

Be the Fire Supporting Our Students Post-Election

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November 8, 2016 is a day in American history many people across the country—and the world for that matter—are still reflecting on and seeing the results of in their daily lives. That day, of course, was the day Donald Trump was elected president of the United States of America. Both sides of the political spectrum reacted to those results, and have continued to stand against or support the new president. But what about the students we see on our campuses: those student leaders, council executive officers, or new members? How did they react, and how are we making sure we are there for them?

I often find myself struggling to not tie my political beliefs into the work I do with the fraternity and sorority members I have the pleasure to interact with. As a professional, your ideals and values, especially when associated with politics, can rub students (and sometimes colleagues) the wrong way, potentially resulting in them not trusting you or alienating themselves from you and/or your office. But the reverse is true as well. When students tell you they supported a candidate who doesn't align with your own views, how do you move forward?

In the days following the election, I saw the students on my campus from both sides take different approaches to the new reality of their lives. Some held demonstrations on campus, from a simple gathering on the quad, to handing out information about what the President-Elect (at the time) was planning to set into motion once in the White House. I saw students continue to walk around content and happy, as the candidate they had supported, even if they hadn't openly stated they were supporting him, had won.

Now, as President Trump continues in his position, we as professionals will have to step up our game in supporting our students. Something as simple as being that person they can confide in, pointing them to the campus and community resources available to them, or even just saying, "I am here for you. You matter;" can go miles for a student who is now fearful or worried about what the future has in store for them and their loved ones. To the students who were happy with the results, having discussions about how others are feeling can help them to see why protests are occurring across the world, yet at the same time we have to make sure they also know their views are respected.

It is a difficult balancing act we must display in order to ensure our political beliefs are used to support our students' success and growth. We can challenge students to think critically about issues our country and its citizens face and how new laws and executive orders will affect those

around us, while developing an understanding of what we all can do to advocate for change. I would argue that fraternities and sororities, as well as student leaders and organizations in general, are some of the best support systems a student has while in college, while also being catalysts for change. As a professional, I would encourage you to serve as an additional light of support for your students, while also being a fire for change and advocacy for them in these beginning stages of a new president.