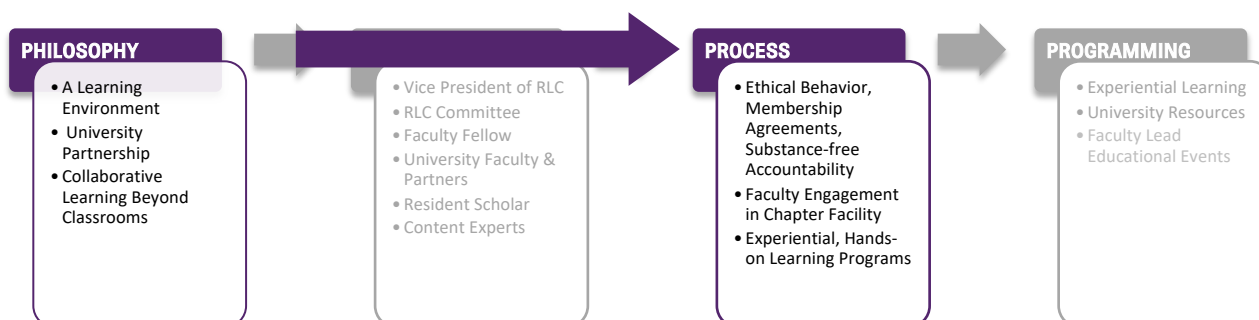
More information on content experts can be found in the "Programming" section of this resource.

## PROCESS

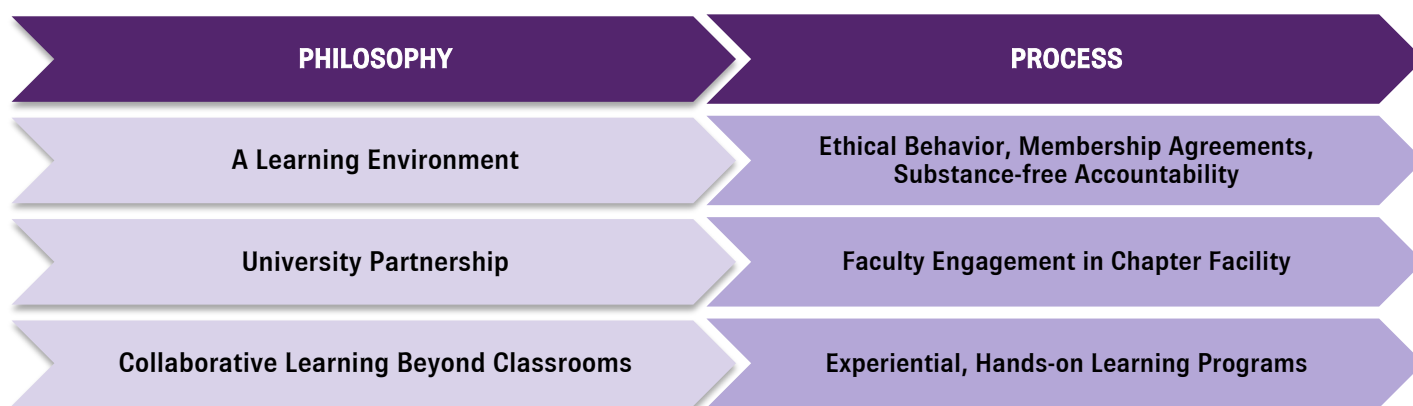
Once the SigEp Learning Community team is in place, we turn our focus to the process by which the SigEp Learning Community is executed. The Learning Community team drives the process by which the Learning Community functions. The process establishes the quality of the living-learning experience. Without this process, philosophy never reaches implementation. The three main processes that bring the philosophical tenets to life are:

1. **Substance-free facility and membership agreements.**
2. **Engaged faculty utilizing chapter facility (or dedicated chapter space).**
3. **Experiential, hands-on learning programs.**

## THE RECOGNIZED LEARNING COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK



Each element of the process directly relates back to a philosophical tenet of the SigEp Learning Community. The following diagram shows each relationship. It is important to understand the connection between philosophy and process before moving forward.



## PROCESS OVERVIEW

### 1 ETHICAL BEHAVIOR, MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENTS & SUBSTANCE-FREE COMPLIANCE

A SigEp Learning Community provides an academic space within a properly managed facility or space that enforces expectations for all members (basic standards/rules, quiet hours, substance-free compliance, etc.). These expectations support the education of balanced men in a safe and healthy environment. By emphasizing ethical behavior and utilizing membership agreements, a chapter establishes norms that influence performance, and, ultimately, fosters a learning environment where Learning Communities thrive.

