

To: Richard Willis, Chair, Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate, 2015-2016 and  
Paul Lim, Chair, Vanderbilt University Faculty Senate, 2014-2015

From: The Greek Life Task Force Committee of the Faculty Senate

Date: October 9, 2015

Subject: Final Report of Faculty Senate Greek Life Task Force

## **Executive Summary**

Valuing the contributions that Greek Life makes to the Vanderbilt community, appreciating the leadership opportunities that Greek organizations afford their members, and recognizing the importance of student-led governance in these organizations, the Faculty Senate Greek Life Task Force identifies four areas – inclusion, accountability, alignment with the University’s mission for residential life, and purposive programming – in which the current practices of some Greek organizations or the Greek system as it is implemented at Vanderbilt are inconsistent with the goals of both Greek Life and Vanderbilt University.

1. **Inclusion:** The Greek community should reflect the socio-economic diversity and cultural richness of the entire Vanderbilt community. While substantial efforts have been made by the Greek system, at this time the Greek community does not reflect the diversity of the entire Vanderbilt community. The Task Force suggests a number of possible paths for achieving this goal.
2. **Accountability:** The Greek community must be accountable to itself and the university for all of its activities and actions, and should become more accountable than it is at this time. The Task Force has identified potential changes to facilitate continued improvements in accountability.
3. **Alignment with the University’s Mission for Residential Life:** Greek Row currently shares aspects of both off-campus housing and on-campus residential life. The Task Force suggests that Greek Row should become more aligned with on-campus residential life and less similar to off-campus living. The Task Force suggests several mechanisms for better integrating the Greek Houses into the larger Vanderbilt residential living and learning communities.
4. **Purposive Programming:** The Greek Houses must include purposive programming consistent with Vanderbilt’s commitment to enhanced residential living and learning experiences for all students, emphasizing the importance of Greek Houses functioning as one of the residential components of campus life for Vanderbilt undergraduates. The Task Force suggests ways in which the programmatic aspects of Greek Life can be better integrated into the larger aspects of campus culture and the greater goals the faculty envision for the complete education, inside and outside of the classroom, of Vanderbilt undergraduates.

At this time, several aspects of the Greek experience at Vanderbilt are inconsistent with the goals set forward by the faculty and the Board of Trust for all Vanderbilt students. The Task Force recommends potential changes with the intent of making the Greek community more inclusive, increasing the accountability of the students in the Greek community, adjusting certain aspects of Greek Life to become programmatically more congruent with the mission and goals of the larger university, and shifting the living and learning experiences for students participating in Greek Life and living in Greek Houses to be more consistent with the goals of the University for all Vanderbilt undergraduate students. The Task Force recommendations align Greek Life with existing Vanderbilt policy governing student residential, social, and academic life. We are making recommendations that we believe will have important consequences for improving Greek Life at Vanderbilt and that we believe the University, specifically the administration and the students working together, must find ways to implement.

The Task Force also wishes to take this opportunity to compliment our Greek community and its leaders for the very significant changes they have made over the last decade and are continuing to strive to make toward making Greek Life at Vanderbilt more inclusive and healthier. In recognizing the progress made, we also recognize, as do our student leaders, the continuing need for substantial, further change. Some of those changes may require significant revisions of institutional habits and structures that have been in place for decades. Usually, such changes cannot be unilaterally imposed by the administration on the students, nor are the solutions to long-standing problems likely to be easily discovered by the students working by themselves. Progress in building a healthier, more inclusive Greek community that is more accountable to and more closely aligned with the mission of Vanderbilt University must be a joint effort by the students, the faculty, and the administration.

## History

Vanderbilt faculty and administration committees previously reviewed Greek Life in 1954-1955 (committee chair: John Compton), 1972-1973 (committee chair: David Tuleen), and 1997-1998 (committee chair: Lawrence Dowdy). The intent of engaging in this periodic review of Greek Life is to ensure that Greek Life at Vanderbilt is consistent with the educational goals of Vanderbilt University for all the students on our campus. The faculty and administration recognize that Greek Life continues to be an active and important component of campus social and cultural life for many Vanderbilt students and that the Greek Life membership and leadership have made efforts to ensure that the culture and programming of Greek Life evolve with the changing landscape of the university; however, a periodic review of Greek Life is important in order to assess whether these changes are keeping pace with the changes in the University community as a whole. As the University changes, the Greek community must evolve synchronously and positively with the institution in order to retain the support of the faculty and administration.

Notably, both the 1955 and 1998 reports recommended Sophomore Rush. That recommendation was met with substantial resistance and was not implemented at either time. The faculty on the present Task Force revisited the question of whether Rush should be moved to the sophomore year. The committee identified several key benefits to Sophomore Rush consistent with reasons articulated in the previous reports. The committee determined, however, that a more in-depth study would be necessary to fully examine the pros and cons of delaying rush into the sophomore year. Carrying out such a study was not the focus of our committee review. Consequently, we are not making this recommendation.

