

Sorority and Fraternity Life Task Force Recommendations to Chancellor Girod

Since 1873, the sorority and fraternity community at KU has played an integral role in the success of the school and the community, fostering the ideals of scholarship, leadership, service, friendship, alumni involvement and university pride. To maintain and improve upon this foundation, the sorority and fraternity community must meet the stated mission of the University of Kansas **“to lift students and society by educating leaders, building healthy communities, and making discoveries that change the world.”**

The KU sorority and fraternity community represents more than 20% of the student undergraduate population. In addition, the sorority and fraternity alumni are engaged in all aspects of support for the University. A collaborative approach among all stakeholders is required to succeed in ensuring the long-term viability of a strong, healthy, supportive Greek system that consistently advances the University’s mission. Sorority and fraternity students, alumni, the University, and the Lawrence community must work together to encourage and enable the sorority and fraternity community’s members to excel academically, behaviorally, mentally and socially.

Nationally, and locally, the Greek community is under intense scrutiny. Issues surrounding hazing and substance abuse have increasingly made headlines across the country, leading many to question the role of sororities and fraternities on today’s college campuses. At the University of Kansas, we are committed to the Greek community, and recognize the value it adds to the University, the city of Lawrence and the state of Kansas. We also recognize the need to raise our standards to meet the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

To that end, the Chancellor created the Sorority & Fraternity Life Task Force.

On November 7, 2018, Chancellor Girod convened a 27-member Sorority and Fraternity Life Task Force and charged this body to conduct a review of the sorority and fraternity community and provide recommendations to ensure that it remains a part of the KU student experience for another century. The Task Force consists of students, alumni, parents and University staff representing the Interfraternity Council (IFC), Multicultural Greek Council (MGC), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and Panhellenic Association (PHA).

The Task Force was charged with the following:

- 1) Identify the values and key characteristics of the KU sorority and fraternity community and define a desired membership experience for a KU sorority and fraternity member.
- 2) Identify existing and new University and community programs, policies, and processes that can be expanded, changed or developed for an improved student experience. This may include the evaluation of programs, polices and processes that have proven effective in similarly situated institutions and programs.

- 3) Review and evaluate existing University and community programs, policies and practices that are undermining and/or harming the health our students and the sorority and fraternity community (e.g., recruitment practices, new member education programming, social event policies, etc.). Evaluate how to improve, change or eliminate such programs, policies and practices.
- 4) Develop recommendations and an action plan that will lead to a sustainable sorority and fraternity community. If necessary, propose a strategy for implementation.
- 5) Provide proposed recommendations and action plan to the Chancellor.

The Task Force convened on several occasions, meeting as a large group and as smaller sub-committees, to more productively drill down into specific topics relevant to each Council. The recommendations provided below contain both joint and individual recommendations for each Council. The Task Force views these recommendations as the start of the work that will need to continue to ensure that our sorority and fraternity community is sustainable for years to come.

SHARED VALUES AND KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The sorority and fraternity community share the following values and the members of the Task Force agree that re-focusing on these values is necessary for the health and vitality of the community.

The following were identified and affirmed as shared values for all Councils:

- **Academic Excellence:** Members are held to high scholastic standards and sorority and fraternity chapters have programs that promote and reward academic excellence.
- **Leadership:** Sororities and fraternities provide numerous leadership training programs and members have the opportunity for application within their chapter, on campus, and in the community.
- **Cultural Competency:** Sororities and fraternities value diversity and members are taught and expected to honor and respect all, and recognize that differences among members make their chapters, University, and community stronger.
- **Service/Philanthropy:** Service to one's chapter, campus and community is both an expectation and a priority. The membership experience shall provide the opportunity for members to become involved in both community service and philanthropic projects.
- **Accountability:** The sorority and fraternity community has the unique responsibility of holding itself and its members, accountable for decisions and actions. A strong Greek

community is one that looks to hold itself above the basic expectations of students and challenges its community to be “the best of the best.”

- **Character:** Sororities and fraternities were founded upon principles and ideals that encompass integrity, responsibility, self-control, and loyalty. These principles and ideals are as relevant today as they were at the founding of each organization.
- **Community:** At a school the size of KU, sororities and fraternities provide a community and sense of belonging where students feel included. The community looks out for the well-being of its members and provides a safe environment for its members to grow and develop. Through this community, lifelong friendships are created. It is important that members value and appreciate their individual chapter, the Greek community, and the University-at-large.

