**Please tell us a little about yourself and your interest in becoming a small group facilitator.**

I am a member of Alpha Sigma Alpha sorority, and I am an alumna of Northwestern State University of Louisiana. My sorority experiences instilled within me the core value of integrity, the desire for personal growth, and the importance of personal responsibility. Since college graduation, I have served as a facilitator for several fraternities and sororities, and those experiences reinvigorated my passion for fraternity and sorority life. I was an NPC delegate for my sorority chapter, and, thanks to that experience, I gained financial education, event planning experience, leadership and interpersonal communication skills. I was held accountable for paying dues on time and I served on event-planning committees. I also took on leadership roles like being the point of contact when a representative from our national organization came to town. Facilitating with Triangle Fraternity would be a tremendous honor and privilege--I am passionate about helping men reach their potential and develop into chapter leaders. It would warm my heart to be part of that process, and, in the next year, I am applying for a Master’s Degree in Student Affairs.

I stand for the betterment of mankind in my personal life: I volunteer every week for a local organization that feeds the homeless. I am also part of the Junior League, and, in this role, I mentor women on the topics of personal development, job searches, and life skills. Integrity is a core value that I hold in the highest esteem. My character, as well as the development of character in others, is important to me.

**What kind of facilitation experience have you had in the past?**

I was a small group facilitator in June, 2017, at Phi Kappa Psi’s Woodrow Wilson Leadership School in Indianapolis, Indiana, and, in October, 2017, at IMPACT at the University of Maryland. Co-facilitating at both events has inspired me to find more small-group facilitation opportunities. At Woodrow Wilson, I had the honor of co-facilitating with Marc. Marc is an alumnus of Phi Kappa Psi, and he brought fraternity knowledge and passion to the small group session we co-facilitated. Marc was impressed by my facilitation tactics: he told me that I conducted an engaged and inclusive conversation with the group. He remarked on my ability to use silence to allow the students to process the information we gave them. After I’d ask a question, I would be silent for a few minutes in order to let the the students ponder the information and the answer to my question. This caused the students to speak up and participate in a thoughtful way. When Marc would ask a question, I’d also be silent in order to allow the participants to think about the question and then share their answers. I believe that this facilitation tactic left a lasting impact on the students, and I hope they left the Woodrow Wilson Leadership School inspired to make their chapters the best they can be. Marc and I worked well together--we asked each other for feedback and whether the other person had anything else to add to the material being presented. A few months ago, I facilitated IMPACT at the University of Maryland. I was a small-group facilitator leading 12 sophomores. It was a rewarding and fulfilling experience because I witnessed the students’ enthusiasm and engagement with the material during the small-group session. The students raised their hands and added to the conversation as I asked them open-ended questions like: what does leadership mean to you? By the end of the weekend, my co-facilitator was encouraging me to seek out other small-group facilitator opportunities as well. He thought I would be a great fit because he saw me lead discussions and he saw the students physically lean in to indicate that they were engaged in the conversation. Mentoring these students fulfilled me, and I was impressed by the action plans that they created; the students left the small-group conversation excited and empowered to make a difference in their chapters and their communities. They also left with specific goals and actions that they could begin working on right when they returned to their respective campuses. I also found that the Greek community as a whole was more unified after the IMPACT weekend; I witnessed positive interactions both inside and outside of the sessions. During the summer, I typically volunteer my time with numerous organizations such a homeless ministry, but this summer I could expand my impact to the members of Triangle Fraternity.

**Another version**

My facilitation tactics impressed him, particularly our similar engaging, inclusive group conversation manner. I also began to better recognize when I needed to improve certain skills interacting with the group. Sometimes I would share too much information instead of letting the group ponder the question and improve themselves by drawing and sharing their own conclusions. And at first I struggled with my “read the room” skills; but as the weekend progressed I became more attuned to the students and started to improve in this area. Soon I could quickly perceive when the group has mastered or solidified a particular subject or concept I’m trying to get across to them.

