

RESIDENTIAL LEARNING COMMUNITY

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1) What is a Sigma Phi Epsilon Residential Learning Community?

A Sigma Phi Epsilon Residential Learning Community (RLC) is an accredited program based on the residential living/learning concept, seeking to augment the fraternal experience with an academic focus beyond the classroom.

2) What are the components of a SigEp Residential Learning Community?

1. Faculty Fellow Engagement
2. Personal and Academic Development
3. Facility/Learning Environment
4. Network of Support

The interaction of these components is intended to lead to greater learning, scholarship, and engagement among college students.

3) What is the mission of the Residential Learning Community program?

The Residential Learning Community program seeks to *Advance Scholarship for Leaders*. The guiding principle is the belief that students benefit from the presence of a faculty member who takes an active interest in their lives. The RLC seeks to develop high quality environments for living and learning to take place.

4) Why develop the Residential Learning Community?

The Residential Learning Community is the result of a desire to create a more powerful living/learning environment, which stimulates students intellectually and breaks down barriers between students and academic professionals on campus. It is not simply a program promoting good grades.

Recent publications indicate that students in living/learning communities exhibit higher levels of engagement in college activities with stronger academic outcomes. While college fraternities have been criticized for their lack of integrated and focused student learning among undergraduates, living/learning communities address these issues and link together useful academic opportunities.

5) What is the residential living/learning concept?

The residential living/learning concept is an environment promoting academic success. The concept revolves around a community, based upon respect and personal development. This community develops within the individual a sense of identity and belonging.



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The residential living/learning concept originates from the residential colleges at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, where academic professionals live among undergraduates. This concept has been adopted by campuses nationwide to create smaller, more intimate learning communities for students.

6) What are the benefits of the Residential Learning Community to students?

For individuals, the benefits include better academic performance and frequent interaction with faculty on a one-to-one basis. Ninety percent (90%) of Rhodes Scholars cited a personal relationship with a faculty member as their primary reason for success.

Residential Learning Communities maintain a higher grade point average than other SigEp chapters. Through programming and greater integration into the campus community, fraternity members are exposed to increased opportunities for networking and alumni engagement.

7) Who is a Faculty Fellow and what does he/she do?

A Faculty Fellow is a member of the university faculty or academic support staff who mentors and advises students. The Faculty Fellow position is ideal for faculty members who are passionate about finding learning opportunities with students outside of the classroom. Faculty Fellows participate in activities with the chapter and develop innovative programs. Activities include weekly office hours in the chapter facility, meals with chapter members, and sponsoring educational speakers on relevant topics for undergraduates. Faculty Fellows may teach a class in the chapter facility, invite other academic professionals to chapter events, and share knowledge of campus resources.

8) How does the chapter find a Faculty Fellow?

Finding a Faculty Fellow begins by defining the qualities, skills, and experiences that the chapter needs from an academic professional. Using these criteria, brainstorm a list of likely candidates and meet with these individuals. Discuss SigEp's innovative programming and incentives that the chapter and/or the university offer. Successful Faculty Fellows are those who show enthusiasm working with students, are aware of current events in the campus community, and perform high quality teaching. Faculty Fellows include professors from a variety of disciplines, department chairs, and upper administration.

Once the Faculty Fellow agrees to accept the position, work together to design goals and a plan for involvement in the first year.

9) How is the presence of alcohol dealt with in the Residential Learning Community?

The Residential Learning Community focuses on creating a powerful living/learning environment for members. Since alcohol, tobacco, and drugs affect this environment, Residential Learning Communities are required to have policies against the presence of substances in academic/educational spaces at all times.

Though individual chapters must choose their policies regarding the presence of alcohol, many Residential Learning Community chapters have voted for and maintain alcohol-free housing throughout their entire facility.

10) How does a chapter apply to become a Residential Learning Community?

To receive an application for accreditation, contact Bayard Gennert, Director of Residential Life, at (804) 353-1901, extension 324, or bayard.gennert@sigep.net. Accreditation materials are evaluated on a

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quarterly basis (February, May, August, and November) by the Council for Accreditation. Once all materials for accreditation are received, and the Council for Accreditation has reviewed, the Director of Residential Life will notify the chapter of its status.

Designation as a Residential Learning Community remains valid for five years, at which point reapplication and re-accreditation are required.

11) What is the next step after becoming accredited as a Residential Learning Community?

The first steps as an accredited Residential Learning Community are selecting an RLC Chairman, coordinating first-year plans with the Faculty Fellow and AVC, and organizing a kick-off presentation to chapter members.

12) What are the financial benefits for an accredited Residential Learning Community?

Accredited Residential Learning Communities are eligible to receive a 5% liability insurance discount each year. An RLC survey in the spring must be completed to receive this insurance rebate.

Although any chapter can establish a tax-deductible account with the Sigma Phi Epsilon Educational Foundation to support educational endeavors, a Residential Learning Community chapter has the opportunity to apply for grant funding to support educational facility improvements. Many factors, including the scope of the project, available funding, and chapter performance, are taken into consideration for submissions. Eligibility does not equal automatic grant funding.