

Dear Campus Partner,

I write to you today on behalf of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi), the Jewish fraternity, with a unique mission of developing the future leaders of the Jewish community. I also write to you with the perspective of a university community member organization which is looking to develop better partnerships to create safe spaces for Jewish students and better outcomes for our mutual students.

The 2023-24 academic year presented many challenges for you and your peers in higher education. In many respects, **we share your concern that the mission of your institutions has been lost in the fog of protest and threats of violence.** As I write this, it is still early summer and **now is the time that we should be deep in discussion about protecting the Jewish community while upholding the values of free speech, independent thought, and equity amongst all of your campus populations.**

For the last two years (in the summers of 2022 and 2023), I have sent you and hundreds of other respected administrators a similar email, in the hopes that sharing some observations could begin a meaningful dialogue that helps universities ensure healthier and safer campus environments. As we approach the 2024-25 academic year, these thoughts and establishing this dialog take on new importance.

Over the years, AEPi has become recognized as the Jewish community's expert on student affairs in higher education, and on higher education policy issues. I implore you to keep an open mind to these suggestions and to engage with us on what we believe to be pragmatic suggestions that will make your campus stronger and safer for all students.

Protecting the Jewish Community

We are witnessing an alarming increase in antisemitism in the United States and Canada. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), since the October 7 terrorist attacks in Israel, antisemitic incidents have surged more than 360%. **Jewish students and their parents are rightfully concerned about your approach this fall to ensuring their safety and guaranteeing that their right to express themselves as proud Jews and/or supporters of Israel are not infringed.** We ask for your partnership in creating a safe campus for Jewish students and Jewish thought.

Following are some simple steps that you can take to combat antisemitism and show your Jewish stakeholders (including your increasingly concerned potential students and alumni) that you are taking steps to make your campus community comfortable for people of all backgrounds and opinion:

1. Insist that all students and student organizations comply with your codes of conduct and the policies and procedures that your campus requires. Do not be afraid to enforce your rules. If fraternities or religious affinity groups (such as Hillel) have to register events, maintain security, and reserve facilities, then all groups should be required to do so. **I urge you not to succumb to the tyranny of the mob. Apply your own code of conduct equally.**
2. If you maintain a campus police or security force, ensure that they are prepared to liaison with federal, state and local agencies on matters of antisemitism and domestic terrorism and that they are aware of Jewish institutions (such as the AEPi house) and places of worship.
3. 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.
4. Monitor rhetoric in student newspapers and on social media. Antisemitic or racist rhetoric should not be printed in student media or on networks which utilize university resources. The First Amendment does not cover hate speech or speech which incites violence. Your students and student organizations are subject to your code of conduct even when operating online and you are therefore responsible for adjudicating their conduct in accordance with your student code(s).
5. Encourage your DEI offices and officers to include Jewish narratives and voices in their initiatives and training of undergraduates and staff.
6. Get engaged with Jewish students on campus by coming to their events and publicly showing your allyship.
7. Ensure that your faculty and fellow administrators do not discriminate against their students based on their Jewish or Zionist identities.
8. Ensure that the policies of Greek Councils and student unions support Jewish community building and Jewish spaces commensurate with those of other minority groups.

AEPi's Antisemitism Response Center (AEPi ARC), a partnership with ADL, is here as a resource to provide confidential consulting on the needs of Jewish students in your

campus community. Helpful resources can be found on the AEPi ARC [website](#). AEPi ARC professionals will follow up throughout the year with opportunities for your staff.

This year – more than ever – you will be judged on how well you protect your Jewish community from vitriolic rhetoric and behavior which often leads to violence. I know you share our concerns about a tragedy happening on a college campus. I cannot urge you any more forcefully to take meaningful steps immediately to protect Jewish students, faculty, and institutions.

Student Conduct

Universities have an ongoing responsibility to foster a safe campus environment and to combat prevalent social and mental/physical/emotional health issues which are common amidst student populations. This includes concerns about substance abuse, sexual assault, hazing, lack of physical safety and security, and poor mental wellness. It is critical that universities foster campus cultures which address and combat these issues rather than accept or perpetuate them.

Alpha Epsilon Pi feels that strong systems of individual accountability are critical to making 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 act. We have FERPA waivers for a vast 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:

1. **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.
2. **Compile and share statistics on all campus safety incidents.</> If possible, share with each community of organizations (Greeks, athletic teams, clubs, student government, religious organizations, etc.) statistics on safety incidents attributable to their events compared to the university community.**
3. **Require all university administrators to copy fraternity headquarters staff and advisors** on correspondence with student leaders related to operations and conduct issues.
4. **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:

1. 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.
2. Look into the budget for services that directly interface with your students and make appropriate allocations based on community participation rates.

Student Rights

Finally, **we are concerned that students' rights are increasingly threatened by the very academic institutions that have traditionally been strong advocates.**

Due process rights, freedoms of speech, and freedom of association are encroached and infringed upon by many colleges, yet the concepts are also weaponized when more convenient not to intervene in violations of codes of conduct. There is a legal balance between the ability to set policy and the obligation not to infringe upon rights, but it depends highly on consistent rather than selective enforcement.

Fraternal organizations on campus are often afforded recognition as student organizations. AEPi prefers to maintain formal alliances with universities, but we are a mission-driven organization and 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 their own due process rights, deny them counsel or representation of their choosing, nor present their case in front of a panel which 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,

Rob Derdiger

Chief Executive Officer

Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity