



Chapter Planting in the Greek Ministry Context

Written by Mindy Meier and Kristen Dalton

InterVarsity staff who seek to plant a new Greek chapter will find the [Chapter Planting Manual](#) to be of tremendous help. It is a wonderful compilation of resources drawing experience from many of the great minds of InterVarsity. This Greek supplemental paper is intended to be used alongside the *Chapter Planting Manual* by contributing a few ideas that have been helpful in starting Greek chapters.

The Importance of Setting Realistic Numerical Goals

One item worth noting is the suggested numbers expected at certain stages of the ministry. Most of us who are Greek want very much to succeed and measure up to the expectations placed in front of us. It is easy for our performance issues to kick in when we see numbers. It is worth noting that Greek ministry numbers will be very different, depending on certain factors.

- How large is the Greek System you are seeking to reach...70 or 700 or 7,000?
- Is there another ministry on campus reaching Greeks?
- Is your school in the Bible Belt, the rocky soil of New England, or the surf culture of California?
- How strong is InterVarsity on your target campus and in your area?

It would be good for the Greek planter to sit down with his or her supervisor and coach and talk through realistic numbers. Together set your number goals with this information in mind.

The Six Essentials in the Greek Context

ESSENTIAL #1: PRAYER

New Paradigms for Prayer

Several Greek IV ministries have shifted from the traditional prayer meeting to “Happy Hour” on Friday afternoons from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. They gather for community, prayer and an inexpensive dinner out. This is a great window of time when students are done with class and want to kick back and hang out with friends, yet have their Friday night open for house activities. Greeks expect to be at some “Happy Hour” on Friday afternoon, why not make it a Greek IV one?

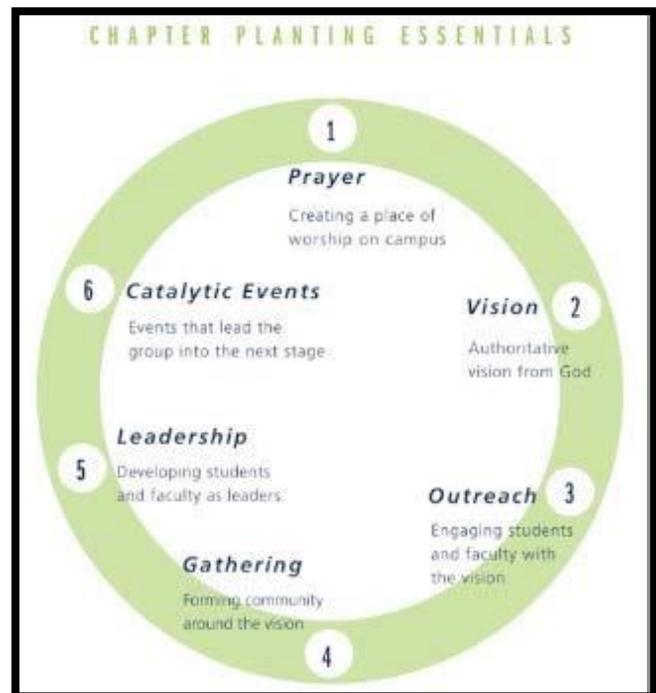
HELPFUL LINK:

Click here for the [how-to's of hosting a “Happy Hour”](#).

ESSENTIAL #2: VISION

Do You Know Joe & Jane Greek?

The vision of Greek InterVarsity is to reach a certain people group we commonly refer to as “Joe and Jane Greek.” Joe and Jane are your typical fraternity guy and sorority girl. They are involved in many different clubs and organizations and, therefore, very busy. They like things that are “Greek specific” and they find safety in numbers. Joe and Jane are probably not searching for a Christian group on campus in



which to get involved and they are probably not interested in finding a church to attend. We have found that the best way to possibly reach Joe and Jane Greek is through an in-house Bible study that is led by one of Joe's fraternity brothers or Jane's sorority sisters. When Greek InterVarsity gets planted on a campus our vision *is to see a student-led ministry in every fraternity and sorority on campus so that every Greek has a chance to respond to the true Jesus*. That is why, when we go plant a Greek IV chapter, we are searching for students who can catch this vision and are willing to be trained and developed to lead a ministry in their respective Greek house, all in an attempt to effectively reach Joe and Jane Greek.

HELPFUL LINK:

For a very engaging and artistic [look at who exactly Joe and Jane Greek are](#), click here.

(Take the time to watch this video; you may even want to use it to train your student leaders.)

