



Cornell University

Office of the Dean of Students

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MEMORANDUM

To: IFC, PHC, and MGLC Chapter Presidents, IFC, PHC and MGLC Chapter Advisors, Tri-Council Executive Board Members, IFC, PHC and MGLC Chapter Members, AIFC Members, APAC Members, AMGLC Members, FSAC Members, Inter/National Organizations

From: Travis T. Apgar, Robert G. Engel Associate Dean of Students

Re: University Recognition Policy Amendment Implementation

Date: August 4, 2011

This memorandum serves to communicate the timeline and details surrounding the implementation of changes to the University Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2010.

HISTORY

Following key studies conducted about fraternity and sorority life and the characteristic behavior of fraternity and sorority members, especially as it relates to high risk behavior, the University Trustees reviewed a presentation on this research in May 2008. Careful consideration and discussion of appropriate steps to be taken resulted in an amendment to the University Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities.

POLICY

The Board of Trustees amended the University Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities in October 2010 to include the following:

Section, E. Criteria for Full Recognition

- Number, 17.
- (a.) Shall refrain from using, furnishing, or having alcohol and other drugs present during the recruitment, education, initiation, or intake of new members.
 - (b.) Will not implement or tolerate hazing, as defined by the Campus Code of Conduct, in any form, at any time.
 - (c.) Shall comply with the initiation deadline determined by the University each semester.

For a complete description of the University Recognition Policy, please visit <http://dos.cornell.edu/cms/greek/upload/RECOGNITION-POLICY.pdf>.

To be clear, we have listed the rules as they apply by time period below; however, the over-arching policies are summarized as follows.

- First semester freshman students are not allowed to attend any form of fraternity or sorority sponsored event or activity, regardless of where it is hosted, if alcohol is present. This includes, but is not limited to, “open parties.”
- Registered events as defined by the Cornell Greek Community’s Event Management Guidelines may continue to be conducted for members and appropriate guests according to Event Management Guidelines, University regulations, and state and federal laws.
- Recognizing that this will fundamentally shift what had become an unofficial recruitment process through social events, which went against the longstanding policy deferring recruitment to the second semester of a student’s freshman year, we will establish a four-quarter schedule so new students may become informed about fraternity and sorority life.

When enacted by the Trustees, the amendment serves to align the University policy with those of national fraternities and sororities and the laws of the State of New York. The amendment to the University’s Recognition Policy for Fraternities and Sororities provides explicit clarification for the University fraternity and sorority community by reiterating the University’s position and policy on these important matters.

The University recognizes the efforts of student leaders who have striven to address the high risk behaviors of members; yet, experience shows that risk management through self-governance can fall short of compliance with the law and achieving required objectives without the additional guidance and support of alumni and the University.

As a community we must work together to protect our organizations, the students who are members, the alumni who have given so much to preserve the positive experience of fraternity and sorority membership, and the students who seek to become members. Also critical is the work we do to sustain and support the long tradition of exemplary behavior and values of our Cornell fraternity and sorority system. Implementation of the amendments to the Recognition Policy requires that alcohol may not be provided, present, or part of any recruitment, education, or initiation process. Practically speaking, we must alter the ways in which the social programs of our chapters are conducted to conform to the law and the new Trustee amendment. Compliance by chapters will help alleviate the pressure, real or perceived, placed upon the fraternity and sorority system to serve as the primary social venue for all Cornell undergraduates and specifically for freshmen upon their initial entrance to the University community. It also will significantly reduce liability by curtailing activities which are unlawful, unsafe, and are typically not covered by the chapter’s general liability insurance.

Moreover, in the aftermath of the tragic death of George Desdunes this past spring, the Tri-Council agreed to advance implementation of the amendments. The \$25 million wrongful death suit filed against the Cornell local SAE Chapter, the International SAE Fraternity, and a number of its local officers and members only adds gravity and urgency to our need to cooperate together in implementing the changes summarized below.

