



CONTACT

Heather Kirk, Chief Communication Officer
Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity
Heather.kirk@sigep.net

October 11, 2019

Sigma Phi Epsilon Closes Chapter at West Virginia University

RICHMOND, Va. – Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity has closed the West Virginia Beta Chapter at West Virginia University after determining the chapter repeatedly violated Fraternity and University alcohol and risk management policies. Following an investigation, the Fraternity’s National Board of Directors made the decision to disband the chapter, with the support of the West Virginia Beta Alumni and Volunteer Corporation (AVC) and in partnership with the University.

In the last 18 months, time and time again, the West Virginia Beta Chapter has violated the law and Fraternity and University policies, bringing both member and guest safety into question. Since January 2018, these violations led the Fraternity to cease operations multiple times to ensure safety, investigate the concerns, take action and provide support to facilitate cultural change in the chapter.

- In the 2017-2018 academic year, the chapter incurred multiple police reports for violations during social events and was found to be operating a slush fund to finance events. These concerns were addressed with the chapter by Headquarters staff and volunteers.
- In August 2018, chapter officers planned and hosted a social event and violated Fraternity policies. They stepped down from their positions, and Headquarters staff and volunteers worked with the chapter to deliver member safety training and hold members accountable. The chapter self-imposed several sanctions — including social probation — expressing commitment to shift its culture.
- In January 2019, members were found to be drinking during a Ritual service after the chapter tried to mislead staff that the service was not taking place. Headquarters staff and alumni worked with the standards board to hold these individuals accountable.
- In February 2019, the chapter held an off-campus social event — during its self-imposed social probation — and received a fire code violation. Additionally, staff became aware that members regularly posted photos of themselves drinking in their facility. With a pattern of violations evident, the Headquarters staff ceased operations, conducted an investigation, re-established expectations, and worked with the chapter to develop a plan to move forward.
- During the 2018-2019 academic year, 50 members who could not commit to a safe SigEp experience — one not based around alcohol consumption — resigned their membership. Members who stayed expressed they were committed to expectations.
- In August 2019, the chapter planned and staged a party with six kegs in the parking lot next to the chapter facility. This event was shut down by the police, and the Fraternity and University issued a cease of operations. In the investigation that followed, the staff and alumni volunteers made it clear that any future violation would result in a recommendation to the National Board of Directors for closure.
- Less than a month later while still on the cease of operations, the chapter hosted a social event in its facility, once again violating the law and University and Fraternity policies. It has been

reported that during this event, members brought guests/dates into the chapter facility, where members told their guests that they would need to split a bottle of hard alcohol and finish it before they could leave. Two 18-year-old female guests became intoxicated to the point of reportedly going in and out of consciousness and vomiting. Concerned for her health, one of the guest's female friends called 911, emergency services were dispatched, and the women were taken to the hospital. We have received reports that some members asked her not to contact the authorities.

Due to the concern for the safety and well-being of members and guests, the pattern of violations outlined, and the chapter's unwillingness to implement cultural change, SigEp's National Board of Directors unanimously determined to withdraw the West Virginia Beta charter.

"SigEp's purpose is to develop balanced men who make a difference in their communities, and we expect chapters and their members to act in accordance with our values," said SigEp CEO Brian Warren. "In this case, members have repeatedly violated the law and the Fraternity's and University's policies on risk management and substance abuse. When the cultural issues within a chapter conflict with our values and are too deeply rooted to change, SigEp will act responsibly to ensure the safety of students and other members of the campus community."

The West Virginia Beta Chapter has had significant support from the Headquarters staff, a committed group of trained volunteers and dedicated University administrators who actively have tried to help them provide a safe, positive fraternity experience. Over the past three years, SigEp staff members have visited West Virginia Beta 18 times and spent more than 48 days in Morgantown to support the chapter in developing positive culture, recruiting quality men and implementing the Balanced Man Program. The committed volunteers of the West Virginia Beta Alumni and Volunteer Corporation have also invested significant time to support the chapter's development and changes to its culture. Each time violations occurred, the Headquarters staff and AVC — in partnership with the University — worked with the chapter to shift its culture.

"The current West Virginia Beta undergraduates have squandered this assistance and their opportunities," said Warren. "They have shown that they care more about being a Morgantown drinking club than they do about SigEp's mission and developing balanced men. That is simply not the experience we seek to provide."

###

Sigma Phi Epsilon is a college fraternity headquartered in Richmond, Virginia, with more than 13,000 undergraduates on 210 campuses across the United States. Established in 1901, its mission is "Building Balanced Men," which is achieved through a continuous member development program focused on academic achievement, healthy lifestyle choices and leadership development.