



# Delta Gamma

1873

## Inclusion & Accountability Addressing Racism in Honor Board

### **Our Commitment to Delta Gamma's Values**

Delta Gamma is committed to creating an inclusive environment for all members. Racism and discrimination have no place in our sisterhood. As a predominately White organization, we must recognize the role we have played in institutional racism. Addressing this is difficult work, and Honor Board plays a critical role in progressing our chapters to be inclusive spaces for all members and new members. Drawing from Article II of the Fraternity Constitution and Delta Gamma's Positional Statement on Inclusivity, members are honor bound to uphold the high ideals of sisterhood throughout all aspects of life. As a reminder, both are listed below as a reference:

#### **The Delta Gamma Constitution, Article II states:**

*The objects of the Fraternity shall be to foster high ideals of friendship among women, to promote their educational and cultural interests, to create in them a true sense of social responsibility, and to develop in them the best qualities of character.*

#### **Positional Statement on Inclusivity**

*Delta Gamma Fraternity is committed to cultivating an inclusive and equitable environment and experience for our members, potential new members and communities. In our membership selection processes and in the life-long membership experience, Delta Gamma Fraternity and its members do not discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, physical disability or other protected identities. Membership is open to all individuals who identify as women and who have a sincere desire to uphold our shared values, as outlined in Article II. We resolve to eliminate inequities and address behaviors that do not align with our values.*

### **Scenarios and Helpful Talking Points**

Honor Board is responsible for facilitating difficult conversations regarding racism and discrimination along with holding members accountable for actions that do not align with the principles of Delta Gamma. One way to encourage transparent, inviting conversation is to frame the discussion using open ended questions. Examples are listed below to guide conversation. Keep in mind that these tools are meant to enhance conversation but does not replace Honor Board policy and the use of Standard Procedure.

After reciting the Honor Board opening statement in a formal hearing, open the discussion with a statement that fosters an inviting dialogue while recognizing that the conversation may be difficult: "This may be a hard conversation to have, however, we are here to talk it through together." You may want to read aloud the above statement on racism, as well Article II and Delta Gamma's Positional Statement on Inclusivity.

### **Utilize the questions below to frame your conversation in Honor Board:**

If you are addressing a specific action/comment/social media post:

- Can you help me understand why you did/said/posted this?
- We just reminded you of \_\_\_\_ (Article II or Positional Statement on Inclusivity), can you share how this action does not align with our Delta Gamma values?
- How might this have been perceived by members of our organization?
- How might others, including our Black sisters, sisters of color, students at our institution, others in and outside of the Sorority & Fraternity community experienced your post/action?
- How do you think your actions further marginalized Black people/people of color?
- How do you think your actions further created an unsafe space for a Black student/member or person of color?
- How might your post make your Black sisters or sisters of color feel?
- In what ways might others attribute your views with Delta Gamma as a whole?

If a member does not realize the impact, or states it was not her intent to do something racist:

- Do you understand the difference between intent and impact?

- *Note for Honor Board: When a person acts in a way that diminishes another person's humanity and identity- in this case, racism- intent, whether good or bad, is not what matters. Rather, the impact experienced by the person who is being oppressed must be the focus of the conversation.*

It is important to connect back to Delta Gamma's values:

- Can you share with me your understanding of what the Delta Gamma values are?
- Talk to us about some of the reasons you joined Delta Gamma.
- Do you think your actions align with the values of Delta Gamma or with the reason you joined this organization?
  - If so, how? If not, how?

If a member starts to shut down during the conversation:

- I see this is very challenging for you. Can you tell me what you are feeling?
- Do we need to take a five-minute break and then reconvene?

If a member says that her actions align with the way she was raised or points to a cultural norm for reasoning behind her actions:

- Are you aware that your actions, though they may be considered the norm to you/your family/your community, are not in alignment with Delta Gamma's values?
- Now that you have learned that your behavior does not align with Delta Gamma's values, are you willing to change your behavior?
- In what ways can we assist you in learning about \_\_\_\_ (racism, discrimination, etc.) to then lead to changed behavior?

If a member is unwilling to acknowledge wrongdoing or try to make a change:

- It sounds like your values are not aligning with Delta Gamma's. Do you still believe this is an organization that you want to be a part of?
  - If the member says no, please let them know the process for resigning their membership.
  - If the member says yes, state: *You are saying you believe Delta Gamma is still an organization you want to be a part of, and you are*

*saying that you are unwilling to acknowledge the harmful impact of your actions. We cannot tolerate having a member who is unwilling to live by our values. Again, are you willing to acknowledge the impact of your action(s)?* If still yes, then remind them of their right to resign and/or note this in the formal hearing minutes and consider recommending expulsion.

