

San Diego State University – WDC2006 Chapter Report

Hello. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Karen and I'm the President of the Zeta Xi chapter at San Diego State. Our report will be a little longer than usual this year, but as we weren't able to speak last year, we have a little bit of catching up to do. This may be the last report you hear from San Diego for some time, so you'll still come out ahead.

Rebuilding our Band Director's podium tower. Hosting concert receptions. Band Barbeques. An instrument petting zoo. Recruitment. Fundraisers. Spring scholarships. Two full candidate classes. An optimistic and ambitious membership. Long-term service projects. That special SDSU spark.

These are all things we **did not do** or **did not have** this year; or the last.

Our chapters (ourselves and our Brothers) have been through perhaps the most agonizing experience one could imagine over the past two years. Some of you know a bit of what has been happening, but most probably know very little.

The intent of this report is not to garner pity, but to help clear the air, and bring to light some things which we hope will prove meaningful to you in the hours, days, and semesters and years to come.

First: the facts of the present.

As you know, Zeta Xi was placed on suspension last year. We were warned that would be the case if changes to our existing constitution were not made two weeks before convention. After the required changes were made, the National Councils decided that they wanted two completely separate constitutions – something SDSU had never had – just 17 hours before convention. This could not be done, and Eta Mu was placed on probation while Zeta Xi was placed on suspension. During the course of WDC 2005, our suspension was lifted, leaving both of us on the somewhat fuzzy and ill-defined probation.

At the beginning of last fall, due in part to some of the changes that had been requested of our groups, our school chose not to recognize either organization with “on-campus” status. This lack of recognition bars us from serving the Music department directly, from renting rooms, openly recruiting, conducting meetings on campus, and – ultimately – from being recognized by the National Headquarters.

By the end of last semester, thanks to efforts from many sides, we believed we had found a possible solution – one acceptable to both the Student Organization Office and the Associated Students. Unexpectedly, rather than receiving word

back about our ability to re-file together, about 36 hours before DLC in January, we and our Brothers received word that Eta Mu had been placed on suspension by their Council, effective immediately. We've required our meetings and services to be held and made jointly for the last 28 years – and we've had no intention of changing that – especially after having been given formal approval to do so. Hence, we have lied fallow these past three month; waiting.

Though the details in the links of the chain of events leading us here are no longer our focus, it is important for us – and, we believe, for the District as a whole – to understand how we have come to the point we are at. We'll spare you the very long version of our story and encourage every one of you *and your Brothers* to talk to one of us personally, and ask your own questions, to find out what happened.

Why Should the Western District Care?

Note this: Our story may be unique, but aspects of it are not uncommon. It was two short years ago that we were firing on all cylinders, working efficiently and happily doing the work and service needed of us. We had no idea that in the not-too-distant future, we would have Brothers and Sisters *literally vomiting* after our meetings due to the stress – the stress of coping with the impossible decisions that were forced upon us by those who had never so much as visited us.

Those of us left at SDSU recognize that trying to explain why our form of joint operation worked for us is almost impossible, if people didn't see it firsthand; and we're not here to waste your time proselytizing. As we mourn our loss, we encourage the District to learn from what we have gone through, but more importantly... to yourselves be empowered by it.

The WD is a unique family in the greater National Organizations, something anyone who's been to a National Convention can verify, and something we should all take great pride in. Though each school has a different manifestation of the mutual joint Brother-and-Sisterhood, we all share in the realization that it is important to us. We hold ice cream socials, we teach our candidates about each other – or with each other -- we make joint T-shirts about getting *PsiEK*d, and we write chapter songs about our love for each other.

Even when we hold Sisterhood events to help us develop our intra-chapter Sororal bonds, we feel the presence of the Brothers close by, ready to help with logistics, giving verbal support, and happy to see further exploring the meaning of our Sisterhood.

We all do it differently, but we all make it work. Our District, with a rich history of

pushing the envelopes of both our organizations; of doing things just a little bit differently from the rest of the country, deserves to be celebrated for its ability to see beyond the rhetoric and to promote the Harmony of the dual-Bond's greater good. Diversity of thought is important, and it is what has made us as a District, strong.

Recent Events – How it Affects Your Chapter(s)

The price of this Freedom is, to borrow a phrase, Eternal Vigilance.

