



Gregory C. Farrington
President

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To: Joseph Sterrett '76, Delta Tau Delta, Executive Director of Athletics (chairperson)
Sharon Basso, Dean of Students
Kathy Duggan-Trimble, '87, Kappa Alpha Theta, Vice President Greek Alumni Council
Mark Erickson, '91G, Vice President for Administrative and Government Affairs
Larry Hunter, '83, Alpha Sigma Phi, President, Greek Alumni Council
Andrew Lucas, '05, Varsity Athlete
Chris Marshall, '88, Executive Director, LUAA
Julia Nolf, '05, Student Senator
Michelle Samuels, Associate Dean of Students
Michael Schaefer, '04, Delta Tau Delta, President, Class of '04
Michelle Sushner, '04, Alpha Chi Omega, President, Panhellenic Council
George White, Professor, College of Education
Seth Yerk, '04, Phi Gamma Delta, President, Interfraternity Council
Michael Carey, Phi Sigma Kappa, Asst. Dean for Fraternity and Sorority Affairs (ex officio)

From: Gregory C. Farrington

Date: 14 February 2003

Subject: Task Force on Strengthening Greek Life

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the Task Force on Strengthening Greek Life. Greek letter organizations have played a prominent role in Lehigh's campus life since 1872, the year our first fraternity, Chi Phi, was founded. In the 1970s, following the decision to admit undergraduate women, sororities became part of the Greek system. At their best, fraternities and sororities build community and character, while instilling leadership traits that last a lifetime.

I continue to believe in the ability of fraternities and sororities to enrich the academic and social life on our campus. If we embrace this vision and commit to making it a reality, Lehigh will be a place where people come to see and experience a Greek system that really works.

However, it is clear that today the Lehigh Greek system -- especially fraternities -- faces significant challenges. Over the past decade, six fraternities and one sorority have been closed permanently, six by their nationals and one by the university. Overall fraternity occupancy is below 75%, and many alumni are reluctant to return to their houses because of the poor condition some are in.

Problems extend to rush as well. In the competitive marketplace of upperclass housing and affiliation alternatives, students vote with their feet and recently quite often the vote has not been in favor of fraternities. Reports of hazing in both fraternities and sororities persist, despite explicit regulations and laws forbidding the practice.

You should be aware that this trend is not unique to Lehigh. Nationwide, fraternities are on the decline. Some institutions have chosen to eliminate their Greek systems entirely.

I believe that strong fraternities and sororities, with houses based on the historic values of brotherhood/sisterhood, pride, and commitment to each other and the university, can be attractive and important living and learning options for undergraduates.

Last summer, I spoke about this issue with many alumni in an effort to engage those who care passionately about ensuring a healthy future for Lehigh's Greek system. I believe that as an extended community we have the will to face this challenge. To help, we have engaged NPower, an outside firm that specializes in helping universities strengthen their fraternity and sorority systems. NPower will conduct a thorough and candid assessment of Greek life at Lehigh; their report will be submitted by March 31, 2003, and shared with the community.

The next step is up to you. The University is looking to each of you to provide leadership in our task force to enhance the quality of the Greek experience at Lehigh. Chaired by Joe Sterrett, the group is comprised of Greek and non-Greek students, alumni, staff and faculty members.

The Task Force on Strengthening Greek Life, which reports to the president and provost, has three primary responsibilities. They are to:

1. Review the NPower report and evaluate their recommendations in terms of potential for strengthening Lehigh's Greek system
2. Generate broad-based commitment to the process by keeping constituent groups informed and engaged
3. Create an implementation plan that will guide the efforts of key constituent groups

We request that a written report containing your assessment of the consultant's report and a proposed implementation plan be submitted to the provost and me by May 15, 2003.

To assist in your efforts, an advisory board comprised of four persons with extensive experience in Greek life at Lehigh has been created. They are deeply committed to the success of this endeavor and are eager to share their perspectives, serve as a sounding board or help in other ways the task force deems useful. Members of the advisory board are:

Robert L. Brown III, '78, Alpha Chi Rho, past president of the LUAA Board of Directors, and the Greek Alumni Council

Karen Randall, '83, Alpha Gamma Delta, past president of the Greek Alumni Council, past director-at-large of the LUAA, and Chapter Advisor

John Smeaton, Vice Provost for Student Affairs

Gerard E. Tarzia, '82, Chi Psi, President of the LUAA Board of Directors

Michael Carey, Assistant Dean for Fraternity and Sorority Affairs, will provide staff support to the task force as an ex officio member of the group. The first meeting of the task force will take place on Tuesday, February 25 in UC 403 from 3 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

On behalf of the campus community and our extended Lehigh family, thank you again for your willingness to take on this important task. The challenge is substantial, but so too is the potential impact on student life. Working together toward a common goal, I am confident we can ensure Lehigh has a strong, healthy fraternity and sorority system for many years to come.