Greeks are Leaders Looking for a God-Sized Adventure

The Greek system is filled with leaders. You will find them in leadership positions all over campus, but many are looking for a God-sized adventure, something big enough to capture their imagination. Being part of a new ministry like Greek IV is very attractive to them. You are looking for leaders you can nourish and develop. Greeks need to see themselves growing in responsibility and influence. They should feel developed as leaders, not exploited or drained. Greeks are energized by being part of something new and potentially big. Share stories of how Greek IV got started at other campuses and how God is working there. Don't be deterred by people who seem crazy busy. They are the movers and shakers who will get things done. They just need to be captured by your vision for the ministry. Create ownership and help them see themselves as stockholders.

HELPFUL LINK:

Click here for some [excellent ideas on how to create and cast vision](#) for your chapter plant.

ESSENTIALS #3: OUTREACH

Make Connections with the Panhellenic Office and the Inter-Fraternity Council

You will want to begin your ministry plant by becoming very familiar with the Greek system at your campus. Visit the Panhellenic office and Inter-Fraternity council office. Introduce yourself, and share with them your purpose for being on campus. Often the Inter-fraternity council and the Panhellenic office will put out a Greek guide. This may be used for rush/recruitment. See if you can have a copy. You may be able to buy space in the Greek guide to advertise Greek IV. They may also be willing to let you put a flyer in the rush packets. Ask their advice in starting a Christian ministry to Greeks. Find out from them about how Greek IV can become an official student organization on campus. Find out about procedures to reserve rooms. Get their opinion about finding a very Greek friendly place to meet for Bible study or prayer or a catalytic event. Ask the Greek Life person about other good ways to get the word out. Get their business card. Cultivate this relationship. Leave them your card or a brochure about Greek IV. Take a notebook with you so you can take notes on what they say. This conveys respect and will also help you jot down information they give you. Pop in every couple of months to say hi.

How to Let People Know About Greek IV

Study communication patterns used among Greeks. How are invitations issued? If a fraternity wants to get the word out about a kegger, how do they invite people? If someone is turning 21 in the house, how are people invited to join in the celebration? If a sorority is sponsoring a walk for breast cancer, how do they get others on board? After you study communication patterns, think about which ones will work for your ministry. Use communication patterns that are typical for your campus. Chalk sidewalks, put table tents in the student union on food tables, tack posters to kiosks, etc. Think outside the box. Put up flyers in bathrooms of popular campus bars letting people know you exist. Your publicity could say something like: "Looking for something more? Come join us! Greek InterVarsity Christian Fellowship at _____" The [Greek IV web site](#) has some great resources for publicity that you can download. My favorite is the two street signs intersecting: "Greek" and "Christian" ...where being Greek and Christian come together.

Some schools have a mandatory rush information meeting. When people leave that meeting you can pass out flyers about Greek IV. This lets Christians who are thinking about rushing know that there is support for their faith in the Greek system. Some Christians will go ahead and rush knowing there is a Christian group for them.

You may want to come up with a few talks that could be given in Greek houses on time management, spiritual life, body image, eating disorders, etc. Many houses are required to have a certain number of programs per semester and are frankly looking for things to meet quota. This lets you get your foot in the door and meet people. If you are wise on a non-religious topic, you build credibility to be seen as wise in spiritual matters.

Of course your main goal at the beginning is to find Greek Christians or Greeks open to the gospel. As you meet people in town and share with them your ministry, write down any leads you get. Follow up those leads. Other ways to generate contacts is through visiting houses or chapters. Ring the doorbell and introduce yourself. Think of what your first line will be. "Hi, my name is Joe Peterson and I am starting a new group on campus for Greeks who are interested in spiritual things. Is there anyone in your house that is a Christian, or goes to church or is interested in spiritual things?" Often there is that one guy who everyone knows goes to church and is a Christian. If he is not home, leave a personal note with a brochure about Greek IV. Other good contacts are presidents and chaplains for the houses. Contact them and let them know about your newly emerging ministry.

Doing dinner announcements at houses is another great way to get the word out about Greek IV. If possible have people give short, enthusiastic announcements during dinner time. One team can hit four houses during a dinner time if the houses are close together. Have people wear their letters. If possible have girls go to the fraternity houses and guys go to the sorority houses. In addition to the cross gender intrigue, with the opposite sex there is no competition. Some schools have deep competition and rivalry between fraternities. You do not want to ignite this. The ATO's will not be receptive to announcements given by Sigma Chi's. Girls are more respected at fraternities and will be listened to. Similarly the girls will listen more attentively to guys.

Another place to garner contacts is your campus activity fair. Most schools have one day that different clubs can set up a table and seek new members. Have your table staffed by Greeks wearing their letters if at all possible. Recruit alumni that are recent grads if you need to. Take photos of any event you have with Greeks, make 5 x 7s or 8 x 10s of those photos and have them up for people to see. Show photos of Greeks having fun together, canoeing, engaging in a Habitat trip or whatever. Have interest cards for people to fill out. An InterVarsity staff or student should contact them within 48 hours.