Both the 1955 and 1973 reviews reported significant concerns that early Rush included blackballing of many students, most significantly (in 1973) students of color. The 1973 report demanded an end to blackballing and led, about a decade later, to local autonomy in the selection of new chapter members and the end of overt racial discrimination in Vanderbilt sororities and fraternities. This social change was of great importance, and we believe the positive changes were a result of collaboration between students, the university, and input from these periodic Greek Life reports. The 1998 report pointed out the dominance of Greek culture on the social and recreational scenes on campus and recommended that the University seek ways to enlarge and expand ways of promoting extra-curricular engagement and cultural activities for all students on campus. Building the Student Life Center and the development of The Commons and the College Halls are direct and indirect consequences of that recognition that the University must define the social and recreational cultural expectations of campus life for all students rather than potentially allow the subset of students participating in Greek Life to define the University culture.

Vanderbilt will continue to change in the coming decades. Greek Life at Vanderbilt must continue to evolve and adapt to the demographic changes that are occurring at Vanderbilt and in the United States if the Greek system is to remain relevant. Without any doubt significant changes have occurred over the last two decades and will continue to occur at Vanderbilt. The question before us now is this: How can we help promote ongoing positive change in the Greek

system at Vanderbilt so that it can remain a positive and influential part of campus culture in the decades to come?

## **Charge to Task Force**

*The Faculty Senate Task Force on Greek Life shall study the Greek system at Vanderbilt from a holistic perspective and make recommendations intended to enhance the functioning of the Office of Greek Life at Vanderbilt and help ensure that the Greek system supports the University's mission. The Task Force should review and evaluate all aspects of Greek Life at Vanderbilt. A particular goal for the Task Force should be to understand and assess how Greek Life organizations contribute to and influence the social, cultural, and educational environment on the Vanderbilt campus. Specific issues that should be addressed are the effects of Greek Life on the recruitment and retention of students to the university, the level of inclusiveness and diversity within the Greek community and the impact of Greek Life on inclusiveness and diversity in the larger university community, the relationship of Greek activities to alcohol and drug use, the effect of Greek Life on the academic experiences of Greek students, the effect of Greek Life on non-Greek students, and the impact of the Martha Rivers Ingram Commons on Greek Life and of Greek Life on the Commons.*

## **Committee Membership**

The following persons, including four current/former/future Faculty Senate Chairs, four Commons Heads of House, and representatives of six colleges/schools, have served as members of this Task Force during the 2013-2014 academic year or during both of the academic years of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 and the first part of 2015-2016:

- Brooke Ackerly. College of Arts & Science. Associate Professor of Political Science;
- Greg Melchor-Barz (committee vice-chair). Blair School of Music, College of Arts & Science, Divinity School. Professor of Musicology, of Anthropology, and of Music and Religion; vice-Chair Faculty Senate 2011-2012; Faculty Head of North House 2007-present; [13-14]
- Donald Brady. School of Medicine. Professor of Medicine; Associate Dean for Graduate Medical Education; Chair Faculty Senate 2013-2014;
- John Braxton. Peabody College. Professor of Higher Education, Department of Leadership, Policy, & Organizations;
- Roger Cone. School of Medicine. Joe C. Davis Chair in Biomedical Science and Chair, Molecular Physiology & Biophysics; Chair, Molecular Physiology & Biophysics Department; Faculty Head of Murray House 2012-present; [13-14]
- Cathy Fuchs. School of Medicine. Professor in Psychiatry; Director of Psychological and Counseling Center; Chair Faculty Senate 2006-2007;
- Chalene Helmuth. College of Arts & Science. Senior Lecturer in Spanish & Portuguese; Faculty Head of Sutherland House 2007-present;
- Brian Heuser. Peabody College. Assistant Professor of the Practice, International Education Policy; Senior Research Fellow, Office of the Dean of Students;

- Paul Lim. Divinity School. Associate Professor in History of Christianity; Chair Faculty Senate 2014-2015; Faculty Head of Crawford House 2007-2015;
- William H. Robinson. School of Engineering. Associate Professor in Electrical Engineering and Computer Engineering;
- Kyla Terhune. School of Medicine. Associate Professor in Surgery and Anesthesiology; Program Director, General Surgery Division; Faculty Head of Hank Ingram House 2011-present;
- Joseph Wehby. Peabody College. Associate Professor of Special Education; Chair, Student Life Committee of Faculty Senate 2013-2014;
- David A. Weintraub (committee chair). College of Arts & Science. Professor of Astronomy; Chair Faculty Senate 2011-2012.

## **Review of Activities of the Task Force**

The Task Force met once per month in the Fall 2013 semester and every other week in the Spring 2014 semester to thrash out ideas and determine issues on which to focus. The Task Force continued to meet bi-weekly through the 2014-2015 academic year and concluded its work with a series of meetings during the first two months of the 2015-2016 academic year.

The Task Force held meetings with student leaders representing various Greek leadership organizations, with the goal of identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Greek system, from the perspective of the students. The Task Force met, as a whole, with the leadership of the Interfraternity Council (twice), the leadership of the Panhellenic Council (three times), and the leadership of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (twice). Members of the Task Force also met, individually and in smaller groups, with smaller groups of sorority and fraternity members multiple times. The Task Force met, as a whole, with 2013-2014 Vanderbilt Student Government President Isaac Escamillia and with 2014-2015 Vanderbilt Student Government President Tanner Owen. Additional meetings included one with a Student Leadership Summit, with Associate Provost and Dean of Students Mark Bandas, multiple meetings with the staff of the Office of Greek Life, and a meeting with the University's Chief General Counsel Audrey Anderson.

The Task Force initially focused on defining the scope of its work. Vanderbilt's student organizations include many Greek organizations that do not operate under the auspices of the Office of Greek Life. These include the many honorific fraternities and sororities, several disciplinary organizations that have Greek-like activities, including the payment of dues, a national organization, and formal events, and other groups that self-identify as fraternities (e.g., BYX) but choose not to register as student organizations. Ultimately, the Task Force limited the scope of its work to those groups officially registered as Greek organizations with the Office of Greek Life.

After developing a set of preliminary recommendations during the spring and summer of 2015, the Task Force held a series of three meetings jointly with four 2015-2016 student leaders --- National Pan-Hellenic Council President Mwamba Rebecca Mvula, Interfraternity Council President Kevin Groll, Panhellenic Council President Jennifer Warner, and Vanderbilt Student

Government President Elizabeth Shahnasarian --- and Director of Greek Life Kristin Torrey. The third of these meetings also included Randy Tarkington, Senior Director of Residential Education from the Office of Housing and Residential Education. As an immediate result of these meetings, the Office of Greek Life implemented one preliminary recommendation of the Task Force (a change in the written policy on the use of bartenders to state clearly and insure, going forward, that these persons must be licensed bartenders; in doing so, the written policy now matches the actual current practice of the Office of Greek Life); consequently, the Task Force removed this proposed recommendation from this report. The Task Force and student leaders engaged in very direct and spirited discussions about the possible consequences, intended and unintended, of the remaining recommendations. As a result of these conversations, the Task Force made significant revisions in the recommendations that are presented in this report to the Faculty Senate.

In the end, the recommendations in this report, which are endorsed unanimously by all thirteen members of the Task Force, are those of the Task Force alone; although the Task Force sought input and responses from students and staff in involved and impacted areas of campus life, the Task Force did not ask for approval or endorsement of these recommendations from the student leaders, the Office of Greek Life, the Office of Housing and Residential Education, or any other office or group on campus. These recommendations are now submitted to the Faculty Senate for debate and, the Task Force hopes, full endorsement, at which time they would be sent forward to the provost for implementation.

## **Analytics Report**

A subcommittee (Braxton, Fuchs, Heuser) performed an in-depth review of survey data. The survey data provides comparisons of Greek and non-Greek cohorts related to, among other matters, diversity, student involvement in Greek and non-Greek organizations, academics, and substance use patterns. The subcommittee report is based on student-level data from six sources:

- i. The Quality of Life Survey – administered by the Office of the Dean of Students (results from Spring 2014): these data can be sorted to allow a review of relationships between Greek Life/Non-Greek Life and substance use, demographics, academic environment, community involvement;
- ii. The Education Benchmarking Institute (EBI) Survey – facilitated by the Office of Greek Life/Office of the Dean of Students (results from Summer 2014);
- iii. Office of Greek Life Outcomes Assessment Results - facilitated by the Office of Greek Life/Office of the Dean of Students (results from Summer 2014);
- iv. Greek v. Non-Greek Graduating Student Survey Results (results from Summer 2014);
- v. Greek Life Task Force Data Report (results from Summer 2014);
- vi. Data provided by Vanderbilt Development and Alumni Relations.

The conclusions of the Analytics subcommittee are reported in the attached appendix. We summarize those conclusions below, because of their importance for our work.

1. Greek Life members demonstrate congruence with the academic mission of Vanderbilt

University. Such congruency finds expression in the similarities with unaffiliated students on reported number of hours per week spent studying, cumulative grade point averages, and their perception that non-class interactions with faculty members have had a positive influence on their intellectual growth and interests. Moreover, Greek Life members also express a higher degree of satisfaction with their academic experience at Vanderbilt University than do unaffiliated peers.

2. A lack of diversity exists within the ranks of Greek Life members. This lack of diversity transpires across racial and economic lines as Greek Life members are predominantly white Caucasians, are less likely than unaffiliated students to receive Pell Grants and more likely than unaffiliated students to demonstrate no financial need when applying for financial aid.
3. Greek Life members tend to drink alcohol more frequently than unaffiliated students. Greek Life members also report more marijuana use.
4. The social experiences of unaffiliated students differ strongly from those of Greek Life members. In contrast to Greek Life members, unaffiliated students indicate a lower degree of satisfaction with their social experiences at Vanderbilt and also find it more difficult to make friends with other students.

These conclusions provide the basis for the deliberations and final recommendations of the Greek Life Task Force.

## Recommendations

### 1. **20-hour weekly maximum New Member Education Hours [Rationale: *accountability; alignment with the University's mission for residential life; purposive programming*]**

Current Interfraternity Council rules allow fraternities to mandate up to 30 hours per week of participatory activities for new members as part of 'new member education' programs, i.e., pledging and initiation activities. Fifteen of these 30 hours are designated by current Interfraternity Council rules to be study hours. Note that 30 hours per week is more than 4 hours per day, 7 days per week, during which the fraternity leadership is able to dictate the activities of the members of their organizations.

