

Address to Chico State Greek Community

April 12, 2005

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Good evening.

We have to stop meeting like this. Truly, we must.

But I will meet with you everyday if this contributes to accomplishing the message that I delivered to you in February. And in case you have forgotten, let me remind you what the two main elements of that message were:

First, with respect to behaviors that are dangerous, illegal and harmful to yourself, your fellow students, your organizations, and your University, you are either part of the solution in addressing them - collectively and every day - or you are part of the problem.

Second, being part of the solution involves being true to whom you say you are - value-centered associations that help develop members into exemplary students, leaders and citizens; organizations which serve their University and surrounding community; and individuals who uphold and act in accordance with the loftiest of behavioral expectations. You are either

who you say you are, or you are frauds. And there's no room for you here if you ignore your responsibilities or deny your promises.

Since we last assembled here, there have been signs of a positive response to my message. The IFC, for example, agreed that there will be no events with alcohol at their houses beginning the week before classes start in the Fall and lasting for several weeks thereafter. The IFC houses went dark for the Cesar Chavez holiday weekend. Lambda Theta Nu brought over 100 young people to the campus for their Latina Youth Leadership conference. Sigma Chi and Panhellenic have started conversations with the University Police regarding ride-alongs and other ways to get to know each other better. And the six national Panhellenic chapters at the University held a strategic planning conference where they set goals and made commitments geared to improve their chapters and the system as a whole.

These are encouraging indications that many of you wish to effect changes and demonstrate leadership in order to survive as part of the solution. Nevertheless, problems with the Greeks continue:

* We have been treated with the revelation that one of our nationally recognized fraternities decided to become part of the porn industry and that decision has brought scorn and derision upon the University, embarrassment and ridicule to the members of that fraternity.

* We have not seen the end of medical transports to Enloe Hospital for members and/or guests of the Greek system needing emergency assistance as a consequence of alcohol or other substance abuse.

* Formal charges of manslaughter and hazing have been brought by the Chico District Attorney against eight individuals - four of them Chico State students - for their involvement in the hazing death of Matthew Carrington.

* The police of both the University and the city continue to keep busy dealing with noise violations, fights, and minors in possession at the houses of both national and local fraternities.

To be sure, it is not just members of the Greek community who have engaged in this kind of behavior. But, rightly or wrongly, fairly or not, the burden of responsibility and the price of notoriety fall squarely on your shoulders. You set the tone, not exclusively, but in large part, for perceptions of what kind of institution we are regarding student behavior, socially and academically.

Let me share with you evidence of how this is the case. I want to read you one letter from among the hundreds of e-mails, letters, and phone calls that I have received from alums, students, parents, and citizens of the State of California over the last two months. Amidst the many scores of these that express shame and embarrassment, outrage and disgust, about the events and behaviors that necessitate our meetings, this one stands out. For it reveals all too sadly and profoundly the consequences of your actions:

The letter is written by the parent of a prospective student:

"I have followed with sadness the news about Matthew Carrington's death at the Chi Tau fraternity in Chico. My son David was offered admission to Chico State as a freshman for Fall 2004. We were thoroughly

impressed with the University from the start. Just two weeks after submitting his application, David received a letter of acceptance, as well as a personal letter welcoming him to the [academic department of his intended major]. Our family attended an information night in [our home town] and visited Chico in Spring 2004. We came away impressed with the dedication of the faculty and staff, the character of the young pre-med student who was our tour guide, and the beauty and welcoming atmosphere of the University. We were all excited about the possibility of David's enrollment at Chico State. David expressed that other schools were "going to have to try pretty hard" to convince him to turn Chico State down. Each representative of the University with whom we came into contact made us excited about the possibility of sending our son to Chico.

"But in the end, David chose [another college], reasoning that he'd 'be able to concentrate better [there]."

"I think it was a good decision. David is a mature young man and not the sort to get into trouble, but his instinct in choosing [the other institution] over Chico State was an acknowledgment that he was not immune to the lures of Chico's 'party school' reputation."

"When I read the negative press about Chico State following Matthew Carrington's death, I sympathized with those good people - administrators, faculty, staff and students - who worked so hard to represent Chico State as my son was making his college decision. I have nothing but praise for them and their efforts. I would have entrusted my son's education to those good people."

David should be here with us. But he is not, and many other David's are not, because they are victims of the consequences of the actions we're here to address. We need to eliminate reasons for prospective students to decline our offer of admission, and a concern that they will "get into trouble" here is one of them.

Now, you may not care or think about the consequences of your behaviors, but I do, your deans and professors do, the alumni of this University do, the leadership and residents of this city do. And now you must, too. Again, let me be clear. The University's concerns about student behavior are not solely concentrated on those in the Greek system. In many respects, your behavior is symptomatic of larger patterns and issues, including ones, like alcohol abuse, that go well beyond our campus. But your visibility and the concentration of disturbing events in your world requires singular attention and corrective action.

When we met in February, I announced the establishment of a task force to examine all aspects of Greek life at the University. 40% of the membership of this task force is from the Greek organizations. I have since broadened the scope of that review to a President's Commission on Campus Life with a charge to look at all student behavior and the conditions that are necessary to keep students safe and healthy, productively engaged in their studies, and succeeding in the classroom and beyond.

With regard to the Greeks, the task force has provided me with a preliminary sense of its direction. It is tackling all the major issues, including alcohol policies and whether or not we will continue to have a formally recognized Greek system at Chico State. Although I will wait for

the final report of this group before deciding upon its recommendations as a whole, including the two I've just mentioned, I have received enough guidance from the task force, the faculty and academic and student life leadership of the University, many of your alumni, representatives of some of your national offices, and a national expert on Greek matters which the University has engaged to direct some concrete actions now.

