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What is the National Residence Hall Honorary?

In 1964, the National Association of College and University Residence Halls (NACURH), Inc. found itself with financial difficulties. Jim Tschechtelin, then NACURH Chair, began investigating possibilities for potential revenue sources and grants. Grants were found, but there were two requirements: a central NACURH office had to be established, and the member schools needed more services rendered. Thus, the National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) was put forth as an answer to the second requirement—service.

During the preliminary organization, the NRHH focused on the incorporation of old into new. Campuses with existing honorary organizations were contacted and coordinated into the NRHH structure. The primary focus of each chapter became the recognition of the residence hall leaders on its campus. This helped sustain a consistent membership in on-campus organizations as well as on the regional and national levels within NACURH.

The years between 1977 and 1987 were years of growth for the NRHH. Pins and certificates were produced to recognize the members of the Honorary; the tradition of regional and national receptions during conferences began and formal recruitment and affiliation packets were produced. Regional Recruiter (now called Associate Directors of NRHH) positions on regional boards were also established. Many awards were established including Of The Month Awards, First Year Experience, Outstanding NRHH Member of the Year, NRHH Building Block Chapter of the Year and Outstanding NRHH Chapter of the Year.

Today, over 200 chapters are affiliated with NACURH. Activities of these chapters vary from campus to campus. Some simply induct new members at an annual recognition banquet every (honorary chapter) and others are extremely active on their campuses and in their communities, coordinating leadership retreats, conferences, socials, hall or campus wide programs, fund raisers, and a whole host of other events. Some chapters have found a middle ground which suits their campus. Membership selection is conducted by each individual chapter. The chapter members represent the top 1% of the student leaders on campus and are those who have contributed extraordinary amounts of personal time and energy in order to provide the ultimate residence life experience.
How Would My Campus Benefit from a NRHH Chapter?

NRHH is a great way to recognize those individuals who contribute to the residence halls and campus community simply by induction. In addition, NRHH is known for its leadership development retreats and community service projects. The NRHH Chapter can be responsible for the coordination of Community Service projects for NRHH, RHA, and the Department of Housing. As an honorary, community service is a high priority very close to recognition (our highest priority) and it is our goal to give back to the community in various capacities. The major benefit of having a chapter is the coordination of recognition on your campus. Possible events that a NRHH Chapter could coordinate for your campus are the RHA Awards Ceremony/Banquet, RA Appreciation Week, Residence Hall Month, and of course the coordination of the Of the Month (OTM) Award Process.

What Can a Chapter Do In Honorary Status?

With the designation of honorary status, your chapters’ purpose is simply to recognize by the induction of members and the coordination of the OTM process. There are some honorary chapters that coordinate or participate in the occasional community service project, but it may not be a semestral or yearly occurrence.

What Can a Chapter Do in Active Status?

With the designation of an active status the sky is the limit. In addition to recognition, you can host leadership retreats, develop civic service programs (ongoing service project), as well as programming with the Residence Hall Association and Hall Staff. Some schools have created recognition programs where residents submit the name of an individual to a box stating how that individual has helped them (or what the individual did to better a community/residence life) and the individuals get a small token of appreciation (little assortments of candy, small certificates, etc.) with the note attached to it. These are just a few examples of what an active chapter can do.
How Do You Build a NRHH Chapter?

Building a NRHH Chapter is not an extremely difficult task, but it will take some time. Before you embark on this process be sure that you are aware of all the proper channels that must be taken at your particular campus to start a new organization. Contact your school Student Activities Office to obtain the appropriate paperwork to become a recognized student organization.

Phase I: Student Interest

To build any student organization you must be sure that you have individuals who are interested. This can be accomplished in discussions with the Residence Hall Association (or campus equivalent), Hall Councils, Professional Staff Members, and the Student Government Association about the organization. It would also be ideal to inform them of the nominating process of individuals for membership by sending out formal information to these entities announcing a nomination process for NRHH membership with set deadlines and a nomination form that is accessible online or via email. While waiting for nominations to come, begin working on the formal request phase where you will be presenting the proposal of having a NRHH Chapter on your campus to the Housing Department. Once all nominations have been received, compile a list of all nominees as proof of student interest.

