



Inclusion & Accountability:

## **Addressing Racism during the Alumnae Membership Review Process**

### **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 The Alumnae Membership Review Process plays a critical role in progressing our organization to be an inclusive space for all 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.*

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### **Step 1: Letter of Concern**

A member seeking review of another alumna member for concerns of racism or discrimination should submit a letter of concern to her Regional Alumnae Specialist (RAS) in accordance with the Alumnae Membership Review Process.

### **Step 2: Initial Review**

The Regional Alumnae Specialist, along with the Regional Director (RD), is responsible for reviewing the Letter of Concern, which may include concerns of racism and discrimination. If it is determined that a membership review is warranted, the Regional Alumnae Specialist will prepare the Initial Contact Letter. When racism or discrimination are concerns, the RAS should include a reference to Article II or the Positional Statement on Inclusivity in the Initial Contact Letter.

The Initial Contact Letter also calls for any additional information that will be helpful to the RAS and Regional Director in reviewing the concern(s). While the request for information can be broad, the RAS may want to utilize the following questions to prompt the member to share information. This will provide an opportunity for the member to provide relevant insights to guide the assessment of the Letter of Concern and any additional information provided by the member.

#### **Questions to Consider Including in the Initial Contact Letter:**

- Can you please provide additional information to help me understand why you did/said/posted this?
- This letter reminds you of the \_\_\_\_ (Article II or Positional Statement on Inclusivity); can you share how this action does not align with our Delta Gamma values?
- How might this action/comment/post have been perceived by members of our organization?
- How might others (including our Black sisters, sisters of color or others in and outside of the sorority/fraternity community) experience your action/comment/post?
- How do you think your actions further marginalized Black people and/or 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 sisters feel who identify as Black or as a person of color?
- In what ways might others attribute your views with Delta Gamma as a whole?

### **Step 3: Making a Recommendation for Action**

Ten days after sending the Initial Contact Letter, the RAS and RD will consider all relevant information, and suggest one of the following: No Action, Warning or Expulsion. Once the RAS and RD have decided on a recommendation, the RAS will inform the member under review of their recommendation and that it is being sent to the next level of review. The following are considerations when making a recommendation with a concern about racism or discrimination:

### No Action

If the information provided clarifies that no wrongdoing took place, then recommend No Action.

### Warning

If the information provided clarifies there was a violation, but that it does not require expulsion and the member takes some ownership over her behavior, then recommend a warning. A warning includes a personalized sanction.

### Expulsion

If the information provided clarifies there was a violation and the member does not realize the impact, or the behavior is egregious/clearly defies our Delta Gamma values, then consider expulsion.

The RAS 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.

Again, even if the conduct is not egregious but the member clearly denies the harm or potential impact of their actions, you may consider expulsion.

Please follow the Alumnae Membership Review process to move the review to the next step – Director Review and Recommendation.

### **Step 4: Director Review and Recommendation**

The Director: Alumnae Resources will share the information received with the Director: Alumnae Development, Director: Lifetime Engagement and Director: Standards for further review. The directors have 10 days to review the information provided and make a recommendation.

Upon completion of the review, the member under review receive an email with the decision from their review. The directors can decide on one of three actions – No Action, Warning (with sanctions) or Expulsion. Please see below for a list of suggested sanctions.

### **Suggested Sanctions for a Warning**

- [Restorative Practices](#) / *Improve relationships and repair harm*
  - Whenever possible, if the racist act involved harm against any other person, the RAS 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/submitted the Letter of Concern 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 they will not know the outcome of the Alumnae Membership Review Process.**

- Educational Resources
  - If believed appropriate, an educational opportunity would be a reasonable response. Offer the member access to educational resources (Appendix B) 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.
    - 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 of color unless the person(s) harmed or member of color wants to be involved.
- Discussion with Cabinet/Council Member or Staff Member(s)
  - If believed appropriate, further discussion about the incident and impact could lead to growth for the member.
  - Determine who is the best person(s) to lead an effective conversation with the member.
  - See the section below titled: ***Tips for Facilitating a Discussion with Cabinet/Council/Staff Member(s).***
  - See the section below titled: ***Tips for Helping to Create a Space for Open Dialogue During a Discussion with Cabinet/Council/Staff Member(s).***

### **Tips for Facilitating a Discussion with Cabinet/Council/Staff Member(s)**

Start with introductions, if necessary. Consider moving into the discussion a statement such as: *Thank you for joining me today. I understand you have communicated with your RAS, and I am glad we are connecting for this important dialogue. As a reminder, today we are joining for a moment of reflection after [describe nature of violation] was brought to our attention. With that, this is meant to be an opportunity for growth, and I would like to start by asking the following question [insert question from below].*

One way to encourage transparent, inviting conversation is to frame the discussion using open ended questions.

- See the questions in **Questions to Consider Including in the Initial Contact Letter** section above.
- Questions that tie into 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?
- Do you understand the difference between intent and impact?
 

*Note: 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.*
- 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 starts to make excuses for the behavior and 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 starts to make excuses for the behavior and indicates she is unwilling to acknowledge wrongdoing or display any effort 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 direct them to Executive Offices to initiate the process of 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 writing a new Letter of Concern.

### **Tips for Helping to Create a Space for Open Dialogue During a Discussion with Cabinet/Council/Staff Member(s)**

Given the nature of the conversation, it is likely to be emotional and challenging. Though it will be difficult, there are ways that the Cabinet/Council/staff member(s) 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.

- Clearly determine when you will connect and how you will connect: phone, virtually or in-person.
- Do not rush the discussion. 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.
- 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.
- 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. Note 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!

## **Appendix A**

### **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. This is the preventative end of restorative justice.

## **Appendix B**

### **Education Resource Lists**

[bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES](http://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES)

<http://antiracismforbeginners.com>

## **Appendix C**

### **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 [alumresources@deltagamma.org](mailto:alumresources@deltagamma.org).*