

# Alumni of the Sigma Alpha Chapter of **DELTA KAPPA EPSILON**



and **DELTA KAPPA SIGMA** P.O. Box 18231, Richmond, Virginia 23226

August 29, 2019

## **Alumni Association/Chapter Update**

*Dan Johnson, Alumni Board Chairman (S'74)*

Dear Fellow DKE/DKS Brothers, Parents and Friends:

The vote is in! After a careful count, recount, and protests by those who got voted in, we have a new (well semi-new) slate of Board of Directors for the 2019-21 session. The 'winners' are:

- **Daniel Johnson '77** - Director and Chairman/President
- **Jeff Rose '12** - Director, Vice President and Secretary
- **Wesley Johnson '12** - Director and Treasurer
- **Evan Miller '15** - Director and Member-at-Large
- **Tom Wilkinson '81** - Director and Member-at-Large
- **Mark Lenzi '15** - Director and Member-at-Large

As part of our new VT-DKE Corporate Governance policy (OK made that one up; not new and we really don't have anything written down) we have ended the long standing practice of including the chapter president on the Alumni Association board and our sister corporate body Sigma Alpha Properties LLC Housing Corporation. This was done following similar moves by DKE International to remove undergraduate representative from their board, mainly to remove any direct or inferred link that the Alumni Association is 'advising/directing' the activities of the chapter operations (which we don't) and/or that the chapter members and DKE House tenants have anything beyond a tenant/landlord relationship with the SAP LLC Housing Corporation. On that front, we are instituting a DKE House 'common area lease' with the chapter this year, in addition to renting out the eight bedrooms to the individual members. Again, the idea is to make all chapter members have a 'stake' in the DKE House and have their activities be bound by the conditions of the lease. These are similar leasing formats and rental rates that are employed by VT for on-campus properties rented to fraternal organizations.

Now, on to some real news. Some of you may have read the flattering front page Roanoke Times article on July 12, which included a picture of the DKE House (am sure you can find article on the RT website). Now when I mean front page, it was *the* top banner headline story. The article/story also picked up by various other papers in Virginia (page 4 in the Richmond Times Dispatch) and elsewhere. Dekes along with seven other unrecognized fraternities that continue to operate off campus (there are several others that lost recognition and have ceased operations); are being labeled as 'rogue' organizations and unsafe by VT standards (which simply means VT does not recognize Dekes and others). This includes four of five East Roanoke Street fraternities; the original fraternity row of VT/Blacksburg. The newly minted VT *Fraternity and Sorority Life Task Force Report* is an interesting read if you want to judge what VT contemplates fraternity and sorority life is going over the next several years. As part of the *Task Force Report*, VT is planning an information campaign (or disinformation campaign depending on one's viewpoint) directed at students and parents; telling students to 'stay away' from these unrecognized fraternities (including DKE) as well as East Roanoke Street. Now many of our members were 'shocked and outraged' (nice way of saying really pissed off) by the misrepresentation and mischaracterization of DKE by the University. But upon further reflection, one can also view the media articles as some free publicity....and the saying goes 'any publicity is good publicity'. Being labeled as one of the 'rogue' fraternities is NOT a moniker Dekes wants to be known for. But we do take offense to the 'unsafe' label put forth by VT. We as VT-DKE alumni, have a concerted effort as landlords to provide safe premises at the DKE House whereby our members/guests can safely reside and socialize. The chapter



leadership team also has a renewed focus with safety and risk management now the lead topics at every chapter meeting. Notwithstanding these efforts, we also realize that Dekes is far from infallible and must continuously strive to 'do better'. DKE is suspended from VT recognition for 10 years that started in March 2018; and that comes on the heels of two other suspensions of 2 and 5 years respectively since 2009. While this is clearly NOT a record to be proud of; "*dems da facts*". The growing consensus of VT-DKE Alumni and active brothers is that DKE is better off as an 'unrecognized' entity. 15% of the fraternities that are still recognized by VT are currently under probation and many believe that the fraternity system at VT will consist of; (1) those that have kicked off; and (2) those that will be kicked off. This view should by no means be construed as some sort license to disobey or break the rules. Quite the contrary, the chapter must learn to operate in a responsible and reasonable fashion. On the bright side, the VT-DKE Alumni Association have over the years have reviewed the chapter's offenses resulting in suspension, and as warranted have helped with the appeal processes. Our Page 3 Column (moved to page 4) below is a history and 'Letter of Support' by the VT-DKE Alumni Association and DKE International standing behind the organization and addressing several of the issues raised by the fraternity. This letter of support is directed to current active members, potential new members, and Parents of members as the newsletter is mailed to the home address of every active member.