## **Tips for Helping Honor Board to Create a Space for Open Dialogue**

Given the nature of the conversation, it is likely to be emotional and challenging. Though it will be difficult, there are ways that Honor Board can make sure that they are creating an environment that will better facilitate open conversations, empathy, care and sustainable change. Remember, this is your sister. It is your duty to hear the perspective of your sisters, be an empathetic and caring listener, and to hold your sisters accountable. Although we want to be firm in supporting our stance on inclusivity and holding one another accountable, it is important to create a space for open dialogue so you can seek to understand:

- Do not rush the hearing. It is important to allow time for the conversation.
- If you are summarizing conversation, check to make sure you got it right and don't assume you know what they want or what they are feeling.
- If you are meeting virtually, recognize that authentic conversation can be awkward and uncomfortable. Give members the opportunity to turn off video or take a short break if the conversation becomes emotionally charged.
- If you are meeting in person, set the space to enhance the discussion. Some ideas could include sitting in a circle or being aware of where the adviser is sitting in relation to the member. It is preferred that the adviser does not sit across from the member who has come into Honor Board, as we want this to be a peer-led environment.
- If the conversation feels unsafe for a member, or she does not believe that she can offer an empathetic and impartial perspective, she should remove herself from the meeting.
- Consider which member(s) of Honor Board might be best to lead this conversation. It is not the sole responsibility of the vp: social standards to facilitate conversation.
- Make sure the member knows that she can take a break at any time.

- Let the member know you genuinely care about her and want to help her to succeed. As Honor Board, you are there to support this person, regardless of your own feelings for them. Seek to be compassionate at all times. If you feel like you cannot do that, remove yourself.
- Practice self-care and encourage self-care for one another. Use each other as support.
- Utilize your resources! Remember: you are not diversity, equity and inclusion professionals, nor are you expected to be! Your campus has many resources available to you (check your Campus Resources Worksheet).

## Sanctions and Accountability

In Delta Gamma, we believe in education, character development, and opportunities to learn and grow. However, severe offences may necessitate expulsion. You will see that probation is not listed as a recommended option below. The rationale being that prohibiting a member from participating in chapter activities does not offer a sustainable option for growth and does not directly address the concern. It's important to keep this philosophy in mind when looking at accountability for each case.

### How does accountability look at the end of the hearing or discussion?

- [Restorative Practices](#) / *Improve relationships and repair harm*
  - Whenever possible, if the racist act involved harm against any other person, Honor Board should work to center the voice of the person who experienced the harm. If appropriate, and would not cause further harm, ask the person who experienced the harm if they are willing to suggest sanctions or other outcomes that would help restore the harm that was caused. If they are willing to suggest sanctions, **please remind them that the Honor Board hearing and any related outcomes remain confidential** and they will not know the outcome of the hearing.
- If the member is open to change and learning, and is truly apologetic for her actions:
  - If believed appropriate, an educational opportunity would be a reasonable response from Honor Board. Offer the member access to educational resources (in Resources section of this document) and talk

about what resonates with her. Allow her to select what resource she would like to explore.

- Remember, involving the member in the sanctioning process can give her agency and therefore, lead to sustainable change.
- Set an expectation for the member to watch/read/listen to the selected resource. Decide together what an appropriate follow up may be.
  - A follow up could be a discussion about the resource, developing a small presentation or creating a piece of art, poetry, written reflection or another agreed upon medium.
  - Honor Board and the member should also agree on a plan for follow-up including time, place and parties involved. This can include one or two members of Honor Board, the entire board or the Honor Board adviser.
  - Please note: It is important that with education we do not put the responsibility to educate on the person(s) who were harmed or other members/new members of color unless the person(s) harmed or member/new member of color wants to be involved.
- Severe Offense
  - Given the severity of the offence, expulsion may be necessary. Honor Board should consider expulsions if the member is involved in any of the following:
    - Patterns of racist or discriminatory behavior
    - Hate crimes (include threats or causes someone to fear for their safety)
    - Premeditated acts of racism or hate (e.g. Blackface or mocking the killing of someone)
    - Behaviors that threaten someone
    - Behaviors that target another person

Through discussion with Honor Board, the member may admit that her values do not align with Delta Gamma. In that case, Honor Board should offer voluntary resignation to the member. If the member is unwilling to voluntarily resign, recommending expulsion is the preferred course of action.

# Resources

## **Restorative Practices video**

This video provides a brief introduction to the Restorative Practices method. Restorative practices is a technique used to restore and rebuild relationships between people and communities. The purpose is to build healthy communities and place folks who have been harmed at the center of the restoration. The is the preventative end of restorative justice.

## **Education Resource List**

**[antiracismforbeginners.com](http://antiracismforbeginners.com)**

## **Racial Equity Tools Glossary of Terms**

Conscious and thoughtful use of language will further enhance Honor Board discussion surrounding race and discrimination. The glossary is suggested as a tool to enhance the education of members and quality of dialogue and engagement.

*Note: This is the first version of this document. If you have feedback, please email [standards@deltagamma.org](mailto:standards@deltagamma.org).*