



Chapter Profile

Sigma Phi Epsilon, New York Delta

SPRING 2021

2003-2009 15th Street, Troy, NY 12180
RENSSELAER POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

PREPARED BY: The Executive Committee of Sigma Phi Epsilon, New York Delta

CONTACT: ec@sigepnyd.com

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SUMMARY

Sigma Phi Epsilon (SigEp) at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute has been driving to succeed in all facets of what makes a balanced man since its founding in 1938. 82 years later, the New York Delta (NYD) chapter is a premier organization for building balanced men through our continuous member development—the Balanced Man Program (BMP)—and by being a valued partner in higher education. We live by our cardinal principles of Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love, while pursuing our core tenants of Sound Mind and Sound Body. We are a non-hazing, non-pledging fraternity that works to model our members with its cardinal principles ingrained within. Set in a welcoming, supportive, and friendly atmosphere we seek to develop our members into independent, exceptional and balanced men.





ORGANIZATION AT A GLANCE

Chapter Size	28 Members
New Members	1 Member
Average Cumulative GPA	3.18 (Fall 2020)
EHS Safety Score	N/A (Not Living in Chapter Houses)
Philanthropy Dollars Raised	\$0
Community Service Hours	0 per Member

Live-In Capacity	24 Members
Majors	
School of Engineering	19 Members
School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences	1 Members
School of IT & Web Science	2 Member
School of Science	9 Members
Cohorts	
Undergraduate, Class of 2024	1 Members
Undergraduate, Class of 2023	2 Members
Undergraduate, Class of 2022	13 Members
Undergraduate, Class of 2021	12 Members



ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

PREPARED BY:
Keenan Ganz

SigEp NYD builds academic excellence by providing support to our members who are struggling and opportunities for all to excel and grow. The system is run by our Sound Mind chair—our academic and mental health position, and the system is complimented by a graduate student live-in advisor, known as the Resident Scholar, and dedicated study space in our chapter facilities, which promotes an overall house culture of academic excellence. Our chapter utilizes a tiered system for holistic academic support of all members, with increased accountability expectations as members encounter greater challenges. There are four tiers: AP (less than 2.6 GPA for their most recent semester), 2 (between 2.6 and 2.8 GPA), 1 (between 2.8 and 3.0 GPA), and 0 (3.0 GPA and above). All tiers participate in holistic academic programming such as stress and time management, while tiers 1 through AP have individual meetings of increasing degrees of frequency with our Sound Mind chair and Resident Scholar. Our program of events for the past year features collaboration with faculty within and outside RPI that integrates with the Balanced Man Program, our flagship member development system. Overall, our members believe that our chapter has encouraged their academic success, shown by Appendix A.1.

Direct academic support is provided through the Academic Support System, which focuses on three main goals: awareness, motivation, and accountability. Awareness centers on ensuring students know what is expected of them academically (exam dates, assignment deadlines, etc). We build motivation in our members through regular conversations about academic goals, how to achieve them, and overcoming obstacles. Finally, accountability aims to create a record of how closely students adhere to the goals they set. By tracking study hours and assignments, our members learn where they need to improve in order to achieve their academic goals. Members are encouraged to report grades throughout the semester via a simple form that enters them into a raffle at the end of the year, with more entries for higher grades.

We offer two internal scholarships to encourage our members to excel in their academics. Our most improved GPA scholarship rewards members who have worked hard to improve their academic success, while our most outstanding brother scholarship is for a member who excels academically and provides strong leadership in the chapter.



Past winners of both awards have included students who were on the Academic Support System. As members mature in the chapter, internal leadership positions enable them to apply their academic skill to improving the house. These include the Residential Learning Community (RLC) chair and Sound Mind chair. The RLC chairman coordinates with our Resident Scholar regarding office hours, study space usage, and RLC talks. The Sound Mind chairman is responsible for administering the Academic Support System and coordinates with the RLC chairman to ensure a unified approach to this program.

In the past several months, we have worked to expand our scope of academically-oriented seminars, or RLC talks, to cater to a remote learning environment. We have found that this enables us to broaden our impact by sharing these opportunities with applicants to the Balanced Man Scholarship, which is offered to all first-year students at Rensselaer. This semester, we had RPI's Dr. Morgan Schaller discuss impact ejecta, and a recent RPI and SigEp alumnus, Alexander Lin, speak about the Professional Engineer exam. At the end of this semester in preparation for finals, we had a workshop for our members on mindfulness and positive psychology, led by Dr. Holly Traver.