So what I am about to lay out is a set of minimum terms and conditions that you must meet in order to be considered to maintain your recognition and continuation. Let me make sure that you have understood what I've just said. These are terms and conditions - a pre-test, in effect - that if fully met, will enable you to be **considered** for on-going recognition by the University. How you meet these requirements will influence the ultimate question of your recognition and continuation, as well as other matters such as recruitment practices, membership criteria, and alcohol policies.

These terms and conditions are aimed no less at the transformation of the Greek system at Chico State University, so that, if we continue to have one, it will be one of the premier Greek systems in the country. This transformation seeks to accomplish, in particular, a strong, shared understanding between the University and the CSU, Chico Greek community about the values, goals and purposes of a Greek system. We should not seek or be satisfied with less. This transformation will not happen overnight. But do not doubt the University's resolve to make it happen. Changing the ethos of Greek life at the University will be guided by several unequivocal goals:

To the extent that you are now, you will no longer be drinking clubs masquerading as fraternities and sororities.

To the extent that you are now, you will no longer be outcasts on the edges of irresponsibility and excess.

To the extent that you do now, you will no longer endanger your own membership and anyone else who risks their safety, reputation and status as a student of the University in associating with you.

To the extent that you are now, you will no longer be an embarrassment to yourselves, your national organizations, your University, and your host city and neighborhoods.

These are the initial, non-negotiable elements of this transformation:

1. These terms and conditions apply to all chapters - IFC, Panhellenic, locals and ethnic Greek groups.
2. All Greek organizations will be expected to meet significantly higher academic performance levels than is now the case. Although I am not ready this evening to designate specifically what these expectations are, they will reflect the fact that academics are a central tenet of all chapters at the University and there is no integrity or credibility for these chapters when their academic performances are significantly out of line with overall University averages. Demonstrable progress in raising chapter GPAs, regardless of the target levels that are established, must be seen by the beginning of classes in Spring, 2006.

3. Each chapter shall have a faculty advisor approved by the office of Greek life to emphasize the chapter focus on academics. These faculty will be engaged with the chapters in full and proactive ways. In addition, chapters must have a similarly approved staff or alumni advisor to assist with chapter operations and development. The Greek Life advisor in the Student Activities Office will no longer be solely responsible for advising individual chapters.

4. Each chapter shall have an active alumni board consisting of members who fully support the need for reform and these terms and conditions.

5. Each chapter shall develop programs of leadership development and hands-on community service that will be exemplary for the entire University in terms of participation and impact.

6. Each chapter with a house shall have an annual fire and building code inspection with a written report that all these codes have been met satisfactorily on file with the Student Activities Office. Chapter houses will abide by all city ordinances dealing with noise, cleanliness, etc. The name and contact information of the owner of the house will also be on file with the Student Activities Office.

7. Only currently enrolled Chico State students are eligible for membership in Chico State social Greek organizations. All members who are not Chico State students must be removed from the chapter.

8. Each chapter must develop a membership recruitment program that seeks members who support and promote the positive aspects of Greek life as a whole.

9. All recruitment events, both formal and informal, must be totally alcohol-free.

10. Hazing will not be tolerated in any form by any student organization. The broadest definition of hazing will be used, that is, any action that involves the abuse, humiliation or embarrassment of another. We will draw no distinction between minor and major hazing. It is all forbidden and disciplinary action will be taken against both the organizations and individuals who engage in it. Furthermore, all new member activities and/or events must be totally alcohol free.

You have between now and the start of the Fall semester to begin to put into place policies and practices to address each of these mandates. I will direct both the provost and the vice-president for student affairs to work together to monitor and enforce compliance of these requirements. I expect you to work closely with them. And I urge you to address these matters collectively at IFC, Panhellenic, and the Ethnic Greek Council and individually with your alumni, nationals, and University advisors.

As you consider your responses and actions, let me make one other point very clear. If you think you can choose loss of recognition by the University and continue your ugly ways as rogue organizations, think again. As never before, the University and the city are working together to align and strengthen our cooperation, to enforce ordinances to protect the health and safety of the residents and citizens of our community, to expand the jurisdiction of campus discipline authority to behavior occurring off-campus, and to improve our neighborhoods and the quality of life for those who live here.

This alignment reflects a compelling, even unique, relationship between the University and the city of Chico. We are a true college town in that there are no boundaries, no barriers, no distance between the University and the city. We share avenues and aspirations, sidewalks and citizenship, a history and an identity. We are proud of all of this.

We prosper together. We define the elements of the good community together. We are mindful of the responsibilities we have to each other.

I don't expect all newcomers to the University to grasp immediately the significance of the special relationship between the University and the city. But I do expect you to appreciate and accept the responsibilities of being a good guest and citizen of our connected communities.

Contribute positively to our community, and respect it, or leave it.

You have within your own self-professed values in your chapter charters all that we would hope for. You have an opportunity to affirm who you say you are. You now have some specific guidelines to this effect to get started. As I mentioned earlier, others will come from the Greek life task force, assuming they recommend continuance of a Greek system here and I accept that recommendation.

As I said in February, I expect that you will choose a path to enrich student life, to support the mission of the University, to earn the respect of the city, and to enable Chico State University to build a future that soars on the clarity of our values and the integrity of our promise.

A Greek system is not vital to the fulfillment of that promise. But it is not incompatible with it either. It remains for you to demonstrate and for the University to determine whether or not you are relevant to the University's future. You can only be so if you are true to your own promises and obligations.

I hope you will choose the path of truth. And in so doing become a source of pride for the University, and yourselves, and provide the kind of leadership of which you are capable to turn something corrosive into something positive.

Thank you again for your time and attention. Good evening.