



# Fraternity and Sorority Life

## EXECUTIVE REPORT

Prepared for: Robert Morris University

Prepared by: Dyad Strategies LLC

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## **Acknowledgements**

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## PREFACE

Robert Morris University (“RMU”) commissioned Dyad Strategies LLC (“Dyad”) to conduct research and provide consulting and education (“Project”) for its fraternal community. Per our agreement, Dyad has (1) conducted survey research, (2) analyzed and interpreted the findings, (3) conducted educational workshops, and (4) prepared this report.

This report is intended to provide an executive summary of key findings and recommendations. The dataset is available upon request. Key findings at the community- and chapter-levels are presented in this report. The entire analysis on all variables is contained within the Appendix.

Dyad/ university personnel made several attempts to solicit student participation. In total, 125 students responded to the surveys ( $n = 40$  men,  $n = 85$  women).

The researchers calculated scores for each measure based on responses to the individual questions associated with each measure. Scores were aggregated to respective chapters and communities. The researchers then compared chapter and community scores with the national baseline sample using appropriate statistical techniques. A summary of the measures examined in the study is presented in Table 1.

The researchers made the following assumptions:

1. Students responded accurately and honestly
2. Reported attitudes are an accurate representation of actual attitudes
3. All students had the access and opportunity to participate

The research was limited in the following ways:

1. The data are self-reported
2. Not every student responded to the survey
3. It is generally understood that biases may exist within self-reported data

**Table 1: Measures of the Study**

Measure	Description	Level of Measurement	References
Brotherhood Sisterhood	The ways that members define and conceptualize brotherhood/sisterhood	Continuous, 5 point (strongly disagree to strongly agree)	Several manuscripts by Cohen, McCreary and Schutts (TBD)
Alcohol use	Alcohol consumption of five or more beverages	Continuous, 8 point: 0 to 7 days per week	

**Table 1 (continued).**

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Level of Measurement</b>	<b>References</b>
Fraternal Conformity	An indirect measure of the influence groupthink and conformity have within the organizational experience	Continuous, 5 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	McCreary and Schutts (TBD)
Hazing Tolerance	The threshold of activity (if subjected to) at which an individual would discontinue seeking membership	Ordinal, 14 point consisting of increasingly worse activities	McCreary (TBD)
Moral Disengagement	The degree to which an individual can rationalize their unjust or unethical actions	Continuous, 5 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Bandura (1999)
Organizational Commitment	The degree of psychological attachment a person feels to the organization.	Continuous, 7 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Meyer and Allen (1991)
Organizational Identification	The degree to which the organization is a major part of a person's social identity (i.e., self-reference; how the individual defines his or herself)	Continuous, 5 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Edwards and Peccei (2007)
Importance of Social Status	The extent to which an individual places value on the social status they receive from membership in the organization	Continuous, 5 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	McCreary (under development)
Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior	The willingness to perform unethical acts because of a belief that that action will benefit the organization in some way	Continuous, 7 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Umphress, Bingham, and Mitchell (2010)
Perceived Organizational Support	The degree to which the individual feels the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being	Continuous, 5 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986)
Person-Organization Fit	The congruence between an individual's beliefs and values and the culture, values, and norms of the organization.	Continuous, 7 point: strongly disagree to strongly agree	Cable and Judge (1996)

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The analysis of results from the students that participated in the survey research project informed our key findings and recommendations for your community. Overall, we find your community to be performing at a high level. While there are certainly areas for improvement within our findings, there are also no major red flags or deficiencies related to the overall dataset.

It should be noted here that some of the fraternity chapters had very low response rates, limiting the generalizability of some of that data.

Some key strengths include:

- For both fraternities and sororities, social status importance was lower than the national average. Fraternity and sorority members at RMU, relative to students elsewhere, are less concerned about the perceived social image of their chapters. Generally, this leads to lower levels of alcohol use and a healthier chapter culture overall.
- Sorority women at RMU report significantly lower levels of moral disengagement than sorority women elsewhere. Again, this indicates a healthy chapter culture where members are motivated to make moral, ethical choices and reduces the likelihood of alcohol abuse, hazing and other abusive behaviors.

