

FRATERNITY - SORORITY CERTIFICATION OF NON-DISCRIMINATION
AND LOCAL AUTONOMY IN MEMBERSHIP SELECTION

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For the past ten years, fraternities and sororities have signed statements attesting to the fact that they do not discriminate in membership selection on the basis of race, color, or creed.¹ This policy grew out of the 1960 directive of the State Board of Higher Education confirming the fact that discrimination on the basis of race, color and religion cannot be tolerated within the educational system. Between 1960 and 1968, the statements were signed by the chapter president each spring following the election of new house officers. The annual signing served a twofold purpose: ongoing education about the State Board's policy and updating the record. Each chapter was also given the responsibility of keeping on file, in the Dean of Students Office, a current constitution.

In 1967, Presidents Flemming (U of O) and Jensen (OSU) presented to the State Board of Higher Education a statement reconfirming their University's stands on the question of discrimination in membership selection and offered a guideline for action to insure that the possible discriminatory practices in the fraternities and sororities would be eliminated.² The 1967 guidelines were presented because of the concern for lack of local autonomy in membership selection which existed because of the requirement of most sororities and fraternities that a prospective member had to have a "recommendation" signed by an alumnus of that particular group.

In 1969, President Charles E. Johnson reiterated these guidelines and affirmed that the Student Administrative Board was the appropriate organization to implement the policy, subject to his final review.³ His delega-

¹See Appendix A.

²See Appendix B.

³See Appendix C.

tion of this responsibility to the Student Administrative Board was in keeping with the stated responsibility of the Board to grant to student groups or organizations the right to the use of University facilities and to identify themselves with the University.⁴

From 1967 until today, each fraternity and sorority has been working to have the necessary changes made by its national organization to allow it to comply with the new, more comprehensive statement, which reflects the concern for local autonomy in membership selection.⁵ It appears that this task has almost been accomplished, as all fraternities and all but three sororities have complied. The three groups who have not yet filed a signed certification statement are Alpha Phi, Delta Delta Delta, and Sigma Kappa. Each of these groups had a national convention during the summer of 1970, so the S.A.B. delayed action last spring and granted them provisional recognition until the Fall of 1970. This fall, the three groups met with the S.A.B. and each is now in the process of communicating with its national organization to finalize certification.

The S.A.B. has on file, in the Administrative Offices of the Erb Memorial Union, the certified statements and membership selection policies of all recognized student organizations. Each year, the S.A.B. corresponds with all organizations on campus, stating that their recognition is continued with the understanding that the non-discrimination statement signed by previous officers is still valid and that the membership selection procedures on file are unchanged. The responsibility for notifying the S.A.B. of any change rests with the organizations. The consequence of failing to notify the S.A.B. on any change in status is loss of recognition.

⁴See Appendix D., taken from Page 30 of 1970-71 Red Tape Notebook.

⁵See Appendix E.

RECOMMENDATION:

If President Clark reaffirms the guidelines followed under Presidents Flemming and Johnson, and if he further agrees that the S.A.B. is the appropriate organization to carry out these guidelines, then he should request that the S.A.B. take action in this area. The S.A.B. understands that their responsibility is a delegated one from the President of the University and has not communicated with the sororities and fraternities because they thought the President should have an opportunity to review the history of the fraternity - sorority problem and decide if he wished to reaffirm the guidelines set by previous presidents.

If the President does so reaffirm the guidelines, he might also include the following procedural suggestions:

1. In the spring of each year, a letter will be sent by the Student Administrative Board to the newly elected fraternity and sorority presidents. The letter will indicate that the statements and membership selection policies currently on file, and signed by a previous president, will be considered valid unless changes occur which negate the validity of the statement or selection policies.⁶
2. The year of a national convention, a letter will be sent to the new chapter presidents of each fraternity and sorority with a carbon copy to the national president. This will insure that the national organization understands that any constitutional change affecting membership selection must be communicated to the S.A.B.

If this recommendation is acceptable to President Clark, it would allow the S.A.B. to be consistent in its dealings with all campus organizations and at the same time would prevent possible misunderstandings about the University and State Board of Higher Education policies on non-discrimination and need for local autonomy in membership selection.

⁶See Appendix F.