

Women's Groups on College Campuses Must Stay

By: Karly Bokosky

In the summer of 2017, Harvard University's faculty committee recommended that final clubs and single-gendered sororities and fraternities be banned, and any student who join them be expelled. The recommendation was fueled to try and prevent sexual assaults and parties on campus. However, after word spread about this potential ban, many alumni and students protested against this outrageous rule. Donors even threatened to withhold their money. Nevertheless, Harvard decided to continue a policy they implemented at the beginning of this academic year that states that any student involved in unrecognized, single-gender groups, such as fraternities and sororities, will not be allowed to be a leader of other organizations or sports teams. Additionally, students in these unrecognized clubs are not allowed to receive recommendations from the dean for certain scholarship opportunities. By implementing this policy, Harvard completely misused their power, and put students in an unfair position to have to choose between school and being a part of something that is larger than themselves.

Although this policy generated a lot of backlash and unhappy students. The reasoning for implementing this policy came from a good place. Harvard's faculty committee wanted to reduce the amount of sexual assaults at the parties put on by these groups. Also, Harvard blamed these groups for social divisions on their campus and forming privilege for those within the groups. Harvard's president and policy makers have encountered many issues with the male clubs, such as fraternities, and felt that this policy would be the best thing to do in order to resolve issues of drinking and sexual assault. However, while punishing all male groups, Harvard managed to lump in all single-gender groups, which would affect sororities too.

Thus, even though Harvard has good intentions in mind, they went too far by punishing groups that did not deserve it. The sororities at Harvard felt this was very unfair, considering they are not even allowed to have any parties or alcohol in the sorority. In an article on BostonGlobe.com, the women in sororities stated that "rather than fostering unhealthy behavior, [sororities] help them safely combat not only sexual harassment but also alcohol abuse, mental health issues, and other challenges particular to college life" (Krantz, 2017). Thus, these single gendered, female groups empower women and give them support to lift them up when they need it. As a result of the policy, Harvard is depriving women of this empowering experience by forcing them to choose between these clubs or being leaders of other organizations on campus.

Many sororities at Harvard refused to abide by these new rules, and even continued to recruit new members. On top of this, many sorority alumni spoke out against Harvard, which forced the University to rethink its policy. As of February 2018, Harvard maintained the policy with all male groups, but now allows all women groups to remain intact without sanctions. Although it took a lot of fighting, women in these groups are eligible to be leaders in other groups on campus. Even though the problem was resolved for women at Harvard, this issue is not limited to Harvard University's campus. Many schools across the country are trying to get rid of single-gender groups. Thus, as a sorority woman, promoting the benefits of these groups is essential. Colleges need to understand the empowerment sororities and other single gender groups give its members and the networking opportunities they provide. Without these groups on campus, colleges will lack satisfaction in its students.