

STANFORD UNIVERSITY OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: September 23, 2014

To: Inter-Fraternity Council and Inter-Sorority Council,
Fraternity and Sorority Presidents

From: John Etchemendy
Provost

Subject: Policy on Fraternal Organizations Housed on Campus

I am writing to outline a new policy governing the conduct of fraternal organizations housed on the Stanford campus.

As I said in my letter to students of May 30, 2014 responding to the abhorrent emails from a former student that had been circulated in a Stanford fraternity, this is a good time to reflect on our common values and our obligations to one another as members of the Stanford community. While the behavior in that particular incident occurred several years ago, I and many others have great concern about other incidents that have continued to occur at fraternities on campus.

The simple truth is that the broad Greek culture continues to be associated with instances of alcohol abuse, hazing and sexual misconduct. Misogyny and homophobia also continue to have an unfortunate presence in parts of the Greek culture. I realize that not all fraternities or sororities are alike and certainly that not all (indeed perhaps few) members are the source of behavioral problems. Nonetheless, group housing on campus is a privilege, not a right. Fraternities and sororities at Stanford must set appropriate standards for the conduct of their members and monitor that conduct responsibly in order to maintain the privilege.

We need a dramatic and immediate change in Greek culture, so we are taking dramatic and immediate action.

Effective today, the university is instituting a new policy for housed fraternal organizations at Stanford. In any school year, if there is one major violation or three minor violations of university policy or law, the organization will lose its eligibility for on-campus housing. Just as individuals who misbehave can lose the privilege of living on campus, a fraternity or sorority that allows bad behavior on the part of its members, or in its house, can lose the privilege of on-campus housing.

Whether an incident is deemed a major or minor violation depends on the particular

STANFORD UNIVERSITY OFFICE MEMORANDUM

circumstances, but examples of what might be a major violation include a serious injury caused by overconsumption of alcohol, sexual assault by a member, drugging or spiking drinks served at the house, failing to call for needed medical help for seriously intoxicated students, or hazing. A minor violation could include failure to follow university rules for parties, serving alcohol to underage students, or distributing intolerant or disrespectful comments about others (though in egregious circumstances, these too may qualify as major violations).

It is not difficult to understand what behavior we expect. If anyone is unclear, our community standards are set out in the Fundamental Standard as “respect for order, morality, personal honor and the rights of others as is demanded of good citizens.” This principle is further explained at <http://studentaffairs.stanford.edu/communitystandards/policy/fundamental-standard>. Another way to look at it is to ask yourself whether a particular behavior is something you would want your parent or grandparent to hear about, to have described or circulated on the Internet, or to have directed by someone else toward your sister, brother or friend.

The university will determine whether violations have been committed that warrant the organization to be unhoused through an evaluation by a panel of three people appointed by the Provost’s Office, including a faculty member, a staff member from Student Affairs, and a student. For issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault, the panel will include the university’s Title IX Coordinator. The panel’s determination may be appealed to the Provost, and the Provost’s decision will be final.

To complement this policy, Fraternity/Sorority Life in Residential Education is developing a Standards of Excellence program to clarify expectations for all fraternal organizations, housed or not, together with an annual review process to assess each organization’s success meeting those expectations. When organizations are being charged under the new policy, the Provost’s panel may also consider the results of recent annual reviews in making its recommendation.

The loss of housing will be for an indefinite period, and the house will be immediately reassigned either to another fraternal organization or to be operated by Residential and Dining Enterprises. There will be no presumption that the unhoused organization will eventually regain its facility.

Some may feel that it is unfair to take action against an entire fraternity or sorority for the acts of a few. However, housed fraternities and sororities receive a truly extraordinary privilege — a facility on campus to house their members — and that benefit demands accountability. If the organization does not carefully select and police its members, and some of those members behave badly, we can only conclude that the

STANFORD UNIVERSITY OFFICE MEMORANDUM

group does not have the capacity to meet the university's expectations of respectful conduct while living together on campus.

We look forward to working with all fraternities and sororities to implement this policy, as well as to bring about any cultural changes needed to ensure that the policy does not have to be invoked. This is an opportunity for fraternities, sororities and their members to demonstrate leadership, and I am confident that will happen. But the university will also not hesitate to take action when the circumstances require. Thank you for giving these issues the serious reflection they deserve.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "L. Kelly", written in a cursive style.