Phase II: Formal Request

Support is the most important element that every organization must have. NRHH chapters are dependent on the support of the Housing Department and the Residence Hall Association. Without either, sometimes a NRHH Chapter cannot develop to their full potential. During the formal request, you should have a clear statement consisting of 3-5 sentences of what NRHH is:
“The National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH) recognizes the top 1% of student leaders across the United States aiding in NACURH’s vision to provide the ultimate residence life experience. It is unique, in that it is the only honorary for students living in the residence halls and one of its main charges is to recognize those individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty to improve residence life programs through programming, community service, advocacy, and leadership development.”

In addition, highlight all the positives that NRHH can bring to your campus and its potential effect on your student population. At the end of the presentation (and discussion, as it sometimes may go to a question and answer phase) formally ask for the support of the housing department to start a chapter on your campus. This is also the most important phase because this is where the foundation of the organization will begin to form. You will need to request that the housing office appoint the NRHH Chapter an advisor and that some professional staff members serve on the NRHH Chapter Chartering Committee (NRHH-C3).

The NRHH-C3 will be responsible for the drafting of the constitution, application process, affiliations process and membership selection of the chapter. This committee, once chapter membership has been chosen, will send the NACURH Information Center (NIC) the constitution, member list, and contact information sheet to affiliate the chapter (be sure that the RHA has affiliated with the NIC if applicable). In addition, it may be the charge of the NRHH-C3 to appoint the first NRHH President and have the rest of the board elected to ensure a strong foundation for the organization.

**Phase III: Organization**

The NRHH-C3 will be spearheading the organization of the NRHH Chapter. The committee shall vote on an individual to serve as chair and the rest of the members shall break up into sub-committees (Application Processing, Ceremony, Affiliations [Constitution, Apparel, Affiliation Paperwork, etc.]). The first objective (potentially with the help of resident assistant staff or the RHA) is to go through
the nominations and send each of those individuals an invitation to apply for NRHH Membership. In addition to this invitation, there should be a link to the electronic copy of the application (or an attachment of the application if the invitation is emailed). This invitation should clearly state the deadline date and the process timeline, it would be ideal to assume that the membership process could take 6 weeks or more (the first time around). While waiting on application submissions, the NRHH-C3 should focus on the constitution and affiliation process.

One of the great things about NRHH is that we have a sample chapter constitution available that can be used by any school; each institution is responsible for supplementing the constitution with identifiers specific to their campus. Once complete, the NRHH-C3 can contact 3 individuals that they feel are dedicated enough to serve as the president of the chapter. From there an individual should be selected by the committee and the affiliation process paperwork should begin.

**Phase IV: Interview Process**

This process is used if there is a large pool of candidates or the NRHH-C3 has no clue as to who the individuals up for membership are. This can be done in two ways: (1) as an individual interview or (2) as a group interview (social). For the individual interviews, questions should be focused on their leadership in the residence halls and on campus, contributions to the residence life community, and community service. This is also a good opportunity to clarify any issues that may appear in the applicants’ housing disciplinary file (if applicable). The group interview is where all the applicants get to meet each other for a mixer as appreciation for service to the residence halls. This is an opportunity for the committee to meet and greet each applicant to aid in those final decisions for membership selection.
Phase V: Membership Selection

The NRHH Membership is the framework for the chapter because the roof of the house (President) must have a strong support network. NRHH Members must be residence life leaders, academically proficient, and go above and beyond the norm; this is the essence of a NRHH member. Membership is not limited to those individuals who are only activity in residence life organizations; it is also open to individuals who are involved in student activities who live in the residence halls. It is the goal of NRHH to recognize on-campus leadership in addition to residence hall leadership. This is a very critical point in the building phase of any NRHH chapter as the membership that is selected could way heavily on the success of your chapter. If it is ideal to be an active chapter, selecting individuals who may lack the ability to commit any time to another extracurricular may be a hindrance to the active chapter status. Select your members carefully as it will determine the dynamic of the chapter.

