



Foundation for Fraternal Excellence – 2025 Alumni & Donor Research

Project Outline and Timeline

April 19, 2024

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About the Project

It is Cygnus Applied Research's great honor and privilege to have worked with the Foundation for Fraternal Excellence (FFE) and almost forty different fraternal foundations in 2011, 2015 and 2020 to explore the varied factors that influence philanthropic support.

In our most recent research, more than 128,000 alumni members shared with us information about their attitudes, perceptions and expectations towards their fraternities and sororities. **While this study was the largest and most comprehensive survey of fraternity/sorority members ever conducted, its real value comes from the information gathered about alumni's preferences for information and communication, their motivations for making contributions, and how fraternities/sororities can grow engagement and support after graduation.**

Alongside the survey, Cygnus conducted a fundraising performance analysis using the database records of each organization in the project. This allowed us to measure the overall level of alumni participation in philanthropy, and develop key philanthropic benchmarks in member acquisition, retention and gift value to create a fully quantitative picture of fraternal fundraising.

In the five years that have passed since our last study, both fraternal foundations and the economic environment have continued to change, but one thing remains true: foundations are still faced with ever-increasing pressures and competition for revenue. With the global pandemic firmly behind us, now is an optimal time to embark on a new program of research to measure changes in fundraising performance, identify new opportunities to grow relationships with fraternal members, and explore how the preferences, awareness and opinions of alumni have evolved over time.

The following project outline briefly summarizes the steps required to update the research, launch the survey, and create performance benchmarks for 2025.

Research Methodology, Participation and Reporting

The 2025 study will build directly on the 2020 research (as well as refer to 2011 and 2015 studies research) to provide longitudinal comparisons of data both at the national level and for every fraternal foundation who decides to participate. This five-year interval provides a sufficiently long enough period to reveal changes in the perceptions of alumni and the operations of fraternal

foundations in both the survey results and database, but it is still recent enough that there is still some continuity of operations and strategy so organization can continue to build on the earlier findings.

Of course, Cygnus is also eager to expand the research to generate new data on issues which are important to fraternal foundations and FFE. In developing the 2025 survey:

- Cygnus will meet with representatives from FFE and fraternal foundations to gather feedback on what information was most valuable to them from the prior survey and analysis. Those most valuable topics will be maintained in the 2025 study, and Cygnus will track and report on how the perceptions and attitudes of fraternity and sorority members have changed over time.
- We will also discuss what research areas need expansion or update and craft new questions and/or expand our analysis accordingly.
- Our survey report will contain similar types of data, metrics and recommendations as it did in the 2020 research, but fully updated and expanded. One of the most interesting areas of our report will be the longitudinal comparisons where we look to see how the attitudes and preferences of alumni and supporters have changed over time.
- Cygnus will update database analyses and benchmarks to include current metrics and offer a performance comparison back to 2020. This will allow fraternities and sororities to track the impact of efforts in fundraising and donor development and quantitatively measure what changes have occurred since the last research.

Although the project will be structured to allow organizations who participated in the 2020 study to see how their results have changed over time, **participation is open to all fraternities and sororities regardless of whether they were involved in the 2020 study.**

- For sororities and fraternities involved in previous studies, they will receive their own updated findings, a comparison with their peer group of fraternities and sororities as appropriate, and a longitudinal comparison of findings with 2015 data.
- Fraternities and sororities participating for the first time will receive their own full data set and comparisons to their peers.

Timeline of Activities

Work on the 2025 survey will formally begin in the autumn of 2024, with the initial unveiling of findings at the 2025 FFE Seminar in Indianapolis.

The following timeline outlines some of the key activities for Cygnus and FFE. Cygnus has confirmed a start date for the project of September 16, 2024, and a launch date for the survey of March 1, 2025. Recruitment of fraternities and sororities into the project will begin June 1, 2024 with a final deadline for enrollment in the project of March 31, 2025. This will ensure that Cygnus has enough time to fully conduct the research and analyze data from each organization prior to the FFE Seminar.

