



Damon Sims
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Mr. Aaron L. Speagle
President, Alumni Board of Directors
Theta Chi of Penn State, Inc.

Mr. Edward J. Wallace
Secretary, Alumni Board of Directors
Theta Chi of Penn State, Inc.

Dear Aaron and Edward,

The incident that precipitated University disciplinary action against the Omega Chapter of Theta Chi was serious and deeply concerning. Everything the University has implemented in the past two years to change behavior in its Greek system was designed to discourage precisely the kind of behaviors that led the Office of Student Conduct to conclude that the Omega Chapter should lose University recognition for four years. There should be no disagreement among us that the misuse of alcohol remains a primary concern in fraternities, as is the failure, occasionally, of chapters to heed reasonable expectations clearly expressed by the University administration. Both these offenses were present in this instance, and they merit our collective and careful attention.

At the same time, loss of recognition for an extended period is among the gravest sanctions that can result from misbehavior in a fraternity. The effect of such a sanction is profoundly felt not only by the undergraduate members who lose their Greek experience, but by the alumni who own and operate the chapter house itself. Closure of the chapter for an extended time can be useful and appropriate—at times, it can be the only way. But a forced closure for nearly half a decade should result only when there is no doubt that the circumstances in the chapter merit among the strongest punitive actions possible.

I have puzzled over this situation longer than I would have liked. Each fraternity at Penn State is unique, but no fraternity at Penn State exists in isolation from the rest. Consequently, sanctions meted out for one chapter should at least be consistent with sanctions meted out for others. Theta Chi's situation and our response to it must be

informed, in part, by our reaction to the situations other chapters face and our actions in response. It also must be influenced by what we observe to be the response to these circumstances from the chapter's alumni and national leadership.

For these reasons, I do not support revocation of recognition for the Omega Chapter for the four-year period originally pronounced by my colleagues in Student Conduct. Instead, I am prepared to lift the suspension of recognition and allow the chapter to return to active status, though on a probationary basis and with important restrictions.

The following restrictions will be in place immediately:

Return to recognized status beginning January 2020, with conduct probation extending through June 2022, during which any further significant conduct violations likely will result in immediate suspension of University recognition for at least the remaining probationary period.

Relevant Student Affairs staff and alumni leadership of the chapter, including named advisors, shall establish a mutually agreeable plan for the reconstitution and development of the chapter, allowing for appropriate accountability and responsibility, and ensuring necessary and regular communications and interactions between these constituencies. Student leaders also should be brought into this process as soon as they are identified.

The Theta Chi Alumni Corporation shall share the insight necessary for Student Conduct and Fraternity and Sorority Life to fully understand the process to be used to review any membership appeals submitted by the collegiate members whose membership has been suspended. The process must meet the University's satisfaction, and both Fraternity and Sorority Life and Student Conduct should participate in hearing or considering any appeals submitted.

In partnership with Student Affairs, the chapter will conduct at least four educational presentations on a range of topics, including alcohol, hazing, and sexual assault, each semester during the probationary period. Attendance should be mandatory for all active undergraduates and encouraged for advisors and alumni leaders.

In consultation with Fraternity and Sorority Life, the alumni leadership should give serious consideration to the possibility of a live-in advisor for the chapter. Some models for these arrangements are better than others, and perhaps there is a partnership between the alumni board and the University that could lead to an arrangement ideal in these circumstances.

New members brought into the group during the probationary period shall have a minimum grade point average at the time their membership begins of 2.75.

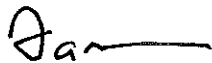
Any junior and senior members of the chapter should be incentivized to remain active residents in the chapter house and to hold leadership positions with the group.

The alumni leadership should be directly involved in all new member programs through active participation and oversight of these activities.

The various specific actions enumerated in the May 24, 2019 correspondence from the Omega Chapter to Lauren Langford, assistant director of Student Conduct, are assumed to remain among your organization's commitments to the process of rehabilitation and reform. Without such commitment, the likelihood that the chapter will be safe, sustainable, and successful in the ways all of us hope and expect could prove minimal. We must work together if we are to achieve the cultural change necessary in both your chapter and our Greek system. The work to be done requires the commitment of undergraduates, alumni, national organizations, and the University, one chapter after another, until all of us come together around this singular and important shared purpose. I fervently believe we can do so, if we only try.

Please let me know if you have other questions or concerns. Otherwise, I'll rely on you to work with the colleagues copied on this correspondence to proceed with what is, in effect, a recolonization for Theta Chi at Penn State.

Sincerely,



Damon R. Sims
Vice President for Student Affairs

cc: Karen Feldbaum
Chris Jefferson
Danny Shaha