Through our Balanced Man Program (BMP), our members experience continuous member development, receiving constant programming on holistic academic success. The program requires members to progress through three challenges: the Sigma, Phi and Epsilon challenges. During these challenges, members are required to complete a series of activities and meetings to engage in a variety of academic and life skills. During the Sigma challenge, members are introduced to local and national fraternity operations as well as the college experience. During the Phi challenge, members focus on growing and developing as a balanced man in their personal life. During the Epsilon challenge, members expand their leadership skills and serve as a balanced man. Upon completion of the Epsilon challenge, members are eligible to apply to become a Brother Mentor, where they develop a project for the betterment of the chapter and make a lasting improvement to the SigEp experience. Through the execution/completion of this project members gain valuable leadership skills while enabling a better future for the entire chapter. Throughout all the challenges, five key concepts are emphasized: SigEp, intellect, physical health and wellness, leadership, and professionalism.

SigEp NYD won the Donald C. McCleary Excellence in Member Development Award from our national headquarters last Spring. In addition, our previous faculty fellow, Dr. Casey Jakubowski, was also awarded the University Partner of the Year Award. We have won several Excelsior Awards in the past few years, in the category of Member



Development. In three of the past four semesters, SigEp recorded one of the top three fraternity GPAs on campus. Finally, our chapter was recently accredited by our national headquarters for our academic support programs.

In the future, we are planning the expansion of our academic program by creating a new executive-level position: the Vice President of the Learning Community. This position will be responsible for coordinating the Academic Support System and academic membership development programming. The goal of this position is to unify our academic membership development programs by concentrating academically-oriented house leadership into one cabinet. By developing programs in tandem, we can work towards common goals more efficiently.



MORAL & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

PREPARED BY:
Alexander Hauck

Our organization's cardinal principles are Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love. We also live by our core tenants of Sound Mind and Sound Body. Our members embody these values throughout their daily activities. One example of Brotherly Love, which we believe expands to everyone we interact with, is supporting our sorority organizations, even in something as simple as cheerleading for them in their powderpuff game, as shown in Appendix B.1. Overall, our chapter agrees that we live up to our values, as shown in Appendix B.2.

To foster the broadening of our members' cultural diversity knowledge, we purposefully seek out experiences and are developing a more robust program for this. We host an annual International Potluck for members to learn about a specific culture as well as creating a dish inspired by that culture, then come together to discuss and eat the various dishes from different cultures. We also ask members, as part of their Phi challenge in the BMP, to experience both artistry and spirituality. Recently, to experience artistry, we've taken trips to Albany Institute of History & Art. Common activities that we participate in to pursue spiritual growth and diversity are visiting a Buddhist temple, having a Rabbi speak with us for an RLC talk, and attending a service at the Chapel + Cultural Center at Rensselaer. Although SigEp is non-denominational, we encourage members to learn, understand, and experience a diverse set of beliefs alongside their own personal ones. Since March, we have been working on developing a dedicated position to focus on inclusivity and diversity, known as the Diversity and Inclusion Chair. This position will be in charge of our chapter's Inclusion Plan, and will lead our chapter in discussions about multicultural topics and challenges, helping our chapter integrate inclusivity within all of our current practices.

SigEp NYD adapts as a community through discussion and active effort. Creating a SigEp Learning Community (SLC) is all about creating an environment of support and understanding, whether that's for academic purposes or societal challenges. Weekly, after each chapter meeting, we open up the floor in what we call Gavel Pass. We go around the room, passing the President's gavel, letting each member talk about whatever



is on their mind that week. We encourage that person to discuss whatever is on their mind, whether it's lighthearted, heavy hitting, happy, or unfortunate. They're free to speak without judgement, and the room's focus is on them. We have continued to do this weekly at our online chapter meetings, of course lacking the physical component.

