

Our commitment to

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS

Dear Sigma Kappa sisters,

We announced a renewed commitment to [diversity, equity, inclusion and access \(DEIA\)](#) on June 20. Today, we are pleased to provide an update on our progress. Below you will learn about our outside consultant who will train our boards and staff and assist us with implementing a comprehensive DEIA plan, supported with a grant from the Sigma Kappa Foundation. We are also thrilled to introduce you to our newly formed DEIA committee as well as the Sigma Kappa Foundation workgroup. We were overwhelmed by your interest to serve, and we have assembled an impressive group of sisters who have generously offered to lend their individual perspectives to our work.

Our staff has worked tirelessly over the past several months to meet the immediate needs of our collegians who must learn new ways to recruit, meet, learn, live together, and keep our ritual alive during a global pandemic. We have also been developing a new strategic plan for Sigma Kappa that takes us beyond those immediate obstacles and into the future. We are excited to share that plan with you in the coming months. You can rest assured that DEIA will be prominently featured throughout our strategic plan and woven into everything we do.



DEIA CONSULTANT



Because we are not experts in the field of diversity, equity, inclusion and access, we have engaged a professional to guide us along this journey. [Vicki Clark \(Vicki Clark Consulting\)](#) will provide ongoing DEIA training and partner with the boards and staff of all three entities. Vicki is a servant leader who begins her work first as a listener, learner, and community builder. She meets organizations where they are and builds a framework and the scaffolding to support change. Her work involves action planning and implementation designed to fully engage and harness the power of the board, members and stakeholders. Vicki has worked with dozens of women's leadership groups at local and national levels. She is aware of the nuances that exist in executing an organization's desire to move toward diversity, equity, inclusion and access, and takes a collaborative approach with boards, membership and staff. We have started working with Vicki and look forward to learning from her.



DEIA COMMITTEE

As the next step in our commitment, we are thrilled to introduce the DEIA committee. This committee will provide feedback and advice to Sigma Kappa national council, Foundation board of trustees, National Housing Corporation board of directors, and staff of all three entities on how our daily work affects inclusion, diversity, equity and access across the organization. Additional details on the committee charge are found [here](#).

We had 84 amazing women submit applications for Sigma Kappa's DEIA committee! An application review team was formed to ensure we had a full evaluation of all applications. The review team was composed of Sigma Kappa Colby Award winners, 35 Under 35 honorees, and entity leadership. Each application was reviewed by seven different women. Identifying information was removed from the applications to allow the review team to focus on areas of expertise including professional and lived experiences. The review team's recommendations were made to national council.

This committee will help us to better consider and understand the perspectives of our sisters who identify as Black, Indigenous, and Women of Color; LGBTQIA+ Women; and Women with Disabilities. [Click here](#) to read more about this outstanding group who will work with the boards and staff to guide Sigma Kappa's DEIA priorities.

- **Jessica Cunningham - co-chairwoman**
Epsilon Tau, California State University, Fullerton
- **Theresa Irigon-Rachetto - co-chairwoman**
Mu, University of Washington
- **Emma Britez Ferrante**
Kappa Iota, University of Pennsylvania
- **Kayla Bridgers**
Theta Mu, University of North Carolina at Charlotte
- **Pau Burgoa**
Theta, University of Illinois
- **Teri Centner**
Theta Lambda, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- **Lauren Redd Ertekin**
Delta Nu, Longwood University
- **Charlotte Hurst**
Gamma Omega, Wittenberg University
- **Jane Harris Nellams**
Alpha Phi, University of Oregon
- **Christina Parle**
Delta Eta, University of Central Missouri
- **Pooja Shetty**
Kappa Omega, Northeastern University
- **Lindsey Schubert**
Beta Omega, University of Nebraska at Omaha
- **Carly Walter**
Theta Upsilon, Bowling Green State University



FOUNDATION WORKGROUP

The Sigma Kappa Foundation commissioned a workgroup of alumnae and collegians to look at the mission-based ways we can use our resources to have a positive impact in DEIA. The workgroup will identify barriers that exist for our members and potential members from underrepresented groups; solutions to help eliminate those barriers; opportunities to strengthen our commitment to DEIA; and other ways in which the Sigma Kappa Foundation can provide resources to support our sisters in these areas. Information on the workgroup can be found [here](#).

- **Marisa Wilkes - chairwoman**
Theta Iota, The State University of New York at Fredonia
- **Martha Bronitsky**
Alpha Omicron, University of California, Los Angeles
- **Shannon Chang**
Zeta Phi, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
- **Lisa Gilbert**
Kappa Xi, University of Nevada, Reno
- **Christie Gillespie**
Beta Sigma, Purdue University
- **Anna Henk**
Gamma Theta, California State University, Long Beach
- **Lisa Humenik - trustee**
Gamma Mu, Eastern Illinois University
- **Alli Kopetzky**
Gamma Alpha, University of Northern Colorado
- **Kim Padilla**
Alpha Gamma, Washington State University
- **Lucy Siegel**
Delta, Boston University
- **Sarah Womble - trustee**
Delta Tau, University of Central Arkansas



WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

Sigma Kappa's commitment to DEIA continues to grow as the committee and consultant work gets underway. A few immediate steps staff and boards have taken related to DEIA include educating ourselves by participating in book discussions, attending webinars and discussing DEIA at staff meetings. National council and senior staff members attended a virtual book discussion with Ibram X. Kendi on his book "How To Be an Antiracist" and discussed the book at our July council meeting. This group is also viewing and discussing Kappa Kappa Gamma's Virtual Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Institute during our meetings from July through September. Other staff teams are also reading books on anti-racism and holding discussions. Staff and volunteers have facilitated workshops focusing on inclusion to [recruitment supervisors](#), vice presidents of membership and advisory board supervisors, and four [DEIA-focused educational sessions](#) are included in the [summer education series](#).

A requirement for all collegiate chapters to have a diversity and inclusion chairwoman has been added to the [National Policy Handbook \(NPH\)](#) and all chairman references are being changed to chairwoman in the *NPH*, the Sigma Kappa [Bylaws](#) and other resources. The [Sigma Kappa book club](#) has read and discussed books by Black authors, and "Why are They Kneeling" was read during a children's storytime. Additionally, as we work to educate the membership on all cultures, the communication team is committed to social media posts celebrating and recognizing various cultural holidays. The DEIA creative teams and NHC leadership team continue to build plans and are looking forward to input and support from the Sigma Kappa DEIA committee.

At this moment, we are examining ourselves, our policies and practices to determine whether we are contributing, actively or passively, to social injustice. Sigma Kappa is committed to providing a welcoming, safe, and meaningful experience for all members. If you are interested in investing in this work, please [click here](#) to make a gift to the PULSE annual fund which will help underwrite the programs and resources to support Sigma Kappa DEIA initiatives.

We want you to be proud of your association with Sigma Kappa and all that it stands for. I am confident that with respect for one another and a brave openness to self-reflection, we can improve aspects of our organization that might prevent us from being fully inclusive, equitable, or accessible. We know that this work will enrich the membership experience for everyone and ensure that Sigma Kappa continues to thrive for generations to come.

Loyally in Sigma Kappa,

Ann O'Connell Adams, *Theta*
National President