

May 26, 2015

Mr. Michael Stavrakos
Vice President for Standards
Interfraternity Council
The Pennsylvania State University

Mr. Grant Vasi
Vice President for Standards
Interfraternity Council
The Pennsylvania State University

Dear Michael and Grant:

I appreciate the care the Interfraternity Council's Executive Board has given to the recent behavioral issues involving various members of the Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity. Although the matter has stirred strong reaction from multiple constituencies, the Interfraternity Council, along with the University, has patiently trusted in the investigative and deliberative processes upon which we must rely. The consideration you and your colleagues on the Executive Board have shown for these complicated issues has been thoughtful and consistent. Our student community is well-served by the leadership you have offered.

You based your recommendation to sustain recognition, while imposing various stipulations, on the investigation report developed by the Office of Student Conduct, in cooperation with the State College Police Department, a hearing with the leadership of Kappa Delta Rho, and prior decisions by the Executive Board. Based on my review of those same factors and others, I have drawn a conclusion that differs from your recommendation. Accordingly, I have recommended to President Barron that we withdraw recognition from Kappa Delta Rho for a three year period commencing immediately, and he concurs.

We base this decision on the sum of misbehaviors exhibited by various members of Kappa Delta Rho. Not every member of the chapter was equally culpable for violation of the University's expectations for recognized student organizations; indeed, many of its members were only passive observers in these activities. Even so, the sum of the organizational misbehaviors is far more than the University can tolerate from a student organization that seeks its imprimatur.

The investigation report issued on April 29 revealed a persistent series of deeply troubling activities within the fraternity. These activities included photographing individuals in extremely compromising positions and posting these photos to a private Facebook site accessible to the group's members. Several instances of hazing, which included physical and emotional abuse, were uncovered, as were drug use and sales. And the investigation brought to light the persistent harassment of two female students, who were degraded through multiple postings to the organization's private site over an extended period.

The University's educational purposes and its responsibilities compel a stronger response than you have recommended. We cannot both sustain recognition for this group, even if various stipulations are imposed in exchange for that allowance, and still make the case that such behaviors fall well short of our community's expectations.

Despite the considerable circumstances that compel this action, we do not take it lightly. The University's typical deference to the judgment of the Interfraternity Council when it comes to matters related to the recognition of fraternities remains important to us. Fraternities are private associations existing on private property, and they are governed by a Council that is associated with, but separate from the University. Our commitment to student involvement in institutional decision-making remains important to us, and our action in this case should not be seen as a retreat from that commitment.

While the University has delegated to your Council a substantial role in the recognition process, the University has not delegated to it complete authority or autonomy for the decision to recognize a fraternity. The University administration has instead retained the final responsibility for its recognition of these groups, and has exercised that responsibility on prior occasions by reversing your recommendations in the past. We choose to exercise this responsibility in this instance, too.

Again, I commend the care and deliberation you and the other members of the IFC Executive Board offered in these circumstances. The rationale for your recommended action is understandable, yet I hope it is equally understandable that Penn State is deeply committed to sustaining a values-based community in which its various constituencies and their organizations demonstrate respect, responsibility, and integrity in all they do. Together, let us continue to encourage our fraternities to support and exemplify those important aspirations.

Sincerely,

Damon Sims
Vice President for Student Affairs

cc: Roy Baker, Director, Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life
Eric Barron, President, Penn State University
Dusan Bratic, President, Alumni Corporation, Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity
Mary Edgington, Senior Director, Union and Student Activities
Joseph Rosenberg, Executive Director, Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity