

## Our commitment to

# DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS

Dear Sigma Kappas,

We are pleased to provide you with the latest update on our progress toward our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA). Below you will learn about our DEIA strategic plan, what we have accomplished since our last update in August, and what is coming next including an opportunity to meet the members of our DEIA committee.

We know you understand how critical the work around DEIA issues is to keep Sigma Kappa relevant on campuses and in communities. What you might not know is that in order to do it right, it is not quick work. We hope by providing regular updates on the accomplishments and work ahead of us, you will come to understand that the ultimate goal is to weave DEIA throughout all we do.

## DEIA STRATEGIC PLAN

Under our new strategic plan for Sigma Kappa, our vision is that Sigma Kappa will model a diverse, equitable, inclusive and accessible membership experience among the women's fraternal organizations by 2023, as evidenced by:

- The elimination of barriers to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access at the point of entry and throughout the membership experience
- A Ritual that does not marginalize members, while preserving the items adopted by the Founders
- Acknowledgment and understanding of Sigma Kappa's history as it relates to past discriminatory behavior and practices
- Celebration of the diversity of our membership
- A membership, leadership, and staff that are knowledgeable about all aspects of DEIA

Information about how you can become involved with the Ritual inclusivity and historical research pieces of this plan is included below. We look forward to sharing more about the other goals of our strategic plan with you later this year.

## WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED

As you know, the purpose of Sigma Kappa is "to provide women lifelong opportunities and support for social, intellectual and spiritual development by positively impacting our communities." Sigma Kappa is committed to creating opportunities for community impact by providing DEIA education and resources to our members.

We began the educational journey for our members with the Summer issue of the [Sigma Kappa Triangle](#) entitled "Better Together – Working Toward A More Inclusive Sigma Kappa." This issue introduces and highlights some of our Black members, provides definitions for common DEIA vocabulary and gives advice on how to talk to kids about race.

Additionally, in the last two months, the [DEIA committee](#) has met twice and divided efforts to begin advising staff and volunteer creative teams. Their initial focus is on social media, heritage and awareness months and assistance with our bias response plan. The national council, Foundation board of trustees, National Housing Corporation board of directors and NHQ staff have participated in training with Vicki Clark, our DEIA consultant, and staff is making modifications to its work across teams. A few changes staff has implemented include making the Promise for New Members lessons available for screen readers, using more inclusive language for our mailings, adding closed captioning to videos and social media captions, and adding DEIA as its [own section](#) on the website. The Sigma Kappa Book Club, the recruitment leadership team and several staff teams have read and discussed books on racism and by BIPOC authors.

In addition to making funds available for DEIA training at a national level, the Sigma Kappa Foundation is offering micro-grant opportunities for chapters. These \$100-\$500 grants will be used to underwrite the cost of a DEIA program including, but not limited to, educational assessments, supplies or resources to conduct the program and a small stipend for a speaker.

The NHC has incorporated a DEIA corner in each of its newsletters and has created a reporting template for corporations to use when providing chapters with details of fees. They have also provided process and procedure documentation to participant corporations to ensure that Sigma Kappa living/learning environments are consistently built, renovated, maintained, occupied, financed and managed.



## NEXT STEPS

Our commitment to DEIA is ongoing, and below are some items that are in the works as we continue to advance the membership experience.

### Ritual Inclusivity Task Force Interest

For more than a year, a Ritual inclusivity task force has been reviewing the Sigma Kappa Ritual to identify non-inclusive language and practices. The task force planned to conduct focus groups and education at convention 2020, but this was put on hold when our in-person convention experience was canceled. A revised task force will complete this work and make specific recommendations to national council about language and practices in the Sigma Kappa Ritual that are non-inclusive or marginalize members and can be modified while preserving the items adopted by the Founders. Alumnae and collegians who are interested in joining this task force should complete [this form](#) by Nov. 15. The work will begin in Dec. 2020 and continue through June 2021.

### History Task Force Volunteers Needed

National council is forming a task force to research, document, and acknowledge Sigma Kappa's history as it relates to past discriminatory behavior and practices. This task force will also document the historical steps Sigma Kappa has taken toward inclusion. If you are interested in applying for this task force, please complete [this form](#) by Nov. 15. Alumnae and collegiate members are encouraged to apply. The task force will begin work in December and continue through fall 2021.

### Legacy Policy Update

The DEIA committee has provided feedback and advice to national council on Sigma Kappa's legacy policy. Information about the policy will be shared with the membership in mid-November.

### Committee Meet and Greets

Members of the DEIA committee will be holding virtual meet and greets on Oct. 27, 28 and 29 from 8-9 p.m. ET. The sessions will be moderated by the committee co-chairwomen and committee members will be split between the calls. If you are interested in learning more about these amazing women, please register by clicking one of the links below. There are a limited number of spots for each call, so please sign up early!

- [Oct. 27, 8-9 p.m. ET](#)
- [Oct. 28, 8-9 p.m. ET](#)
- [Oct. 29, 8-9 p.m. ET](#)

You won't want to miss this opportunity to get to know these accomplished members and hear how they are working to help Sigma Kappa consider and understand the perspectives of our sisters who identify as Black, Indigenous and Women of Color; LGBTQIA+; and Women with Disabilities.

Contact [inclusion@sigmakappa.org](mailto:inclusion@sigmakappa.org) with thoughts on additional ways you'd like to interact with the DEIA committee.

### Creative Teams Work

Three DEIA creative teams have started developing educational resources with the goal to release content by the end of 2020. The current DEIA teams are: general DEIA education, officer resources and social justice. Future DEIA creative teams include allyship & advocacy and bias & privilege. Two members of the DEIA committee serve as liaisons to each creative team. Additional details on the work of these teams can be found on the [website](#).

### Sigma Kappa Foundation

The Sigma Kappa Foundation will be identifying routine steps to promote volunteer opportunities. Additionally, the Foundation is engaging with college/university scholarship and foundation personnel to learn more about how to best incorporate DEIA into the scholarship application and review process.

### National Housing Corporation

The NHC annually reviews the model housing and financial responsibility form to ensure accuracy, fairness and value. In the next year, the NHC will provide resources to participant corporations to ensure Sigma Kappa housing is fair, safe and inclusive including a tool to assess equity in house rules. In the next year, they will provide resources to participant corporations to ensure Sigma Kappa housing is fair, safe and inclusive.

### Live with Heart Facilitator Team

The Live with Heart Facilitator Team (LWHFT) has gone virtual! By providing virtual visits, we have increased the accessibility of these visits to collegiate chapters as we work to meet their needs. Many collegiate chapters are asking for programs related to DEIA. The facilitators are working on best practices when it comes to facilitating these discussions to ensure they are prepared to provide meaningful and productive conversations. The LWHFT is a great way to bring a new face and a new voice to our collegiate chapters and help them with personal growth. Additional details can be found [here](#).

As we approach the 146th anniversary of Sigma Kappa's founding, thank you for joining us as we strive to ensure that Sigma Kappa provides a safe and inclusive space where women can feel a deep sense of belonging. Continue to live with heart and care for one another.

In Sigma Kappa,  
**Ann O'Connell Adams**, *Theta*  
National President