For perspective, the NCAA does not permit varsity coaches more than 20 hours per week of contact hours with players. The NCAA further mandates at least one day per week as a day of rest.

For additional perspective, the traditional academic rule is that students should spend three hours per week outside of the classroom studying for every hour spent in class. Thus, for a three-credit-hour class a student is expected to commit approximately 12 hours per week of total effort. Pledging, at 30 hours per week of total effort, therefore could be considered equivalent to a 7.5-credit-hour class, or one-half of a full course load.

The committee finds the number of hours potentially committed to fraternity 'new member education' programs out of balance with the level of commitment appropriate to an extracurricular activity during the academic year. Based on the reference points of sports and academics, we recommend a 12-15 hour per week ideal and 20 hour per week maximum for all mandated pledging and associated activities for new members (including any and all mandated activities, including required attendance at study halls, parties, community service activities or meetings).

The Task Force wishes to encourage Greek organizations to continue to encourage their members to devote significant hours each week to studying; however, we recommend that the concept of mandated study halls --- be in this place at this time to study, while well intentioned, is not always the best means for improving studying and classroom performance for all students. The Task Force recommends that fraternities and sororities consider replacing mandated study hall hours with more individualized means of encouraging good study habits. Student members, for example, could be encouraged and rewarded for studying, whether in the library alone, in the Commons with friends or classmates, or elsewhere.

The Task Force recognizes that at Vanderbilt at this time, fraternities (some, not all), and not sororities, are generally the organizations that require more than 20 hours per week of committed activity from their new members during new member education programs. Also, the Task Force understands that some of the National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations



may have new member education programs that include more activities than they believe can be easily accommodated within the recommended 20 hour per week limit. If this is the case, then these organizations should adjust their expectations for new members so that the new member education programs become less all-consuming of their members' time, as the Task Force believes that joining a Greek membership organization is an activity that should happen in parallel with the other activities in which first-year students should be involved, but should not be so demanding as to force students to give up participating in other extracurricular and social activities. The recommended policy applies to all Greek organizations, but will require programmatic changes only for those that currently exceed the 20 hours per week limit.

The Office of Greek Life should monitor the number of new member education hours imposed on new members by each organization, and should be informed of what those hours include and where new members will be for all of those required hours. The Office of Greek Life should develop a policy for sanctions on organizations and on the officers of those organizations if the limit on hours is not honored.

2. **A) Hire an Area Coordinator (through the Office of Housing and Residential Education) responsible for the residents in all of the Greek Chapter Houses in addition to all of the undergraduate students in off campus housing; B) hire at least one and preferably three Graduate Resident Assistants (through the Office of Greek Life) to live on Greek Row and support the work of both the Greek Row/off-campus Area Coordinator and the Director of Greek Life; C) require all Greek Chapter presidents to participate in training programs for Resident Assistants (RAs) [*accountability; alignment with the University's mission for residential life*]**

A) We recommend that the Office of Housing and Residential Education hire a full-time Area Coordinator<sup>1</sup> specifically responsible for 1) the students living in all of the Greek Chapter Houses and 2) all of the Vanderbilt undergraduates living off campus while enrolled at Vanderbilt.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Area Coordinators, who work under the supervision of the Associate Director of Residential Education, are full-time professional staff members who hold post-baccalaureate degrees. They live in their areas, are equipped with cell phones, and are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Area Coordinator is available to:

- respond to emergencies,
- accompany sick and injured students to the emergency room,
- advise student government organizations,
- counsel individual students,
- promote and assist in the planning of residence hall programming,
- investigate and resolve student disciplinary matters.

<sup>2</sup> While this Task Force is not tasked with matters related to undergraduates living off campus, as part of our work we did learn from Senior Director of Residential Education Randy Tarkington that he has no staff specifically tasked with the job of Area Coordinator for students residing off campus and that he would welcome support for a staff person in that role. Normally, an Area Coordinator has 500-600 students under their immediate supervision, and the number of students on Greek Row (about 140) represents only about 25% of an Area Coordinator's normal supervisory load. The combined numbers of students on Greek Row plus those living off campus are, together, about 600. Thus, this proposal not only corrects what this committee has identified as a serious deficiency in how

B) We recommend that the Office of Housing and Residential Education and the Office of Greek Life work together to identify and hire up to three Graduate Resident Assistants. These Graduate Resident Assistants, who should not be affiliated members of any sorority or fraternity, would live on Greek Row and work out of the Office of Greek Life. They would provide the first level of emergency and crisis response on Greek Row, as they would in other on-campus student residences. They would provide the on-the-ground follow-up to any emergency and crisis management issues that emerge and that are initially managed by the Area Coordinator. They would be trained, as are all Resident Assistants, in suicide prevention, and educated about sexual assault, eating disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, and other issues associated with promoting healthier living for all Vanderbilt students. They would be trained, as are all Resident Assistants, to go back into their assigned communities to have conversations with students about these healthy living environment issues. They would also work for the Director of the Office of Greek Life in ways that support the evolving needs of that office.

