



# **SIUE's Sasso Inaugural Fellow at Penn State Center for Research and Reform**

by Megan Wieser  
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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville’s Pietro Sasso, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Educational Leadership’s College Student Personnel Administration program, has been named the inaugural faculty research fellow for the Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform at Penn State University.

Sasso’s research exploring the fraternity/sorority experience spans more than a decade, and especially considers the experience as a cocurricular student development and leadership opportunity for undergraduate students. He focuses on the college experience (student involvement, identity, masculinity), student success (academic advising, student retention) and educational equity across cocurricular spaces.

“Interrogating these areas of inquiry helps to consider a fundamental existential question, ‘What should postsecondary institutions do with and for its students?’” Sasso explained. “I am particularly interested in the fraternity/sorority experience, because it is one of the largest student involvement opportunities in higher education, and demonstrates outcomes which promote student persistence, learning and development.”

Sasso also critiques and interrogates issues of equity, including race and class, and describes efforts to reduce harm such as hazing and substance abuse, as these issues negatively impact the associated positive outcomes of the fraternity/sorority experience.

“My initial research has suggested there is gender performativity related to alcohol misuse and hazing, and that the fraternity/sorority experience contributes to identity development for multiracial and other students across culturally-based fraternities and sororities,” said Sasso. “This helps us reframe the fraternity/sorority experience as a space of learning and development which contributes to individual student persistence and university retention.”

As a research fellow, Sasso will focus on three projects over a two-year period:

A series of journal articles validating the Fraternity/Sorority Experience Survey (FSES), which is a national benchmark assessment tool.

A project tentatively titled, “A nationwide analysis of the relationships and prevention programs for a reduction of high-risk drinking, substance abuse, hazing and other second-hand effects.”

A qualitative exploration of student organization and fraternity/sorority conduct models in partnership with the Association of Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA).

“This opportunity will advance my knowledge to master specific, different research methods,” Sasso said. “I will be supervising an SIUE Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities (URCA) student who will assist with some of this research.”

The fellowship will support dissemination of Sasso’s research at professional and academic conferences through 2023. Sasso will work remotely, in collaboration with the Center through regular scholarly meetings.

The Timothy J. Piazza Center for Fraternity and Sorority Research and Reform was formed at Penn State in January 2019. The Center empowers higher education to make the fraternity and sorority experience safer and more meaningful. The Center produces actionable data to give practitioners the evidence needed to enact meaningful change on their campuses.

*Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of nearly 13,000.*