Ralph Wilhelm, President of the Fraternity and Sorority Advisory Council, Jonathan Feldman, President of the Alumni Interfraternity Council, Donna Green Barsotti, President of the Alumni Panhellenic Advisory Council, and Frank Wilkinson, President of the Alumni Multicultural Greek Letter Council, support the rules and protocols being implemented under the new Trustee amendments to the University Recognition Policy. They will continue to work with alumni and undergraduates, the Fraternity and Sorority Advisory Council, and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs to support a strong Cornell Greek System.

IMPLEMENTATION

The four quarter system is defined as follows:

- 1st Quarter – Moratorium
 - Moratorium is defined as the period when there will be no formal or informal recruitment activities initiated or organized by fraternity and sorority members. Contact with freshmen will be limited to those interactions that occur in the normal day-to-day conduct on campus and in the classroom and through campus related organizations and activities.
 - Moratorium commences with the arrival of the freshman class on campus and concludes at the end of fall semester break. For academic year 2011-2012, this time period will last from August 19th to October 11th.
 - For freshmen, this period of time should be devoted to academic and residential transition to the new University environment.
 - Chapter members will not engage with freshmen in chapter organized events or activities during this time period. This restriction applies to all events and activities including, but not limited to; chapter houses, chapter annexes, residences in Collegetown, or other off-campus locations.
 - Chapters may choose to focus on recruiting transfer students and upperclassmen during this time.
 - The fraternity and sorority system will be presented to freshmen as an option through general informational opportunities planned and guided by the Tri-Council and the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs.
- 2nd Quarter – Informal Recruitment
 - Informal Recruitment is defined as the period when freshmen are permitted to engage with chapter members in activities that do not involve alcohol or other drugs to learn about individual fraternity and sorority chapters and their members.
 - Informal Recruitment commences with the first day of classes following fall semester break and concludes with the last day of finals in the fall semester. For academic year 2011-2012, this time period will last from October 12th to December 16th.

activities and events such as “pledge parties” and “mixers” regardless of location.

- Hazing, as defined by the Cornell Code of Conduct, will not be tolerated in any form. The Fraternity and Sorority Affairs Staff should be consulted if there are any questionable activities in a fraternity or sorority’s initiation or intake process.
- 4th Quarter – Post-Initiation
 - Post-Initiation is defined as the time period in which all members will be fully initiated and privileged to enjoy the full benefits of membership.
 - Post-Initiation commences with the first day following the chapter’s Initiation ceremony or no later than April 2nd.
 - At this time, their participation in the programs of their chapter will be conducted according to the appropriate Tri-Council guidelines and the general rules under the Campus Code of Conduct.

ENFORCEMENT

Consistent with the fraternity and sorority community’s current judicial system, all alleged violations of the Cornell fraternity and sorority community policies, as listed in the Guidebook of Rights, Responsibilities, Requirements and Resources (found at greeks.cornell.edu) will go through a fact finding period and if determined appropriate, be referred to the Greek Judicial Board. The Greek Judicial Board will determine if a chapter is responsible for a violation. A chapter found responsible will receive a sanction. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to; social probation, disciplinary probation, fines, and even the loss of days of informal recruitment and/or formal Rush. The Greek Judicial Board reserves the right to refer the case to the Fraternity and Sorority Review Board or to assign a lesser sanction.

Likewise, in the event that a chapter fails to comply with the Recognition Policy, the University reserves the right to convene the Fraternity and Sorority Review Board to consider the chapters continued status of recognition.

CONCLUSION

As stated before, the adoption of these new guidelines and rules is aimed at establishing a safe environment in which the guiding values and historic culture of the fraternity system at Cornell are assured for the present and the future. To achieve this, we must recruit members into our fraternities and sororities for all of the reasons and values we exist, and not simply for the social aspects of our programming. For chapters to thrive, they must adapt to these changes and adopt substantive and creative ways to attract new members, while adhering to the laws, rules, and protocols under which we must operate.

The staff of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs want you to be successful in the transition we are required to make to have a safe environment for all of our chapters. We are available to meet or talk with undergraduates or alumni regarding these changes, new recruitment strategies, or other topics of concern.

In accordance with the Cornell tradition of *freedom with responsibility*, we are hopeful that our fraternity and sorority system will rise to the challenge of creating a social culture that promises a better future for all. We look forward to partnering with you during this journey.