C) We recommend that the presidents of all Greek Chapters be required by the Office of Greek Life and the Associate Director of Residential Education to participate in the training sessions for Resident Assistants, run by the Office of Housing and Residential Education.

These recommendations are a direct response to the need to include the Greek Chapter Houses as part of the living and learning communities in which our students live. So long as students continue to live in the Greek Chapter Houses, which (with one exception) are owned and maintained by Vanderbilt University and are on land owned by Vanderbilt University, the University should, to the extent possible, provide as close to the same level of oversight, support, and protection that would be provided to students in all other campus housing units managed by the Office of Housing and Residential Education. The addition of an Area Coordinator and a small number of Graduate Resident Assistants to Greek Row, and the training of Chapter Presidents who live in the Chapter Houses as if they were Resident Assistants, is particularly important in order to monitor the general living environments on Greek Row and ensure that policies and standards for residence halls are upheld, promote safer and healthier living for all the students under the care of Vanderbilt University, hold students accountable for actions and conduct within the houses, and ensure the protection of the facilities.

**3. Include Faculty Fellows in the Greek Life Community [*accountability; alignment with the University's mission for residential life; purposive programming*]**

Congruent with the University's ongoing commitment to enhancing the residential living and learning experience at Vanderbilt, we recommend that the Vice Provost for Learning and Residential Affairs appoint a Faculty Fellow (*not a live-in faculty member*) for all Greek organizations (very small organizations might share a single Faculty Fellow). These Faculty

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the Office of Housing and Residential Education manages Greek Row but it corrects that same deficiency for our off campus students in a way that makes financial sense.

Fellows would serve a similar role to those faculty members already engaged in Vanderbilt Visions, the Commons, the College Halls, the Mayfield Living Learning Centers, the McGill Experience, and the McTyeire International House. Based on our committee's data, faculty out-of-class interactions are an important, welcome aspect of the college experience for Greek members, and the addition of a Faculty Fellow for each organization would increase the number and intensity of those interactions.

Faculty Fellows would become familiar with the Greek Life Standards and serve to advance the social, academic and values acculturation of Greek members. They would be paid for their service, commensurate with the stipend granted to Faculty VUceptors, and would work in direct coordination with the Vice Provost for Learning and Residential Affairs and the Dean of Students. Faculty Fellows would be expected to meet regularly with their respective organizations, to discuss all matters of campus/academic life at Vanderbilt with members, and would be expected to increase their presence with their assigned organizations during times of Rush or other significant Greek commitments. The exact nature of each Faculty Fellow's involvement with their associated Chapter would evolve and would be uniquely defined by the times and by the needs and desires of both the individual Chapter and the University.

**4. Public declarations of support for Inclusivity [*accountability; inclusion*]**

We commend the Interfraternity Council for developing and adopting the Inclusivity Compact in 2015. We urge both the Panhellenic Council and the National Pan-Hellenic Council organizations to develop and endorse their own public declarations in support of full inclusivity.

**5. Effective in the 2019-2020 academic year, only third year and higher students should live in Greek Chapter Houses. Effective with the completion of the College Halls system, one hundred percent of our students should live in the College Halls communities and the Greek Chapter Houses should become completely non-residential facilities, without exception [*accountability; purposive programming; alignment with the University's mission for residential life*]**

Vanderbilt is a residential university for our undergraduate student community. In deciding to be a residential university, we long ago collectively embraced a philosophical principle of fundamental importance to the foundation of a Vanderbilt undergraduate education: *a critically important part of the education of the undergraduate students who choose to become Vanderbilt students is that they spend their four years in residence as members of our intentionally-designed residential communities.* This fundamental principle underlies this recommendation.

The faculty and the Board of Trust of Vanderbilt University are bound together by a single duty: to define the structure of the educational mission of the university. The Board of Trust approves the very creation of the Colleges and Schools. The faculty define the curricula.

Certain aspects of the educational mission, however, they do together, such as create degree-granting programs.

One of the most fundamental decisions made by the Board of Trust and embraced by the faculty is that Vanderbilt University is a residential university. In 1952, the Board of Trust put in place a *Residential Requirement for Vanderbilt Undergraduates*. As expressed in the 2014-2015 Student Handbook<sup>3</sup>:

The Residential Requirement, established by the Board of Trust in 1952, states that “All unmarried undergraduate students, except those who live at home with their families in Davidson County, must live in residence halls on campus during the academic year, May session, and summer sessions. Authorization to live elsewhere is granted at the discretion of the Director of Housing Assignments in special situations, or when space is unavailable on campus.”

As further explained in the Student Handbook section on Housing,

The residential experience is regarded as an integral part of a Vanderbilt undergraduate education. The mission of the Office of Housing and Residential Education is to provide the residential experience to as many undergraduate students as can be physically accommodated.

Vanderbilt is a residential University. All unmarried undergraduate students — regardless of class standing or seniority — are required to live in on-campus residential housing unless the University grants a student authorization to live off-campus. The residential requirement is binding for the student’s entire undergraduate education.