Some areas for growth include:

- Fraternities at RMU score significantly lower than the national benchmark for brotherhood based on belonging, and important schema of brotherhood that is strongly related to organizational commitment and retention.
- Sororities are lower in all five schema of sisterhood relative to the national sample, with significant differences related to the schema of support and accountability. Generally, sorority women at RMU experience sisterhood at reduced levels relative to sorority members nationally.

## KEY FINDINGS

1. Sorority women at RMU measure significantly higher on a measure of organizational conformity relative to the national sample. This measure indicates the degree to which one feels pressured to conform to the norms of one's social group. High scores on this measure, combined with low scores on all five schema of sisterhood and small chapter sizes, could be indicative of a culture where women feel pressured to fit a certain

“norm” and that variations are frowned upon by the majority of members, leaving some members feeling alienated. This may also keep away prospective members who would otherwise feel interested in sorority life on campus, but who do not feel that they fit the dominant culture.

2. Fraternity men at RMU measure in combination high on the measure of continuance commitment, and low on organizational identification. Continuance commitment measures the degree to which organizational members stay involved in the organization only because there are no better options, and organizational identification measures the degree to which members feel that their membership is a large piece of their personal identity. In combination, this finding seems to indicate that fraternity members do not strongly identify with their fraternity experience and, for those who stay involved through senior year, only do so because they feel they have no better options on campus.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Sorority chapters should receive additional counseling related to increasing sisterhood across the board at the chapter level. New chapter presidents should set goals in key functional areas (particularly support and accountability) and plan both programming and their leadership agenda around goals in those areas. Training provided to chapters by the FSL office could include creating more supportive standards/judicial processes, creating a safe space for informal accountability, and conversations related to how members support and encourage one another.
2. The combination of fraternity members scoring low on brotherhood based on belonging, low on organizational identification, and high on continuance commitment should be a cause for concern. FSL staff should work with chapter and council leaders to develop initiatives aimed at promoting pride in the fraternity system, while working at the chapter level to assist chapters in boosting a sense of belonging. This can be done through helping the chapter create new member education activities that promote open dialogue and authentic, vulnerable conversations about important topics, allowing younger members to find ways to get involved in their chapters in meaningful ways (committees, offices, etc.), and helping chapters create an environment where all members are treated with fairness and respect.

# COMMUNITY ANALYSIS

## METHOD

The researchers compared data from the RMU community to normed data from the national comparison samples. Significant differences in the average values were evaluated using *t*-tests and Cohen's *d* statistic. The *d* statistic is interpreted as follows: 0.30 (small effect/difference), 0.50 (moderate effect/difference, 0.80 and above (large effect/difference). To control for family-wise error, significance was set to  $\alpha = .01$ .

## KEY FINDINGS

### Brotherhood

#### 1. **Belonging**

- a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the RMU fraternity sample and the national baseline. RMU fraternity men reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 2.95, p = .005, d = .44$ .

### Sisterhood

#### 1. **Support**

- a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the RMU sorority sample and the national baseline. RMU sorority women reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 4.18, p < .001, d = .41$ .

#### 2. **Accountability**

- a. Small differences exist between the RMU sorority sample and the national baseline. RMU sorority women reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.64, p < .001, d = .33$ .