DESIRED MEMBERSHIP EXPERIENCE

A desired sorority and fraternity membership experience is one where students are supported and included, and where safety and taking care of yourself, one another, and your community are priorities. This membership experience should allow students to grow and excel academically, behaviorally, mentally and socially, while developing a strong bond with their chapter, fellow students, the University and Lawrence community.

Through its deliberations, the Task Force affirmed the desired sorority and fraternity life membership experience will occur by:

- Emphasizing intellectual growth through structure, support, debate, guidance, and mentoring.
- Providing an environment that promotes the health, safety and welfare of its members and others.
- Serving as an incubator for leadership development.
- Valuing philanthropy and community service.
- Promoting social awareness and respect for oneself and others.
- Creating a sense of belonging and loyalty.
- Developing a culture of accountability—academically, behaviorally, and socially.

In addition to the shared values, key characteristics and desired member experiences common to all Greek councils, the following Task Force recommendations are broken out in three areas:

- Greek Community-at-large
- MGC and NPHC Councils
- IFC and PHA Councils

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ALL GREEK COUNCILS

1. Develop a Greek/University Community Partnership to collaborate and align all stakeholders around the Greek System's mission-based purpose and shared values.

There is a shared purpose among all stakeholders. It is critical that all stakeholders reconnect and deepen trust within a spirit of alignment, teamwork and collaboration:

- Greek Students/Leaders
- Greek Alumni/Leaders
- University
- Lawrence Community

The Task Force recognizes that all stakeholders need to collaborate in the development, communication, and dissemination of programming of the highest quality in many shared areas, beginning with, and utilizing when possible, the resources at KU and within the Lawrence community.

Through this collaboration, the Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- Develop and implement a communication strategy to showcase and emphasize the values and positives of all the councils that make up the Greek community. By refocusing on the shared values and key characteristics of the community, it will help to reset the culture and expectations of membership. Further, it would increase the visibility of the Greek community and help to recruit and retain new members.
- Prepare a strategy for decreasing the risk of drug and alcohol-related incidents via both University and Lawrence community policy (e.g., increasing Friday morning classes, working with Lawrence Police Department, partnering with the City Commission, etc.).
- Evaluate effectiveness and awareness of existing University resources to address health, safety and wellness (e.g., Watkins HERO programs, SAPEC Gender-based Violence course). Recommend enhancements and/or additions to meet best practices standards.
- Evaluate current efforts to promote the Greek community to potential new students, and make recommendations on enhancing/adapting already existing programming such as Crimson & Blue Day, Rock Chalk Days, and SFL Experience Day.
- It is strongly suggested that Student Leaders and Chapter Advisors be the first contacts for all University-related matters involving their Chapter and its members.
- Advisors should be included in critical communications between the University and Chapter members.

2. Build upon successful programs and policies supporting academic excellence within the Greek community while working together to lift our collective performance even higher.

Academic success has always been the primary focus for the sorority and fraternity community at KU, and its members traditionally have higher grade point averages than the non-sorority and fraternity community. This is especially true of its new members, who are typically freshman. Additionally, members who join the Greek community as freshmen have higher retention and graduation rates than non-Greek students. Continued academic success is critical for the community and must continue to be a priority.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- IFC, PHA, MGC, NPHC, with input from the University and Alumni for each entity, will work to share practices, policies and develop a support model to assist members and chapters that are not meeting academic expectations or potential.
- Evaluate and enhance current marketing and recruiting methods to better promote the Greek community to high school seniors/incoming freshmen, and better educate potential new members of the recruitment process at the University.
- Maintain the current practice of allowing freshman new members to reside in fraternities.
- Work with the University to have more Friday classes and early morning classes brought back to all disciplines and all schools throughout the University.

3. Leverage existing University resources to emphasize the importance of leadership and personal/professional growth and development within the Greek community.

