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**LETTER FROM THE EDITOR:
DEVELOPMENT AS A PILLAR OF ORACLE**

MARCH 2022

JAMES P. BARBER, PH.D.

Greetings from the campus of William & Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. I have procrastinated writing this letter for too long, reflecting and lingering on the tasks to publish my last issue as Editor.

I have been with *Oracle* since the beginning of the publication, and we have developed together over the years. I became a member of the inaugural editorial board as a new doctoral student in 2004 and have vivid memories of nervously calling higher education faculty members to ask them to serve as peer reviewers for a new research journal about fraternities and sororities. Years later, as a new faculty member myself, I accepted a leadership role as Associate Editor and served two terms. For the past four years, it has been my honor to serve as the Editor of *Oracle*. Now, I pass the torch to our next Editor, Adam McCready at the University of Connecticut.

From its inception, *Oracle* has had a developmental approach. Inspired and encouraged by Dr. Chuck Eberly, Emeritus Professor of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University, the journal's founders established *Oracle* as vehicle for developing scholars and disseminating scholarship. Dr. Eberly was one of those higher education faculty members who served on the original peer review board, and he continues to serve as a reviewer to this day. In 2015, the award for outstanding *Oracle* article was renamed the Dr. Charles Eberly Oracle Award. Over the years, *Oracle* has maintained a core purpose to promote the development of scholars in the field of fraternity/sorority studies as well as the advancement of thoughtful conversation and reflection on fraternity/sorority participation. On a personal note, I am grateful to Dr. Eberly for his constant support of *Oracle* over the years, and his encouragement to consider the role of Editor four years ago. Thank you.

In my time as Editor, I have kept this developmental mission close to my heart. I focused my efforts on increasing the accessibility of *Oracle* for both authors and consumers of research. In 2018, we moved to an online platform for manuscript submission and peer review which vastly improved and streamlined the review process. That same year, we launched the *Oracle* Research Writers' Retreat, a program designed to provide time, resources, community, and accountability for fraternity/sorority researchers. In spring 2021, after a slight pandemic delay, we launched *Oracle* at its new academic home at William & Mary Libraries (<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/oracle/>). In moving the publication to an open-access digital repository, we enhanced the visibility and scope the journal. As of early 2022, *Oracle* is averaging 1200 full-text article downloads per month.

This edition of *Oracle* includes four research articles and a book review. Michael Giacalone explored how commuter students experienced belonging in historically White sororities and fraternities. Jaime Myers and Pietro Sasso examined the differences in

informal alcohol policies between fraternities and sororities. Crystal Garcia, William Walker, Ciera Dorsey, Zachary Wernick, and Jessie Johns studied NPHC and MGC sororities and fraternities as spaces of activism at predominately White institutions. Levi Harrel-Hallmark, Jason Castles, and Pietro Sasso researched the sense of belonging for fraternity and sorority members who are first-generation college students. Finally, Shanté Hearst and Kevin Bazner reviewed Sasso, Biddix, and Miranda's edited volume, *Supporting Fraternities and Sororities in the Contemporary Era: Advancements in Practice* (Stylus/Myers Education Press, 2020). The research in this edition of *Oracle* is notable, collectively interrogating issues of student behavior and belonging. I trust you will find these manuscripts both enlightening and useful in your work related to the fraternity/sorority experience.

As I step back from my role as Editor, I hope that development remains a part of my legacy at *Oracle*. I believe strongly that our journal is at its best when it embraces the twin pillars of developing scholars and disseminating scholarship established at the outset of the journal.

I want to give a sincere thank you to the brilliant colleagues who I have worked with over the past four years. I have collaborated with an amazing team of Assistant and Associate Editors: DJ Mitchell, Kate Steiner West, Kahlin McKeown, and Adam McCready. During my time as Editor, I have had the support of a cadre of talented graduate assistants from the Higher Education Program at William & Mary: Amanda Armstrong, Johann Ducharme, T. J. Horan, and David Harger. I appreciate Joe Wheeless, who played an invaluable role in organizing the logistics of the *Oracle* Writers Retreats. I am very grateful to the William & Mary School of Education and William & Mary Libraries for supporting my work as Editor of *Oracle*.

In closing, I offer my best wishes to the new leadership of the journal: Adam McCready, Crystal Garcia, Trace Camacho, Kahlin McKeown, and Luz Burgos-López. *Oracle* is now in your very capable hands. I wish you great success as you lead the next developments for the journal, its authors, and scholarship of the fraternity/sorority experience.