Ethical behavior may be defined as acting in ways consistent with good values and involves demonstrating respect for key moral principles that include honesty, fairness, equality, dignity, diversity and individual rights.

A chapter's environment, whether a house or a common room on campus, will significantly influence the chapter's culture and, therefore, the undergraduate experience. An environment conducive to undergraduate success is one that promotes ethical behavior and learning. It provides resources and programming that foster the development of a Sound Mind and Sound Body.

### 2 ENGAGED FACULTY UTILIZING CHAPTER FACILITY

For much of the past 50 years, higher education institutions repeatedly attempted to engage fraternities, but the invitation was not reciprocated. The SigEp Learning Communities reverses that trend. The Learning Community creates a true university partnership by inviting faculty and university staff into our chapters' homes and dedicated spaces.

When faculty and university staff operate within the chapter space, it reinforces the academic commitment of members. By teaching courses, holding workshops or simply through general mentorship, university partners expose members to new learning, aid in the application of knowledge and bring valuable educational resources right to SigEp's doorstep. This model of the fraternity experience differentiates SigEp from other student organizations. The Learning Community program is rooted in the relationship that is built between university faculty and staff and the undergraduate chapter.

### 3 EXPERIENTIAL, HANDS-ON LEARNING PROGRAMS

College is a time to explore professional pursuits, to learn a craft and to build a repertoire of skills that will serve you throughout your lifetime. The SigEp Learning Community program provides an environment where those skills and lessons can be learned and applied through meaningful, experiential learning. Guided by university

faculty and staff, the Learning Community produces intentional programming that applies lessons members learn in the classroom and in SigEp's own Balanced Man Program. Application of knowledge to real-world conditions, where brothers engage in their surrounding communities or professional environment, is a hallmark of the Learning Community experience.

## SIGEP LEARNING COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION

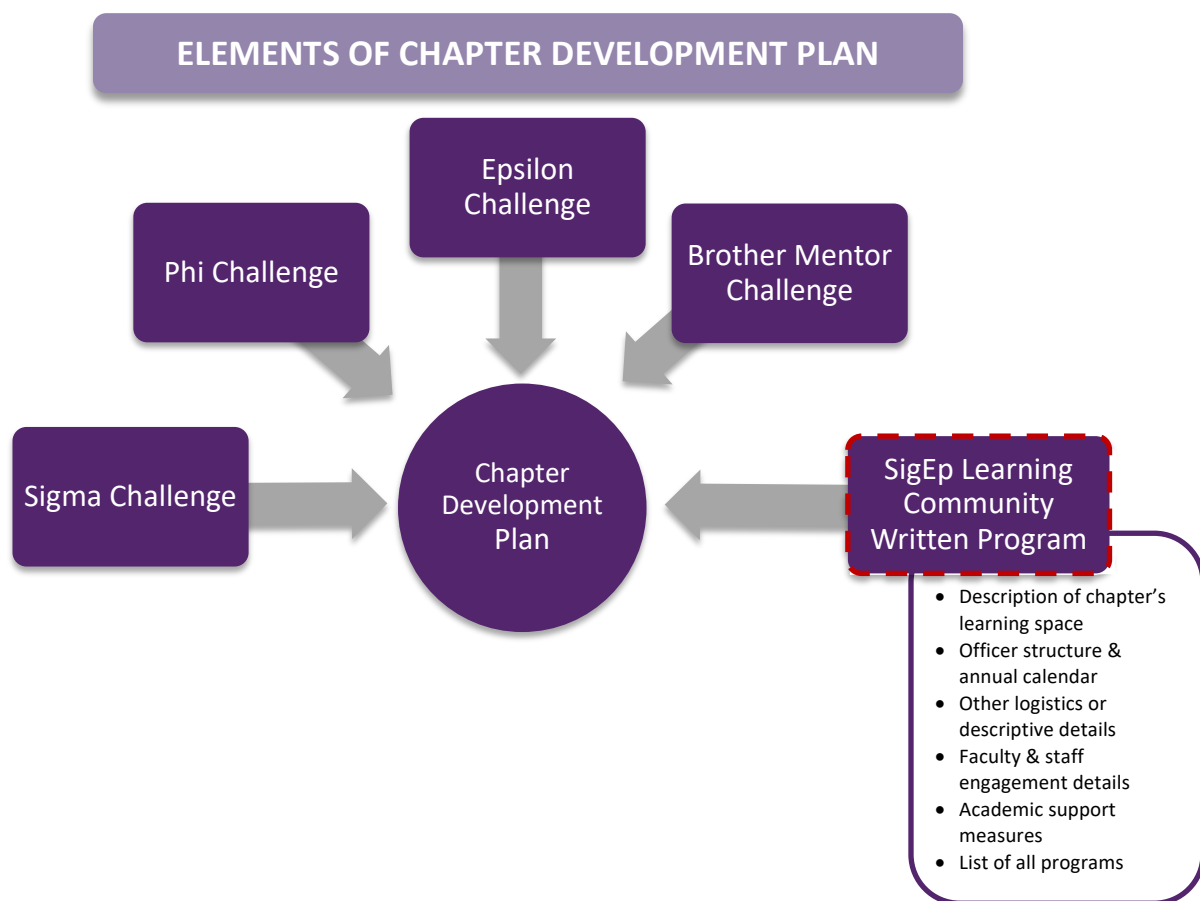
To ensure your chapter can consistently execute the processes outlined above and explained below, your chapter must have a written program. This guide is designed to provide you a clear playbook for implementing the Learning Community program. A written learning community program is essential for several reasons:

- ❑ **Each member sees the opportunities the SigEp Learning Community program offers for his continued development and understands what is expected of him.**
- ❑ **Members can use this program for values-based recruitment by showing a potential new member all of the benefits of the Learning Community program.**
- ❑ **It ensures continuity. Each year, the Learning Community committee can improve upon this written program.**

### THE CHAPTER'S WRITTEN SIGEP LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAM

A written learning community program allows the vice president of the Learning Community and the committee to improve the program each year instead of recreating it. It plans out the entire year in terms of the execution of the Learning Community program.

Conceptually, the Learning Community “plan” is not a separate plan at all. Rather, it is a part of the chapter's development plan, called the Learning Community Program. (The chapter should have already written a development plan in order to properly execute the Balanced Man Program.) The Learning Community program, then, is really just a section added to enhance the chapter's development plan. So, the major sections of the development plan should look like this:



Now, let's break down the components that should be in the Learning Community section of your chapter's Development Plan. This section contains a few basic components:

- ☐ **SigEp Learning Community description and operational details** — The written Learning Community program should clearly define how the chapter facility or alternative space is used as a learning environment. Include details about your chapter's Learning Community program like the officer structure used, annual planning calendar and any other appropriate logistics for executing the Learning Community program. This portion is effectively the “roadmap” for how the Learning Community program is executed in your chapter.
- ☐ **Faculty and staff engagement** — Your chapter's Learning Community program should detail exactly how and when faculty, university staff, and chapter volunteers utilize the Learning Community space. Be sure to include all services and support, including university resources, employed in your Learning Community. Along these lines, detail the chapter's process for implementing faculty engagement.
- ☐ **Academic support measures** — You should detail all initiatives your chapter employs to assist members who may be underperforming relative to the minimum chapter academic standards. This includes all resources and programs the chapter makes available to members who need or desire such materials and services.
- ☐ **Experiential learning programming** — Your chapter's Learning Community Program should include a list of all programs planned for the year related to the Learning Community. Remember, Learning Community programs are events that are held wholly or partly in the Learning Community space and that have a clear academic connection — that is, they demonstrate application of knowledge beyond the classroom. Include descriptions of how you fully utilize the chapter house or dedicated space to execute programs for chapter members. This portion should also detail how the chapter uses content experts to carry out the Learning Community programs.

The following list includes other helpful materials in a high-quality written Learning Community program:

- ☐ Job descriptions of each member of the Learning Community committee.
- ☐ Sample/draft calendar of events for each semester.
- ☐ Contact information for campus resources, including faculty fellows and other faculty volunteers.
- ☐ Expectations for how the Learning Community committee interacts with the chapter and the standards board.
- ☐ Standards and processes for substance-free facility and member accountability.
- ☐ A historical record of chapter facility programming to track accomplishments.
- ☐ Best practices from the former vice president of the Learning Community.