SigEp provides our members with ample opportunities for growth in leadership and professionalism. As a non-hazing, non-pledging fraternity, members are eligible and encouraged to run for leadership positions within the chapter from the day they sign their bid. We also encourage our members to take on leadership positions in other organizations outside of our own. In the last three years we have had two Rensselaer Union Executive Board members, three IFC Executive Board officers, three Engineering Ambassadors, and plenty more members involved with other campus organizations such as Coding&&Community, Order of Omega, and Resident Student Association. We worked with our faculty fellow at the time, Dr. Jakubowski, as well as other Archer Center members such as Dr. Audrey Scranton, to develop our members professionally and create multicultural leaders. We have a professional development week on a semesterly basis, just prior to the career fair. Dr. Jakubowski leads an event to discuss a professional topic he finds important, such as a seminar he gave on elevator pitches. These events are open to the campus and we partner with other organizations such as the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) to promote each event to a broader campus audience. The week also features resume critiques, facilitated by SigEp NYD alumni, Dr. Jakubowski, and older chapter members. This semester, we performed two separate resume critique sessions over our community Discord server, having dozens of brothers and Balanced Man Scholarship applicants in attendance. We also had Dr. Scranton speak with members about organizational ethics last year. This was hosted as a part of the Sigma Challenge in the BMP, but other members also came to participate. Our members value this programming, as shown in Appendix B.3.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

PREPARED BY:
Sergey Scoville &
Daniel Shipman

Sigma Phi Epsilon plans and organizes numerous service events throughout the year. These events include park and church cleanups, and Sexual Assault Awareness Week (SAAW). The one we are most proud of is our participation in SAAW, which our alumnus, Vishrudh Gopalakrishnan '20, kickstarted. In partnership with AGD and Sole Survivors we organize an around-the-clock see-saw ride that continues for the entire week to signify that sexual assault can happen any time and any day of the week. We also have people sign a poster stating they will always ask for consent. To top it all off, we sell t-shirts that encourage asking for consent and we donate all the profits to Unity House. Our SAAW advertisement can be seen in Appendix C.1. This semester, we posted information and resources on our instagram to begin conversations within our brotherhood and externally.

Within the Institute and the Troy community we organize and conduct cleanups for local parks and churches. Students from the Rensselaer community are invited to all of our community service events. This past year we held two cleanups at Prospect Park after Keenan Ganz, who is passionate about sustainability, wished to be involved in the viral Trashtag Challenge. At the park we gathered as much trash as we could in 3 hours and hauled it to the dumpster there to be disposed of. A picture from each cleanup can be found in Appendix C.2. We assisted the church clean up by helping to demolish the kitchen so that they could move it into a different room, and moving any rubbish outside including a particularly large refrigerator. We are excited to gather in the Fall to participate in more such activities to help our community.

Nationally, Sigma Phi Epsilon has partnered with the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) organization, and we support the local capital region chapter with our efforts as our main philanthropic focus. Primarily we sell bacon, egg, and cheese sandwiches (BECs) every Friday in front of Russell-Sage dining hall. A picture of the first BEC of the decade can be seen in Appendix C.3. All profits from this venture go to BBBS, and most recently, from the Fall 2019 semester, we've donated over \$1,500. Last semester, we were unable to support BBBS through our regular means, and so, we held two charity live streams. In these streams, we encouraged members of the RPI community to engage in various



games and activities while a group of chapter members ate increasingly spicy chicken wings. Through these, we managed to raise over \$415 to donate to BBBS. We held games and trivia with the chat and all donations went directly to BBBS. We are planning to make a strong comeback with our regular weekly BEC efforts in the Fall semester. Several of our brothers have also volunteered directly with the organization and been big brothers to the children involved. We hold an annual BBBS BBQ at our houses so that we can meet those that we support and play lawn games with them. Interacting with those we support is very important to us, as we don't want to just support them monetarily, but also emotionally.

In the future, we would like to hold more events engaging with the campus. A primary example is the launch of Mental Health Awareness week, spearheaded by our brother Sergey Scoville '22. Mental health is a huge issue in the college community across America and particularly at RPI. Similarly to SAAW, we will reserve a week to focus on mental health awareness and hold events that encourage improving mental well-being. We hope to partner with additional organizations on campus and provide talks and events to spread awareness about this issue during the first week of October. Another way we hope to involve the community is to include a 3K/5K road race. We are planning to officially launch this during the upcoming Fall semester.

As shown in Appendix C.4, members have grown to recognize the value in community service and philanthropy. We believe it important to intentionally choose the organizations we work with and the service we accomplish. Each one of the events we organize has at least one member who is passionate about or has a personal connection with that organization or service. Whether that looks like Vish starting SAAW, Sergey starting MHAW, Keenan starting park cleanups, or several of our members volunteering as big brothers in BBBS, we believe having that personal connection is important to the quality of effort put in, as well as the reflection and understanding taken from it.