After that somber stuff, let's move on. We have another VT football season quickly approaching (hopefully with an opening game win by the time some of you get this) with 7 home games this year and of course 7 DKE Tailgates! We have designated the VT-UNC game weekend as the DKE Alumni game weekend with an expanded tailgate and Open House activities at the DKE House. The chapter has expanded the weekend events to include a Friday activities as well as "brunch" at the DKE House on Sunday. Hey in Blacksburg, Carol Lee donuts and coffee are classified as brunch. We have tailgate set up for 3 hours before every game in our Lot 4, Space 94 location adjacent to Lane Stadium; and if you are a 2019 VT-DKE Annual Giving Fund donor, then you are a member of the *Premium Pass* - DKE Tailgate Club with all the attendant benefits. How do you become a member of this exclusive club you may ask?; simple just fill out the enclosed card and mail in the enclosed blue envelope your 2019 VT-DKE Annual Giving Fund donation. You may already be 2019 DKE Tailgate Member; and can easily tell if you are in possession of a fine, rare, collectors-edition, DKE wall clock artifact. Regardless, come by the tailgate; food and drink provided; family and guests of all ages welcome. And look for the email newsblasts prior to each game.

Speaking of donating, the VT-DKE Annual Giving Fund is an excellent way to support both DKE and VT. So far in 2019, 143 individual Dekes have made donations representing over \$32k in support. We even got some statistics, so they must be true. On the 2019 VT Giving Day in March 93 individual donations were made and earmarked to DKE which represented 69% of donations and 81% of funds that that were earmarked to fraternities and sororities on that day. And for the non-engineers and business types, this means that Dekes support outstripped all other fraternities and sororities combined!!! And by a lot, bigly. The DKE Annual Fund combined with the VT Annual Fund allows you to support VT and DKE at the same time with the same donation!

We held the 70's Dekes mini-reunion in Blacksburg in July with just over 100 Dekes and guests returning. A smashing success by all means. We had a handful of alumni that hadn't been back to the Blacksburg or the DKE House in yep....40-years! Quick Summary of Events; Friday golf; Reception at the Skelton Alumni Center; Group Dinner at Preston's; Late Night at the DKE House (and the DKE House was looking good!); Saturday morning guest VT speakers on topics about the **Calhoun** Honors College and NoVa Innovation Campus; lunch with 'esteemed' guest speaker **Charlie Phlegar** S'75 on VT Update; afternoon campus tours of VT Transportation Institute and VT Athletic Facilities; Saturday night VT Inn Cocktails and Banquet; 'Tales of Dekes' session; and Sunday AM brunch at the DKE House; all intermingle with old (yep old!) friends and brothers getting together over an 'occasional drink or two'. Special thanks go to **John Burgess** F'71 for stepping up as the 70's Reunion chairman and **Mickey Hayes** S'62 for his bang up job in coordinating all the VT Inn and VT events. Of course, John Burgess will provide a written recap report of the event, and hopefully organize photos on vtdke.com website. We are glad to report that everyone who attended actually survived the weekend, even **Billy Rohrer** W'71. Odds were that Billy a 50/50 chance of surviving (by his own doing or at hands of someone else) after Saturday night's festivities. However, we can



confirm that Billy did wake up the next day; as he was seen at the getaway brunch at the DKE House on Sunday AM. We have already booked the venue again for the 80's Dekes mini-reunion, so if you were in Dekes in the 1980's plan on it! None of this stuff happens without volunteers, so we are looking for some 80's Dekes to step up and form reunion committee to get it going. We have great template from this and last years' events. A great tradition that we need to keep going intersperse between of 5 year cycle of all-decades DKE reunions.