## ACTION ITEM

Develop and document the chapter's written development plan, including a section for each of these elements noted above. (Learning Community application criterion #7)

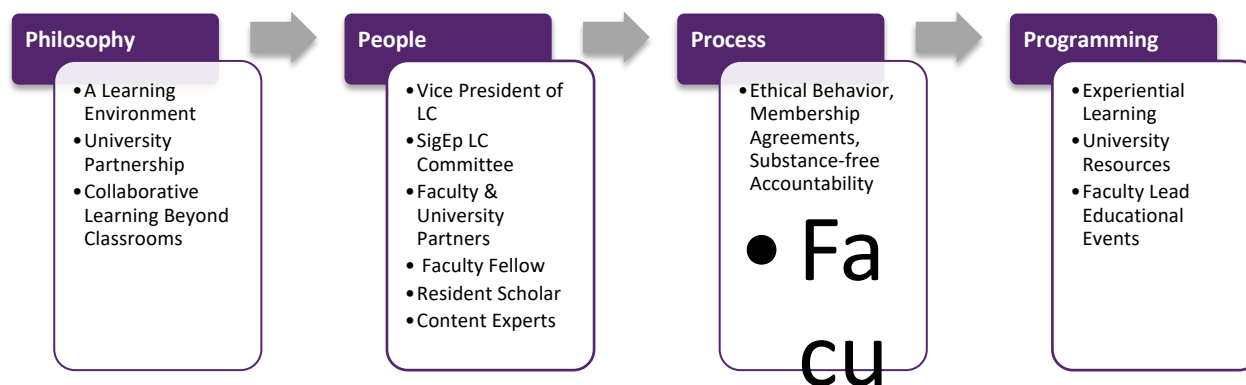
# PROGRAMMING

As previously mentioned, to get the most out of the SigEp Learning Community program, a chapter must:

1. Understand the philosophy of the SigEp Learning Community and implement those tenets in the chapter's culture.
2. Have a team who understands the philosophy and desires to implement the SigEp Learning Community program.
3. Define the process of organizing/facilitating SigEp Learning Community programs for successful implementation.

Finally, a chapter must provide quality programming that fits into the process. This is done by providing programs and experiences utilizing the expertise of faculty and university partners:

## THE SigEp LEARNING COMMUNITY FRAMEWORK



Quality programming does more than simply improve the undergraduate experience. It equips members with the skills and knowledge to be successful after college and it directly applies those acquired tools to the real world. This section outlines the programming details as it relates to the SigEp Learning Community and offers tips for successful implementation.

## PROGRAMMING SPECIFICS

The SigEp Learning Community is filled with programming to build a learning environment, engage faculty and university partners, and to apply knowledge. These programs reinforce a chapter culture that is dedicated to intellectual growth and development. To decide on what programs to offer, we must understand the experiential learning model — the model that Learning Communities employ.

## SAMPLE LEARNING COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

Program	Desired Outcome	Area of Development	Facilitator (s)	Attendees	Location
Engage political science professor	Learn about the importance of political engagement and engaging in public discourse	University Partnership	Professor from political science dept, possibly a local elected official	Epsilon challenge members, any others with interest	Chapter media room, if not applicable, host cookout in chapter space
Study skills and succeeding in college	Members are taught strategies to effectively take notes, study independently and are made aware of campus resources	Learning Environment	Representative from campus testing center	Sigma challenge members, challenge coordinators and any students on academic support program	Held in the chapter learning space or on campus resource center
Personal and Professional Development	Chapter members learn from the advice of an alumnus and learn how to apply it	Collaborative Learning	Alumnus as available, otherwise utilize viable campus partner or local business leader	Full chapter	Dedicated space in chapter facility if applicable, otherwise on-campus space
SigEp Startup	Chapter brothers form interdisciplinary teams with a university advisor; brothers build a business plan with their advisor that they then submit to a campus/community startup competition	Collaborative Learning	Professor from corresponding field; Alumni with relevant experiences	Brother Mentors	Chapter learning community space

### ACTION ITEM

Document a comprehensive list of all LC programs that have occurred in the facility or designated space in the past year. (LC application criterion #7)

## IMPLEMENTING QUALITY PROGRAMMING



Many chapters lack an organized approach to implementing programming in the SigEp Learning Community program. The following diagram outlines the process by which chapters can assess and improve the quality of their LC programming:



The graphic above outlines five steps to help execute quality programming. Here is a closer look at each step:

### **ASSESS**

Assess the needs of participants themselves – is this meeting the needs of a first-year student? Of a soon-to-graduate senior student? After this, know what you want participants to learn from the activity. Discuss the desired outcomes with other leaders.