HUMAN CONNECTION

PREPARED BY:
Alexander Hauck

Within SigEp NYD, we strive to develop a community where everyone can be comfortable and themselves. Members generally agree that we have established an inclusive environment, as shown by their thoughts on their individuality within the chapter in Appendix D.1 and how strong of a bond they feel they have with their brothers in Appendix D.2. We love to encourage this bond, and an example of how we strengthen our connection to one another is through our semesterly brotherhood retreats. Each Fall, we gather in Reinhardt house (2005 15th Street) to talk, play games, learn cooking skills, and any other activities that the current membership enjoys. We also participate in team building exercises and create a space for us to speak openly with one another. In the Spring, we have an off-site overnight retreat, finding a location to spend an overnight at. Most recently, we worked with Dr. Jakubowski to rent a cabin in a woods nearby. During the Spring retreat, we play sports and cook, but we also focus on membership development. We split into groups based on our BMP challenge and openly discuss our opinions of the chapter, our vision for what the chapter should look like moving forward, and ways we can work to make that vision a reality. Our Brother Mentors facilitate these discussions in each of these groups. We emulated a version of this latter retreat format this semester, creating small groups and performing a social activity such as mini-golf to rebuild brotherhood and take a break from school stress. We then participated in these chapter discussions in our challenge groups that week during our regular online meetings.

Our brotherhood is unique for many reasons, and I believe one of the most important is how we push each other to succeed in all facets of our lives and personally impact one another. In the survey sent out, one response about the uniqueness of their Greek life experience was, “exposure to more ways of thinking and cultures.” Another stated that “taking advantage of everything college has to offer with a large group of like minded and supportive people, with the budget to do fun and incredible things.” We encourage each other and hold one another to a higher standard, using our Standards Board to hold each other accountable. Nationally, at the Grand Chapter Conclave in 2017, we voted in favor of, with 140+ SigEp undergraduate chapters, implementing a substance-free housing bylaw. Although this was set to take effect by August 1st, 2020, we passed our



local bylaw early, and we have had substance-free facilities since September 2018. This was also prior to Rensselaer's implementation of substance-free Greek facilities. We take pride in this step forward, and many members in the house feel that this decision took our chapter from its problematic past status to its 5 star current status.

Members in our chapter look forward to a variety of social programming we provide, including a semesterly formal, several mixers a semester, and holiday dinners. We connect with our past at an alumni-active co-hosted event, which we call CLAMs, where we visit Thatcher Park after finals end in May each year and participate in a large clam bake with our alumni, sports, and networking. We held our second virtual CLAMs this May, joining dozens of RPI SigEp alumni for chapter updates, a keynote about aircrafts on Mars, and friendly conversation. This semester, we have continued to focus more on creating simple, regular social interactions between members through our community Discord. Members often join voice chats to collaborate on schoolwork, play video games, or challenge each other to crossword puzzles. We've found creative ways to emulate the everyday interactions that occur all the time when members are able to live together in the same houses. In accordance with RPI, state, and local regulations, we also began to gather safely in small groups to participate in outdoor activities such as mini-golfing, running, and visiting the farmer's market.

SigEp NYD is more than just another student-run organization on campus. Our members love supporting one another, stating in the survey how their big brother is always there to talk about anything, and that the stress management seminars we hold impact them greatly. We have more than an objective view of our members, caring about the personal health and well-being of every member. This makes an impact, as shown in Appendix D.3. As an organization, we're providing the tools to develop our members to be the most balanced men they can be, and that starts with their own individual state. We have frequent discussions surrounding everyone's mental health, and are able to adapt if a member needs us to. We also participate in a twice-semesterly Sound Body day, promoting the physical health and wellness of our members. To promote more regular physical activity, we did several small Sound Body challenges, where brother Sergey Scoville shared and led members through a brief, full-body, bodyweight workout over WebEx after meetings.



BEHIND THE SCENES

PREPARED BY:
Alexander Hauck

Sigma Phi Epsilon has a unique member development experience known as the Balanced Man Program (BMP). We also received accreditation through our national headquarters as of Spring 2020, becoming a SigEp Learning Community (SLC). As a part of being a Learning Community, we provide a Residential Learning Community space on our third floor of Reinhardt house (2005 15th Street), filled with table space, textbooks, study materials, and a whiteboard. Being recognized as a SLC is important to us, as it shows the advancements we've made in our academics and member development over the last few years are meaningful and effective.