Even more news, so pour another cup or pop another one and keep reading. Prior to the 70's mini-reunion, we held our 9<sup>th</sup> annual Habitat for Inhumanity on the June 28-30 weekend to undertake maintenance and upgrades at the DKE House. Eighteen (18) alumni and brothers participated this summer. We replaced the carpet in the common area of the third floor with vinyl wood plank flooring; floor tiling and vanity replacement in the men's bathroom on first floor; extensive cleaning and painting, electrical and window repairs, to name a few. Also **Matt deJager S'18** led a group of actives (mainly a group of one) to undertake the repainting of several of the first floor common rooms and applying polyurethane coating on the floors during the summer. After an Eden Landscaping blitz of the yard and shrubbery (courtesy of an in-kind donation by Mickey Hayes); and a professional cleaning job prior to the 70's reunion weekend, the DKE House never looked better. But have no fear, it still has that frat house feel and of course the unmistakable DKE basement smell. Also during the summer, we had the gutters repaired/cleaned and two downspouts relocated to allow full extension to the ground level. Hopefully, the place will survive yet another year of DKE fraternity life. We have owned the property for 52 years. The place could always use 'new' furniture so if you have Frat House worthy stuff (prison grade furniture) think about donating it to the DKE House. Just don't come looking for it three years later and be surprised if it is still in one piece.

The active chapter report can be found further down in the letter. School has started and the chapter had 58 dues paying members return this semester. The DKE House rooms are fully rented for the academic year. The lifeblood of the fraternity is new membership. If you have son, brother, friend or neighbor attending VT this year and you want to experience the DKE brotherhood let us know by returning the enclosed card with his information. Speaking of sending in information, we are still looking for contact information for the multitude of VT-Dekes that we have lost contact. Our last newsletter had a list of DKE brothers that we are looking for current contact information. These gentlemen, scholars, and jolly good fellows have been missing out on the award winning DKE Newsletters and other massive benefits provided by our alumni association. If you know of the contact information of any of these brothers please pass it on by mailing it in or emailing us at [sigmaalphadekes@gmail.com](mailto:sigmaalphadekes@gmail.com).

Make plans to reconnect at the DKE Tailgates before every football game this Fall. FFTHF, Dan Johnson '77

## Active Chapter Report -

*Jack Langford S'17 Chapter President*

Brothers and Friends,

We have returned to school with classes starting this past Monday. We have 58 'dues-paying' brothers that have returned to VT and are active for this semester. A few less than we expected at the end of the Spring semester as there are always a few surprises at the start of year to see who comes back...and who doesn't and those that are taking a semester off due to: co-op work; study abroad; academic casualty; or financial issues. We have planned and budgeted out the semester and got a lot of fun activities planned, so we hope to see many alumni and families at tailgates this football season. Rush begins September 8th, and we are optimistic that we will be able to have a quality pledge class for Fall 2019. Our early activities carrying over from last year have identified a number of students that have already connected with and signed up on our 'interest list'. This includes several legacies (brothers of existing brothers). We are always looking for more jolly good fellows, so we ask that anyone who has family or friends interested in joining a fraternity please email me at [jiangford@gmail.com](mailto:jiangford@gmail.com) with the pertinent contact information I will ensure we get them invited to a DKE function.

FFTHF, Jack Langford - Brother Beta



## Page 3 Column (page 4) – DKE History – Letter of Support

**DKE Background & History** - DKE's roots at Virginia Tech go back to 1941 when four students formed the Delta Kappa Sigma Fraternity (nicknamed as 'Deeks' at the time). Our fraternity has operated continuously since that time, making Dekes the oldest, continuous fraternity at VT; having been in existence for 78 years. In 1968, the chapter acquired the DKE House property located at 302 East Roanoke Street, the location we still call home today. We purchased the property from the original owner's estate, which had the house built in 1912 (or maybe it was 1920). The iconic DKE House, with its grand white columns, is located in the Blacksburg Historic District and has undergone numerous upgrades and renovations since DKE has owned the property. We were the first VT fraternity to acquire a property outright; and the DKE House is oldest, continuous fraternity property in Blacksburg. The DKE Fraternity is managed by an Executive Committee consisting of the Fraternity's top officers duly elected each year by the active chapter membership.

