

January 15, 2008

To the Dartmouth Community:

A simple goal of bringing an outstanding organization to campus has created some controversy, along with some misinformation. Here, we are happy to have the opportunity to explain more about our intentions and to clear up some of the misperceptions:

Background on Beta at Dartmouth

The Alpha Omega Chapter of Beta Theta Pi was chartered in 1889. We were later legally incorporated as the "Trustees of the Alpha Omega Chapter of Beta Theta Pi." We are the corporation that built 6 Webster Avenue in 1933.

Our organization enjoyed more than a century of recognition as a leading Greek organization on campus respected by both male and female students. Many highly regarded alumni, including former President David McLaughlin '54, have been members of our organization.

Derecognition

During the mid-90's, a sustained period of misbehavior by members of the fraternity led to the "permanent derecognition" of the organization. While this behavior was caused by a minority of the membership, the fraternity was ultimately at fault for not policing itself properly. The Beta Trustees supported the shut down of the fraternity. The term "permanently derecognized" meant that neither the existing classes of Beta undergraduates at that time nor their organizational structure would be allowed to return to campus. However, it was understood that after a suitable period of time had elapsed, 3 or 4 years, a new interest group might be formed to apply as a new fraternity to use that space. In other words, a completely new fraternity would be allowed, but reconstitution of the previous Beta chapter was permanently barred. The offenses committed by those undergraduates were an affront to all Beta alumni, one which we will not soon forget. It should be further noted for the record that "Betavision" is patently untrue.

Alpha Xi Delta lease

In November 1997, Alpha Xi Delta sorority, lacking a home, signed a witnessed and notarized lease with us to end on June 30, 2000. After the period of the written lease, Alpha Xi Delta became a tenant at will, subject to 30 days' notice. Here are some excerpts from the lease document:

"Alpha Xi Delta ... understands that this lease is for a limited term and that it is obligated to vacate the leased premises at the end of the lease even if it has not secured substitute space; and

"Alpha Xi supports the reorganization of Beta at Dartmouth College ... and is willing to cooperate in all reasonable ways with the Trustees and the future Dartmouth College students to be involved in such reorganization in order to allow reoccupancy of the premises by members of a renewed Beta at the end of the lease."

While we have had, and still have, other options as property owners, we were proud to be one of the first organizations to provide housing and social space on Webster Avenue for women.

Reinstatement

It was our expressed goal to achieve reinstatement from the beginning. At the outset, we expected our “dark period,” similar to Zeta Psi’s, to last 3-4 years to allow the unwanted elements of the organization to cycle out of the College. This was communicated verbally by the College and was the basis for the terms of our lease with Alpha Xi. Fate intervened as the Student Life Initiative came to campus in 1999, prior to the end of our “dark period.” This placed a moratorium on new, single-sex Greek organizations.

Despite this obstacle, discussions with the College continued through this period and were increased upon the lifting of the moratorium in June, 2005. Importantly, it was an expressed interest of ours and the College to ensure alternative space would be available for Alpha Xi as part of our reinstatement. We have committed to and they have accepted our offer to work with them through this transitional period.

National Affiliation

Our agreement with the College stipulates that we prefer a nationally-affiliated organization. We are not currently affiliated with our national organization; however, we have had extensive discussions with the Beta Theta Pi General (national) Fraternity for the past three years. Those discussions are ongoing to this day. The College has also suggested other national organizations that allow for open affiliation.

Women at Dartmouth

Beyond offering one of the first female social and residential living spaces on Webster Avenue, women at Dartmouth are of particular concern to our organization. Many of our alumni are married to Dartmouth alumnae and many of our alumni are proud to have daughters currently on campus or recently graduated. We are committed to creating an organization respectful to all members of the Dartmouth community, both male and female. And, finally, the mistakes made by a small number of our 1200 alumni will not be repeated.

Our Future

We intend to build a model Greek organization, one that respects the dignity of its members and the community at large. Any inappropriate legacies of the past will stay there. While we will provide support and guidance for the organization, the true character of the new organization will be built on the strength of the outstanding undergraduates we seek to attract from a broad spectrum of the campus. This is our legacy and we wish to build upon it.

More information is and will be available on our website – www.dartmouthbeta.org.

Sincerely,

The Beta Board of Trustees