

“Student Affairs Talk” • Aly Ruhl, Fraternity and Sorority Life • August 26, 2021

Q: First off, thank you for joining me on the podcast. Classes are underway, and more importantly in your role with Fraternity and Sorority Life — Recruitment is underway. Tell us a little about what recruitment is, what stage you’re currently in and what students can expect this week and beyond?

RUHL: We just finished our first weekend of Recruitment this past weekend, which was rounds two and three. This upcoming weekend, we have our preference round — which is our last round of Recruitment — and then we have Bid Day on Sunday. That is the day everybody gets their bid cards and finds out what chapter they are going to be a part of. Really, Recruitment is a time that potential new members (PNMs) get to meet all the different chapter women, have a lot of conversation and getting to know each other and learning more about the chapter and also more about that potential new member. It’s just a really fun experience to finally be back in-person after a year of being all-virtual.

Q: Numbers are very high. I think about 1,500 women are going through Recruitment — is that about right?

RUHL: We were really close to 1,600. We were over by 300 this year versus last year.

Q: How different is it being in-person this year in Littlejohn Coliseum versus last year when it was all virtual rounds of Recruitment? I assume it’s vastly different, is that why you’ve seen such an increase in interest?

RUHL: Yeah, I think so. We did have people last year who decided not to go through Recruitment, because they wanted to wait for it to be in-person versus on Zoom. Last year was my first Recruitment at Clemson, so this is actually my first year ever seeing Recruitment in-person. It’s just a lot more exciting, in my opinion, to be in-person because you really do get to see everything happening, hear the chapters when they’re chanting and see that face-to-face interaction that people are having. So it’s just a really fun experience. With Zoom, the chapters did an amazing job of navigating that and being able to still have Recruitment. We have had to incorporate a little of that this year as well. We’ve done some virtual rounds, as well as in-person this year, just to

accommodate anyone who needs that virtual experience.

Q: You serve as an assistant director for the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. If you could, share with us some of the responsibilities you take on within this role?

RUHL: My biggest responsibility would be advising Panhellenic. I serve as their primary advisor. I also do a lot of chapter leadership programming. I’m in charge of our presidents’ retreat, our chapter officer programming and our advisor training.

Q: When did you officially join the FSL staff, and what have been some of your biggest takeaways about the Clemson experience to this point?

RUHL: I started in November of 2019. So, I was here for about four months before we went virtual. My biggest takeaway has been that these students are some of the most dedicated I’ve ever had the opportunity to work with. Seeing them pivot throughout the past year, having to move virtually and still connect when their groups are almost 300 (members) in size, has just been really amazing to see. They really are dedicated, not only at being good leaders, but they really do care about their overall chapter and wanting to make it the best experience for their members.

Q: Any familiarity with Clemson before you applied for the position?

RUHL: I did not. I’m from Nebraska. I knew about Clemson Football, and that’s about it.

Q: It looks like you had a good amount of experience in the field prior to coming to Clemson — what were some of your previous professional stops?

RUHL: I went to graduate school at Ohio University. That’s where I became Panhellenic advisor, during my graduate assistant role. That’s really when I fell in love with being able to advise Panhellenic students. When I graduated, I actually moved to a headquarters role. I worked at headquarters, where I supervised about 30 chapters nationwide. I loved that experience, but did miss the in-person role with the students. So much of my headquarters role was over the phone, if I wasn’t traveling. I transitioned to director of Fraternity and

Sorority Life at Rhodes College, which is a small, liberal arts college in Memphis, Tennessee. I oversaw IFC, NPHC and Panhellenic, and all office operations — as an office of one. When Clemson’s role popped up, it was a good move for me. I missed being at a big school with a lot of spirit. I came from Nebraska-Lincoln, and there’s not much going on — so you really love the Nebraska football atmosphere. I missed having that big-school environment. So when the Clemson opportunity popped up, I actually emailed Gary (Wiser) and asked if he was still looking, decided to apply, and here I am.

Q: What made you want to get into the Student Affairs profession, specifically in the area of Greek Life?

RUHL: It was when I was a junior. I just didn’t know what I wanted to do, growing up. I had changed my major five times, and my mom said I had to figure out a plan. ‘What are you going to do when you graduate? What do you enjoy doing now?’ My response was, ‘I love Recruitment and being involved with my sorority.’ At that point, we both just laughed and said, ‘This is not a job.’ But then I became the vice president of recruitment for Panhellenic at Nebraska, and we went to a conference where I saw all of these adults working. I went up to them, asking, ‘What do you do, and how do I do what you do?’ I wanted to continue working in this field, and I didn’t realize it was a job. Even though I had a Panhellenic advisor myself, I had no idea that was actually a career I could go into. That’s when everyone said to go to grad school for college and student personnel, and I’d have all of these different opportunities to continue working in Fraternity and Sorority Life. So, that’s really how I found my way. It was the one thing in college I really did connect to; I loved my experienced. I kind of just wanted to continue it and to help students the way my advisors helped me.

Q: Gary Wiser has a very tight-knit staff in FSL; what are your impressions of the team supporting our Greek Life students here at Clemson?

RUHL: We have a strong team, and that’s one thing that made me want to work at Clemson. Being a part of that team

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environment, coming from an office of one. Many of us in this office have experience working at a smaller school as an office of one. We understand how important that team dynamic is. Even with Recruitment, there are times I don't get to sleep much during the night and Trish (Robinson) will come and give me a break so I can sleep a little bit during the day. And you don't get that everywhere. You don't have people who will come in the office at 6 a.m. to help you out when you need it. It really is an office where if you need something, people are going to step in and help you. And we're friends outside of the office; we really do enjoy being around each other. We're in the office a lot together; I always look forward to coming in, see the team and getting to work with them is really fun.

Q: Bid Day is Sunday. How many chapters are we talking about and what is the process like?

RUHL: We have 12 chapters that will be doing Bid Day. We do have one new chapter coming to campus, but they'll have Recruitment in September. We'll have about 1,500 PNMs in Norris Quad. They'll get their bids at the same time. Everyone's going to open it. They'll walk to their chapters at the Intramural Fields, where they will find the rest of their chapter members holding up signs and welcoming them into the group. That will be a very exciting time over here in the Norris Quad area.

Q: When this period of Recruitment is over, any big plans? Or just rest?

RUHL: I am definitely going to go and get some sleep, yes.

Q: When you get time away from work, what are some of your interests?

RUHL: I am also a grad student in the MBA program. I have to catch up on class myself when I can. I just hang out at home, but I'm also wedding planning right now — which is like another full-time job. Also trying to do a little bit of that when I can, so it doesn't become too overwhelming. When I can get the time to watch Netflix, hang out with my fiancée and my cats, I do that as well.

Q: That's awesome, congratulations; when is the big day?

RUHL: May 27. It will be in downtown Greenville.