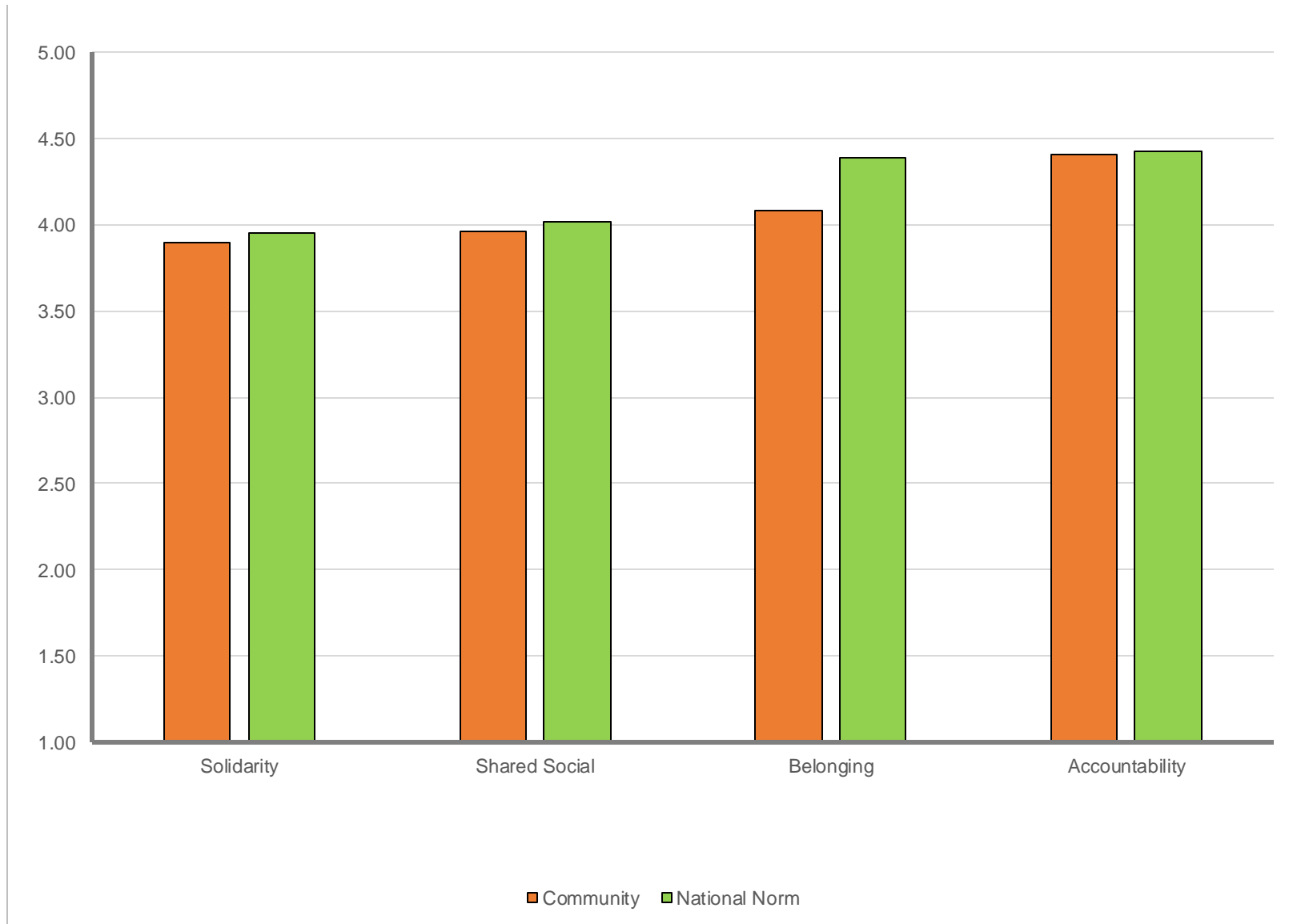
### Other Measures

#### 1. **Importance of social status**

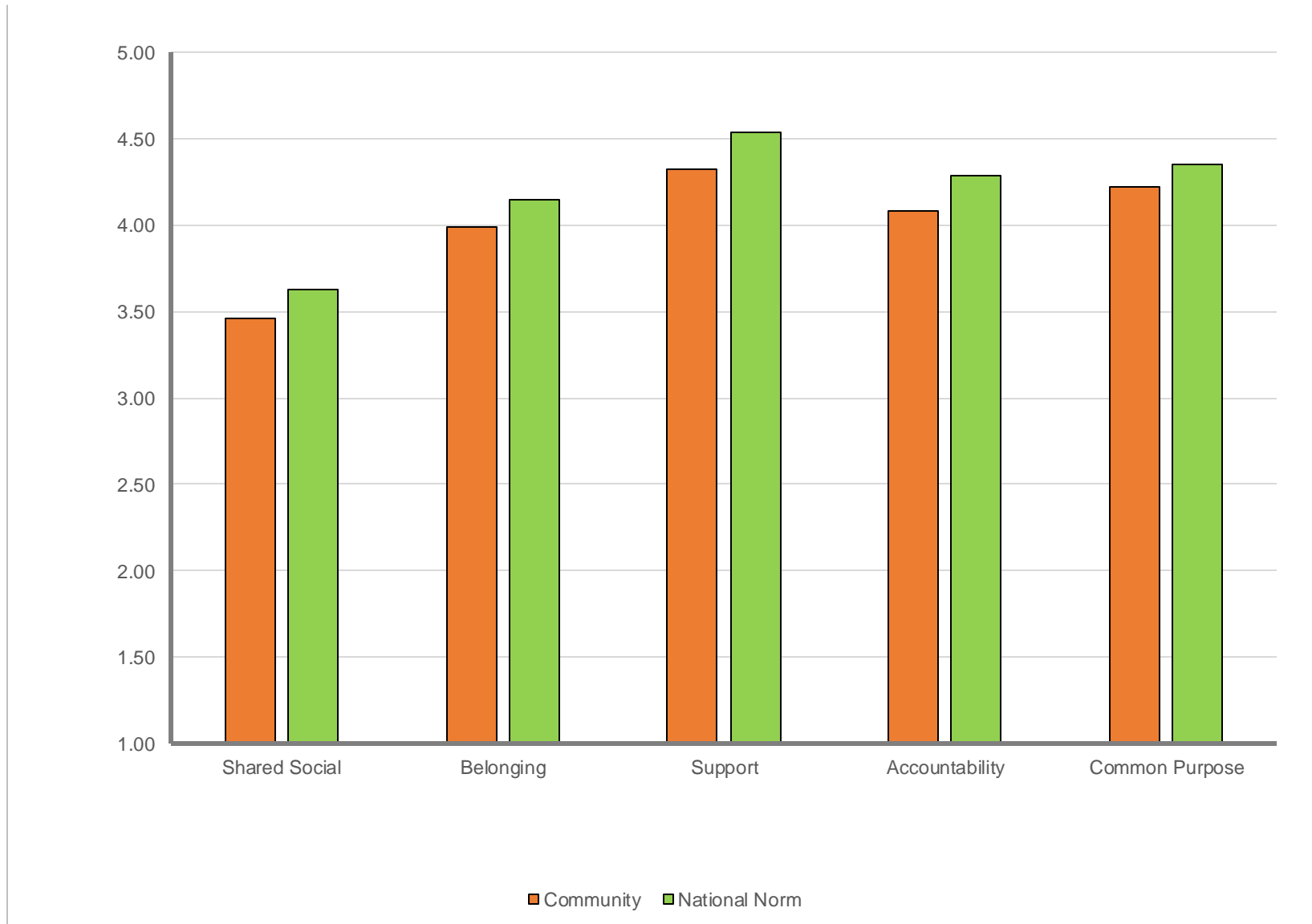
- a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the RMU fraternity sample and the national baseline. RMU fraternity men reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.03, p = .004, d = .42$ .
- b. Likewise, moderate differences exist between the RMU sorority sample and the national baseline. RMU sorority women reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 8.01, p < .001, d = .59$ .



