



ASSOCIATION OF FRATERNITY | SORORITY ADVISORS

Good Morning,

Thank you for joining us today at the business meeting. This is an important part of the work we do as an Association, and I value that you made it a priority to be present.

I am thrilled to greet you today as the new President of AFA. I have been actively involved in AFA since my first volunteer role on the graduate staff in 2002. Ever since then, AFA has offered me both professional development and deeper relationships with colleagues, and for that I am grateful.

If you would indulge me for a moment, I'd like to ask you to close your eyes. I want you to think of a recent positive interaction you had with a student. Take a moment to think of your surroundings during this interaction. The time of day. The context of the conversation. The student's face while they were talking to you. The words being said. Do you have it? Can you remember? This, my friends, is why we do our work. These positive interactions, these teachable moments, these imprints we are making on the members of fraternities and sororities...and they do make a difference.

For those of you who have read the poem about the starfish with the old man throwing them back and someone asking him why he is participating in this futile attempt, he responds, "It made a difference to that one." I remind you today that you make a difference to the students you encounter. And the good work must continue.

I have a few goals for my two year term as president that I would like to share with you today. I want AFA to provide as many tools and resources as we can to help those who do work with fraternities and sororities to be their best. Whether these professional development experiences are in person or virtual, I want our members to feel that AFA has helped them be a better professional or volunteer. Whether we at AFA create the program ourselves or we work in partnership with other valuable associations and groups that offer similar programming, I don't want our members to feel they have to look elsewhere to gain the education and experience they need to do this work. As you heard earlier, our strategic workgroups have created initiatives for us to accomplish. I thank the volunteers on these committees, and I hope to be able to engage more volunteers in the future to help us execute our plans.

I want us to continue producing research regarding our work. I want us to use this research to help others learn and understand more about our field but also to inform the way we practice our work. Additionally, I want us to gather more data and information about the professionals who do our work. Last year's survey was a great first effort, and I would like us to continue these data collection initiatives. Likewise, as a campus professional, I often wonder how other campuses approach certain things whether it be judicial, expansion, or an educational program for students. I would love to have a repository or thought circles of interested individuals that we can use to share this information.

Next, I want new professionals in this field to have mentors. Some of you are fortunate and already do but some of you are going it relatively on your own. We know so many of our members are in their first

three years of their role. I want to create a formal way for our newest members to be able to have mentorship opportunities. And for those of us who are more “seasoned” in the room, I want us to model the way and get to know these new members in our field. I know plenty of this advice sharing and mentorship does exist, but I want it to be more formal and available. I want us to reach back and pull others through as others have done for us. I also recognize that those who consider themselves to be mid-level professionals are also expressing a need for education, and I hear you.

I know that this work can be difficult. Challenges arise that question the existence of fraternity and sorority, which is a thing we love and have great passion toward. When that happens, I want to represent you well with my seat at the table. I want to advocate for this experience that has provided me so many developmental opportunities as an undergraduate and still today as an alumna. But I also want us to be developing better and new ways to do our work so we can eradicate some of these challenges.

I also want to collaborate. There are so many people in my life who have had a positive influence on me. In the same way, all of us can positively influence our students. It is not a contest. It takes all of us to support our current undergraduate students and our alumni. I will do my best to be open to the ideas of others and talk about ways we can all work together to achieve a desired result. I want fraternity and sorority to be a value add to our campuses for years to come. As the saying goes, “A rising tide lifts all ships.”

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge a few special people who helped me get to this role. My Greek Advisor at Gannon University was Stacy Kraus. She saw a graduate assistantship advertisement on the old AFA listserv (yes, that was a thing once). That landed me at the College of William and Mary with Anne Arseneau who nurtured my involvement in AFA early. Which eventually led me to my first professional position working for Greg Singleton who told me about his experience being both an AFA Conference Chair and the AFA president. Before email. Since then I have worked at Cornell University with Travis Apgar who has supported my volunteer habits for the last ten years. To the Board members and volunteers I have worked with in the past and will work with in the future. Each of you have helped me be a better volunteer and Board member. My students at Cornell - who make me happy to go to work each day. Jennifer Leung, a friend I made while volunteering for AFA, flew in today just to celebrate my presidency. Thank you. Laurence Bolotin, a colleague from my 2002 Graduate Staff flew back to Boston to see me be installed. My Region 1/NGLA family, I appreciate your constant friendship and support. And my sisters of Sigma Sigma Sigma, without our dear sorority, none of this would have ever happened. I am tremendously grateful for your support and sisterhood. As we know, “We who receive much, must give much.” And I have to mention my mom and Stan who are rooting for me from Pennsylvania. Always.

Many of you know I am a PhD candidate at Colorado State University. There is a statue on campus that always strikes a chord with me. It is a Sir Isaac Newton quote that reads, “If I have seen further than others, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants.” As we celebrate AFA’s 40th anniversary, I think that is an apt statement. Because of all of you who came before, we are in a great place today. Because of all of you who are with us now, we will continue to propel this great Association forward.

I hope that during your time here, you have met new colleagues, you have had new ideas about how to approach your work, you have become rededicated to the work we do, and you have thought about what part you play in the future of our Association. Please reach out to me with your ideas and

questions. As I said earlier, we are all in this together. I heard a wise colleague say this week that during his tenure as a fraternity exec he learned that it's okay to ask for help. I thought that was perfect advice. The notion that an entire fraternity/sorority community or national organization rests on our shoulders is a daunting feeling. Together we find answers, we find new ways of thinking, we push each other to new heights. There is a message often attributed to Abraham Lincoln. It reads, "Whatever you are, be a good one." I want each of you in this room to be a good one in your role with our students. We are privileged to impact them during a transformative time in their lives. Be a good one. Help their experience be the best it can be and help each student be the best they can be. I have a framed quote on my desk that reads, "Courage does not always roar, sometimes it is the quiet voice at the end of the night that says, 'I will try again tomorrow.'" Colleagues, let's try again tomorrow and be a good one. I commit AFA to help provide the tools and direction to assist you.

Thank you for your support. I am humbled by this honor.