***Sorority Housing Task Force Work Completed***

*Denise Brenner ’00, Delta Zeta – Task Force Chair*

During the May, 2021 Fraternity/Sorority Town Hall meeting, OWU students and alumni were provided with an initial overview of the then newly formed Sorority Housing Task Force. The Task Force was assembled in February, 2021 based on a recommendation from the Cost of Membership Subcommittee of the Fraternity/Sorority Life Strategic Planning Committee. After recognizing the significant impact of facility related costs of the women’s properties on Winter Street, members were tasked with reviewing National models for sorority facilities and providing a recommendation for an appropriate model for OWU sororities.

The Task Force included 10 individuals representing various OWU constituent bases (alumni, parents, staff, Administrators and volunteers) and professions (accounting, development, FSL Executive Office staff, higher education, law and real estate). The group met bi-monthly from February-December, 2021 and examined data specific to OWU and National trends in admissions, financial aid, residential life, FSL affiliation, legal cases, social and cultural factors, cost of membership, University/FSL residential partnerships, and other relevant factors.

Feedback from constituents was gathered through participation in an SPC initiated survey of OWU students (affiliated and non-affiliated), leading a focus group of current sorority women, discussions with local and National House Corporation members, hosting interactive Zoom sessions with each chapter, and meeting with OWU Administrators. The TF also took into consideration the strategic pillars of the OWU Board of Trustees.

In December, 2021, members met with President Rock Jones and Vice-President of Student Success and Engagement Dwayne Todd to discuss our findings and next steps. Based on collective feedback from the initiatives above, as well as many hours of work and discussion by the Task Force, our recommendation is as follows:

1. The University conduct a feasibility study to determine the design and construction cost of a potential women’s sorority structure proximal to Williams Drive, consisting of:
   1. Separate organizational spaces with apartment style living over a unique multi-purpose room. Living spaces should accommodate **up to** 12 beds per organization and include a full residential kitchen and access to laundry facilities.
   2. Each of the aforementioned multi-purpose rooms should include:
      1. Common space/Chapter room.
      2. Residential-grade kitchen.
      3. Powder Room/half bathroom.
      4. Secure storage space.
      5. Dedicated study space.
   3. All multi-purpose rooms should include adequate soundproofing to allow for privacy during rituals and meetings.
2. The University provide specific and definitive cost information for the construction to each of the five current NPC organizations, with adequate detail to answer all questions related to financial, logistical, operational and fundraising requirements and obligations.
3. The Panhellenic House remain on campus as long as there is interest and the facility is occupied to capacity.

In response to the TF work, the University contacted three national firms to obtain proposals in line with the criteria spelled out in the recommendation. This included assistance with:

* estimated construction costs related to various structural options
* considerations of potential site planning
* creation of preliminary concept renderings
* assessment of philanthropic potential to support project costs

The University opted to partner with The Scion Group (<https://thesciongroup.com/>) to move forward with the portion of the feasibility plan that involves financial modeling and interest gauging among constituents. In April, 2022, TF members participated in a virtual focus/discussion group with two members of the Scion Group team to discuss our recommendation (which has been provided to them) and answer follow-up questions. As part of their feasibility study, the Scion Group led several other constituent discussion groups, including sessions with administrators, staff, students, alumni, House Corporation members, chapter advisors and a strategic planning group.

While awaiting the recommendation from the Scion Group, the Task Force also felt it important to meet with the Panhellenic Community and House Corporations members to share the recommendation points and provide an update on the progress of the initiative. The TF hosted a virtual session in March in which participants were provided the opportunity to ask questions and share their thoughts. Current sorority members were encouraged to commit to taking an active and engaged role in collaborating with the University in this process.

While the work of the Sorority Task Force has now concluded, we look forward to learning about the next steps in this initiative. The Task Force believes our recommendation would directly support the wishes of our constituent groups by providing an upgraded residential experience, flexible residential options, an effort toward creating equity in residential life, adequate space for growth in sorority membership, and ultimately, a reduction in the cost of membership.

Finally - I would be remiss if I did not publicly recognize and thank the members of the Task Force for their hours of dedicated service to our end product:

*Brian Emerick, OWU Director of Residential Life*

*Brooke Georgiton ‘00, Kappa Alpha Theta*

*Sarah Witkowski Gipe ‘99, Kappa Kappa Gamma*

*Sean Harris ’97, Sigma Alpha Epsilon*

*Laurie Wesp Patton ’95, Delta Delta Delta*

*Nancy Bihl Rutkowski, OWU Senior Associate Director of Alumni & Parent Engagement*

*Virginia O’Grady Shipps ’70, Delta Gamma*

*Katie Webster, OWU Director of Alumni Relations & Engagement*

Thank you for the opportunity to positively impact the future of sorority life at Ohio Wesleyan!