Figure 1: Graph of Brotherhood Schema vs. National Sample



**Figure 2: Graph of Sisterhood Schema vs. National Sample**



2. **Continuance commitment** and fraternity men
  - a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the RMU fraternity sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 4.27, p < .001, d = .45$ .
    - i. This was the strongest relationship difference of all variables measured for fraternity men. Results might suggest that continuance commitment is hindering belonging as an important aspect of brotherhood. Higher continuance commitment corresponds with persistence because of a lack of viable alternatives – akin to almost being “trapped” in the organization, for better or worse.
3. **Organizational identification** and fraternity men
  - a. Small differences exist between the RMU fraternity sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 2.87, p = .006, d = .32$ .
4. **Organizational conformity** and sorority women
  - a. Small differences exist between the RMU sorority sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.71, p < .001, d = .34$ .
5. **Moral disengagement** and sorority women
  - a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the RMU sorority sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 4.92, p < .001, d = .43$ .

# CHAPTER ANALYSIS

## METHOD

The researchers compared data from the specific RMU fraternity and sorority chapters to normed data from the national comparison samples. Consistent with the community analysis, significant differences in the average values were evaluated using *t*-tests and Cohen's *d* statistic.

Based on number of responses, only Phi Delta Theta ( $n = 16$ ) was compared to the national dataset. All other fraternities were compared to the campus sample only. All sororities were compared to campus and national samples. To control for family-wise error, significance was set to  $\alpha = .01$ .

## KEY FINDINGS

### Brotherhood

#### 1. **Belonging**

- a. Moderate differences exist between the Phi Delta Theta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.89$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = .63$ .

### Sisterhood

#### 1. **Accountability**

- a. Moderate differences exist between the Delta Phi Epsilon chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.10$ ,  $p = .007$ ,  $d = .51$ .

#### 2. **Shared Social Experiences**

- a. Small differences exist between the Sigma Kappa chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 2.87$ ,  $p = .010$ ,  $d = .37$ .

