



Alpha Epsilon Pi

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP
for the JEWISH COMMUNITY

Dear College or University Administrator,

I write to you today on behalf of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi) with the hope of providing the perspective of a university community member organization. Our stated mission is to develop the future leaders of the Jewish community. We provide substantial value-added programming and training opportunities to your students who affiliate with our fraternity and accordingly better your campus community. We expect our members to make your campus a better place, exhibiting their values and those of our organization. As an extension of these ideals, we thought that sharing some observations could begin a meaningful dialogue that helps universities ensure healthier and safer campus environments.

Student Conduct

It is the responsibility of each university to foster a safe campus environment and to combat prevalent issues common amidst their student populations. Among the most common issues that we see are substance abuse, sexual assault, hazing, physical safety and security, and poor mental wellness.

Alpha Epsilon Pi feels that strong systems of individual accountability are the only way to make a positive impact on campus culture. By contrast, failure to hold individual students accountable for violation of university policy has a negative impact on campus safety. There are certainly cases

where collective accountability is warranted due to the actions of the leadership or broad membership of an organization. In these cases, we would like to encourage you to adopt a system of joint and several accountabilities where each member of an organization is held equally accountable for any corrective actions or sanctions regardless of changes in their membership status or the status of the organization with which they affiliate.

We are not abdicating our role in student accountability. In fact, our chapters maintain their own peer conduct procedures and our headquarters staff provides training and guidance in this area on a consistent basis. To our knowledge,

few other types of student organizations maintain systems for peer accountability -- something we are very proud of.

If there is concern over the conduct of our chapter or its members, we encourage you to proactively contact our headquarters staff. Our authority to intervene is unconstrained so open and honest partnerships can often yield positive changes before the university needs to intervene. We have FERPA waivers for a majority of our individual members. As such, if the university has knowledge of an issue with a student member and fails to share it with us, we consider it to be obstructing our ability to take corrective action. In the worst case scenarios, withholding this information may place the safety of other members or guests at risk. There are some simple steps that we ask you to take to exhibit strong partnership:

- **Ensure that all of your departments and your university police or security force operate with full transparency.** This includes timely compliance with open records requests. Operating private police forces without transparency or accountability contributes to dangerous campus environments and infringes on students' rights to due process.
- **Compile and share statistics on all campus safety incidents.** If possible, share with each community of organizations (i.e., Greeks, athletic teams, clubs, student government, religious organizations, etc.) statistics on safety incidents attributable to their events compared to the university community as a whole.
- **Require all university administrators to copy fraternity headquarters staff and advisors** on correspondence with student leaders related to operations and conduct issues.
- **Allow volunteer advisors and/or fraternity staff to advise or serve as advocates for students or chapters within student conduct proceedings.**

Resourcing for the Greek Community

The college landscape is becoming more complex for undergraduates to navigate. The need to coach and mentor our mutual students has increased dramatically so we ask that you invest in your Greek affairs office at a level that allows those departments to hire and retain talented and dedicated staff. When a university chooses to regulate and monitor a Greek system, it accepts responsibility for appropriate oversight. Failure to maintain appropriate levels of staffing support for the Greek community, commensurate with that maintained for clubs or athletic

teams, has proven to reduce programmatic and safety outcomes. **AEPI continues to invest in our staff to provide our students with appropriate resources. We hope you will join us in investing in appropriate support systems that yield positive outcomes for our students and our organizations.**

There are some simple steps that we ask you to take:

- Ensure that there is no additional fee or tax imposed for participation in Greek life. This system should be supported by existing student fees in a manner commensurate with other student organizations. Imposing extra fees places unfair and undue burden on specific students including economically disadvantaged populations such as first-generation students. We hope that you join us in encouraging equity.
- Look into the budget for services that directly interface with your students and make appropriate allocations based on community participation rates.

Protecting the Jewish Community

We are witnessing an alarming increase in antisemitism in the United States and Canada. **The Antidefamation League reports a 34% increase in antisemitic incidents over the last year. In a study performed by the Louis D. Brandeis Center it was found that 65% of openly Jewish students on campus have felt unsafe and that 50% actively hide their Jewish identity.** We ask for your partnership in creating a safe campus for Jewish students. Following are some simple steps that you can take to combat antisemitism:

- If you have not already done so, please adopt the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance \(IHRA\) definition of Antisemitism](#) so that it is clearly identifiable on your campus.
- Encourage your DEI offices and officers to include Jewish narratives and voices in their initiatives and training.
- Monitor rhetoric in student newspapers and on social media. Antisemitic or racist rhetoric need not be printed in student media which utilize university resources. Your publications are subject to your code of conduct.
- Get engaged with Jewish students on campus by coming to their events and publicly showing your allyship.

- Ensure that your professors do not discriminate against their students based on their Jewish or Zionist identities.
- Ensure that the policies of Greek Counsels support Jewish Community building and Jewish spaces commensurate with those of other minority groups.
- If you maintain a campus police or security force, ensure that they are prepared to liaison with federal agencies on matters of antisemitism and domestic terrorism.

AEPI's International Office, along with our campus partners, are available to provide support in this area of programming and sensitivity. We will follow up throughout the year with opportunities for your staff.

Student Rights

Finally, **we are concerned that student's rights are increasingly threatened by the very academic institutions that have traditionally been strong advocates.** Due process rights, freedom of speech and freedom of association are encroached and infringed upon by many colleges.

Fraternal organizations on your campus are often afforded recognition as student organizations. We prefer to maintain formal alliances with universities, but we are a mission-driven organization and often assert our freedom to exist and perpetuate regardless of university recognition. Likewise, your students have the right to affiliate with any organization of their choosing at any time. This includes fraternal organizations, clubs, political parties, advocacy groups, religious communities, trade associations, or any other type of organization. We encourage you to maintain a stance where this right is recognized and accepted broadly.

Nobody on any campus should have the authority to deny a student of their own due process rights, deny them counsel or representation of their choosing, nor present their case in front of a panel that fails to maintain impartiality. We encourage you to promote adherence to your published rules for disciplinary processes and to make sure that these rules respect students' rights.

Thank you for your time and for your consideration of the topics addressed in this letter. As an organization that teaches and encourages leadership it is important for us to live our values by advocating our positions and encouraging our partner campuses to make small positive changes that could have a large impact.

If you have any questions about any of this, please do not hesitate to contact me at rderdiger@aepi.org. We look forward to continued partnership as members of a shared community.

Sincerely,

Robert Derdiger

Chief Executive Officer

Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity



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