In addition to my execution of the required facilitator leadership and communication skill set, Marc also appreciated one particular tactic that I learned from my parents (especially from my mother, who was a teacher for thirty years and the best natural facilitator you ever saw!): my ability to use silence as a processing and organizing tool. After I’d ask a question, I would be silent for several minutes in order to let the participants absorb the information and better formulate their answer to my question. I’d also asked Mark that he and I be silent after he asked a question, to allow our group time to think and prepare cogent responses, which,when shared, resulted in better group participation and feedback.

I believe that the “power of silence” facilitation tactic left an indelible impression on the students, not only for group learning sessions but also in real life. It enlightened and demonstrated to them to the power of pausing before responding to think things through, contrary to their Pavlov-like habit of instantly responding to the ring tones of texts and Instagram and not reflecting on the message and situation first. They learned that just because someone can reach you at the speed of light, it doesn't always mean you must respond at the speed of light. Also, when someone insists “This is important,” it’s good to pause and ask yourself “to whom”? How many friendships or opportunities have been lost by not taking the time to do these things!? The group’s positive feedback afterward made me proud that they left the Woodrow Wilson Leadership School weekend inspired to implement many of things discussed to make their chapters, and themselves, the best they can be.

My IMPACT facilitation at the University of Maryland was just as rewarding and fulfilling an experience. As a small-group facilitator leading 12 sophomores, I used much of what I learned from the Woodrow Wilson Leadership School about what works and what doesn’t. After the usual initial awkwardness, I was thrilled to witness the students’ enthusiasm for and engage-ment with the small-group session material. Most all started raising their hands to share their thoughts and they added smartly to the conversation, even responding in a relatively pertinent and persuasive manner to open-ended questions like, “What does leadership mean to you?”

My co-facilitator, who was more experienced than me, was impressed with my preparation and execution, especially that when I led the discussions the students would physically lean in, showing their passion and engagement in the conversation, spurring many salient shares and chances to learn from each other. By the end of the weekend, he said I was a great mentor and fit in this format so well that he encouraged me to seek out other small-group facilitator opportunities. That’s why I’m writing this application and hoping that I will be selected as a Leadership Academy Breakout Facilitator.

I’ve truly discovered my love for mentoring these students, guiding their development, and passing along what I’ve learned from my mistakes, successes, experiences. I was also very pleased and impressed by the action plans that these students created after our sessions. I was gratified watching them leave the small-group conversation so excited about making a

difference in their chapters and their communities, and also feeling confidently empowered to develop specific goals and actions that they can start work on immediately. It’s so fulfilling, and I’m anxious to do more.

Also, I found that the Greek community as a whole was more unified after the IMPACT weekend. I witnessed many positive interactions, both inside and outside of the sessions. This is a sector with unique issues that I would like to explore and deal with further.

**Please describe your facilitation style including your strengths, challenges, and what you need from a partner to have a balanced pairing.**

I usually start my interactions with small groups,by asking them to say their names, what Sorority or Fraternity they are a member of, as well as their most memorable experience in that organization. For example, I introduce myself by saying “my name is Leigh Ann Levy, I am an Alpha Sigma Alpha from Dallas, Texas. I grew up in Louisiana and went to school at Northwestern State University of Louisiana. I also have a masters degree in Information Technology from American Intercontinental University. “My most memorable experience was my initiation into Alpha Sigma Alpha due to how meaningful it was to me.

I’m a no nonsense woman, to the point and confident in most situations.My IMPACT co-facilitator Ethan told me that I explain things in detail and make the concepts being presented such as leadership characteristics easy for students to understand. I often rely on silence to allow partIcipants to think and ask open-ended question to start the conversation. I look around for students looking at me to indicate that they are done with the exercise they are working on. I also look for students who are looking at one another as if they are confused by the material being presented.

It takes me a little longer to motivate a group when staring at their phone, or having side conversation with another student. When that happens, I have to draw upon facilitation training I received for techniques to encourage them engage in the conversation. I’ll say something like, “Sarah, what do you think about what Beth just said?”. I believe I had a balanced pairing with Ethan because he would add to the conversation that I’d start or I was able to ask for his feedback as a Greek Life advisor at a University. In addition, Ethan would share about different conversations and experiences he had with students on the topics of leadership and how to operate within their chapters. For example, if a member caused a risk management issue like drinking underage, Ethan told about how he advised the chapter President to handle the situation such as speaking with the member about the drinking and encouraging him to be mindful of his drinking in the future. After he stated that, he then brought the conversation back to the topic of leadership and asked me to share any similar type of situation. I then shared a time in my advising experience that a member posted a status on Facebook that was not a good reflection upon the Sorority she is a member of and then stated that we worked through it by asking her to delete the post and she attended a campus event on living Sorority values.

