



February 24, 2022

Dear Members of Alpha Zeta Chapter at Cornell University,

What follows is an extremely belated apology from the national council of Sigma Kappa Sorority for the suspension of Alpha Zeta Chapter in 1956. In 2020, we set a goal for Sigma Kappa to model a diverse, inclusive, equitable and accessible membership experience among the women's fraternal organizations. One fundamental part of achieving that goal is coming to terms with Sigma Kappa's history, which has not always reflected inclusion as a priority.

In 2020, we formed a history task force to research, document and acknowledge organizational discrimination in Sigma Kappa's history. The group's work is detailed in the article *Acknowledging the Past, Looking toward the Future* in the Winter 2022 issue of the *Sigma Kappa Triangle*. In the early 1950s, Alpha Zeta Chapter requested clarification from the national council as to Sigma Kappa's membership qualification requirements, to no avail. In 1956, the chapter pledged Barbara Collier, who is thought to be the first Black woman to pledge a National Panhellenic Conference sorority. We understand that because of this offer of membership to Barbara, the chapter was suspended in the summer of 1956; four Alpha Zeta delegates who attended the 1958 Convention to argue for reinstatement were ignored and ostracized; and the Convention body declined to reinstate the chapter. We cannot imagine the hurt, harm and pain which this caused the members of your chapter. Please know that we will strive to make sure that no one else feels this way in Sigma Kappa.

These events are probably not news to you, nor were they unknown to Sigma Kappa over the years. But we had never collected the relevant documents, acknowledged what happened, or apologized for it. We are deeply sorry for the suspension of Alpha Zeta Chapter, and we also regret that our apology has lingered for so long.

We recognize that you may have mixed feelings about hearing from Sigma Kappa after all this time. We hope that our letter can bring some closure and validation to your experience. As young college students, your instinct for inclusion was the right one, and Sigma Kappa failed you. It is important that you hear that from us. Please know that as we have reflected on the suspension of Alpha Zeta Chapter, we have renewed our commitment to having honest conversations about policies and practices in Sigma Kappa that are inconsistent with what we are trying to achieve: a special place where all members can feel a deep sense of respect, belonging, and support through the lifelong bond of sorority. We also understand with clarity the importance of engaging with our chapters in conversations about inclusion and change when they look to us for guidance or invite us to the table.

We recognize that you may have withdrawn your membership in Sigma Kappa decades ago, which we can certainly understand. If you are ever interested in rejoining our sisterhood, it would be our honor to reinstate your membership. More generally, if you are willing to reflect with us about your Sigma Kappa experience and how it has impacted you, we would welcome a conversation. Please contact Mallory Simmons, director of publication, at history@sigmakappa.org, or 317-381-5502, and we will reach out.

We cannot change what happened in the past, but we have an unlimited capacity —inspired by you—to spread love and friendship through the power of inclusion. We hope that you will accept our apology on behalf of Sigma Kappa, or at the very least find comfort in knowing that all these years later, your bravery continues to inspire reflection and change.

Loyally in Sigma Kappa,



Ann O'Connell Adams
National President



Jordan Archer
National Vice President for Extension



Angie Naniot Ahrens
National Vice President for Alumnae



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