Another place to get contacts is through your campus churches. Find out what three churches have the most college students. Make a half-hour appointment with the senior pastor or campus pastor. Introduce yourself and explain your vision for Greek ministry on campus. Ask if the church has any Greeks that attend. They may be willing to give you names and contact info, but if not, leave your contact info with the pastor and ask that he or she pass it along to any Greeks. Ask if they will pray for your Greek IV ministry during their weekly prayer meeting.

HELPFUL LINK:

Click here for a great [tool that will help you brainstorm names of contacts](#) (network think sheet).

ESSENTIAL #4: GATHERING

Your prayers and outreach strategies are working. What do you do with this handful of missional Greeks that are catching your God-inspired vision for the Greek system? We have found a weekly Greek Bible study to be one of the best ways to gather this Core group. The most important component of the weekly Core meeting is a missional Bible study. Portions of Acts, Gospel stories,

leadership books like Nehemiah and Rich Lamb's series [Images of Leadership](#) are some of the favorites used by other Greek IV staff. Other components for this 1 hour meeting include:

- Your vision is repeated and recast at least once
- Application of the Scripture – this can be done in small groups or as a whole group at the end of your Bible study; make sure the application is very tangible as they leave the Core meeting and go back to their individual Greek houses.
- Strategies are developed for reaching unreached Greek houses – many staff have found it helpful to include a “house/chapter of the week” at the end of each Core meeting. For example, have a representative from a certain house stand up and give a short testimony about what is happening in their house, spiritually. If you don't have a representative from a certain house, spend some time praying for that house. You'll be amazed at what kind of names or students pop up as a result of those prayers! Another idea is to, as a Core group, go through the list of outreach ideas listed above and decide which ones you will implement to gain more contacts.
- Chapter ministries are launched – make sure your Core group is leaving the meeting with a feeling of being sent back to do outreach in their individual houses; the last thing you want is for them to feel like they have a nice Christian club to attend weekly. Instead of doing a Bible study one week, lead a GIG yourself that they can lead back in their houses. Or train them in how to have spiritual conversations. Always gage what your leaders need to learn in order to more effectively do ministry in their houses.

A wonderful byproduct of this meeting is that Greeks will gain energy by being with other Greeks who share the same passion and vision that they do. Make sure to follow up with any newcomers to your Core meeting!

HELPFUL LINK:

Click here for more [ideas in how to lead a great weekly Core meeting](#).

ESSENTIAL #5: LEADERSHIP

The Developmental Stages of Many Greeks

One challenge you will have is getting people involved with Greek IV while not pulling them out of their house or chapter. We want to avoid making them become that “ghost” brother or sister. I have found that Greek Christians often go through four developmental stages.

Stage 1: They are very involved in the social fabric of their fraternity/sorority. They are part of the party life in the house and are not living a life pleasing to the Lord.

Stage 2: They get their relationship with the Lord in a good place and begin to live a holy life. They struggle to figure out what holiness looks like in a Greek house.

Stage 3: They begin to see the sin in their fraternity/sorority and are disgusted with it. What used to be attractive and enticing is now repulsive. At this stage they want to deactivate and live with committed Christians. Don't let them jump ship at this stage. Help them move to the next stage.

Stage 4: They see the sin and brokenness of their brothers and sisters and, because they are moved with compassion, they want to be part of God's redemptive work in the house. These are missional Christians. They become Christ's ambassador to their Greek friends. These people become the bedrock of your ministry.

When doing outreach in the Greek system, we don't often find students in stage 4 that are missional Christians yet. This is why, in Greek ministry, we rely heavily on missional discipleship to help students develop into more missionally minded Christians. Since seeing a student-led ministry in every Greek house on campus is your vision, doing missional discipleship with 1-2 leaders in every Greek house is a great way to begin making this vision a reality. One hour, weekly discipleship appointments are ideal and should include the following:

- Brief time to catch-up on what's happening in the student leader's life and Greek house.
- A good portion of time spent studying Scripture and applying it. Ask questions of them that help them think about the Scripture in a more missional way and make sure to follow-up on their applications in your next appointment!
- Ask questions about their house ministry and train them in how to lead it.

- Pray for their house, for God to open doors for spiritual conversations and for individuals in the house

Understanding this developmental process will help you counsel them through the stages. If you know about stage 3, you will be prepared to give them a new way to look at their house and move to stage 4.

HELPFUL LINK:

Click here for more detailed info on [how to disciple Greeks](#).

ESSENTIAL #6: CATALYTIC EVENTS

Catalytic Events for Greeks

When you plan a catalytic event, pay special attention to the calendar of Greek events. You can have an awesome program lined up but if you are going up against Kappa's best ever spaghetti dinner fund raiser no one will come. You will want to get a copy of the Greek calendar of events. When is rush/recruitment? When are the big Greek events on your campus? Do not schedule in competition with those events. Attend them if you can. Try to build relationships with students at these events. As you attend these events, try to pick up on the issues that are of great concern to Greek students. If you see someone wearing the letters from the house you were a part of, go up and introduce yourself.