Our chapter has a unique live-in advisor program, in which we hire a graduate student attending RPI as the Resident Scholar. This graduate student can be either a brother or not, and they are provided room and board for the year we hire them. The Resident Scholar takes on duties similar to a combination of RPI's Resident Assistant (RA) and Learning Assistant (LA) positions, providing opportunities for members such as technical skills and presentations as well as office hours.

The mission statement of SigEp is to be a "valued partner in higher education." We look to fulfill this by working with the RPI administration every chance we get. We also look to develop personal relationships with RPI administrators, and to do both, we've given a presentation to several administrative staff in the past—including Dean Apgar—detailing who SigEp is, how we operate, and why we do what we do. Our goal is to provide this presentation on an annual basis to at least several administrators and hope to be able to expand that audience to include many more allowing further development of our relationship with RPI. As we perform more presentations over the years, we will continually focus more on how we are ever-changing and improving over time. In addition, prior to the presentation, we have dinner with the administration members we invite and converse to get to know each other better. After the presentation, we open up the floor for questions and discussions about how our partnership can grow. We did this for the first time in Spring 2019, and although hoped to do so again this past Spring, were unable to do so while administrators focused on the



present challenges. We are looking forward to interacting with more RPI faculty and administrators in the coming years when we are able to host them again.

Each year, we award several first year students that exhibit our cardinal principles (Virtue, Diligence, and Brotherly Love) and core tenants (Sound Mind and Sound Body) with the Balanced Man Scholarship (BMS). Our BMS process involves an application that we extensively advertise on social media, our website, and through RPI's admissions office; a two-phase interview; and various professional development, community service, and physically active events. The BMS process culminates in a banquet where we invite finalists, their parents, professors, our faculty fellow, and a keynote speaker (last year's keynote was Dr. Charlie Potts). Last year, we received nearly 150 applicants and awarded three first year students scholarships totaling \$3,500. This year, we received just over 150 applicants and awarded a total of \$10,000 to recognize six exemplary first year students. We held a brief virtual banquet, giving attendees UberEats gift cards in lieu of a banquet meal. Our faculty fellow, Dr. Hisham Mohamed, gave a keynote speech on endurance and resilience. We are constantly looking for ways to improve this scholarship, and have several plans to do so. We plan to increase the perspectives and backgrounds of our selection committee by including several past winners and other organization members. We also hope to add a scholarship for transfer students from HVCC, and are working with our Chapter Counselor, Dr. Jakubowski, to do so.

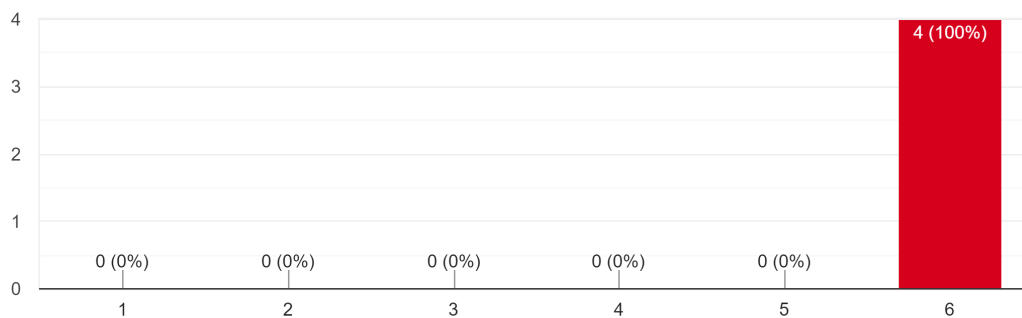


APPENDIX

Appendix A: Academic Excellence

My Greek Life experience has helped me with my academics.