In and of itself, the Greek community provides an incubator for leadership opportunities as well as personal and professional growth and development. To attain the University's bold mission related to "educating leaders," we believe there is an opportunity to build upon this shared value throughout the Greek community. This could and should help enhance the perception of the Greek community on campus and provide greater success in recruiting and retaining students with high academic potential into our chapters. Given the wealth of resources that already exist within the University -- and across our Big 12 peer institutions -- we would like to collaborate on ways members of the Greek community can become even stronger leaders at all levels.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- Work with University and/or outside resources to develop a Greek-specific Leadership training program. This training would provide core principles of leadership that could be used to foster increased participation within individual chapters, on campus and throughout the Lawrence community.
- Consult outside resources—either nationally or among our Big 12 peer institutions to provide best practice learning opportunities within specific areas of leadership (e.g., Risk Management, Philanthropy, Community Service, PNM Recruitment, etc.).

- Create a KU alumni Speakers Bureau featuring successful leaders who would be interested in coming back to campus for panel discussions on leadership as well as personal/professional growth that would benefit the entire Greek community.

4. Provide additional resources to support Sorority and Fraternity Life at the University of Kansas; including a better understanding of the reporting structure of organizations that support the Greek community.

As previously mentioned, sorority and fraternity members make up over 20% of the University of Kansas undergraduate population. The task force undertook a review of the structure and support systems at like institutions. Currently, the Sorority and Fraternity Life at KU consists of one (1) Associate Director, one (1) Assistant Director and two part-time graduate students. This is a smaller staff than what was found at other similar institutions and it was clear that the current staff at KU would benefit from additional help. The Task Force believes that additional staffing resources would benefit the entire community. By providing additional resources to increase staff support, to include a full-time assistant director for IFC, an additional coordinator position for PHA, MGC and NPHC, and additional graduate student support, the community leaders, alumni and chapters will have the opportunity to receive more mentorship and support and effect positive change within the community.

Recognizing that a portion of the staffing budget is funded directly by the Greek community, it is recommended that Greek student(s) and alumni have the ability to provide input regarding staff selection.

Further, the Task Force also suggests that a clear explanation of the organizational structure and job responsibilities of the organizations within KU that provide support to the community be provided, updated, and accessible, to all community stakeholders. This will help alumni advisors and members understand the resources available, who to connect with for help and how to support the efforts of these organizations.

5. The Sorority and Fraternity community must hold itself to the highest standard of conduct and accountability.

The Greek community has the primary responsibility to govern itself and establish expectations, policies and practices to ensure that the health and safety of its members is a priority, hazing is eliminated and the community continues to hold itself to a high standard of conduct. This is a responsibility the community must take seriously.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- The Greek community will re-develop a comprehensive, integrated community standards program, with support from University staff.
- PHA, IFC, MGC, NPHC alumni for each entity, and University staff will be responsible for developing specific criteria for “success” across all councils and individual chapters.

- This will include a “success scorecard” and recognition/rewards program.
- The criteria for “success,” “meeting expectation,” and “needs support” will be clear, transparent and consistent.
- In addition to letting each chapter know where they stand relative to their peer set, this will allow the sharing of Best Practices among those at the top while providing University support services an opportunity to focus on elevating the performance of those at the bottom.
- Programming emphasis will be on “root cause” and not symptoms. The programming should include:
 - Academic Support
 - Alcohol use and abuse
 - Drug use and abuse (prescription/non-prescription)
 - Hazing
 - Sexual harassment, abuse, assault
 - Leadership development
 - Team building
 - Social function parameters
 - Others

Risk Management

The greatest risk to the health, safety, and welfare of university students include substance abuse, sexual violence, and mental health. These risks are not unique to the sorority and fraternity community.

While the Task Force recognizes the need to enjoy the college experience, students at the University too frequently have taken the experience to extremes, often with life-changing results. Too many University students are facing significant issues including alcohol dependence, underage drinking, binge drinking, substance abuse, prescription medication addiction, depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, sexual assault. These issues require difficult, candid conversations and cannot be improved without a commitment by all parties to change the culture that currently exists.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- Evaluate the alcohol and substance abuse policies and practices of all sororities and fraternities, along with education programs available and provide recommendations on meeting best practices in this area.
- Evaluate initial results/outcomes of the current 8-hour course being offered by SAEPEC to a subsection of new students, and explore the expansion/adaptation of existing course into a required, one-credit hour course focused on health, safety, and welfare
- Return of Friday morning classes across all disciplines and all schools.
- By September 15 of each calendar year, PHA, IFC, MGC and NPHC and their alumni counterparts, with input and assistance from the University, will offer workshops and

programming to all members related to alcohol/substance abuse, sexual assault, hazing and other risk-related issues.

