



Dear West Virginia University community,

The fall season has brought colorful foliage, a chill in the air and a wide variety of activities and events. This week marks the 71st year that the University celebrates Mountaineer Week — a time where we honor our Appalachian roots.

One of the attributes of our Appalachian culture — and indeed one of our University's core values — is accountability. I recently had the opportunity to see this value put in to action by some of our students.

As I shared earlier this fall, the University has banned five fraternities from campus due to their decision to dissociate. Though we attempted to partner with them to create a path that would be beneficial for all, they chose a different route — with the support of their national chapter headquarters.

It was a disappointing moment. I would prefer that all of our student organizations are recognized and overseen by the University. In a recent meeting, I found it affirming that the remaining Interfraternity Council leadership — some facing increased pressure from their national headquarters to dissociate — are committed to remaining a part of the University and creating a better culture of fraternity life.

I have always said that if you treat students as adults they will step up. That is why I am proud our student leaders created a proposal on how to move

fraternity life forward at West Virginia University. Concerned about students choosing dissociated organizations without proper information and education, the IFC leadership developed a proposal for a truncated, second-rush period this semester that would allow freshmen who meet certain requirements to explore recognized IFC fraternities.

This second recruitment period is a pilot program. Organizations wishing to participate must agree to the parameters outlined by the University to remain an Interfraternity Council member in good standing at WVU. Activities will begin with a chapter meet-and-greet Wednesday, Oct. 24, and conclude by Friday, Nov. 16.

Guidelines for students, including those in their first semester seeking IFC membership, must have a minimum 2.75 GPA, per midterm grade reports, at the time of recruitment. The Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life will review and approve all scheduled activities related to new member recruitment.

All rush events must be alcohol-free. IFC organizations must publicize their recruitment schedules, and University staff will closely monitor recruitment activities. No new member education events will occur between the hours of 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.

Students who receive a bid and accept membership to a chapter must participate in weekly education programs surrounding alcohol education, hazing prevention, Title IX and bystander education. In addition, our consultant who helped us create the Reaching the Summit process will be on hand this week to assist with implementation and provide an overarching assessment.

In addition, West Virginia University also will expand its commitment to hazing prevention education by implementing a hazing prevention campaign

and resources. The University has partnered with alumnus Dan Catullo and creative partner, Michael Fiore, to develop the project that reminds the campus community that we lost one of our own, Nolan Burch, in 2014 due to hazing at an unsanctioned fraternity event. I do not want us to ever forget Nolan Burch and his story. In remembering him, we remember that irresponsible choices lead to irreversible consequences. My hope is that this effort will not only advance our own campus mission, but also be used on campuses nationwide.

Though I am still a fervent supporter of deferred membership, I am confident that this pilot program will provide our fraternity leadership with the platform to demonstrate that fraternity life on West Virginia University's campus is changing for the better. The ability to check mid-term grades, along with the substantive programming and operating procedures that have been implemented since 2014, has created a more transparent and thoughtful process. I also believe this will allow our students, particularly our freshmen, to explore the opportunities available in those organizations still associated and overseen by the University.

If you have any questions on the implementation of this second membership period, please contact our Dean of Students Corey Farris at corey.farris@mail.wvu.edu or at **(304) 293-5811**. If you have any questions regarding fraternities recognized by the University, visit greeklife.wvu.edu.

This is an opportunity for our students to put our University values into action. We will approach this pilot program with respect, accountability and service. And I know that together we will ensure that each of our students find his or her place — and purpose — at West Virginia University.

E. Gordon Gee

President, West Virginia University