
From: Stefanie Warner <warnes3@rpi.edu>
Sent: Thursday, June 21, 2018 10:20 AM
To: gm@rpi.edu; pu@rpi.edu
Subject: Response to Suspension of Greek Life Rush and Recruitment

Fellow students,

Recently, the RPI administration announced the formation of a Greek Life Task Force to “assess the system, and work with the community to identify what is necessary to enact a long-term, sustainable, and comprehensive culture change to preserve the positive aspects of the Greek system.” This is deeply concerning, especially given the administration’s history of overreach on a wide range of other student issues in recent years.

As stated in the administration’s letter, across the country, a number of Greek Life organizations have been scrutinized, with quite a few of them rightfully penalized for harmful behavior.

We want to be clear, if **any** student organization at RPI—Greek or otherwise—is suspected to have sanctioned or facilitated such egregious activities, we strongly support the Dean of Students Office in using the formal judicial processes outlined in the *Rensselaer Handbook of Student Rights and Responsibilities*. Hazing, substance abuse, and other illegal activities are inexcusable. All clubs and organizations recognized by, or affiliated with, the Rensselaer Union are mandated to include an explicit no tolerance policy for hazing in their constitutions or other governing documents.

Yet, the administration's letter omits the mention of any other student organizations, instead focusing on just the Greek system. Of course such actions are not limited to fraternities and sororities. There are numerous examples of other student organizations and individuals at colleges and universities across the nation that have engaged in actions such as hazing, substance abuse, and other infractions. Actions like these warrant intervention and judicial action by the respective universities and law enforcement.

It is irresponsible to paint our entire Greek system in the light of the improper actions of a select few, such as individual houses across the nation or even isolated incidents at RPI. This harsh generalization ignores the benefits these organizations provide to our students, our school, and our community. Each year, our fraternities and sororities volunteer over 17,000 combined hours of service to our community, and they raise over \$70,000 for various philanthropic causes. Many of our chapters aim to go above and beyond in their philanthropy and have received recognition from RPI and their national organizations for these efforts.

Since the administration’s letter announced the formation of this Task Force, students, staff, and alumni have already begun making their voices heard about their concerns with these changes and about the benefits of Greek Life at RPI. Even though neither of us are members of fraternities or sororities, the value of Greek Life at RPI is very clear to us.

Yesterday, the administration announced the suspension of rush and recruitment activities for the fall semester with the possibility of restoring these activities in the spring. We are alarmed by such a rushed and harmful decision against Greek Life. Given that most students join fraternities and sororities during their first year, this will inevitably restrict the ability for many of our over 1,800 incoming first-year students to join Greek Life at RPI. The lack of new membership will cause irreparable financial harm to these organizations.

Our fraternities and sororities serve as a “home away from home” for the over 1,400 members across our many Greek Life organizations. They provide invaluable leadership and networking opportunities for their members. **Damaging or dismantling an entire system, rather than dealing swiftly with specific infractions, is risky. Doing so could diminish the opportunities for future RPI students.**

We reiterate our unwavering support for promoting responsible conduct by each student and within all student organizations. Of course, we support and encourage prompt intervention to address any improper actions. However, we do not support this comprehensive attack on our Greek Life program.

We are committed to supporting our Greek community as this continues to unfold. We are in close contact with the presidents of the Interfraternity Council and the Panhellenic Council. We have also reached out to administrators regarding our concerns with the Task Force and any rushed changes to our Greek Life program. As we learn more, we will keep you all informed.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to us at gm@rpi.edu and pu@rpi.edu.

Respectfully,

Stefanie Warner
153rd Grand Marshal

Justin Etzine
129th President of the Union