

From: Ricardo D. Hall, Ph.D., Vice President for Student Affairs

To: Phi Sigma Kappa undergraduate members, parents, alumni

CC: Chloe Soloman, Assistant Dean & Director of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs, Phi Sigma Kappa IHQ, Phi Sigma Kappa Alumni Advisors

Date: July 14, 2022

Subject: Phi Sigma Kappa - Accreditation Follow-up and Next Steps

This is a follow-up message regarding Phi Sigma Kappa's recent accreditation decision. Chloe Soloman is copied, as well as national headquarters representatives and Nu Chapter alumni advisors. I have asked Chloe to distribute the email more broadly, including to alumni and parents.

As you are aware, the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Affairs prepared for me a chronology of events leading up to the decision to rescind Nu Chapter's university recognition. I also acknowledge receipt and review of the materials you recently submitted.

There is no appellate process for student organization accreditation decisions. The unique set of circumstances outlined below prompted me to review all available information before the pending loss of recognition. This was a stand-alone decision made independent of any past or pending organizational conduct matters.

As clearly outlined by OFSA, all Lehigh fraternities and sororities are responsible for demonstrating progress toward meeting agreed-upon standards of the community. For the 2021-2022 academic year, all chapters faced similar Covid-related challenges, received hands-on advising from OFSA, were expected to seek and to receive support and guidance from alumni advisors and their alumni organization and their respective national headquarters, and were evaluated on the same rubric.

Phi Sigma Kappa's Unacceptable rating signaled a clear distinction between the chapter's longstanding history of positive accreditation ratings and the more recent chapter performance.

The divergence from Phi Sigma Kappa's past to its present state can be directly traced to what has been the unofficial merger of Phi Sigma Kappa with the remnants of a fraternity that is not currently recognized at Lehigh.

In 2018, another Lehigh fraternity (Fraternity A) lost its campus recognition. Students who were affiliated with that fraternity joined a second fraternity (Fraternity B), with the presumed intent of using Fraternity B's house and recognized standing as a base of operations for the ongoing unofficial activities of Fraternity A. Unable to adhere to its stated principles and Lehigh's community standards, Fraternity B lost its university recognition in 2020. Students who were either affiliated with or influenced by Fraternity B (and with a belief that they were still in some way loosely affiliated with the legacy of

Fraternity A) joined/merged with Phi Kappa Sigma.

The university is deeply concerned that the infiltration of Phi Sigma Kappa by students not committed to Phi Sig's ideals - instead committed to a loose adherence to a continuing legacy of Fraternity A - placed Phi Sig on its inevitable path towards the recent Unacceptable rating.

There were several documented attempts by OFSA and Phi Sig's chapter leadership to prevent this outcome. Most notable was the chapter's decision to remove members from the organization. A total of twelve (12) members were identified and submitted to Phi Sigma Kappa Headquarters in March 2021, for what were described as repeated violations of Phi Sigma Kappa's brotherhood. Headquarters declined to accept the removal of the members, a decision that ultimately negatively impacted the chapter. Since then, OFSA has been aware of a steady decline in the quality and frequency of chapter philanthropy and program activities, as well as member disaffiliation.

Phi Sigma Kappa's Unacceptable rating was not based solely upon the strength or weakness of the chapter's written accreditation report. It was determined by an objective panel that the report and the chapter's representative(s) provided documentation and in-person confirmation that Phi Sigma Kappa was not operating in a manner consistent with the organization's stated principles or Lehigh's clearly outlined expectations for continued campus recognition.

Based on a review of all available information, Phi Sigma Kappa's accreditation rating of "Unacceptable" was appropriate and will remain in place.

Regarding the Phi Sigma Kappa house (physical structure), the previously communicated loss of group housing will remain in place for the 2022-2023 school year.

The action taken in response to the Unacceptable rating is consistent with the most recent similar accreditation actions (2014 and 2007).

