

Maggie von Stein
Attn: Greek Life Office
600 S. Clyde Morris Blvd
Daytona Beach, FL 32114

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National Panhellenic Conference
3901 West 86th Street, Suite 398
Indianapolis, IN 46268

NPC Board Members;

This correspondence is with regard to the enforcement of Unanimous Agreement X, its negative effects on Greek life, a violation of our Freedom of Speech and discrimination against Chapter Sweethearts. I understand the purpose behind this agreement is to protect the single-sex status of both male and female fraternal organizations. However, in reality the policy is being enforced by University officials in a harassing and discriminatory manner violating the very principles upon which it was conceived. Specifically, I would like to share my experience at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University (ERAU) in Daytona Beach since the University's implementation of your Unanimous Agreement X.

A brief background; my husband and I are both ERAU alumni and members of fraternal organizations. Prior to my own affiliation with Theta Phi Alpha, I was elected to represent Sigma Chi Fraternity as Chapter Sweetheart. I was humbled by the role as I watched the Fraternity's ideals, forged over 150 years ago, take hold of the hearts and minds of these boys as they became men. I was presented a Greek lettered Sigma Chi jersey, which I proudly wear as a token of my service and a symbol of support to our male counterparts. An organization, like Sigma Chi, would only allow a non-member to wear their sacred letters if they truly felt that person (male or female) was capable of representing the group in a positive light. After my term as Sweetheart, I was further recognized on the International level, being named as one of the three finalists in the 2005 election for Sigma Chi's International Sweetheart. During this event, the Grand Consul bestowed upon each finalist our very own Sigma Chi badge to wear. Being treated with this level of respect and admiration was the foremost reason I subsequently became interested in "going Greek". Therefore, you can attribute my future affiliation with Theta Phi Alpha to the men of Sigma Chi Fraternity. As a token of gratitude, I have always taken great pride in supporting the men's recruitment effort in addition to Theta Phi Alpha's. Sigma Chi

allows me to wear their letters and badge, but I know I am not a member. I have never been confused as to my affiliation, nor have I ever been questioned if I am a Sigma Chi. Ask any non-member, in today's generation, there is no uncertainty that only men can join fraternities and sororities are for women. There is no active threat to this constitutional right, however UAX confuses the issue by preventing Panhellenic women from supporting organizations outside of their own membership (a blatant violation of the first amendment).

Since the Greek Advisor at ERAU has begun enforcing your Unanimous Agreement X, a dark cloud of oppression has spread across Greek life. During "recruitment week" in January 2014, I was approached by a group of Sweethearts clearly upset and outraged. Each is a member of an NPC affiliation and represented a different Fraternity on campus as their elected Sweetheart. Asking for my help, they explained that NPC women are no longer allowed to participate or even be in the vicinity of men's recruitment events and if caught wearing their "big letter" Greek shirts they would not only be putting their own letters at risk, their chapters would be punished. After reading UAX, the foundation of the agreement is to educate and remind members of the battles fought in winning and preserving our single-sex organizations. Yet, the policy it dictates prevents women from going where they want, saying what they believe and even wearing clothing of their choice. You say Fraternities exist so that women can **"create, through their ideals, an ever-widening circle of service beyond the membership."** *SERVICE BEYOND THE MEMBERSHIP!* Are chapter sweethearts not the perfect example of women serving as leaders and ambassadors to organizations beyond their own? You may protest, as the ERAU Greek Advisor did, that these stipulations only apply during recruitment events. To which, I will remind you that recruitment is 365 days per year; our organizations are always under the scrutiny of the public eye. Let me be the first to agree that Panhellenic women need education and guidance in living up to the ideals upon which we were all founded. However, UAX has empowered the University to discriminate against a group of female-leaders (Sweethearts) proudly promoting Greek-life and like-minded organizations. Most shocking, your documentation remind us this agreement was built on the premise of the First Amendment, yet ironically is the constitutional right being withheld!