Happening amidst all this self-celebration are changes that, when added up, point to an obvious trend. Over the last ten years, fewer and fewer things are done together nationwide. New projects are created by one group and not the other. Inefficiencies abound as dual copies of the essentially the same material are produced, each with the other organization's name carefully deleted, as if one wouldn't have to acknowledge the other group's mere existing if one didn't wish to.

Many may not be aware that until 1999, KKY and TBS provided a single joint Membership Education Program and we functioned using joint Chapter Operations Handbooks. The joint Colonization Handbook now gathers dust while the two Councils develop their own separate material, each barely mentioning the other, if at all. "Kappa Kappa Psi" and "Tau Beta Sigma" are mentioned 14 times in each others' National Constitutions (not counting words like Fraternity and Sorority), but you wouldn't know that by the operational rhetoric dished out when Eta Mu was told, just recently, that "they were still working too closely with Zeta Xi."

So what *does* keep us together on a National level? Well, we believe that, to no small extent, it's the Western District that does! We, more than any other District, see us as two sides of the **same** coin. But what happens to the West can happen to the rest of the country. And what happened to SDSU, can happen to the District.

Is this really what the future holds? Perhaps some background would help you to see the pain that we saw.

The Path

We were founded in 1978, and directly authorized by the National Councils from the very beginning to operate in the way we did. Headquarters staff has informed us that there is, in fact, a joint document on file, but that they will not copy it for us. A single document, single meetings, single combined votes on everything

from fundraisers to candidates to officers, a single bank account, single elections. With two sets of officers, two rituals, two chapters, a single class together, and a single mind.

It's really very simple, actually. And the proof of this experiment's success is in our history. By the time of the Beta class, the candidates were chaining themselves together so they wouldn't have to go into separate ritual rooms when it came time. By 1984, we tended to refer to ourselves as a "Frasority." Throughout the 80's and early 90's, we received awards, had members in District Offices, and helped to set some Western District cultural precedents. Jean Newman, current Chair of the Board of Trustees, was elected in 1993 as the TBS National President.

From 2000-2004 we: had produced two Accent's; ran a State Day, yearly SD-4 celebrations, and a Convention that we still get complimented on; and had helped save our campus mascot. We'd had no substance abuse problems, no hazing issues, and we'd already initiated our first male Sister and female Brother. Our Marching Band had just received a massive influx of funding, chapter attrition was down, morale was high, committees were working, and the weather was great in San Diego. To this extent, we could be, by no means, considered a "problem chapter."

But, with the National political winds blowing in the direction of total separation, the policies of the "poster child for joint relations," as they used to call us, were eventually targeted. The time was right nationally for the point to be made. So, 26 years after the fact of their joint installation, the Councils forced radical change onto members who had never operated any differently, under threat of suspension "and further actions."

The effect was, as we feared, catastrophic. Devastating. Words cannot express the absolute emotional and mental Hell our organizations have gone through, but you can still see it in our faces. The 18-hour emergency meetings where we tried to decide whether or not to continue to fight. The confusion about *why* we suddenly weren't allowed to operate the way we were installed. The hours of arguments and discussion with National Council representatives; the hours of painful arguments with each other; the frustration in trying to adhere to two council's demands; the frustration in receiving two different sets of consequences forcing Brother and Sister with different reactions.

As it stands, a majority of our chapters' members do not know what it feels like to plan a simple service project while having a reasonable expectation that their chapter will still be operating in 3 weeks. Or that they'll perhaps be locked out of all future KKY/TBS activities under some sort of indefinite Inactive member status.

Beyond the changes we have been forced to make, however, it was the manner in which the changes occurred that should concern ourselves with. Our circumstances were unique, but what if we were to tell you that similar pressure has already been applied to all of you as well? That decisions have already been made without regard to the wishes of the District or Chapter?

It should be of great concern to us all that we, “student run” organizations and leadership development societies, see very little actual student control or leadership development pathways beyond the chapter level. There would seem to be an inherent lack of trust in our own District’s student leadership abilities on our councils’ parts.

Those of you who were here last year will remember the dictums handed down from on high during the final joint closing session. Statements that it was against the TBS National Constitution for the delegates to vote as a combined whole with the KKY delegates, that the Western District was in violation of the National Constitution, and that, presumably, there would be strong repercussions if the District did not change the policy. Backed into a corner, our District Officers felt forced to declare a change by fiat without a vote on the issue.

Yet here is something the District Officers didn’t know:

20 hours earlier, in a meeting with the National Executive Director and our current National President, Zeta Xi was told that if we “simply” stopped voting on officers and candidates as a combined whole with our Brothers, we would be in the clear. We brought up our concerns that the goalposts would be moved and we would be forced to make further changes down the road. However we were assured that this would not be an issue as the National Constitutions only specify policy for the aforementioned scenarios. Imagine our surprise when the **very next day** the carpet is pulled out from underneath the District.

And finally, after everything else, despite the previous approval of chapter constitutions, one council has retracted its feelings and is forcing further change from SDSU. The messages we have received from our National Councils have been inconsistent, at best. And now that we have been completely forcibly severed, we remain proof that the lack of consistency between the two Councils does **indeed** affect the individual chapters.

We should also be concerned with the obvious outright lack of concern for the respective organizations. For example, as mentioned earlier, SDSU’s chapters were denied on campus recognition. Were either group to register on campus independently, the other group would be barred from doing so, as the campus does not allow two basically identical groups to operate. So both chapters decided to wait to register and continue working at getting both organizations recognized, rather than leaving one chapter in the dust. But instead of hearing

messages of, “You guys are putting out a great effort,” or “Great job looking out for each other,” we are instructed to fend for ourselves, and just to do what we had to in order to get *ourselves* recognized. The constant refrains of “they’re not our responsibility” only serve to highlight the intentional blindness to the damage that is being caused to members who are part of your family nonetheless. Is recommending that we register separately, despite the damage it would cost half of our family, how we feel about Brotherhood and Sisterhood?

Two organizations that remain bound together at the top by shared programs, staff and resources. Two organizations that are going force themselves apart until they break, like a wishbone. But a wishbone isn’t nearly as special after it has been broken in half. Something is going to give.

Students at SDSU would argue that it already has (for us); and it has happened at the expense of individual Brothers and Sisters, their chapters, and ultimately, of their music program. And if we are not helping the bands, then why are we here?

Where Do We Go Now?

We fought because we believed in it. We believed that Kappa Kappa Psi and Tau Beta Sigma together were worth more than the sum of their parts. Just as you would stand up for your family, so have we. Just as you love what KKY and TBS represent, so do we. We have questioned the status quo, and paid the price. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with our position, we hope we have helped reinforce a standard of principles for every chapter in here this weekend.

Do **not** be afraid to ask questions of the blanket policies and statements thrown at you. Do not be afraid of speaking up for your views and views of your chapters, even if you’re in the minority. Do not be afraid to ask questions when there’s something happening you don’t understand. Learn parliamentary procedure so that you can recognize when your rights are being compromised. These are **our** organizations – stand up on your chairs if you have to in order to make that point. Over the remainder of our time here, decisions will be made that affect all of us as Chapters, students, Brothers and Sisters; and for better or for worse, that policy will remain at least until the following year. This is the best chance you will have this year to make an impact; so take advantage of it. Make the most of your hours here, and when it is time to go home, you can be proud of what you have tried to accomplish.

We, the Students of this District, with our feet on the ground, running the day to day services and operations of our chapters, have discovered ways of

cooperating and coexisting peacefully as Brothers and Sisters. Each school does it differently, but we all **have ways of doing it**. But these ways of life are threatened by the political forces surrounding us, and if we don't develop the courage to stand up for what we believe in, the culture that we've all thrived in will **vanish**. And the 19-year legacy of the Western District we've come to love, will disappear with it.

San Diego State would like to thank those members who, over the past few years, have extended their support, their kind words, and their encouragement, whether they agreed with our decisions or not. They have reminded us all once again of what Brotherhood and Sisterhood is all about.

As the chapters at SDSU continue to be faced with the question of **Being or Not Being**, we don't know what the future will bring for us. Some members have started another local, music-focused, student service organization. Some of the older members may try to help start a San Diego-based alumni group. Many may turn up in WDJAA. But for now, from the Active membership of the Sisters of Zeta Xi, and from our Brothers in Eta Mu currently being kept from operating at all: Goodbye.

Please pass the message on to your Brothers.