MEMORANDUM

To: IFC, PHC, and MGLC Chapter Presidents, IFC, PHC and MGLC Chapter Advisors, Tri-Council Executive Board Members, IFC, PHC and MGLC Chapter Members, AIFC Members, APAC Members, AMGLC Members, FSAC Members, Inter/National Organizations

From: Susan Murphy, Vice President, Student and Academic Services, Cornell University

Re: Plan to meet President Skorton’s Challenge “To End Pledging as We Know It”

Date: November 28, 2012

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As you know, in August 2011 David Skorton, President of Cornell University, challenged our community to identify and adopt practices that would put an end to fraternity and sorority hazing by ‘ending pledging as we know it.’ In response, several fraternities redesigned their processes for welcoming new members, and all three governing councils have had discussions with their constituents about policy, enforcement and the purpose of the new member programs. Alumni and student leadership assembled a task force, dubbed RARE (Recruitment, Acceptance, Retention and Education), charged with creating a set of recommendations to change inappropriate and dangerous values, norms, and practices in the Greek System, and chaired by Bob Forness ’87 and Corinna Romantic ‘12. They deserve our gratitude for the long hours, commitment, and creativity they contributed.

Dean Hubbell, Associate Dean Apgar and I have taken the RARE task force recommendations, along with those received from the Fraternity and Sorority Advisory Council, other University staff, administrators, alumni and other community members who contributed their ideas, and have created a comprehensive strategy to respond to President Skorton’s challenge. He has accepted the recommendations we have presented as first steps in accomplishing our goal. This coming spring, as we enter into the formal recruitment period, we will implement six changes to the process:

1. Remove the power differential between members and initiates which often leads to coercive behavior
2. Transition from a pledge model to one of sustained personal development, focusing on the organization’s core principles and the educational mission of Cornell.
3. Approve orientation events, by Cornell University and partners, before they occur
4. Shorten the period of new membership orientation
5. Communicate transparently in the event of infractions
6. Increase alumni involvement

Recognizing that shifts in a community culture take time, we have developed a phased implementation timeline, enclosed here. In the coming days, there will be opportunities to engage with student leaders, invested alumni, and staff to discuss details of the plan and understand how each chapter can contribute to a successful transition.

From the outset we have emphasized the importance of preserving the many positive characteristics of the fraternity and sorority experience. I have every confidence that the community will agree that we have done so, and that we must – and will – meet the president’s challenge.