What follows are pre-conditions that must be met before Phi Sigma Kappa will be eligible to return to group housing. Phi Sigma Kappa reserves the right to decline to meet the pre-conditions and lose recognition; however, what is outlined below is non-negotiable.

Chapter members will be eligible to return to group housing as early as fall semester 2023, contingent upon the following:

- **Membership Audit**

Phi Sigma Kappa will conduct a membership audit. Specifics of the process will be jointly decided upon by current undergraduate members, alumni, and

Headquarters. The audit process will be shared with and approved by OFSA before implementation. I anticipate that at least some of the current members willingly pursued an experience other than that which traditional Phi Sig membership offers, and I hope your membership audit is successful in identifying and addressing those individuals in a manner that is best for the organization.

- **Successful end-of-year accreditation**

Phi Sigma Kappa will be afforded the opportunity to function on campus in a manner similar to chapters in receipt of an “Unaccredited” rating. This is an acknowledgment of the unique set of circumstances surrounding Phi Sigma Kappa’s recent “mergers” and the apparent negative impact on the overall quality and execution of chapter operations. While the Unacceptable rating precludes the use of the university-owned house, there are current and past examples of chapters operating at a high level without the benefit or privilege of group housing.

Incorporated into initiatives evaluated during the accreditation process will be broad or specific initiatives of alumni members who may express willingness to be more, or differently, involved in providing guidance and support to the undergraduate chapter.

Phi Sigma Kappa will be required to receive an accreditation rating of “Accredited” or “Accredited with Excellence” to retain university recognition. A rating of “Unaccredited” or “Unacceptable” will result in immediate loss of recognition.

- **Gender Violence Education and Support Apology**

During a March 2022 mandatory training on the topic of gender violence, members of Phi Sigma Kappa conducted themselves in a manner that was unwarranted and disrespectful towards the presenters. The program was hosted by the Office of Gender Violence Education and Support and the presenters were student volunteers of the peer education group Break the Silence. By all accounts, Phi Sig members were immature and inappropriate and caused the presenters to feel “uncomfortable and embarrassed.” An apology, both in writing and in person, is in order.

- **VPSA Meetings with Phi Sig Executive Officers**

Lastly, as I was requested to weigh in on the recent accreditation, it is appropriate that I am kept abreast of progress towards a positive result. To that end, I will be meeting each first and third Friday with the chapter’s executive board members. Tentative dates: September 2 & 16, October 7 & 21, November 4 & 18, December 2.

Even with the inevitable juggling of calendars that will occur throughout the year, I’m confident we will be able to conduct these twice-monthly meetings and I look forward to learning more of the chapter’s plans and accomplishments.

As I stated in my previous email, the support expressed by alumni has been

impressive. This support arrives, however, at an unfortunate juncture. Many alumni shared stories of their experience and role(s) Phi Sigma Kappa played in their maturation, growth, and development as students and professionals. Several also shared that they have no direct knowledge of current or recent chapter goings on. It is my sincere hope that the renewed interest among alumni will translate to undergraduate rededication and adherence to the Phi Sigma Kappa's Cardinal Principles (To Promote Brotherhood. To Stimulate Scholarship. To Develop Character), Core Values (Demand Excellence. Commit to Lifelong Learning. Meet Challenges with Innovation. Value Brotherhood Above Self), and Creed.

Time and again, it has been demonstrated that a key strength of fraternity and sorority life is the understanding that members are a part of something greater than themselves. Our chapters are not free-standing franchises with no connection to the national body. Our members cannot decide that they will cede control of our organizations to those who do not share similar fidelity.

At the heart of this decision is my strong belief that something good can and will come from this set of circumstances. I fully expect that some who receive this message will maintain that Phi Sig is a "victim". It is. Nu Chapter has been victimized by those who sought to veer the chapter from a path that was paved in 1901. Others will feel that Phi Sig does not deserve, or will squander, the opportunity presented. I am hopeful that undergrads, alumni, and headquarters will be unified in your efforts to return Phi Sig to its longstanding status of being a strong member of the campus community.

Sincerely,

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