

For Immediate Release
May 9, 2016

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Fraternal Organizations Respond to Harvard Policy on Single-Gender Organizations

INDIANAPOLIS — Officials from the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC), the North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC), the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations (NALFO) and the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA), issue the following statements in response to the policy announced Friday, May 6, 2016, by Harvard University that would sanction students who are members of single-gender organizations, beginning with the class entering 2017. At Harvard, fraternities and sororities — which are private organizations — are not affiliated with the university.

Joint Statement from Dani Weatherford, executive director of the National Panhellenic Conference; Francisco Lugo, commissioner of member services for the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations; Judson Horras, president and CEO of the North-American Interfraternity Conference; and Mark Koepsell, executive director and CEO of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

“While we understand and share Harvard’s goals of creating a safe and equitable environment for students, we are discouraged and disappointed by the policy announced Friday, as it mistakenly assumes the way to achieve those ends is to punish students for participating in single-gender organizations. We urge Harvard to reconsider this policy. Not only does it deny students the basic right of free association, it penalizes them for involvement in fraternities and sororities — experiences that foster leadership, personal growth and the very sense of engagement college is designed to create.”

Additional Statement from Weatherford, National Panhellenic Conference

“Sorority membership calls on women to empower each other and provides powerful spaces of support, something as important today as it has ever been. We strongly encourage our Harvard colleagues to consider the ramifications this policy shift will have on programs and opportunities for women on campus. While we support efforts to forcefully address sexual assault on every campus, punishing women for being members of single-gender organizations is not the answer.”

Additional Statement from Lugo, National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations

“Students in culturally-based fraternities and sororities are also punished by Harvard’s policy. Our organizations provide a powerful experience for underrepresented students, and if Harvard is seeking to make campus more inclusive and equitable, removing opportunities for these students goes directly against that goal.”

Additional Statement from Horras, North-American Interfraternity Conference

“This policy not only violates student rights, it takes focus off real issues around campus safety. Our organizations and the university need to get back to the problem at hand — reducing violence. The NIC represents a diverse range of fraternities — including historically black, multicultural and emerging organizations — and our member groups stand ready to come to the table as willing partners to improve campus communities.”

Additional Statement from Koepsell, Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

“Harvard’s long-held intentional decision to not recognize or support fraternities and sororities has been a disservice to students in those groups. Harvard’s proposed solution to control these students through top-down policy rather than mentorship and professional support completely misses the mark on how to improve campus safety and inclusivity.”

About the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC)

NPC, one of the largest organizations advocating for women, is the umbrella group for 26 national and international sororities. NPC sororities are located on more than 670 campuses with 380,565 undergraduate members in 3,234 chapters. Alumnae are represented in 3,889 associations throughout the world. For more information, including a complete list of NPC sororities, visit npcwomen.org or find NPC on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).

About the North-American Interfraternity Conference

Founded in 1909, the NIC is the trade association that represents a diverse range of inter/national men's fraternities, including historically black, multicultural and emerging organizations. NIC's 69 member organizations boast more than 6,100 chapters located on more than 800 campuses in the United States and Canada, with approximately 375,000 undergraduate members and nearly 4.2 million alumni.

About the National Association of Latino Fraternal Organizations

Established in 1998, NALFO promotes the advancement of Latino fraternities and Latina sororities. NALFO shares a commitment to fraternal unity, family values and empowering Latino and underserved communities.

About the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors

Through programs, publications, networking opportunities and other resources, AFA represents the community of campus-based fraternity and sorority advisors and is the leading voice in aligning the fraternity/sorority and higher education experiences.