

Dear Students, Staff and Faculty:

When community members are empowered and willing to confront unacceptable behavior on the part of their peers, it indicates that the community's climate is growing more inclusive. We would like to share a recent story of such progress at Lehigh.

Earlier this week, five students from the Kappa Delta sorority chose to dress in culturally insensitive costumes for an off-campus Halloween party. A student at the party quickly brought the costumes to the attention of Kappa Delta leadership, and they, as well as leadership from the Panhellenic Council, took appropriate and decisive action to address the situation immediately. The students voluntarily removed the offensive costumes, left the event, and the sorority promptly reported the incident themselves to the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs and the Office of Student Conduct & Community Expectations.

More information about this incident is available on the Lehigh GreekCommunity Blog at <http://lehighgreeks.blogspot.com/>.

This is a great example of how effective bystander intervention and student leadership can be in confronting offensive behavior and minimizing harm to others in our community.

We appreciate that Halloween is intended to be a fun, carefree event that allows students to show their creativity and take a welcome break from the stresses of their daily lives. We applaud the efforts of the students who have displayed sensitivity around offensive costumes, and we encourage others to do the same. Most importantly, we encourage you to share your opinions on these issues, and to engage in the kind of open, candid dialogue that should be a hallmark of a campus setting.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Swann, professor of Biological Sciences
Joe Sterrett, Murray H. Goodman Director of Athletics
Lori McClain, director of Academic Transitions
Tyrone Russell, director of Multicultural Affairs
Rita Jones, director of the Women's Center
Kathleen Hutnik, director of Graduate Student Life