While the Board of Trust put this philosophy in place in 1952, only with the creation of the Commons in the 2000s and the ground-breaking for the Warren and Moore residential colleges in the 2010s did the University fully embrace the very philosophy that lies at the heart of a Vanderbilt undergraduate education. Now and into the foreseeable future, one of the hallmarks of a Vanderbilt undergraduate education, indeed one of the cornerstones that will continue to make an education on the campus of Vanderbilt University of almost immeasurable value as the landscape of higher education evolves, will be the opportunity for a young person to live in a designed residential community on the campus of a great research university and, as a result, to have the opportunity to become deeply and fully immersed in the life and culture of one of the greatest research universities in the world 24/7 for four years. Indeed, living in such a community is by itself at least as enriching as an immersion experience as an immersion experience in research or creative expression or study abroad. Such opportunities do not exist at major public universities, at liberal arts colleges, or at community colleges. This approach to undergraduate education is, in fact, the niche that defines Vanderbilt University as a nearly unique place in the world of higher education. We must do everything we can possibly do to enhance and enrich this aspect of this University.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student\\_handbook/residential-life/](http://www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/residential-life/)

The Board of Trust has now spent over three hundred million dollars putting our money where our philosophy lives, and we are likely to invest hundreds of millions of additional dollars finishing our College Halls system over the next two decades. Once we have invested nearly a billion dollars in the infrastructure that undergirds our educational philosophy, we should do everything in our power to ensure that our students enjoy the benefits of that enormous financial commitment of our board members, alumni, and friends. With all of these ideas and principles in mind, the Greek Life Task Force makes the following recommendation:

The goal of Vanderbilt University should be that with the completion of the College Halls system, one hundred percent of our students should live in the College Halls communities.

An immediate corollary of this goal is that having any students live in the Greek Houses is antithetical to the educational goals and mission of the faculty and Board of Trust.

Therefore, the Task Force also recommends the following:

Upon completion of the College Halls system, the Greek Chapter Houses should become completely non-residential facilities, without exception.

The timeframe for achieving these two related goals should be set by the chancellor and provost based on the construction plans for completing the College Halls system. Ultimately, achieving these goals will return the Greek Chapter Houses to what the Task Force argues is their true purpose: building and nurturing communities. They become places for meetings, meals, parties, ritual events, event planning and socializing.

In moving toward these two long-term goals, we recommend at this time an important intermediate step:

Only third year and higher students should live in Greek Chapter Houses. More specifically, no sophomores should live in the Chapter Houses.

At this time, only a very limited number of sophomores live in only a small number of Chapter Houses and in the shared National Pan-Hellenic Council residences. The Task Force recognizes that some complicated issues must be negotiated and managed jointly by some of the Greek organizations, the Office of Greek Life, and the Office of the Dean of Students in order for the University to achieve this goal. For example, many Chapters have local or even national rules that require that certain elected officers live in their Chapter Houses.

A Vanderbilt University rule that precludes sophomores from residing in the Chapter Houses might therefore have unintended and perhaps problematic consequences for some Chapters, if implemented immediately. The faculty and administration may have to help the Chapters manage these issues. For the affected Chapters, one solution that they could choose to

implement on their own would be to limit the slates of candidates for certain officer positions to only those members of their organizations eligible to live in the Chapter Houses, if elected. Other solutions are possible and should be discussed. Vanderbilt University, of course, has the right and duty to define the educational parameters for our students, and if Vanderbilt redefines the educational landscape in this way, then the fraternities and sororities that wish to be members of the Vanderbilt community will adjust and find ways to embrace our structures.

Because the Task Force recognizes that solving these and other problems associated with limiting those in residence in Greek Chapter Houses to third year students and higher will take some time and effort, we recommend a period of three years for this transition to a system of Greek Housing that includes only third year and higher students. The Office of Greek Life and the Office of Housing and Residential Education, together, should be able to transition to and fully implement this rule in time for the 2019-2020 academic year.

**6. A) Meaningfully address the socio-economic-status problem for Greek Life by 2025; B) Create *Affording Greek Life*, a before-you-start appraisal of the real costs associated with going Greek. [*accountability; inclusion*]**

The single biggest problem for Greek Life at Vanderbilt in the coming decade is the increasing divide between those students who can afford Greek Life and those students who cannot afford Greek Life.

This Task Force will not impose a solution to this problem but is recommending a time-frame on which the problem should be effectively and consistently addressed: by 2025 Greek Life at Vanderbilt should be socio-economically indistinguishable from the Vanderbilt student body, based on the same kinds of statistical metrics used by this Task Force to identify the differences between the two groups in 2015. Over the coming decade, the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee should use these, or similar, survey metrics to assess the changes and/or progress in Greek Life, with respect to various socio-economic status indicators, and report at least biennially to the full Senate on these results.

While the Task Force is not proposing or imposing a solution to this problem, we do wish to suggest boundaries around future solutions that groups of student, faculty, and administrative leaders might develop to solve the problem.

- i. The actual solutions to this problem must emerge from the students themselves with the support of faculty and staff through dialogue and review of data assessing change. The Task Force is aware that Greek student leaders are already discussing multiple approaches that might at least begin to address this problem.
- ii. The students' own financial resources should be used to solve the problem. The Greek organizations are student social organizations. We suggest that student social organizations need to solve their organizational problems with their own financial resources. They should not ask the University to use University resources to solve their socio-economic and cultural problems.

