

April 26, 2018

Edward Baker Coogan, Consul  
Eta Lambda Chapter, Sigma Chi Fraternity  
3205 Oak Lane, Room 204  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

Dear Mr. Coogan,

Dr. Frank Shushok, Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs, has designated me to respond to the disciplinary appeal that you submitted on behalf of the Eta Lambda Chapter of Sigma Chi Fraternity at Virginia Tech on April 9, 2018. It is important to note that my role is not to rehear your case but to render findings relative to your claims. As such, my task is to consider your assertion that the sanction(s) issued were unduly harsh or arbitrary.

The substance of your appeal focused on the behavior of those involved in the Sigma Chi Sweetheart Program, and more specifically, your assertion that Sigma Chi has been unfairly held accountable for the behavior of the women involved (particularly hazing with alcohol). For the sake of consideration, I mentally set aside the hazing finding to test whether or not the sanctioning would be unduly harsh absent the hazing component of the case.

At the time of the incident that gave rise to this finding, Sigma Chi was on the status of deferred suspension for previous policy violations. Alcohol, as well as other policy violations, have recently spanned the course of four separate incidents. By current sanctions, Sigma Chi is prohibited from chapter events with alcohol. Even given this reality, by your own admission, multiple members of Sigma Chi, seniors included, came intoxicated or brought and/or consumed alcohol at the Sigma Chi "Bonfire Reveal" (that occurred after the new and incumbent sweetheart celebration to which you contest being a Sigma Chi activity). By this singular fact, Sigma Chi placed itself in the precarious position for suspension.

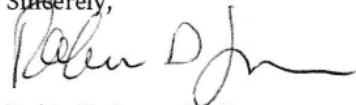
As you are likely aware, colleges and universities across the country have been plagued with alcohol-related fraternity deaths. While the near death of another student brought light to this incident, the most compelling fact is that the chapter was unable to control and manage an alcohol culture previously flagged by being placed on a deferred suspension status. The severity of this case, unfortunately, was further aggravated when the chapter interfered with the student conduct process and provided false information to university officials investigating the case.

In Sigma Chi's closing statement at the hearing, the chapter acknowledged "that a drinking culture exists" and that "too many Greek organizations have lost recognition [and]. . . find themselves on social probation or deferred suspension." If educational programming and previous disciplinary action has not elicited the chapter's attention, it seems to me that Sigma Chi has left Virginia Tech with the only reasonable progressive option. Sigma Chi was on deferred suspension for an alcohol-related infraction. A subsequent alcohol-related infraction while on this status assumes that suspension in the likely next sanction. It is for this reason that I affirmed my test that the hazing violation in of itself is not responsible for the sanction. Your argument, therefore, is moot. I have therefore thoroughly reviewed all the information provided and it is my conclusion that the outcomes imposed by the hearing officers were neither inconsistent with precedent nor necessarily unduly harsh or arbitrary. Therefore, I am upholding the sanctions imposed from the original hearing.

It is standard practice for an organization to lose recognition for a period of five years so that the health of the organization can be restored with new members who have no history with the previous culture and practices. Should Eta Lambda decide to return to Virginia Tech, I am confident that you will have all the support necessary to rebuild in a way that encourages individual members and the organization as a whole to respect and adhere to both Virginia Tech and Sigma Chi policies and guidelines.

I understand that this decision may be disappointing to you and many others; however, this becomes Virginia Tech's final decision in this case. Should you have any additional questions, please contact the Office of Student Conduct.

Sincerely,



Robin D. Jones, Ed.D.

Appellate Officer

Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs

Division of Student Affairs

cc: Ro Settle, Director for Student Conduct  
Dr. Frank Shushok, Senior Associate Vice President Student Affairs