



July 18, 2020

We, the Penn State Panhellenic Executive Board, write to the entire Penn State community to:

- I. Acknowledge and speak to the recent stories shared on social media about our community's experience with racism and exclusion as a part of Panhellenic sorority life at Penn State.
- II. Propose definitive plans to support all members of our community and seek out ways that we can transform into a more inclusive environment for everyone.

It is not nearly enough to state our support for you. As an organization, and as your fellow peers, we can do better.

The experiences shared on social media relating to the systematic racism, exclusion, and lack of diversity in Penn State's Panhellenic community make it clear that we have not done as good as we could have in protecting our community members. For years, our goal has been to create a safe and welcoming environment for everyone. It is clear that we have not met this goal.

It is our promise to you, that we will meet our goal. To do this, we must fully embrace changes to systems and norms that have been present in Panhellenic sorority life for decades. We must work together, not as an Executive Board alone, but as a community of 20 Panhellenic sororities.

To begin our efforts, we would like to focus on 3 core areas. This is not an all-inclusive list and these efforts alone will not dismantle every issue of injustice. However, these are promises we are making to you right now, that will pave the way for a better, safer, more inclusive community.

Recruitment

The issues of systematic racism in sorority recruitment have been present since the start of Panhellenic sorority life. When our organizations were founded, many sororities did not allow women of color to join. To this day, the recruitment process can alienate women of color.

- Legacy women are given an advantage over women that are new to Panhellenic sorority life. This favors predominantly white families that have participated in Panhellenic sorority life for years.
- Similarly, the act of requiring or encouraging letters of recommendation favors individuals that have legacy or know families and friends that participated in Panhellenic sorority life. This makes it more difficult for individuals with no prior connection to Panhellenic sorority life to join and to feel accepted joining.

- The high cost of membership dues can make Panhellenic sororities financially inaccessible, and thus discriminate against individuals of lower socio-economic status. This can affect any woman that wants to go through Panhellenic sorority recruitment.

To combat these issues, we will:

- I. Require more intense training for our recruitment counselors or Pi Chis. This will include learning and utilizing more inclusive language, being educated on the history of Panhellenic sorority life, including the systemic racism that is still often present, and helping prevent any individual from feeling alienated throughout the process.
- II. Giving potential new members the ability to review financial information prior to signing up for Panhellenic sorority recruitment.
- III. Working with our member chapters' diversity and inclusion chairs to hold seminars regarding the issues of racism in Panhellenic sorority life and to continue to have open dialogues and conversations about discrimination in any form.

Community

Community is what sorority life should be about. We want our members to feel a sense of family, belonging, and love throughout their membership. It is clear that some individuals have felt discriminated against, alienated, and have been disappointed with their experience.

To combat this issue, we will:

- I. Continue to work with each of our member chapters' diversity and inclusion chairs to make sure they are listening to the women in their chapter, helping combat any discrimination or alienation, and reporting any instances of such injustice.
- II. Host events specifically targeted at educating the entire community on the history of fraternity and sorority life.
- III. Make it clear that we as an executive board hear you. We were elected to represent the Panhellenic community because we have a vision for it. We are passionate that Panhellenic sorority life can be an incredible community, but we need support from all our Panhellenic women in order to make our goals a reality.

Accountability

To our Panhellenic members:

If you witness any form of discrimination, racism, or injustice as a part of our community, we encourage you as Panhellenic women to act and report it. You can report any of these incidents on Penn State's Student Affairs website (<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/report>) under "Report an Incident". We as your executive board, are always here to help guide you through these actions and we encourage everyone to help keep us informed so we can hold individuals accountable.

To the Penn State Community:

We encourage our greater Penn State Community to report incidents of discrimination, racism or injustice on the Penn State Student Affairs website (<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/report>) under "Report an Incident". Penn State provides many anonymous reporting options.

With full transparency, we are a board of 11 Panhellenic women. We are your peers, we are your friends, we are your sisters. We were elected in November of 2019, were trained, and began our positions in January of 2020. Since being elected, we have strived to make changes in our community. In the past, many injustices have been overlooked. It is our promise to you that we are looking, we are listening, we are learning. Through this, we are changing.

Sincerely,

Your Panhellenic Executive Board