### **PLAN**

Make a list of all the supplies you need and understand how the activity works. Make a list of tasks you need to complete before the activity. Know how much time you will need and how the activity will end.

### **PREPARE**

Complete all tasks on your list and assemble any materials you will need. Coordinate with any speakers or venues that are involved in the activity to make sure everyone is on the same page.

### **LEAD**

Show up prior to the activity to prepare and troubleshoot. Make sure participants know the rules and expectations. Execute the activity.

### **EVALUATE**

With the program participants, look back at the activity and assess strengths and weaknesses. Make a list of these items and keep notes for the future.

Following these steps allows a chapter to stay organized and continually assess their performance. Some additional tips include:

- Dedicate an appropriate portion of your chapter's budget to Learning Community programming, including future changes and improvements.
- Develop holistic programming calendar to understand how LC events are scheduled in relation to BMP and chapter programming events.
- Keep detailed notes on how certain programs are executed. This can include: invitations, contact information, task lists, etc. Pass these notes on to the next officer.
- Recruit the best people outside of SigEp to help with LC programming. Find faculty, university staff, community leaders, service organizations and alumni to help execute LC programming.
- At the conclusion of each LC program, ask participants for feedback on the latest LC programming. Record their feedback and use this information to make improvements.

If your chapter does not have an organized approach to provide programming, use the diagram and tips above to get headed in the right direction.

## **SigEp Learning Communities and the "Future of Fraternity"**

Brother Eugene Dubach, an early visionary of SigEp remarked, “Sigma Phi Epsilon needs to create an environment where it is easy to do right, and hard to do wrong.” Today, all chapters must take critical action to honor and, ultimately to realize, this common-sense principle. Indeed, in today’s fraternal world, our chapters cannot afford inaction.

There can be no doubt regarding the types of issues — from risky behavior to a changing student experience — that not only SigEp, but *all* fraternities, must confront in the years ahead or be resigned to insignificance. Only by consistently demonstrating that SigEp is a valued partner in higher education may we emerge from today’s challenges and create a fraternity experience for our members worthy of the vision of our Founding Fathers. SigEp has done it before. Our Fraternity has stood tall and demanded better for our men and for our university partners. The Balanced Man Program changed the fraternity landscape when we moved to eliminate pledging. The BMP transformed how we approached member development. It was a game changer — and SigEp is about to do it again.

The SigEp Learning Community program holds the promise to fundamentally alter how we view and utilize our chapter facilities and assigned spaces on campus for un-housed chapters. The SigEp Learning Community concept continues to distance us from the stereotypical “frat house” and the divide has never been wider than with the Fraternity’s embrace of living-learning communities. In doing so, the Learning Community program presents the logical extension to the BMP program by focusing on the environment in which members are developed. Creating a learning environment, engaging faculty and building university partnerships, and practicing collaborative learning beyond the classrooms revolutionizes how fraternities use the chapter home.

Still, some members may ask: Why become a SigEp Learning Community? SigEp Learning Communities had the following performance data in 2017:

- Average GPA of 3.25 compared to non-RLC average of 3.13
- Average chapter size of 93 vs. 57
- On average RLCs retained 20% more of their members
- At Conclave, 26 of the 40 Buchanan Cups were awarded to RLCs
- **ALL** of the Gold Buchanan Cup recipients were RLCs

As the new SigEp Learning Community continues to roll out over the coming months and years, new training opportunities will be available to undergraduate members, volunteers and alumni. Be sure to regularly check SigEp’s website — [sigep.org/rlc](http://sigep.org/rlc) — for the latest information and resources. This is also where you will find helpful resources for the Learning Community program, including a sample Learning Community written program for your chapter and a list of potential Learning Community programs that you may use with your chapter.

Please remember that beginning in 2021, for a chapter to be eligible for a Buchanan Cup at Conclave, the chapter must be a SigEp Learning Community at the time of its Buchanan Cup application submission. For more information about the Learning Community program, criteria and application process, please contact us at [learning.communities@sigep.net](mailto:learning.communities@sigep.net).

The opportunity to create a true living-learning environment in your chapter is closer than you may realize. Follow this guide, and your chapter will be successful.