**DKE International** - In 1971, as VT began to formally recognize fraternities, Deeks became affiliated with the Delta Kappa Epsilon International Fraternity. The reason for the move from DKS to DKE was really quite simple, the similar name. DKE International was founded in 1844 at Yale, and is currently celebrating its 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its founding. The founding DKE motto of 'Gentlemen, Scholars, and Jolly Good Fellows' is still used to this day. The history of DKE is extensive and an unparalleled five (5!) United States Presidents are Dekes including: Rutherford Hayes; Theodore Roosevelt; Gerald Ford; George H.W. Bush; and, George W. Bush. Also Charles Landon Carter Minor, the very first President of VT from 1872-1879, was a DKE. There are 66 DKE active chapters/colonies today, including seven (7) of the ACC schools; and four (4) universities located in the State of Virginia. DKE International has a volunteer Board of Directors whom oversees the professional staff management, which has a home office based in Ann Arbor, Michigan. A full summary of DKE International can be found on the dke.org website. While each DKE chapter is autonomously run, DKE International charters each chapter, and provides the chapters with: management guidelines; chapter operational tools/resources; and educational materials. DKE representative(s) also visit each chapter every year. Included in the DKE International Risk Management Policies is a strict 'No Hazing' rule and violations of DKE International's policies can result in suspension or revocation of the chapter's charter. When violations of university policy are reported to the DKE International the staff reviews each case and makes appropriate recommendation to the DKE Board Judicial Committee for action. Over the past several years DKE has revoked or suspended over 10 DKE chapters for disciplinary reasons. While the DKE International Fraternity has imposed fines and probationary disciplinary actions against the DKE - Sigma Alpha Chapter located at VT, DKE International, nothing has risen to the level where DKE International has determined to need to suspend or revoke the Sigma Alpha Charter. And to the contrary, **Doug Lanpher** (Vanderbilt '77) the Managing Director of DKE International was present during the VT judicial hearing in 2018 which resulted in VT handing down a 10-year suspension of VT recognition of the chapter. After witnessing the facts presented in the case, Doug commented to the DKE Board that the chapter was grossly mistreated by the University and recommended that DKE should not discipline the chapter. Over 48 years the Sigma Alpha chapter has been a chapter in 'good standing' with the International Organization and DKE International fully acknowledges this fact and is 100% supportive of the chapter. *(last statement as per Doug Lanpher, Managing Director – DKE International)*

**DKE - Sigma Alpha Chapter and Virginia Tech Relationship** - DKE is a social fraternity. Over the years it has consisted of a group ranging in size between 25 and 75 men, all typically aged 18-22 years-old, and that more by circumstances than plans, have joined DKE and formed life-long "Bonds of Brotherhood". Now this same group is typically run by a 20-year-old, and the management is changed out every single year. Not necessarily the best sustainable business plan, but somehow the chapter has miraculously survived for 78 years as a functioning entity. DKE's relationship with VT has also changed and evolved over the years. At the onset DKS was an 'illegal' fraternity from the founding up through the end of 1960's. As VT began to recognize fraternities in 1970, DKE was at the forefront with initial organization of the VT-IFC (inter-fraternity council) having Dekes in major leadership roles. For the decades that followed, recognition by VT simply meant being a member of the IFC which was effectively a self-policing, student run organization. At that time, the main cause/reason in losing IFC recognition (and hence VT recognition), was the failure to pay IFC membership dues. In the late 1980's DKE lost IFC recognition