There are four (4) types of membership status recognized by NRHH- Active, Alumni, Early Alumni, and Honorary:

- **Active**: Individuals living in the residence halls who meet requirements
- **Early Alumni**: Individuals unable to be active (paperwork involved)
- **Alumni**: Individuals who no longer live on-campus
- **Honorary**: Student Affairs Personnel / Residence Life Champions

Phase VI: Affiliation Process/Induction Planning

At this point, the only obstacle left in the affiliation process is submitting the information to the NIC. Once the members have been selected, send the member list, constitution, and information form to the NIC to receive your NRHH Chapter Charter. At the same time send an order form and check/money order for NRHH Pins and Certificates to the NSRO for the new membership. While waiting on the charter, it would be imperative to begin the plans for the induction
ceremony three (3) weeks prior to ceremony. Begin figuring out the location, special guests (Housing Department, Student Affairs, Neighboring chapters, etc.), refreshments, time and date. Once the logistics are together, it is time to notify the inductees that they have been selected and the date and location of the induction ceremony. It is proper etiquette to give two (2) weeks notice as they may wish to inform family and friends (it may be ideal to inform them if they may bring guests to the ceremony and how many as a safeguard). Doing this via e-card or mailed correspondences are both acceptable.

**Phase VII: Induction Ceremony**

Induction ceremonies are always great occasions. There are a couple of suggested items to have a simple NRHH Induction Ceremony:

- 1 white Candle stick (for each inductee)
- 1 White Center Candle (lit by the host and used by inductees to light their candles)
- 2 Blue Center Candles (lit by the Ceremony host, one placed on each side of the white candle)
- NRHH Pins
- NRHH Certificates

For the ceremony you will want to have the inductees wear all black or black/white. Welcome the crowd to the induction ceremony and present a brief history and explanation of what NRHH is. From there the 3 center candles should be lit (1 Blue- loyalty to purpose, 2 Blue- loyalty to idea, 1 White- a blank page: a page on which a student writes the successes and experiences that fill their days in the residence halls.) Once the candles are lit call each inductee up one at a time giving their name, major, residence hall, inspiration, and long-term goal(s). As members approach: help them kneel to light their candle, pin them, hand them
their certificate, have them sign their name in the chapter ledger and stand in a straight line on the side. After every member has been pinned a chapter pledge can be recited encouraging them to always recognize. Bring the induction ceremony to a close with a brief speaker, a poem (Starfish poem), or a few remarks or words of encouragement from the Housing Director. Serve light refreshments after the ceremony and inform the new members that a meeting will be scheduled in the following days to elect the rest of the executive board and to review the constitution.

**Phase VIII: Chapter Status Question**

After the new members have had a few days to rest, the chapter must decide whether they have the manpower and time to be an active chapter or assume honorary chapter status. There are a good number of honorary chapter and there are a lot of active chapters. The most important thing to remember is to take into consideration how the NRHH Chapter will work best for your particular campus and move from their.

**Empowered Student Clause**

If in the occasion professional staff is not available (for one reason or another) to form the NRHH-C3, students can form the committee with the appointed advisor for the chapter (which in some cases may be the RHA Advisor). They can follow the same exact steps as listed above. Every student who is on the NRHH-C3 is eligible for membership (as long as they meet the eligibility criteria), but they must all go through the application process. In addition, the membership will be selected by the advisor and their selected professional staff members.
How Do We Keep Our Chapter Affiliated?

Keeping your chapter affiliated is extremely easy. Each year at your regional No Frills Conference or sometime before the NACURH Conference present a copy of your chapter’s constitution to your Regional Associate Director of NRHH (AD-NRHH). Then at the next NACURH Conference submit your affiliations paperwork (application, member list, and constitution (if updated) to the NIC via online. Then check the NACURH website to verify that your chapter is fully affiliated. It’s that simple!!!

Recommendations on Building a Strong Chapter

It’s takes hard work and time to build a strong chapter. One attribute that all strong chapters have is a strong, solid foundation. Building a strong, solid foundation is all about relationships and traditions. It is very important to build a working relationship with your institutional housing department and RHA. Inquiry about the initiatives of the housing department and offering your help and support (via volunteer hours, programs, presentations, focus groups, etc.) are great ways to start a working relationship. In the case of the RHA, taking on full responsibility of the organization’s community service programs, coordinating awards ceremonies, and maintaining the OTM system are good ways to build a relationship.

In addition to relationships, building chapter traditions is extremely important. Some chapters have unique traditions, such as: (1) a ledger that all new member sign at induction; (2) a special restaurant where they dine after every induction ceremony; (3) an annual t-shirt design; (4) a special community service project [sing to underprivileged children for Christmas]; and/or (5) coordinate and present sessions at a Winter Leadership Retreat for hall council members. Chapter traditions are beneficial; it is what makes chapters strong.
APPENDIX

Sample Chapter Membership Nomination Form

Sample NRHH Membership Application

Sample Chapter Constitution
Dear Nominator:

Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to nominate worthy individuals into our prestigious organization. The National Residence Hall Honorary is a residential life organization that recognizes the top 1% of student leaders and activist on campus making life in the halls more than just a “dorm.” We are requesting that you please fill out the information below on your student nominee so that we can have a little information to make a decision on students to issue formal applications. **This nomination form is due to the Department of Housing (ATTN: NRHH) by Friday, November 3, 2006 at 5pm.**

Name of nominator: ________________________________________________

Name of nominee: ________________________________________________

E-mail address: ______________________ Phone number: ______________________

List known positions held by the nominee.

List known activities the nominee has been involved in.

What has the nominee done above and beyond their position requirements?

Signature: ______________________ Date: ______________________
The National Residence Hall Honorary
Membership Candidate Application

**BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

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**ACADEMIC STANDING**

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**NRHH APPLICANT VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION**

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS FOR COMPLETION OF APPLICATION**

**FOR NRHH CHAPTER USE ONLY**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>DATE RETURNED</th>
<th>RESUME</th>
<th>NRHH MEMBER RECOMMENDATION</th>
<th>FACULTY/STAFF RECOMMENDATION</th>
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Sample Constitution

(includes officer and member oaths)

One of the most challenging aspects of getting a National Residence Hall Honorary Chapter off the ground is coming up with a constitution. It can seem like a very formidable task; most of us have never written a constitution before.

Writing a Constitution

Preamble

Not all constitutions have a preamble, but those that do read in this manner:

We, the members of the ____________ Chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary, in order to honor and recognize outstanding members of the residence hall system, and to promote a higher quality and standard of involvement and interaction in the residence hall community do hereby establish and uphold this constitution.

Article I - Name

Some chapters have taken Greek letters (YNX are the initials for University of Northern Colorado); others have taken their schools mascot: Bobcat or Greyhound chapters; some have named them after people from their university and other have gone for just the name of their school. The constitution should state:

"The name of this organization shall be the ________ Chapter of the National Residence Hall Honorary at ________ (name of school).

Article II - Purpose

"The purpose of this organization shall be________." Across the board, other schools include statements such as to "provide recognition for students who have provided outstanding service or exceptional leadership in promoting the residence hall system."

Article III - Membership

This is where things start to vary. The NRHH National Bylaws state that the minimum requirements for induction are:

1) Individuals shall have lived in the residence halls during the year prior to induction;
2) Individuals shall have exhibited outstanding leadership and service to the residence hall system; and
3) Individuals shall have a grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale.

Chapters also break membership down into four categories:

a) Active members live in the residence halls and have fulfilled the above requirements.
b) Alumni members have either moved off-campus or no longer attend the institution where they were inducted.

c) Early alumni members have filled out the appropriate paperwork and have been confirmed by the regional AD-NRHH

d) Honorary members may be an administrator or off-campus person who has done something outstanding for the residence halls. Even within this framework, there are some variations among chapters.

Under this article, there are also some sections pertaining to the total number of active members in a chapter (which may not be greater than 1% of the capacity of your school's residence halls or 20 members, whichever is greater). Some schools have combined membership and selection of members into one Article (see below).

Article IV - Selection of Members

Basically, the ways people can be nominated are by themselves, or by others. Some schools distribute nomination sheets where candidates describe their own accomplishments and reasons for wanting to get involved with NRHH. Some schools have a selection committee, which reviews nominations. Others have an objective point scale that they use to rank involvement.

In your Constitution, you will probably want one section dealing with the ways in which potential inductees can be nominated, and another section dealing with the manner in which the potential inductees will be screened (i.e. a selection committee, point system, or consensus of active members).

Article V - Executive Structure

Chapters typically have a President/Chairperson. In addition, some chapters have other officers including a Vice-President, and/or a Secretary/Historian. In this article, you may also want to include the method of selection and timeline for selection of officers, the qualifications for a chapter advisor (if you have one), and the responsibilities of the officers.

Article VI - Fees and Dues

This article may include a section regarding institutional chapter dues, if you are to have any.

Article VII - Amendments and Bylaws

In this section, you may want to define what percentage of the active members it takes to amend or add to the Constitution.

Article VIII - Enactment

Typically, you need a majority (occasionally a 2/3) vote of the current active members to ratify a constitution. You may also want to present your constitution to your Residence Hall Association or Residence Life Department for their approval.