Figure 3: Graph of Brotherhood Chapter Averages vs. Campus Sample

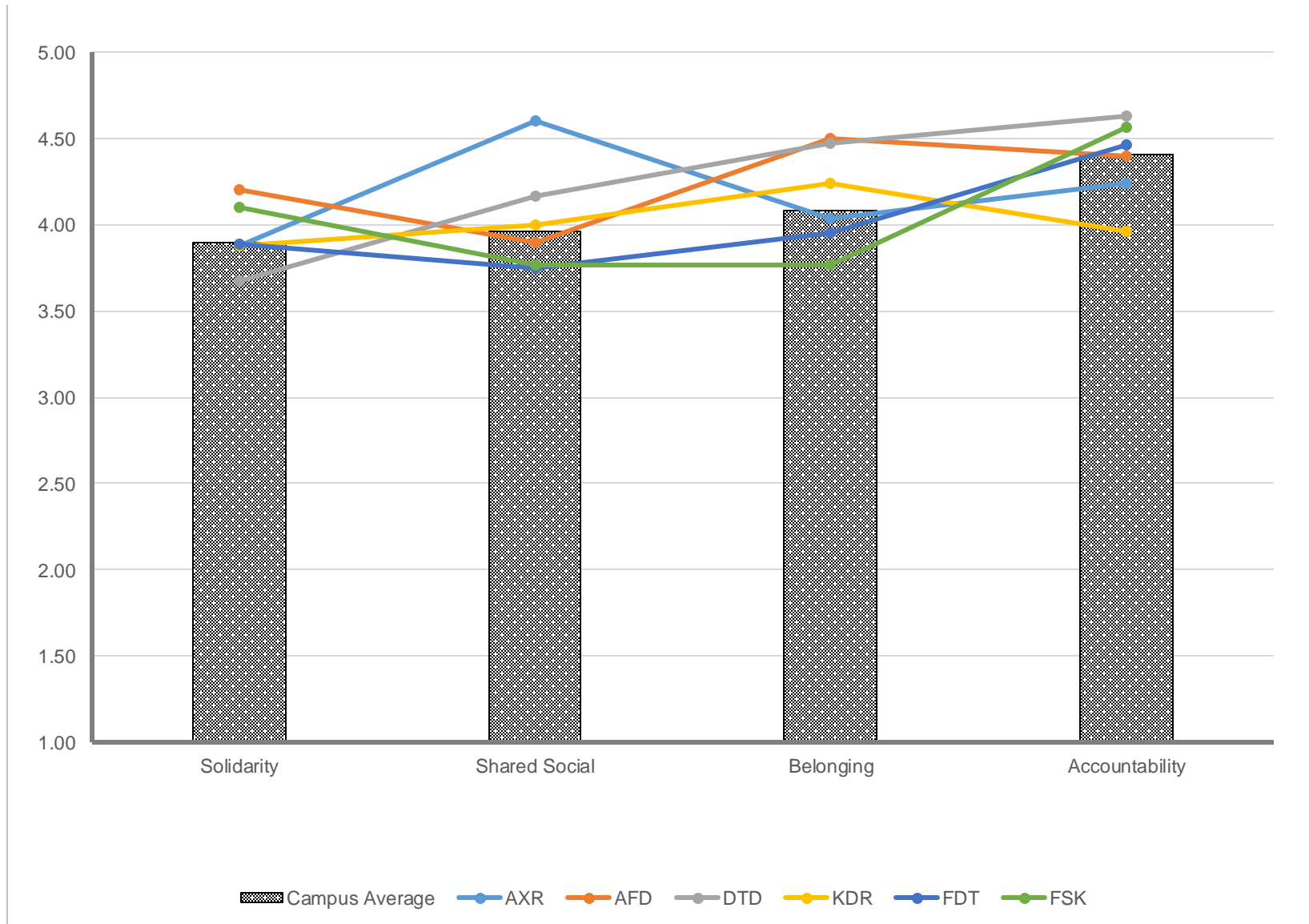


Figure 4: Graph of Sisterhood (National Sample w/ Chapter data)

