October 13, 2009

Dear Phi Sigma Sigma Parent:

We hope that this letter finds you well and enjoying another fall semester.

In an effort to keep our Greek parents more involved and informed about the happenings within the Rider Fraternity and Sorority Community, I am writing to provide some information about an incident which occurred within your daughter’s chapter at the end of the spring 2009 semester. After you read through this letter, I encourage you to engage your daughter in a conversation about healthy choices and personal accountability. Only if we work together - parent, student and administrators - will we hope to effect positive change in our community.

During the spring semester, a freshman male student was transported to the hospital due to over consumption of alcohol. Throughout the investigation of the incident, it was discovered that the student had been a guest of at least two rooms in two houses within the Greek Community. One of the organizations allegedly involved was Phi Sigma Sigma. Immediately, I became concerned about the circumstances surrounding this incident. Both organizations were temporarily suspended and asked to cooperate with our office and Public Safety to understand the events that took place.

First, I would like to commend the student leadership of the Phi Sigma Sigma Sorority. These young women provided assistance and demonstrated great understanding throughout the process. They worked to provide information that was necessary for us to understand the full details of the events and worked to find effective and appropriate solutions to remedy any violations found. You should be very proud of the mature response that the women in this organization had as they worked to hold the responsible individuals accountable.

During the investigation, we discovered that some individuals had hosted a few guests in their rooms within the house. It was in one particular room where the underage male student was able to gain access to alcohol. None of this information would have been ascertained if it were not for the help and cooperation of the student leadership. The students were as concerned as we were and eager to resolve the issue through peer accountability.

The sorority enacted their own “standards board” process which levied sanctions on the individuals responsible, mandated group education, and implemented chapter policy changes. We feel that there is a direct correlation between the response generated through the chapter and those which the individuals would have received through the Rider Community Standards process. Additionally, the learning and development that occurred for the sisters not directly involved was greater because of the structure that a sorority provides for group education. No other environment on campus serves as this type of learning laboratory for our students to grow individually, learn from each other, and further define their own personal value systems.
In addition to the steps taken with the individuals, the University has placed the chapter on “Disciplinary Probation” until December 31, 2009. For a sorority chapter, Disciplinary Probation is defined as the time period during which any further violations will likely result in suspension as a recognized organization from the University depending on the offense and the chapter's community standards history. This allows us to work closely with the chapter and monitor for any patterns of behavior that would lead to further incidents. However, since the chapter does not have a history of similar incidents and because they responded so appropriately to our concerns and requests, I anticipate that there will be no further issues.

Overall, we feel that the systems in place to provide oversight, support and accountability within our fraternities and sororities have been strengthened in the past few years. We hope that this additional step of parental notification will increase the dialogue amongst our community members as to the importance of healthy decisions and personal accountability. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 609-896-5235.

Sincerely,

Ada L. Badgley
Director of Greek Life

cc:
C. Threatt, Associate Dean, Residential Programs
K. Fico, President, Phi Sigma Sigma
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Phi Sigma Sigma Chapter File