4 responses



A.1. Chapter Profile Survey Academic Support Results

Appendix B: Moral & Cultural Development

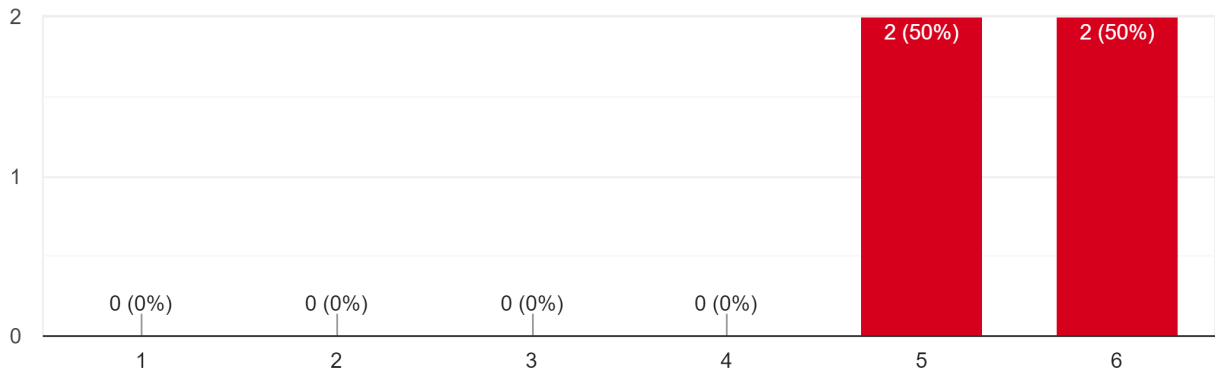


B.1. Powderpuff Football Cheerleading



My chapter lives up to its ideals and values.

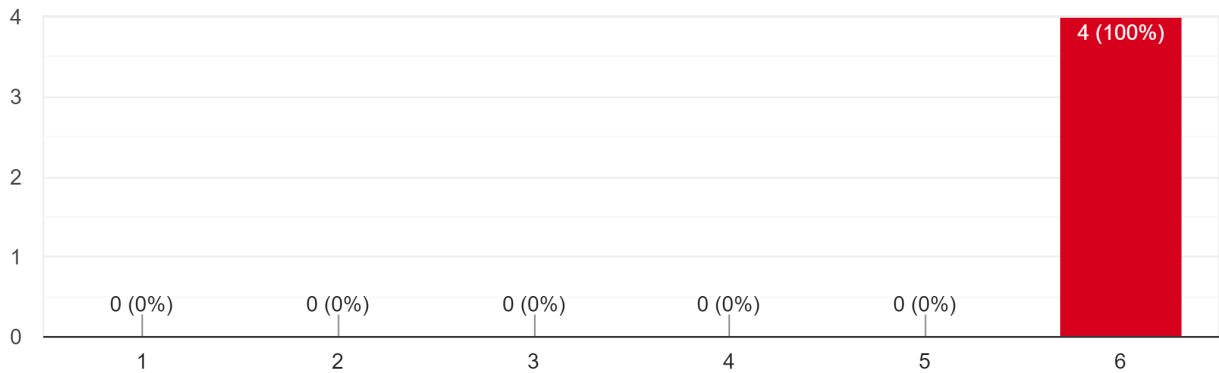
4 responses



B.2. Chapter Profile Survey Ideals & Values Results

Overall, I believe my Greek life experience has contributed to my professional development.

4 responses



B.3. Chapter Profile Survey Professional Development Results



Appendix C: Community Engagement



C.1. SAAW Advertisement



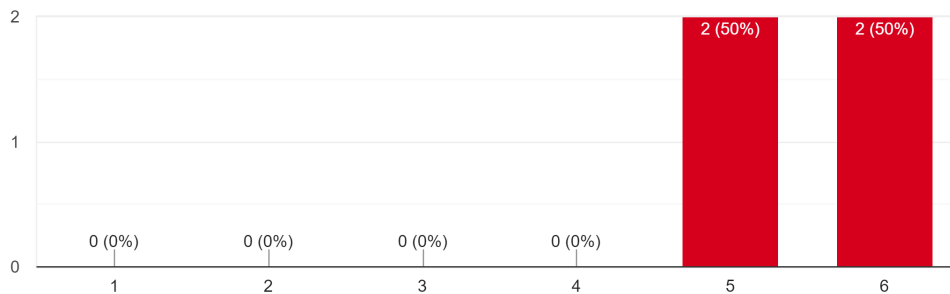
C.2. Prospect Park Cleanups



C.3. First BEC of the Decade

My Greek Life experience has helped me understand the value of serving my community through community service and/or philanthropy.