**Another version**

From the beginning I try to develop a strong rapport with the group, making it clear that this facilitator will encourage and welcome their enthusiastic participation, that they should speak up without worrying about making a ‘mistake’ or being judged, and will be receptive to their questions and concerns.

I’m a naturally outgoing and humorous person; but while I try to maintain a convivial, inclusive atmosphere, I regularly pay strict attention to the session guide and clock, to accomplish the activities and goals listed within the time frame. This means I sometimes have to be an iron fist in a velvet glove, to congenially keep things moving along while trying to include everyone.

From the beginning of each session, I focus on making connections with as many participants as I can. More importantly, I encourage each of them to make strong connections with the others, to learn as much as possible from each other during the sessions, and to continue these connections after the weekend, so they can continue to learn from each other and their leadership experiences - comparing notes about how the leadership skills and techniques learned in the big and small sessions worked or didn’t, discussing reasons different efforts succeeded or failed, and to trade tips about things they learned and new tactics they tried while leading their chapter member programs and community events.

To try to keep things light when appropriate, especially if discussing a very deep or grave subject, I’ll throw in a relevant joke to keep the energy and spirits up. I try to firmly but gently to get everyone participating, inviting them by name if shy or reluctant, and use my trained ability to continually read the room to assess how the group is progressing in their understanding of what I’m presenting, and whether we should spend more time on it if they haven’t yet grasped it.

**Working hard is important, as is having fun! How do you have fun? How can you bring fun into this program?**

Humor is my strength, and I use it to lighten subjects or transition from certain topics when the mood may be heavy. I can also use games like “Either, Or” to re-energize the room. In this game, participants choose an option, and then they run to whatever side of the room fits the option they choose. For example, the game leader asks: do you prefer hot or cold weather? Then, the participants that prefer hot weather stand to the left side of the room and those that prefer cold weather stand to the right side of the room. In a different game, each participant takes several pieces of candy, toilet paper, or other objects, and then they tell as many facts about themselves as the number of objects they have. For example, five pieces of candy would mean that the participant would share five things about themself.The goal and purpose of these games is to allow participants to get to know one another and to move around physically so that they aren’t just sitting in one spot for a long duration of time. Getting to know one another and what commonalities are shared develops bonds that potentially last a lifetime. .

**Describe how you deal with conflict when working with a small group. [We can talk about this...]**

I was fortunate that there were no conflicts in the groups I worked with. At Woodrow Wilson, I had about 15 students that were engaged with the material and at IMPACT I had the same experience with about 12 students. But if I had, I would have attempted to get to the root of the issue as often it has to do with misunderstandings that people have or different perspectives. I get to the root by asking why the student feels the way they do, and once I understand that, I can then explain it to the group or another student in a neutral kind of way using language such as “his/her perspective is this because of this. Does that make sense?” For example, I once had an issue where I asked “what are some examples in our chapters that where negative behavior has become the norm?”

While there may not be a mutual agreement among the students involved, once other student(s) logically see the conflicting perspective, the issue at hand typically comes to an agreeable outcome, or further conversation is postponed until after the small group session. If the topic is brought back up again, I can remind them of the agreement made to postpone further conversation, the outcome reached through the prior conversation on the conflict or speak with the student initiating the conversation on the conflict privately. For example, one I had an issue where a member thought she was going to be getting reimbursed from the Alpha Omicron Pi chapter I work with. We spoke on the phone and I determined that there was a misunderstanding. I asked her “tell me about what happened from your perspective?” She then stated that the Vice President Finance advised her that a billing error had been made and to correct the billing error she would be getting reimbursed.” I then worked with the Vice President Finance and Alpha Omicron Pi Headquarters to get the issue resolved. Once the issue was resolved, I let the member that was expecting the reimbursement that the amount would be credited to her account instead.