- Reevaluation of council social policies to determine compliance with state law and with the policies of their respective national/international organizations.
- Reevaluation of council social policies to address high-risk social functions such as “after hours,” “pre-games,” and similar spontaneous, open parties, whether at chapter houses, at “senior houses,” or elsewhere.
- Reevaluation of council social policies and judicial processes to determine appropriate methods are in place to ensure compliance and consequences for violations.
- Evaluate effectiveness of current services provided by Counseling and Psychological Services and Watkins Health Center, and recommend enhancements and methods, if needed. Additionally, determine and recommend ways to better promote their resources for students suffering from addiction, depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Hazing

Negative perceptions surrounding the Greek community nationwide primarily relate to student conduct with the concept of hazing rituals serving as a “lightning rod” for damaging publicity based upon the injuries and fatalities connected with this practice. The Task Force recognizes that hazing still exists at the University of Kansas, and that the Greek Community must eliminate hazing in fraternities and sororities.

Some organizations’ traditions and/or alumni networks continue to support mindsets that foster hazing, and cultural change is challenging. Indeed, in many cases, members have expressed that the hazing activities were part of “bonding” rituals or “rites of passage.” Many members perpetuate hazing behaviors that they experienced as new members, creating a cycle that is difficult to break. This will require joint alignment behind a common, shared definition of hazing and a uniform understanding and approach to holding members accountable.

The Task Force also recognizes that hazing is not limited to the Greek community at KU, and that opportunities exist to partner with non-Greek organizations to address this issue.

In addition, trust, fairness, and transparency must be priorities for the sorority and fraternity community and the University in all regards, especially with the student conduct investigation and hearing process.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations:

- IFC, PHA, MGC, and NPHC, with support from Alumni and University staff and administration, must continue to develop programming and policies to prevent and eliminate hazing. It is critical that this programming go beyond Chapter and community leaders and involve and impact the general Chapter members.

- University administrators and members of PHA, IFC, MGC, NPHC, and Alumni from each entity will form a working group by 2020 to develop a plan to formally identify and address hazing within the Greek community and provide tangible solutions to address the root causes.
- University administrators, with members of the Greek community and Alumni from each entity will continue to work on identifying behaviors that should not exist in our sororities and fraternities and determine whether or not such behavior constitutes hazing.
- The Office of Student Affairs, with input from IFC, PHA, MGC, NPHC, Alumni from each entity, and the Office of General Counsel will review the definition of hazing and ensure that is clear and in line with standard definitions.
- The Office of Student Affairs, with input from IFC, PHA, MGC, NPHC, and Alumni from each entity will continue to work with the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards to implement a new governance structure. It is imperative that the productive communication between the chapters, chapter advisors and the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards continue to ensure that the procedures for investigating allegations of non-academic misconduct protect the due process rights of students and organizations, while preserving the goal of upholding the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities.

MULTICULTURAL GREEK COUNCIL AND NATIONAL PAN-HELLENIC COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS

There are four specific recommendations that the Task Force puts forward for consideration regarding Multicultural Greek Council and National Pan-Hellenic Council. It is critical for MGC and NPHC Chapters to be able to recruit and retain students that create a strong base of members who can continue to uphold the long-standing values and traditions so important to the councils and the University of Kansas.

1. Increased Funding for MGC and NPHC Leadership Retreat

Traditionally Councils have an off-campus retreat to better prepare the councils leadership boards for the upcoming academic year. By leaving campus, students are able to fully engage in the content and disengage with what is happening outside of the space. The Funding would be used for lodging and event space. The request would be to have a budget that is comparable to IFC and NPC retreat budgets. This would provide an opportunity to bring in outside speakers and facilitators who are experts in this area.

2. Increased Funding to send more MGC and NPHC members to AFLV and Chapter-specific conferences

The Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values exists to stimulate the growth and development of fraternity and sorority councils, chapters, and members by promoting leadership, educational, and values-based experiences and resources for student leaders, their advisors and the larger fraternal market. The AFLV conference is where Greek leaders

from around the country go to be challenged, learn best practice and grow with peers. The Task Force recommends that additional funding be provided to MGC and NPHC to consistently send their leadership to AFLV conferences. The funding would be used for registration, travel and lodging.