Activity / Requirement	Method	Dates / Deadline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFE communications to membership about 2025 study as appropriate. 	Email / Mail / Newsletter	April 2024 - May 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official sign-up period for fraternal foundations to join project (although members can join at any time before the final deadline). 	Enrollment with FFE	June 2024 - May 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participating fraternal foundations provided with database extraction instructions as they enroll. 	Email	October 2024 - May 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FFE appoints 2-3 Project Managers / representatives for the study. 		July 1, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cygnus receives optional test extractions from fraternal foundations for review. 	Upload	November 15, 2024 - January 15, 2025

Activity / Requirement	Method	Dates / Deadline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cygnus and Project Managers' preliminary meeting to discuss focus of 2024 research and participation. 	Email / Telephone	Mid-November, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 – 7 fraternal foundations provide sample material from their current member communications and appeals. 	Email / Mail / Upload	Mid-November 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cygnus conducts 20-minute interviews with key development representative(s) from 5 - 7 fraternal foundations. 	Telephone	Early December 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initial draft of questionnaire and database assessment outline provided to FFE Project Managers for review. 	Email / Telephone	Early January 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full database extractions from participating fraternal foundations 	Upload	January 15, 2025 - May 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final approval of survey by fraternal foundations and FFE. 	Email / Online	February 1, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cygnus builds and tests online surveys. FFE and Project Managers review the online version prior to launch. 	Online	February 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysis of databases and preparation of survey mailing lists by Cygnus. 		February 2025 - June 2025

Activity / Requirement	Method	Dates / Deadline
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Deadline for Database Extractions from fraternal foundations to Cygnus 	Email / Mail / Upload	May 31, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey opens and deploys to alumni and donors. 	Email / Online	March 1, 2025 - June 15, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cygnus' analysis of survey and database findings. 		May 2025 - July 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Findings Presented. 	In person at FFE Seminar	August 24-27, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual fraternal foundation Reports Delivered. 		Mid-August 2025 - Mid-September 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Special webinar – reading and interpreting your findings. 	Webinar	September 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presentation of project findings and discussion -- Jeff Dubberley. 	In Person Presentation FFE Summit	January 26 - 29, 2026

Fraternity and Sorority Representatives for the Project

Each participating Foundation should appoint a representative who will serve as a contact point for the project. Ideally this individual would have knowledge of current fundraising practices and the ability to extract (or oversee the extraction of) the Foundation's database records for surveying and analysis purposes. Cygnus will make occasional contact with this individual to:

- Request sample material reflecting past fundraising and donor communication activities.
- Request database and contact records for surveying and database analysis.

- Seek their approval on the deployment date for their survey.
- Provide feedback to us on the project as it progresses.
- provide final reports and recommendations at the conclusion of the project.

Of course, the representative is free to deputize and/or appoint other staff members to gather materials and provide feedback, but it is helpful for there to be a single individual who will represent each fraternity/sorority.

Project Fees

Organizations donating to the Amplifying Sorority Campaign or Fraternities Matter Campaign at the total giving level of \$10,000 or more will have their participation fee waived.

The fee for participation is \$5,000. The Foundation for Fraternal Excellence is offering flexibility for those wishing to split payments throughout the fiscal year and into the following fiscal year. Contact FFE Executive Director Ashley VanDewark to learn more about payment options.

There are also sponsorship opportunities for those organizations wishing to support the project and receive detailed national research findings but choose not to provide alumni/ae and donor records.

Please note: additional fees will be incurred for FFE non-member organizations.

This fee structure not only includes all the reporting for the project but the longitudinal analysis of survey and database findings to 2020 findings where appropriate. It also includes presentations by Jeff Dubberley, Vice-President of Cygnus Applied Research, as set out in the above timeline at the FFE Seminar, and the FFE Summit.

Special Request for Individual Associations

Cygnus keeps the overall cost per organization low on the project by effectively building a single master survey that applies broadly to many organizations. However, we do have the facility to

tailor survey questions or even add additional questions to the study in a limited way for fraternal foundations.

Adjusting the survey for an individual group is time consuming and affects data reporting. Pricing is provided upon request, but as a guide it typically takes between 5 – 15 hours at a cost of \$750 - \$2,250 to update, add or alter survey questions and reporting.

Contact for Questions

For additional information, please contact:

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All of us at Cygnus appreciate the opportunity to provide you with this information and look forward to working with the Foundation for Fraternal Excellence and its fraternal foundations once again!