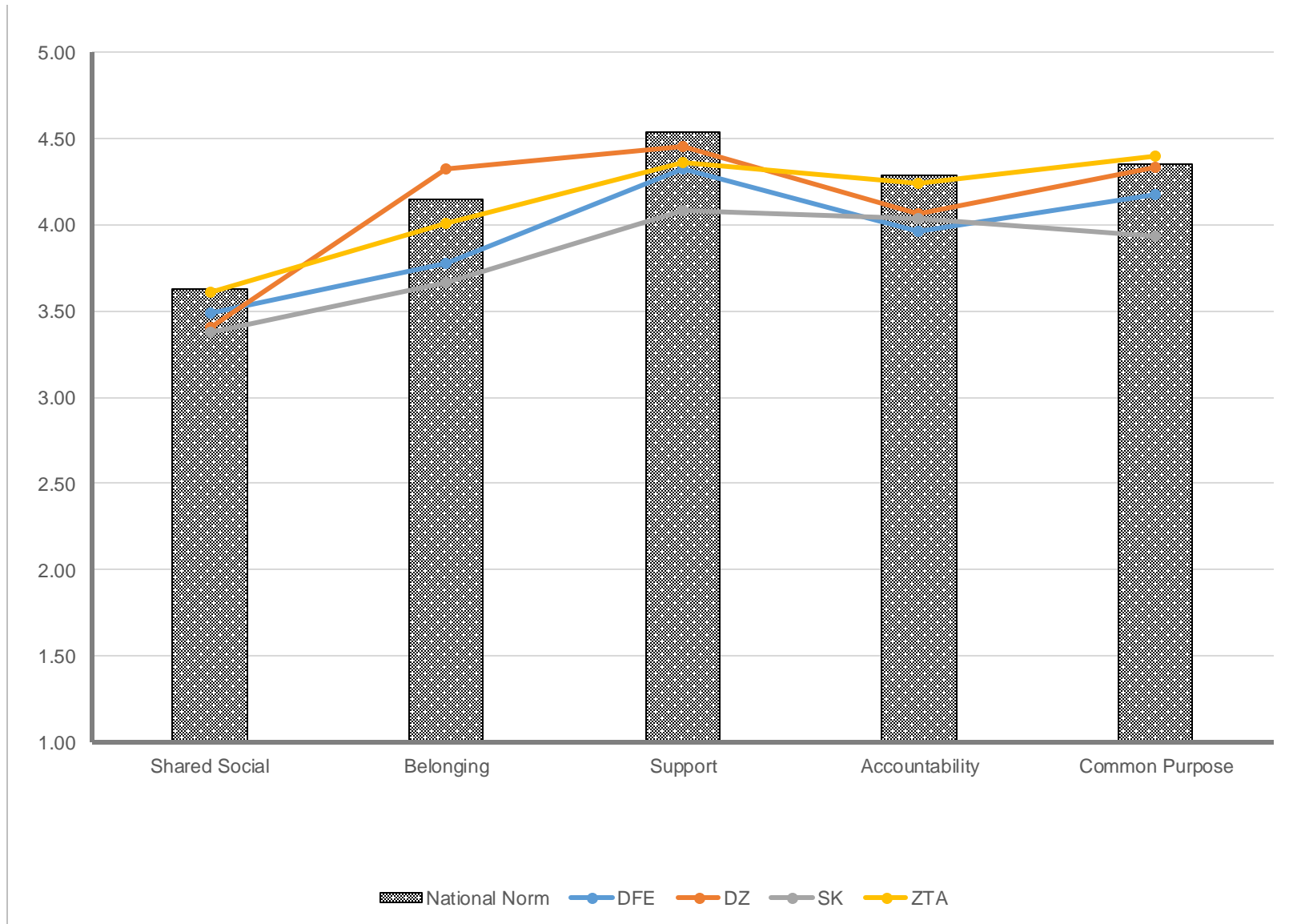
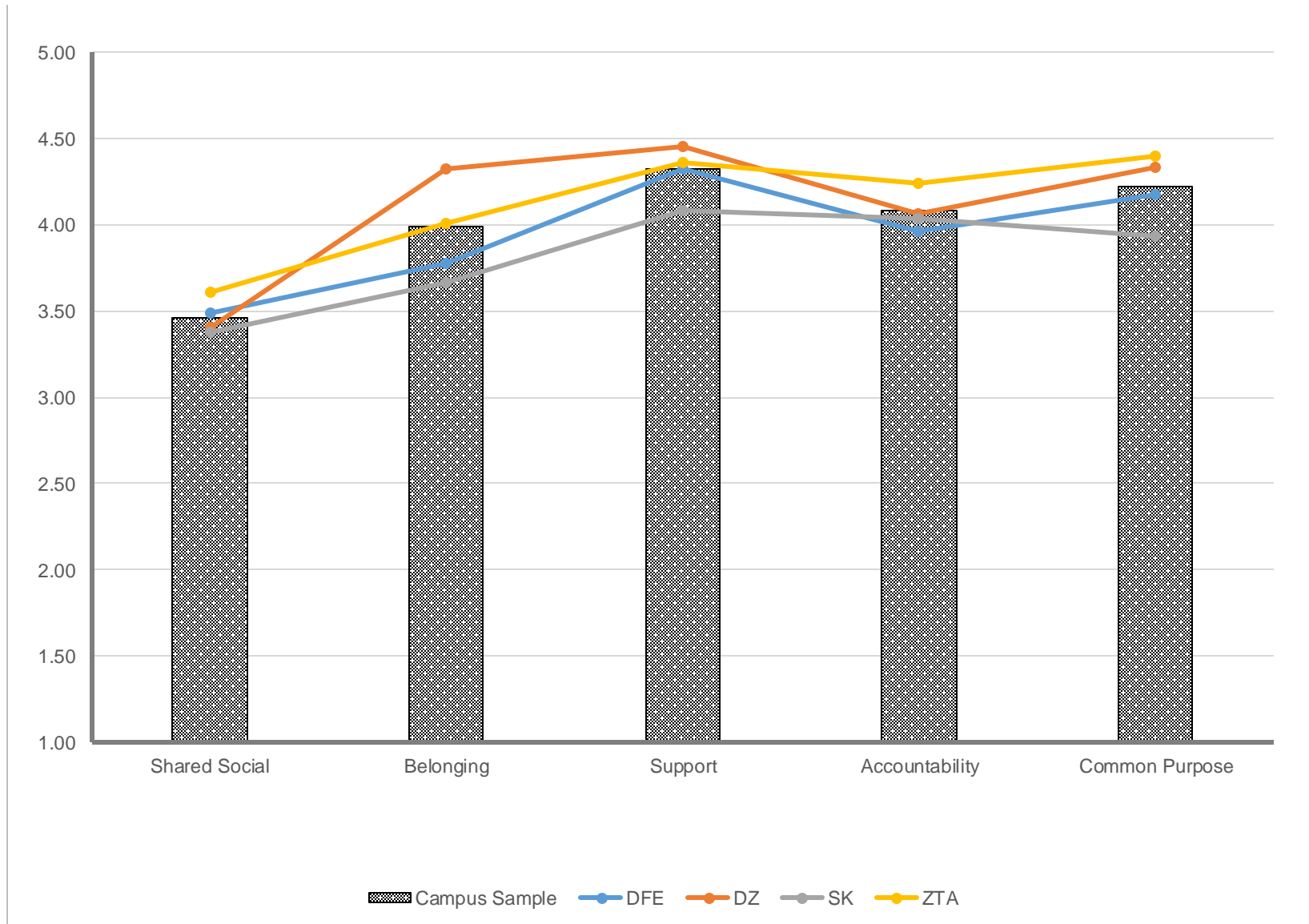