- iii. *Experience Vanderbilt* (or an equivalent program) funds should not be used for Greek dues or expenses. Greek dues are not like an Alternative Spring Break participation fee. Unless every student has the expectation that he or she will be invited to join a Greek organization, such organizations remain private, closed groups and such groups should not have the privilege of gaining Vanderbilt University money for the payment of individual students' dues (or other Greek-related expenses).
- iv. The Task Force believes that philanthropy from Greek alumni might help alleviate current problems on an annual, ongoing basis; however, the establishment of an endowment(s) managed by Vanderbilt University for the payment of Greek dues or other Greek expenses would divert possible alumni giving from areas of greater current and future, long-term value to the University. Therefore the creation of such an endowment is contrary to the greater-good interests of the University as a whole and we recommend against allowing the creation of such an endowment.

The Task Force wishes to note that Greek Life already receives enormous financial support from the University, and if the recommendations of this proposal are enacted they will receive even more. The University allows the Greek community to use valuable property for the purpose of parking their cars and siting their Houses. The University pays for the staffing of the Office of Greek Life and the many outreach and training programs that flow through that office in support of Greek Life. The University pays for the safety and security of the streets and the neighborhood and buildings of Greek Row, though Campus Security. With all of this in mind, the Task Force suggests that the financial resources of the University (i.e., *Experience Vanderbilt* or an equivalent program) should not be used to solve this problem for the Greek community.

The Task Force suggests the following ideas that future committees trying to solve this problem might consider. Among the ideas the committee discussed are the following, some of which, we are aware, the student leaders already have under discussion in some form:

- i. allocate a portion of each member's dues (\$50? \$100?) to a scholarship fund and use the existing (confidential) machinery of *Opportunity Vanderbilt* to help determine an individual's level of eligibility for scholarship support;
- ii. find ways to reduce the cost of joining and participating in the Greek system: sponsor fewer and/ or more affordable parties (example- reduce the cost of the annual formal by identifying local sites for the occasion), buy fewer t-shirts, stickers and coolers, require fewer meals;
- iii. find other ways to reduce expenses in order to reduce the costs of Greek membership for everyone.

The Task Force also recommends the creation of a program we call *Affording Greek Life* that would provide a before-you-start appraisal of the real costs associated with going Greek. To this end,

- i. The Office of Greek Life should publish *the actual costs of membership* in each fraternity and sorority each year before Rush begins and offer "Affording Greek Life" information sessions to all potential members. At these sessions, Greek Life staff can outline and explain methods of paying, explain any possible scholarship

- opportunities, and inform students about how the amounts of need-based funding support would be determined (presumably, based on a model that is matched to a student's financial aid package).
- ii. The Office of Greek Life should *provide individualized pre-Rush cost estimates to students*: If and when any scholarship programs come into existence, students should be advised before Rush what their scholarship award would be, so that they would know, before choosing to Rush, what their out-of-pocket costs would be, before the recruitment process begins.

**7. The Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee should monitor these recommendations**

For the foreseeable future, the Faculty Senate should include as a standing charge to the Student Affairs Committee a recommendation to monitor progress on the recommendations of this Task Force.



## Further Comments and Concerns

The two points raised below are not recommendations of the Task Force; rather, they are concerns raised during the deliberations of the Task Force that are of sufficient importance to merit mention in this report.

### 1. Create *Experience Vanderbilt*

The *Opportunity Vanderbilt* scholarship program has triggered some of the most important cultural and demographic shifts in the history of Vanderbilt University within our student body and on our campus. The Task Force fully supports the full implementation of *Opportunity Vanderbilt*. We do wish to point out, as other groups on campus have noted in recent years, that *Opportunity Vanderbilt* has had unintended negative consequences. *Opportunity Vanderbilt* allows some students to obtain a Vanderbilt education who otherwise would be unable to afford to do so; *Opportunity Vanderbilt* does not, however, pay the full cost of participating fully in the Vanderbilt undergraduate experience, including the costs of participating in programs like Alternative Spring Break or the additional costs of a study abroad experience or the membership fees for certain student organizations. Thus, *Opportunity Vanderbilt* has created two Vanderbilt communities. The first community includes those who can afford Vanderbilt on their own; those students can also afford to participate in Alternative Spring Break, the Manna Project, to pay club dues, and to affiliate with the Greek system. The second community includes those who are at Vanderbilt only because *Opportunity Vanderbilt* opened the door; those students often cannot afford to participate in Alternative Spring Break, to join some of the other clubs, or to affiliate with the Greek system.

The lack of diversity in Greek communities is found in many metrics; however, because of the large increase in recent years of less financially well-off students due to the success of *Opportunity Vanderbilt*, the high cost of membership in the large, socially dominant, predominantly white organizations is an expanding problem that divides the student population at Vanderbilt on a larger scale than what occurred in past decades.

