

*Our commitment to***DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESS**

Dear Sigma Kappas,

Approximately eight months ago we made a commitment to do more to assure that our Members of Color and other underrepresented identities feel welcome, included and empowered in our organization. We knew that this work would mean a monumental shift for Sigma Kappa and would not be easy or have an end date. 2021 begins with renewing our pledge to ensure that all members feel valued and affirmed. We are pleased to provide you with another update on progress toward our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and access (DEIA).

Below are some of our accomplishments since our [December 2020 DEIA update](#). You will find information on recently added affinity groups, updates to the Foundation's scholarship review process, new resources and processes to address and eliminate bias, and continuing strides to make our communications more accessible. As we continue to live with heart and care for one another, we welcome your questions and suggestions at inclusion@sigmakappa.org.

**UPDATES****Bylaws**

Members of Sigma Kappa's national council, staff, and the DEIA committee are currently undertaking a comprehensive review of the Sigma Kappa *Bylaws* from start to finish to identify and address barriers to DEIA. Recommended changes to the *Bylaws* from this review will be presented at the 2022 Convention in Denver. If you have recommendations or suggestions on changes, please send them to bylaws@sigmakappa.org.

Volunteers

To broaden the pool of Sigma Kappa volunteers beyond those who are already connected to our volunteer structure, all vacant national volunteer roles, as well as advisory board supervisor and recruitment supervisor positions, are posted on the [volunteer vacancy page](#) of the Sigma Kappa website. Volunteer vacancies will be posted monthly on Sigma Kappa's [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#) pages. They will also be highlighted quarterly in *The LowDown* newsletter and on [Instagram](#).

All national volunteer roles are now application-based. To apply, a member should submit their information on the volunteer interest tab (this asks for a resume, interests, etc.). We have created an interview process that all teams are following as they fill volunteer roles. We are fine-tuning and standardizing this process and an overview will soon be shared on the Sigma Kappa website.

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups have been added to Sigma Kappa social media channels. An affinity group is a smaller community of Sigma Kappa members who share common identities or experiences. Links to the groups are below and can also be found at the top of the [Sigma Kappa Facebook page](#). We hope these affinity groups, which are created and maintained by our members, provide a productive space to discuss common issues and connect through shared experiences. If you are interested in starting an affinity group, please [click here](#) to access the form.

Live with Heart Facilitator Team

We received 27 applications from members interested in facilitating DEIA content for the [Live with Heart Facilitator Team](#). The applications are being reviewed, and DEIA-focused Live with Heart Facilitator Team visits will be available in the coming months.

Foundation Scholarships

In December, we shared information about an overhaul to the Sigma Kappa Foundation scholarship application process to obtain a more complete picture of our applicants and break down barriers to scholarship access. Review of scholarship applications is now underway, and we are pleased to share that the evaluators received training provided by our DEIA consultant Vicki Clark on recognizing implicit bias. This was an opportunity for the evaluators to learn how to be conscious of their biases while evaluating [scholarship applications](#).

**WHAT WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED****DEIA Training and Webinars**

Since our [last update](#) on Dec. 21, 2020, national council, the Foundation board of trustees, the National Housing Corporation board of directors, and staff have continued our educational journey by attending training and webinars on DEIA topics. Staff and members of the DEIA committee are developing a process for addressing bias incidents involving collegians, volunteers and alumnae-at-large. The hope is to provide opportunities for restorative justice and personal growth when bias incidents arise. If you have experienced an incident of bias, you can report it at bias@sigmakappa.org.

Resources

The civility and social justice creative team created the TRUTH acronym, a resource to assist in handling difficult conversations. This resource has been added to the [DEIA resources](#) accordion on the website. A DEIA-related podcast list has been added to the Sigma Kappa website to supplement the book lists created by our general DEIA creative team and posted in December. In January, the [Sigma Kappa Book Club](#) read "The Person You Mean To Be (How Good People Fight Bias)" by Dolly Chugh, and is reading "The Vanishing Half" by Brit Bennett in February, continuing to center books on DEIA topics and/or by BIPOC authors.

Accessibility

Staff has made progress on the accessibility of our publications and social media. The communication team has added alt text to all social media platforms and purchased video auto-captioning software. We have also added closed captioning to all Promise for New Members learning modules and made the Promise Book accessible via e-reader.

Sigma Kappa Employment

Equal employment opportunity (EEO) language has been added to the [employment tab](#) on the Sigma Kappa website and to all staff job descriptions, reflecting our commitment to prohibiting discrimination of any form in the hiring process. Sorority job descriptions have been updated to add a commitment to DEIA initiatives and DEIA reflective questions have been added to the staff interview processes.



NEXT STEPS

Sigma Kappa Purpose

Continuing the work in the Sorority strategic plan, national council will meet virtually in March to review the Sigma Kappa Purpose statement from a DEIA perspective and begin work on an inclusivity statement for Sigma Kappa.

New Resources

Two new resources for collegiate members, "Tips for Collegiate Officers Relating to DEIA" and "Working with Members who Cannot Attend Events", will soon be available. We will also be adding closed captioning to officer training modules.

Another resource close to completion is a Forging Connections program. Forging Connections will provide information about the larger fraternity and sorority community including National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), which is composed of historically African American collegiate Greek-lettered fraternities and sororities, and other multicultural groups. The program is designed to help members gain an in-depth understanding of the DEIA implications and historical background of each organization.

We are also close to completing a DEIA survey for collegiate chapters to use with members and resources focused on bias and privilege.

Membership Selection Review

A comprehensive review of the scale used during membership selection is underway. The forthcoming recommendations will incorporate all aspects of DEIA and reflect Sigma Kappa's values. The goal is to pilot the recommendations in fall 2021 with a full rollout in spring 2022.

February is Black History Month and reminds us of the continued need for education on racial justice. It is also an opportunity to explore and honor our differences - not only during holidays and awareness months but each and every day. We hope that you are excited about the progress we are making on DEIA and where Sigma Kappa is headed. Sometimes progress is fast and sometimes it feels slower than we would like. But every little step on this journey creates a Sigma Kappa experience that is more inclusive and genuine.

In Sigma Kappa,

Ann O'Connell Adams, *Theta*
National President

Jordan Duffie Bentlage, *Theta Upsilon*
Sorority Executive Director



LINKS

Sigma Kappa affinity groups:

- [Lavender Sigma Kappas \(LGBTQIA+\)](#)
- [Sigma Kappa Military Alumnae](#)
- [Black Members of Sigma Kappa](#)
- [Purple Polygons \(Pokémon\)](#)
- [SK Bachelor Nation](#)
- [LSK Lead \(leadership, careers, networking, business, etc.\)](#)
- Do you want to start an affinity group? [Fill out the form here!](#)



RESOURCES

New resources in [The Learning Center](#):

- Eliminating Bias in Chapter Elections
- Accessibility Considerations for Alumnae and Family Events
- Kappa Kappa Gamma 2020 Virtual DEI Institute - available to advisors