Figure 5: Graph of Sisterhood (Campus Sample w/ Chapter data)



### 3. Support

- a. Large differences exist between the Sigma Kappa chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.67$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $d = .84$ .

### 4. Common Purpose

- a. Moderate differences exist between the Sigma Kappa chapter sample and the national baseline.
  - i. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement relative to the national sample,  $t = 3.20$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $d = .59$ .

## Other Measures

### 1. Importance of social status

- a. Very large differences exist between the Kappa Delta Rho chapter sample and the campus baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 4.54$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 1.27$ .
- b. Large differences exist between the Delta Zeta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 6.49$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .82$ .
- c. Moderate-to-large differences exist between the Sigma Kappa chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 4.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .66$ .
- d. Moderate-to-large differences exist between the Phi Delta Theta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 4.96$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .64$ .
- e. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the Zeta Tau Alpha chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 3.37$ ,  $p = .003$ ,  $d = .45$ .

### 2. Affective commitment

- a. Very large differences exist between the Alpha Chi Rho chapter sample and the campus baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 11.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.55$ .
- b. Very large differences exist between the Alpha Phi Delta chapter sample and the campus baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** agreement,  $t = 10.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = 2.05$ .



- c. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the Delta Zeta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.15, p = .004, d = .40$ .
  - d. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the Delta Zeta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.15, p = .004, d = .40$ .
3. **Moral disengagement**
- a. Moderate differences exist between the Delta Phi Epsilon chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.97, p = .001, d = .59$ .
  - b. Moderate differences exist between the Delta Zeta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.10, p = .006, d = .59$ .
4. **Organizational conformity**
- a. Moderate-to-large differences exist between the Delta Phi Epsilon chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 4.21, p = .001, d = .69$ .
  - b. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the Sigma Kappa chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 3.10, p = .005, d = .45$ .
5. **Alcohol use**
- a. Small-to-moderate differences exist between the Phi Delta Theta chapter sample and the national baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** alcohol use per week,  $t = 3.15, p = .007, d = .49$ .
6. **Continuance commitment**
- a. Very large differences exist between the Alpha Chi Rho chapter sample and the campus baseline. Respondents reported **significantly higher** agreement,  $t = 6.82, p < .001, d = 1.12$ .
7. **Hazing tolerance**
- a. Very large differences exist between the Delta Tau Delta chapter sample and the campus baseline. Respondents reported **significantly lower** tolerance,  $t = 6.04, p < .001, d = 1.04$ .

# APPENDIX