I approached the ERAU Greek-life office last year (wearing my own Sigma Chi jersey) and was told this policy was handed down from the National Panhellenic Conference and that I would need to address the issue with "them". Doing so now, let me further agree that to a potential member or non-Greek, seeing a group of men and women wearing identical Greek letter jerseys could imply we are co-ed organizations. This display of "letter-wearing" may also be disrespectful to those who fought so hard to bring us sole-sex organizations. This is an argument any Sweetheart can stand behind; I would gladly **recommend** Sweetheart's wear Greek Letter jerseys of differing color and clearing denoting "Sweetheart". However, thanks to the hard fought battles of those who came before us, we are fortunate to live in an era where

collegiate men and women must be given the opportunity to wear what they want, support who they choose and sit where they like, it's unconstitutional to dictate policy otherwise. You remind us of the tribulations endured in ridding our organizations of sexual-discrimination, yet you've instituted policy forcing today's women under the same umbrella of oppression. I had to ask myself, is the wearing of "big letter" Greek shirts the most pressing matter on our agenda? Shouldn't ERAU and NPC be focused on educating and empowering our young men and women to be freethinking leaders, rather than holding them back through the constant spoon-feeding of rules and regulations? Even my own time and effort in writing this letter could have been better served to anti-sexual assault, hazing or alcohol abuse awareness. Last year, I concluded that our time was more important and I decided to let the issue go, until today!

One year later, on January 27th, 2015, a student activities fair was again held on ERAU's campus. Living locally, my husband and I still remain active in supporting the Greek recruitment effort. My husband donned his faded Sigma Chi jersey, I wore an off-color long-sleeved Sigma Chi Sweetheart shirt (with big Sigma Chi Greek letters atop the cursive letters "Sweetheart"). We even brought our two-year old son, dressed in an adorable Sigma Chi legacy shirt (it had big Greek letters too). The Sigma Chi undergraduates welcomed us and obviously appreciated the support. Within minutes of my arrival, I was pulled aside by the Greek Advisor. In a condescending tone, he said "We've talked about this." He told me that I am not allowed to wear such a shirt and aware that I am a Theta Phi Alpha, he threatened to take action against them. I told him, if necessary, I would disaffiliate from NPC; after which he threatened the local Sigma Chi Chapter (under what premise, I thought). Having no choice, forced to otherwise leave, I had to strip off my shirt in the middle of campus, in less than comfortable temperatures. My Husband looked appalled and confused as I returned from my belittlement. Of course, I had a tank-top on underneath, but have never felt more harassed and sexually-discriminated against in my life. Feeling this uncomfortable at my own University, amongst my fellow Greeks and Family is a direct result of your Unanimous Agreement X. Out of fear, oppression and discrimination the other Greek Sweethearts have "fallen-in-line". But, as a Woman in her thirties, a Mother, a Greek, a Sweetheart and your Sister, I say no more!

I've explained my understanding of UAX's intent and greatly appreciate the battles fought on our behalf nearly half-a-century ago. However, after experiencing the ramifications of this agreement, it's been taken too far and has become discriminatory in itself. The definition of sexual discrimination is ***treating someone unfavorably because of that person's sex***. The agreement is extremely shortsighted and is in itself a perfect example of discrimination (exactly what you were trying to prevent). Specifically, it states, ***"There is no place for women - undergraduate or alumnae - at men's recruitment events."*** Each time I read this statement, I'm stunned by its ignorance! You try to hide behind Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which only exempts our membership from sexual-discrimination, not who our members

freely choose to support! Furthermore, I have listened to Sweethearts, Wives, Daughters, Sisters and Mothers of Sigma Chi's give their perspective on Greek Life to potential new members. Most memorable, a Sigma Chi Mom, whose Son lost his battle to Leukemia at 23, would recount the days following her Son's death and the amazing show of love and support by her Son's Fraternity Brothers. She would conclude with a reminder to the young potentials, they are embarking on a journey of life-long duration, echoing the support they will receive from their Brothers throughout their lives and even offering her own home and a hot meal if ever needed. Fraternity men should not have to pretend as if women with strong-ties to their organizations do not exist (literally being forced to cover up their Sweetheart's photo on a composite). It is a deliberate misrepresentation and falsification of the organization's identity to hide such women from potentials. To the outsider looking in, it can often be most comforting to hear from another outsider, not just those perspectives from within the organization. Yet, UAX **denounces** the participation of Panhellenic women in men's fraternity Recruitment events.

Denounce: to pronounce, especially publicly to be blameworthy or evil.

