

An Open Letter to the Ole Miss Student Body

From:

Sigma Chi President Clay Wooley

Sigma Chi Vice President Max Lopez

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Sigma Chi would like to extend a formal and sincere apology for offensive remarks made during Friday's dance competition portion of the annual Derby Days philanthropy event.

Every year, Sigma Chi ends a week of fundraising events for Batson Children's Hospital and donations to Mississippi Blood Services with a choreographed dance competition between Ole Miss sororities. Two Sigma Chi seniors emcee the dance competition every year, and they have always interviewed each sorority's chosen "Derby Day Queen," in a comedic fashion.

Sigma Chi impresses standards upon all of its members, and unfortunately these standards were not fulfilled at Friday's event. Inappropriate language was used, inappropriate questions were asked to the queens, and there was behavior that was upsetting, not only to the competing teams, but everyone in attendance.

The Eta Chapter of Sigma Chi code of conduct specifies that members are to exercise good grace toward women, and we would like to sincerely apologize to the queens, the competing organizations, attendees of the dance, and anyone who was offended by the words and actions of any of our members. These young women are our friends and our sisters, and it would never be our intention to hurt, upset or embarrass them in any fashion.

This incident, as upsetting and unfortunate as it was, gives us an opportunity as a community to address the issue of the sexually insensitive culture that is all too prevalent in the Greek system, not only at the University of Mississippi, but also across the country. We plan to work with Rebels Against Sexual Assault to hold a workshop for our members that speaks to the severity of sexual harassment by way of verbal abuse.

The events do not need to be overlooked or washed over, instead they need to be used to open an honest dialogue about making positive change in our society. Instead of arguing and fighting we need to work together to fix these issues moving forward.

Sigma Chi leadership has apologized to each sorority in person and in writing, and preliminary disciplinary action has been taken toward the members involved in Friday night's event.

Derby Days is a storied tradition that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars in its history. In all other aspects, 2016 was a successful philanthropic endeavor. We would like to thank everyone that put in so much work to help with the events, however we need to address the greater issue at hand.

Sigma Chi is committed to making necessary changes to keep the focus of this great event where it should be ☐☐ on a week dedicated to serving and celebrating our community. We look

forward to working together to improve this event and making it more beneficial to Ole Miss for years to come and to upholding the standards expected of the members of Sigma Chi.