

Preamble to *Final Report of Faculty Senate Greek Life Task Force*
April 4, 2016

The recommendations contained in the *Final Report of Faculty Senate Greek Life Task Force* are intended to represent a framework for evolutionary change both in the culture of the Greek student community at Vanderbilt and in the relationships of that community to the independent students at Vanderbilt and to the faculty of the University.

The recommendations of the Task Force should be embraced in the spirit of adaptability and flexibility. The recommendations are based on fundamental philosophical principles about the University as currently understood and should be implemented within the parameters that recognize the dynamic and evolving nature of Vanderbilt. The Task Force recognizes that one size does not fit all leading, to the potential for unintended consequences to recommended changes; this emphasizes the critical importance of dynamic rather than static application of the recommendations.

The historical structure of the Greek organizations is diverse, which introduces challenges to making general recommendations regarding Greek life at Vanderbilt. For example, there are unique aspects of NPHC organizations that introduce the need for possible exceptions to some of the Task Force recommendations. One difference is the new member education process for NPHC organizations, which is not identical to the process for other Greek organizations. NPHC students, for example, might be asked by their nationals to attend a full-weekend, off-campus educational program. Attending such a program would require a participating NPHC student member to commit more than 20 hours in a single week to the new member education program, in violation of the proposed recommendation #1. The Task Force recognizes the importance of such activities for the individual student member and the NPHC chapters and encourages the Office of Greek Life to make reasonable exceptions to the general rule in circumstances such as this one.

The Task Force also wishes to emphasize that the recommendations in the *Final Report* are intended to both address current problems and to be forward-looking. While the Task Force is unable to predict the future, we all recognize that Vanderbilt University is not a culturally static entity. Virtually all aspects of the University change, sometimes on a timescale of a few years, other times on a time frame of a few decades. We know that Vanderbilt today is not the Vanderbilt of yesteryear and that Vanderbilt in 2050 will be different from Vanderbilt today. In the 1950s, Vanderbilt students and faculty were predominantly white, Christian and southern. Today, the Vanderbilt community is multicultural, multiracial, multiethnic, and international, though not as diverse in all these ways as it will be in 2025. Some changes are unpredictable but others, for example the transition to a complete residential college system for our undergraduate student community, are predictable. We should focus on general principles such as development of a residential college system while maintaining an approach to change that is responsive to our evolving culture.