Hazing is evil, sexual-assault is evil, but Sweethearts? This is where you remind me that UAX states the Sweetheart position can remain. But you've taken away one of the most important aspects of being a Sweetheart. We are an ambassador of the organization to the outside world; being non-members we can best relate to those also on the outside – looking in. At ERAU, during each semester's dedicated Greek Recruitment Week, Sigma Chi hosts a Spaghetti-dinner for the undergraduates, alumni, potential new members and guests. During this event the undergraduate leadership, distinguished alumni and sweethearts speak to their experience with Sigma Chi. Each year I volunteer to speak and will continue to do so, regardless of your agreement. I was disheartened to see the role that remains for the current chapter sweetheart in the wake of UAX. Being Greek herself, she stealthily entered from the back of the room, quietly dropped off a plate of cookies and quickly made her exit before any rush monitors noticed her presence. How sad; instead of being there to listen to Greek leaders speak and perhaps one day become a speaker herself, NPC Policy tells her she's only good enough to bake – now back to the kitchen before someone notices. Essentially, you're telling Sweethearts: make a choice, it's us or them – you can't have both. It's sending a message to Fraternities; if they don't want to deal with more Panhellenic **drama**, elect a non-Greek as Sweetheart. The University administration, empowered by UAX, is telling women on campus they cannot speak for and represent what they believe in! How can you support such blatant sexism?

To further unveil the ignorance of UAX; during last year's "Meet-the-Greeks" event, the undergraduates asked me to speak with an ERAU student who was in his late 20's. This man is a military veteran, married with children, interested in Greek life. However, his concerns were that of his wife's and how the experience might impact his marriage and time with his family. Under the circumstances, there was no better person than me to help alleviate his wife's concerns. I told him how important Sigma Chi is to our family, even 14 years after my husband's initiation. I explained the high level of respect always shown to me by these men and while I

am not an initiated member of the organization, I will always be a part of the Sigma Chi Family. This outsider perspective is an extremely valuable recruitment tool. Having my child with me, also made it very evident that this is an organization I would be proud to have him one day become affiliated. I might add, that man is now a Brother of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. To save yourselves further embarrassment, you should remove your "no place for women" statement. It's derogatory, ignorant and should be retired next to the "White's ONLY!" signs of the 1960's.

Further infuriating, UAX recommends Panhellenic women to wear a "dance party shirt" or be lavaliered by a boyfriend, but cannot wear "big letter" Greek shirts. NPC is supposed to promote developing the individual's potential through leadership opportunities and group effort. Yet, you're telling our undergraduate women if they want to support Fraternities, they need to go to "Frat" parties or find a man; be the object of their affection - you might even get to wear their letters. Whereas a Sweetheart has already been recognized as a leader amongst her peers and is a female representative to a group of young men to which she can relate. You say women should not promote one particular member group, but instead encourage potentials to "Go-Greek". I believe all men should explore the possibilities of fraternal life as there is likely an organization out there to fit each individual. Is Sigma Chi the right one for everybody? Of course not, but I cannot speak on behalf of other Fraternities. Much like having loyalties to our own affiliation, why would it be any different when Sweethearts wants to support an all-male group of their choice? Once again, your policy prevents women from thinking and speaking for themselves. How are you preparing them for the real world that awaits after graduation?

Hopefully, you can agree with some of the points made in this, admittedly, passionate and disgruntled letter. However, assuming your lack of initiative to rectify the situation, my next and only option is to disaffiliate from Theta Phi Alpha and NPC. This would only be self-serving, so that I may continue attending and speaking at Fraternity recruitment events or even wear a nostalgic t-shirt of my choice on campus. If nothing else, my disaffiliation should be enough to halt the Greek Advisor's attacks of harassment and sexual-discrimination. The loss of one out-spoken member may not mean much to NPC in the grand scheme. However; it's hard for me to believe this is the type of response you expect from University officials; a man literally stripping letters from visiting alumni and threatening action against an IFC organization based on the premise of an NPC agreement. Please help me – help you!

Recommendations:

1. Remove the statement, "There is no place for women — undergraduate or alumnae — at men's recruitment events." It's derogatory, untrue, and is a blemish to the very history you are trying to preserve.
2. Allow an exception for elected past and present Sweethearts to continue participating in

men's recruitment events. This is as basic as freedom of association!

3. Allow Sweethearts to wear "big letter" Greek jerseys in support of their chosen chapter. A suggestion recommending it bear the word, "Sweetheart" and not be identical to the Brother's jersey would be most appropriate in the true spirit of this agreement.

My next step is to approach the University's Student Activities Director and I would appreciate your response to the following:

1. Is it NPC's position to support disciplinary action (fines, sanctions, suspension, expulsion, etc.) if a Panhellenic women fails to abide by UAX policy?
2. Has the ERAU Greek Advisor implemented UAX into policy as you would have expected?
3. If I disaffiliate from NPC, will the Greek Advisor have grounds to continue his targeted attacks against me?
4. Can the Greek Advisor make good on his threats to punish the Sigma Chi Chapter for my failure to recognize and abide by NPC's Unanimous Agreement X?

Disappointed,

Maggie von Stein
Sigma Chi Sweetheart (2002-2003)
Theta Phi Alpha