(the infamous Kenyon College case) for a two year period and for most of the 90's remained as unrecognized by IFC and VT primarily due to financial reasons and outright apathy (e.g. didn't pay IFC dues). This was also during the period when VT built on campus fraternity housing in phases; and established a university governed Fraternity and Sorority Life office to manage the on-campus organizations; and there was a targeted push with the Town of Blacksburg to get organizations to move on campus. While nearly all the sororities moved to campus, the majority of fraternities with off-campus housing (including DKE) chose to remain off-campus. Around the year 2000, the DKE chapter, albeit a small organization at the time with around 25 members, rejoined the IFC (i.e. began paying IFC dues again) and with that, was once again a recognized VT student organization. Meanwhile times had changed. The majority of the VT fraternity and sorority members were now living on campus in housing owned and operated by VT. What was once acceptable behavior decades ago was no longer (and rightfully so). The VT processes evolved from low-tolerance to zero-tolerance for any infractions. In the Fall semester of 2009, the DKE chapter was charged with and found RESPONSIBLE for violations related to reports of underage people having receiving or been seen drinking at the DKE House property was suspended from VT recognition for a two-year period. Suspension meant: cease and desist all fraternity activities. Despite not ceasing operations beyond the condition of not using any university facilities; DKE was found to have met the terms of suspension and was reinstated one year later effective at the start of the 2011 Spring semester. While accepted by VT, the IFC Presidents Council voted not to accept DKE back into the IFC, and hence VT was of the position that DKE was not recognized, despite any governing VT policies or regulations stating that recognition is dependent on the IFC. In the meantime, after the IFC vote, the chapter was hit with additional infractions related to underage drinking. Unable to charge the organization (not recognized at the time) the university brought in and charge individual members all of which for found NOT RESPONSIBLE. Then in some arcane and inexplicable manner VT decided to re-recognize DKE such that they could turn around and find them RESPONSIBLE and suspend the chapter for 5-years. A formal appeal was submitted, but the appeal was denied and hence the chapter was suspended up to the start of the 2016 academic year. Prior to the start of 2016 year the DKE chapter filed for reinstatement and was granted probationary status and recognized once again. The next semester in Spring 2017 the chapter again received a referral and was put on probationary status. While on probationary status, yet another reported incident incurred and then the infamous "Anonymous Letter" directed at VT which included a section of unfounded and libelous allegations/accusations against DKE. These allegations were found by VT not to be true, but as part of their 'investigation' process of separately questioning 30 DKE individuals, they proceeded to charge the chapter with additional charges as several members while under interrogation for unknown and false claims, 'confessed' to having had a beer at the DKE House. Once again our appeal was denied on procedural grounds, and the chapter was found RESPONSIBLE with a 10-year loss of recognition from VT. The chapter is committed to continue to operate as a non-recognized fraternity for the foreseeable future and the VT-DKE Alumni Association endorses and supports this commitment.

**VT-DKE Alumni Association and Sigma Alpha Properties LLC Housing Corporation** - In 1999, the Town of Blacksburg passed a new zoning ordinance stating that no more than 4 unrelated people could live in the same residence; which in effect prohibited any future fraternity houses in the town. Beyond wanting to force fraternities out of the town, and on to campus housing; another part of reason behind the rezoning change was the deteriorating and dilapidated condition of many of the fraternity houses (no doubt led by the DKE House which had fallen into disrepair and was literally condemned by the town in 1999). The house condemnation episode resulted in the formation of a permanent VT-DKE Alumni Association and its associated Sigma Alpha Properties Housing Corporation, which effectively took over financial responsibility of the DKE House. The property has undergone extensive improvements and upgrades exceeding over \$400,000 in the past 15 years. The DKE House has been modernized and as additional safety features has: fire sprinkler system; security cameras; coded exterior doors; and fully upgraded electrical/plumbing systems. The implications made by the University that unsafe or substandard building conditions exist in the 'rogue' fraternities; is simply not the case with the DKE House. Our room tenants sign individual leases complete with security deposits. Lease conditions specifically prohibit illicit or illegal activities. The DKE House is a no smoking property and since 2017 we have a ban on hard alcohol consumption in any common area. The VT-DKE Alumni Association is fully supportive of the Sigma Alpha Chapter and its ongoing endeavors for continuous improvements and to make DKE the best fraternity and brotherhood as possible.



# Alumni Treasury Report -

Wesley Johnson F'08

The 2019 VT-DKE Annual Giving Fund is moving forward out the year with 143 brothers donating over \$32k in cash and other in-kind donations. The RLF-SA Fund, fiscal statement (June 30, 2019) has a balance of \$179k. This amount consists of \$13.6k in our scholarship fund and \$165k represented by the five notes issued by SAP LLC Housing Corp. Coupled with outstanding primary mortgage balance (\$197k) you can add up that we still carry a debt load of \$363k on the DKE House as of 06/30/19. Our VT-DKE Alumni operating account has \$19.2k (Aug 25) and the SAP LLC account has \$22.5k. All the rooms in the DKE House are rented for this academic year. We are looking to undertake major renovations next summer including the rear cellar door entry and basement floor/drainage. This is combined with the ongoing and seemingly never ending upkeep and repairs costs. And as always looking to fund the DKE Tailgates and support the 80's Dekes mini-reunion events next year. If you haven't done so yet, please show your support with a donation to the 2019 VT-DKE Annual Giving Fund and get doubly recognized from VT also. Thanks! FFTHF, Wesley Johnson

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