4 responses



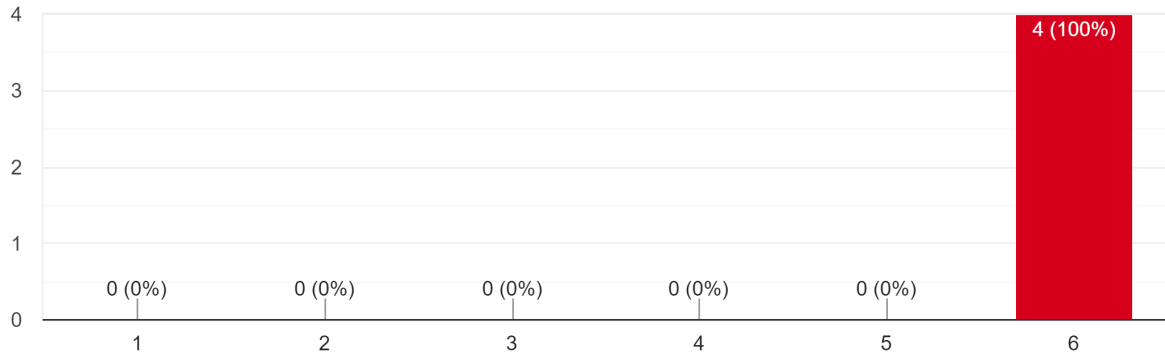
C.4. Chapter Profile Survey Community Service/Philanthropy Results



Appendix D: Human Connection

I feel comfortable being myself with my fraternity or sorority.

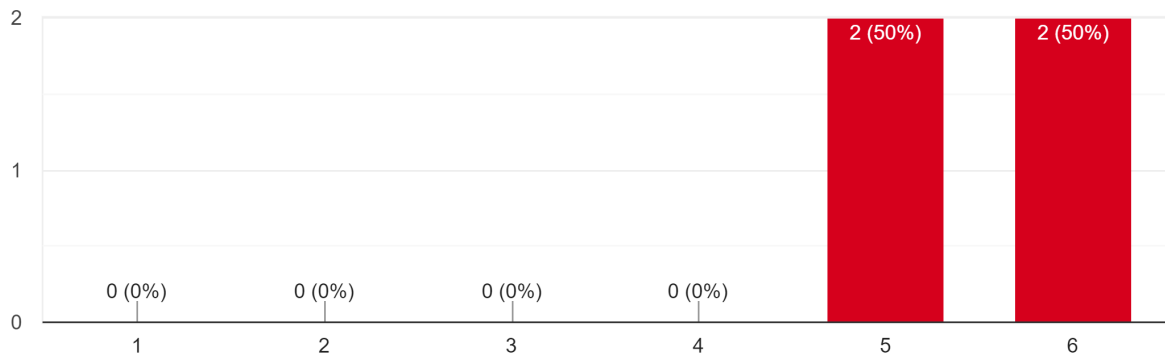
4 responses



D.1. Chapter Profile Survey Individuality Results

I have a strong bond with my brothers/sisters.

4 responses

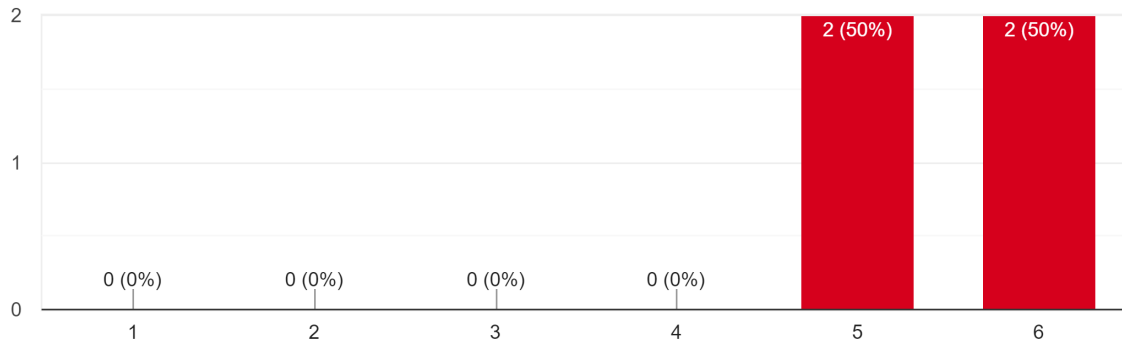


D.2. Chapter Profile Survey Brotherhood Bond Results



Mental Wellness

4 responses



D.3. Chapter Profile Survey Health & Well-Being Results

Appendix E: Behind the Scenes

Please visit our website, rpi.sigep.org, for more information about how our organization operates.