Organization specific conferences have a similar impact but are more organization specific and help to improve recruiting, retaining and building a strong foundation.

3. Annual University Sponsorship of MGC and NPHC Campus Events

The Task Force recommends that University explore an annual sponsorship of key MGC and NPHC events. One such event that was provided as an example is the NPHC Step Show. The annual step show is a campus wide event that a wide range of student, faculty and staff attend. Not only is this event a place for people to gather it is also used for marketing and PR for the university.

This could also include a guest speaker series throughout the year, which is a regular part of most NPHC/MGC's programming. This is an opportunity for the campus-at-large to learn and grow from a different perspective. University sponsorship will send a signal of the importance of the subject events and increase the visibility for the events.

4. Alumni Advisors Retreat

The Task Force proposes the creation of a University sponsored Alumni Advisors Retreat for the MGC and NPHC Chapter Advisors. This would be an event that would bring all advisors together with Sorority and Fraternity Life staff and other University offices. The retreat would work to build connections between the University and Alumni Advisors as well as amongst the alumni advisors who represent each chapter.

INTER-FRATERNITY COUNCIL AND PANHELLENIC ASSOCIATION **RECOMMENDATIONS**

One overriding conclusion of the Task Force was the need for dedicated alumni involvement for all chapters. While students might be active with a chapter for 2-4 years, alumni have the ability to provide to chapters, and the sorority and fraternity community as a whole, broad, long-term, and more sustained perspective and guidance. Involved alumni provide the opportunity to share information and best practices among all chapters, resulting in improvement for all.

As such, the Task Force recommends the creation of a Sorority and Fraternity Alumni Council, whose mission would be to provide guidance and advice to the undergraduate councils. This Council could improve and strengthen the bonds between the University, its sorority and fraternity support services and the community by increasing communication and establishing a collaborative partnership between the alumni, the students and the University.

Moreover, chapter houses are typically owned by alumni-managed boards/organizations, which have significant vested interests in the success of sorority and fraternity life at the University of Kansas, and in the success of the University as a whole. Alumni should be viewed as trusted partners with students and the University, willing and able to work together to lift the entire community, raise standards for all, and hold all accountable.

The Task Force makes the following recommendations for the Sorority and Fraternity Alumni Council:

- Development and formalization of the Sorority and Fraternity Alumni Council, consisting of representation by alumni from all chapters. The mission of this Council will be to provide guidance and advice to the undergraduate councils, and to improve and strengthen the bonds between the University and the Greek Community by increasing communication and establishing a collaborative partnership between the alumni, the students and the University to resolve issues of mutual concern. The Sorority and Fraternity Alumni Council can be initiated by formalizing and better organizing the group of Greek alumni gathered each year by the staff of KU.
- Development of an Executive Board, consisting of 6-8 alumni, who will lead the Alumni Council. The Executive Board will serve as a link between the students, the Alumni Council and the University and will be tasked with the helping with the development of programming, education, and training opportunities beneficial the community, which will be accomplished through the creation of sub-committees created and overseen by the Executive Board.
- The University and IFC and PHA Executive Boards will consult with the Executive Board on matters impacting the Greek Community.
- The Alumni Council will meet as a whole at least once each semester, while the Executive Board will meet on a more frequent basis. Moreover, the Executive Board and selected individuals representing MGC and NPHC will meet at least once per semester with the Chancellor, or the Chancellor's designee(s), to identify concerns and to update the

Chancellor. It is also expected that the Executive Board will have frequent meetings with University support staff throughout the year.

- At least one representative from the Alumni Council will be present at all meetings of IFC and PHA.

CONCLUSION

The Task Force affirms we have successfully addressed the specific charges requested by the Chancellor based upon his letter dated November 8, 2018. In doing so, we firmly believe the adoption of these recommendations will enhance the health and vitality of the Greek community at the University of Kansas for generations to come. As stated previously, this report is viewed as a start and provides a framework to begin to address the critical issues facing the Greek Community. The task force looks forward to working to help implement the recommendations if accepted and desired by the Chancellor. We believe the fruits of our efforts will benefit not only the University but may also serve as a “beacon of light” to help guide other universities who are experiencing similar issues within their Greek communities.

Respectfully Submitted,

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The Sorority and Fraternity Life Task Force Members