To: President Chuck Staben  
From: Jean Kim, Vice Provost for Student Affairs and Chair of SLTF  
Subject: Final set of 7 additional recommendations (#2-8)  
Date: April 1, 2016

The Student Life Task Force began its work in mid-September with the charge to: Examine how UI currently supports the first-year students and their overall transition to the university with a special focus on their residential experience; Identify potential improvements in Housing & Residence Life; Explore the impact of how we recruit first-year students to join the Greek system and housing them in Greek chapter houses; and Examine how Greek Life contributes to the residential experience and whether it can be strengthened by any changes in practice.

In January we submitted our first recommendation to you which was for the UI to continue the current system of providing first year housing options that include Greek chapter houses, Residence halls, and Steel House Co-op. We are glad you accepted our recommendation one.

Since then, we reviewed the remaining data at our subsequent meetings to improve the residential experience in the residence halls and in Greek chapter houses, and considered changing practices that may improve the overall first year residential experience at the UI. We also conducted one more study to hear from the residence hall students who are over 21 years old and have sought feedback from the Campus Community Coalition on potentially making all residential communities dry. What follows are seven additional recommendations from the SLTF. Lastly, by submitting these additional recommendation to you, the Student Life Task Force members consider our work to be finished, but we do look forward to hearing your responses to these recommendations soon.

Recommendation Two: Require Greek leader training

Resident Advisors (RAs) receive safety training, and this year the RA staff from Steel House participated in the RA training as well. We believe students in Greek living situations should have access to similar training to maintain safer living environments. The Task Force recommends that at least two leaders from each Greek chapter house be identified to receive required safety training similar to the training given to Residence Life staff on an annual basis.

Recommendation Three: Consider Live-In House Directors

There are RA’s and live-in professional staff in university housing, and all sororities and two fraternities have live in House Directors. While we understand that it would be a huge financial burden on the chapter in compensation and potential remodeling expenses to have a live-in House Director, we believe a live-in House Director could bring significant value to the fraternities. The Task Force recommends fraternities consider having a live-in House Director, but having such position is not mandated.
Recommendation Four: Study two year on campus living requirement

We believe there are a number of benefits to new students to live on campus for two years. It provides students more time to develop bonds with the campus community and the university. It gives students more time to evaluate their choices. Research has shown better retention rate for those who live on campus than students who live off campus. Information gathered from the Focus Groups also indicated students who moved off campus after one year felt they lost a connection to the UI, and could become more ‘at risk’ to leave the University. The UI fraternities and sororities already have at least a two year live in requirement and some require three years of living in the chapter houses. The Task Force recommends conducting a study as soon as possible on whether the University should move to a two-year live on campus requirement.

Recommendation Five: Make all living option costs transparent

Currently we do not fully communicate on the cost of all living options to help students make informed choices. We need to make all living option costs transparent to new students including room, meals, membership dues, initiation fees, etc. The Task Force recommends that UI make all living option costs transparent to the students, including room and board, membership dues, initiation fees, etc. through all printed materials, websites, and recruitment events.

Recommendation Six: Provide reduced meal plans

Currently the Greek chapter houses do not provide meals on weekends. An option to buy meals from campus dining services on weekends maybe appreciated by some Greek students. The students living in the LLC (Living Learning Communities) who are not required to purchase a campus dining meal plan may also benefit from having a reduced meal plan option. The Task Force recommends that reduced meal plan at an affordable price be made available on weekends to Greek students. Also, the same or similar reduced meal plan be made available to students in the LLC’s allowing them to supplement their cooking in their residence halls.

Recommendation Seven: Explore revising living group/housing business practices

Inability to break housing contracts without significant financial cost is seen as a major impediment for students to move from the residence halls to Greek chapter houses and from Greek chapter houses to residence halls. For students wishing to move between Greek houses and the Residence Halls, the cost of breaking housing contract with the university or with individual Greek chapters is significant and could be a major impediment for students to move from one system to the other. Currently, both contracts are for the academic year (i.e., for two semesters). The Task Force is in favor of revising the policies/contract so that the cost is neutral for students, as much as possible, when such moves are desired. The Task Force recommends exploration of this issue in further detail by a full review of existing policies/contracts and collection of necessary data by a small working group (Greek alumni and residence hall staff) that is charged to figure out how this could be achieved with potential implementation for the AY 2017-18.

Recommendation Eight: Follow the progress and inform alumni of the implementation of the Intentional Interaction Model in the Residence Halls
As was mentioned in our first recommendation, the First year Retention by Residency study indicated (controlling for various factors such as HGPA, first gen, SEC) the retention rate of first year students are higher in the Greek chapter houses than in the residence halls, 88% vs 79% (with one exception being the Upham LLC which was the same as Greek houses). The Upham Living Learning Community’s high retention rate was the result of implementing a pilot program called Intentional Interaction model. It is a model that requires a paradigm shift in the focus of the Resident Assistants to emphasize more one on one interactions with students rather than on meeting a quantity of programming requirements. Given the success of the pilot initiative in Upham, the Housing and Residence Life department will be expanding the Intentional Interaction model in all first year communities starting Fall 2016. Many SLTF members are aware of the fact that the question most asked by alumni, after the first recommendation was accepted by President Staben, concerned what improvements will be recommended for the Residence Halls to improve the first year students’ experience in them. Alums who have been following SLTF work are aware of retention, grades and bonding of all living groups, so it is important for them to be informed that improvements are also in the works to improve the residence hall experience.

* Student Life Task Force Members

Erin Agidius ’01, ’11, Interim Director of HRAI, Kappa Alpha Theta Alumnae
Dan Alsaker ’72, Sigma Alpha Epsilon Alumnus
Blaine Eckles ’11, Dean of Students
Frances Ellsworth ’83, Gamma Phi Beta Alumnae
Sandy Fery ’81, Delta Delta Delta Delta Alumnae
Marilyn Fordham ’57, Delta Gamma Alumnae
Dee Dee Kanikkeberg, Director of Housing & Residence Life
Jean Kim, Chair, Vice Provost for Student Affairs
Troy LaVigne ’17, IFC President, Delta Tau Delta
McKenzie MacDonald ’19, ASUI Senator
Kent Nelson ’80, ’84, General Counsel, Sigma Chi Alumnus
David Pfeiffer, Director of Office of Undergraduate Research; Prof. of Biological Sciences
Dick Reilly ’81, Phi Delta Theta Alumnus
Laird Stone ’75, ’78, Alpha Kappa Lambda Alumnus