The socio-economic divide that is manifest in Greek Life is arguably the largest cultural division on Vanderbilt's campus in 2015. Specifically, the wealthier students can join the Greek system, the students of lower socio-economic status cannot. Yes, in previous years, before *Opportunity Vanderbilt*, not all students chose to go Greek, and financial issues have always been a factor separating Greek from non-Greek for a subset of students. The financial disparities, however, are greater now leading to a change in the narrative. With *Opportunity Vanderbilt* the University has increased the number of students on campus who might choose to go Greek but who cannot afford the \$1,000-or-more per semester dues plus the additional hidden expenses for t-shirts, stickers, party clothes, food and cab fares. A campus on which the students from wealthy families have the option of affiliating with the Greek system and the students on scholarship have no choice but to remain independent is a campus on which

diversity is not adequately addressed. We have become that campus. *Opportunity Vanderbilt* represents the best ideals for opening the doors of educational opportunity to all, based on merit. Greek Row now represents the opposite: the doors are open only to those who have the financial status that affords them the ability to write the checks. While a small amount of scholarship money is available within the Greek system to support a few students in need, those funds are not sufficient to cover the costs of both membership and active participation for more than a handful of students. Greek Row, today, is akin to what Vanderbilt University was like in and before 1980: a great university open only to the privileged few.

The Task Force would like to encourage Vanderbilt University to fund the full cost of a Vanderbilt Education for *Opportunity Vanderbilt* students via what the students have called *Experience Vanderbilt*. The full cost of a college education at Vanderbilt is more than room, board, books and tuition. The Task Force, however, is not convinced that *Experience Vanderbilt* dollars should be used to pay the membership costs associated with organizations, such as Greek letter organizations, that are not open to all students. The problem of solving the socio-economic divide that exists in the current Greek system needs to be solved, the Task Force believes, with private dollars as long as participation is not open to all students.

## **2. Greek Responsibility: Stepping Up and Stepping Forward**

The Task Force suggests that the Greek Life leadership and membership should work with the Faculty Senate Student Affairs Committee to explore the Greek membership responsibilities to the University.

The Greek organizations need to lead, to solve problems, to take on big issues in big ways. The Task Force has emphasized, in its conversations with Greek organization leaders that Vanderbilt's Greek organizations have the power and influence on the Vanderbilt campus to influence significant change, not just within the Greek community but across the entire campus, should they choose to do so. The Inclusivity Compact, adopted by Interfraternity Council in 2015, is an example of doing exactly that, as is the partnership with the Mary Parrish Center as part of Greek Week Lights on the Lawn. What else can the Greek organizations step forward and do?

- Contribute toward solutions that reduce irresponsible drinking on campus. We note that Greek organization student leaders self-identified, in our meetings, alcohol and illegal substance abuse as the biggest concerns within their communities.
- Contribute solutions toward reducing body-image and eating-related disorders for all students (not just for Greek women).
- Contribute meaningful solutions toward solving the campus-wide problem of sexual assault, which is very strongly correlated with alcohol abuse.
- Engage in dialogue re: the socio-economic issues that have resulted in increasing disparity between the affiliated and non-affiliated students among the Vanderbilt student community.

## Conclusions

We can make three predictions as to what the Vanderbilt world will look like for Vanderbilt undergraduates in two decades, at about the time the University is likely to undertake a survey of Greek Life again. 1) Fraternities and sororities will still exist at Vanderbilt. 2) A complete College Halls system will exist at Vanderbilt. 3) The Vanderbilt community of undergraduates will be both more culturally diverse and have a larger percentage of international students than it has today.

We believe that fraternities and sororities can continue to have a place at Vanderbilt in the decades to come; however, Vanderbilt's Greek organizations should use their positions of strength and their strong working relationships with Vanderbilt's administrative leaders to lead their organizations forward. The unique structure of Vanderbilt and Vanderbilt's Greek system allows for the possibility of rapid, substantive, and meaningful change.

In the 1970s, Vanderbilt's Greek organizations demanded the right to integrate their communities when many of their national organizations tried to prevent that change from happening. While this Task Force does not know whether the habits, views and cultural preferences of any of the national organizations will make local change difficult at this time, Vanderbilt's Greek Chapters must assert themselves as leaders of their own communities and find ways to become as culturally diverse and as socio-economically inclusive as the larger Vanderbilt community. Vanderbilt's Greek community must quickly evolve to become representative of Vanderbilt and become open to all of Vanderbilt students, not just those with the most financial resources. And Vanderbilt's Greek community must accept the responsibility for leadership that comes with the many privileges given to them by virtue of having the support of an Office of Greek Life and Chapter Houses on Greek Row. If the Greek community fulfills their obligations for leadership and is welcoming to all of Vanderbilt's many demographically distinct communities, then it will continue to merit the special privileges that are now given to it.

Vanderbilt's students, most certainly including all of the student leaders of our Greek organizations with whom the members of this Task Force have met and been privileged to work over the last two and a half years, are very strong leaders. They, collectively, are a force for change and a force for good on the Vanderbilt campus. Together, they have the vision and the ability to make change happen both within their organizations and on our campus. We look forward to watching our current and future student leaders, working with the support of our faculty and administration, make positive change happen at Vanderbilt.