In Greek ministry, please always remember you are trying hard to not pull your student leaders out of their houses which only encourages "ghost brother/sister syndrome." Greek ministry centers around your leaders being an integral part of their own Greek house, building relationships within them. Therefore, in Greek ministry, we already have a few big events built into the calendar and we encourage leaders to invite their non-Christian brothers and sisters to these events. Greek Conference is, by far, our biggest catalytic event. We also encourage a fall Greek Getaway which is a 24-48 hour very low key event. Usually this getaway happens at a location 30 minutes – 3 hours away at a cabin, cottage, lake house or other place convenient to your campus. Spring break affords a wonderful opportunity for a catalytic event. Many parents expect their student to go on a spring break trip of some kind. Right now alternative spring breaks like Habitat for Humanity trips and hurricane relief trips are considered very "in." Ride this wave while it's hot. Chapter camps can also be very helpful in training, vision casting and solidifying deep relational bonds. Smaller events like pick-up wiffle ball games, BBQs and Christmas dinners can also be catalytic events where Greeks see that it is still possible to be Christian and have fun.

When you plan a catalytic event, give extra attention to the ambiance. Engage the five senses. When people walk in the room, what do they hear, see, smell, taste and touch? The meeting should have a "wow factor." Give thought to the music: have a CD playing when people enter the room; think club not classroom. Greeks are used to being in bars and parties that are loud. Total silence seems sterile. If at all possible have food and drink, because this hospitality gesture goes a long way with students. Take time to think about the lighting. Don't necessarily use the ceiling lights of a class room, instead bring lamps, floor spot lights, strands of Christmas lights—again think club not classroom. Have a table cloth on the table. Make sure you finish on time. You build trust when you say "we will meet from 9:00 – 10:15" and end promptly. Even if you have to interrupt, say, "Hey its 10:15 and that is our official ending time. Feel free to hang around, but I know your time is precious so our meeting is officially over." Greeks are extremely time-conscious and will not come back if they think Greek IV is a black hole. Send them away thinking and wrestling with a perplexing question.

When you have a catalytic event, have greeters but also have several people prepped and ready to sit with and hang out with new people. If a new person walks into a room, having someone say "hi" and greet you is nice, but having a person take the time to get to know you and then say, "Hey, do you want to sit together?" is even nicer. Think rush. You want to network that person. Find out what their home town is and introduce them to some one from that same home town. Find out their major and introduce them to someone with the same major. Everyone loves it when

someone takes a personal interest in them, offers to get them a beverage, etc. Use the things you learned in recruitment to make your meetings a place people will want to come back to.

When you do a large group or catalytic event, don't be afraid to import musical talent. Would the praise band at your local church be willing to play for your group? What about the band from the multi-ethnic chapter of InterVarsity? Good worship attracts talent; people will look and say, "Wow, I'd love to be a part of that!" Lame music is embarrassing and can make people not want to come back. Greeks especially hate lame music.

A Stage 2 Wave in Greek ministry might look something like this: Weekly Core meetings which serve as a gathering event, weekly missional discipleship appointments, outreach-based house ministries, and monthly preview large groups when your group is ready. As a planter you are coaching many students to plant outreach focused ministries in their respective Greek houses.

Final Note: Utilize Greek Alumni

You will find that many Greek IV alumni are still living in the town where they attended college and they often have great connections with their house. Or there also may be Greek IV alumni in your area going to grad school or working that can potentially be very helpful. They can help you by introducing you to current house members. Greek alumni can be very helpful in starting a house Bible study in the house they used to be a part of. They can launch a group and begin the process of passing off leadership to a student in the house. Have the potential student leader meet with you, the Greek IV staff, to build rapport and let them know you can serve as their coach. Alumni can also be helpful in doing outreach, in planning or hosting a catalytic event (i.e. a backyard BBQ or dinner), or discipling student leaders.

Chuck Colson is Called to the Prison Ministry. You are Called to the Party Ministry.

As you move forward to do Greek ministry, remember that Jesus was criticized for hanging out with the party people. He was not put off by their sin. Instead he looked below the surface of their lives and saw in them a hunger to connect deeply with God. Many Christian ministries have written off Greek college students and see them as not interested in spiritual things and not capable of leading Christ-like lives. We know differently. Deep inside some of the biggest partiers on campus is a quest for adventure and fulfillment that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Some of those party people even come on Greek IV staff. Welcome aboard!

[Chapter Planting in a Greek Ministry Context](#) is posted on the [Collegiate Ministries website](#) with related resources for InterVarsity staff and student leaders.