**The Annual Communication**

**of the**

**Executive Council**

**to the**

**177th Psi Upsilon Convention**

Madison Concourse Hotel

Madison, Wisconsin

Tu-whit tu-whoo, Brothers! As we are once again able come together in person as a Brotherhood to convene in Madison for the 177th Convention of Psi Upsilon, we are at a place and time very much in-between. We are here in beautiful downtown Madison, physically in-between Lakes Mendota and Monona, celebrating 125 years since the Rho Chapter finally received its charter. We are also at an in-between time in history that is coming out of a year unlike any that we have ever experienced, now very much in a transition period on our way back to normal, but still very uncertain about what the future holds. Uncertainty of what the future holds was a feeling known all too well by the founders of the Rho Chapter.

Five years after the Mu had been installed at the University of Minnesota, our Fraternity added its last Chapter during the nineteenth century, not quite the beginning of a chapter, but the end of the forty-six year effort to bring Psi Upsilon to the University of Wisconsin. The effort began in 1851 with a call from graduate members of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity residing in the State of Wisconsin, for the establishment of a chapter at the state’s university. Despite having support from a number of alumni in Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Legislature, the Board of Regents, and the faculty of the University of Wisconsin, the requests were rejected for several years in a row.

Then in 1892 a new hope arose at the university when a group of members of the Phi Kappa Psi fraternity requested from the new President of the University of Wisconsin, Andrew D. White, Beta ’53, to establish a chapter of Psi Upsilon, of which they could become members. The Phi Kappa Psi members dissolved their Wisconsin chapter, each resigning their membership, and then establishing the local society Rho Kappa Upsilon. The badge of the Rho Kappa Upsilon society was a diamond with their Greek letters over a rampant lion, and thus the famous Rho Owl Song was born.

*There is a legend quaint and Greek about an ancient owl, Who dwelt in great exclusiveness, a most respected fowl; Beloved he of lion bold, who, rampant, rose one morn, Awak'ning consternation in the land where he was born.*

*The ancient owl blinked both his eyes and marveled at the roar; In loud protest a pack of curs were snarling at his door: "An upstart lion comes this way!" the envious jackals cried. Pray bar from out thy portals fair this traitor double-dyed!"*

*Unto the rabble thus the owl: "Away! Let him appear! When Virtue claims her just reward, 'tis Envy seeks to jeer; To thee, wise beast of rampant mien, the mystic badge I bring; Accept for thy great loyalty, the shelter of my wing!"*

The **rampant lion** represented the Rho Kappa Upsilon, who sought the shelter of the wing of Psi Upsilon, the **wise old owl** that most conservative foul, but the **envious jackals**, groups outside and within Psi U fearful of our expansion west, called to bar the traitor double-eyed. The members of Rho Kappa Upsilon were stuck in-between. They had left their affiliation with their previous fraternity without any assurance or confidence that they would achieve their goal. Yet, even during that time of uncertainty, the rampant lions did not sit back and wait to see what fate had in store for them. They pushed valiantly ahead, seizing every opportunity that was available to them, and forging their own opportunities when there were none.

The battle for the Rho’s charter continued until the Convention of 1895 voted unanimously for their petition, and then the charter was granted the following February. On March 27, 1896, the members of the Rho Chapter were initiated into Psi Upsilon from class years from 1856 to 1899. A chapter that was just born, yet already was forty-six years old.

We, Psi Upsilon today, are the rampant lion! We have had little control over what has gone on at our colleges and across our nations over this past year, and we are at a point of great uncertainty about what is to come next, where the Greek system, as a whole is heading, and what is next for Psi Upsilon. Yet our Brotherhood can take advantage of any and every opportunity that avails itself to us, and where there are none, we must blaze our own trail to create our own opportunities. There are envious jackals out there who would love nothing more than to dismantle every last aspect of the Greek system, but it is up to each of us to grow when they want us to shrink and prosper where they want us to fail.

Growth and expansion are our key focus to not accept simply surviving the challenges that COVID-19, damaging university policies, and Abolish Greek Life pose for us, but rather expand our values and our lifelong brotherhood to new members at new universities that would miss this incredible opportunity otherwise. Additionally, growing our existing chapters through their outreach, recruitment, and living by the mission of Psi Upsilon. We must aggressively seek prospects that when the next Annals of Psi Upsilon is written, they will note this as an inflection point in our history when we became something that we never would have been capable of before.

We have begun to do wonderful things for this Brotherhood that we never would have without a pandemic and lockdowns. Our Speaker Series was in its infancy when we made it virtual, which afforded the ability to reach a greater audience and spotlight our incredible alumni more frequently than we would have been able to in person. The importance of having digital access to the archives of our Fraternity, became that much more important. Archon’s Academy, one of the cornerstones of this organization’s leadership training, was able to be expanded to eight virtual sessions with training focus and involvement for nearly every officer position within the chapter, making it a true leaders’ academy. We all live and work in a world of Zoom meetings and calls now, but the adoption of virtual meetings has afforded the opportunity for a greater interconnection and community for Chapter Alumni Presidents and Chapter Archons by hosting monthly town hall meetings for each group to get together and connect directly with our staff.

Reactivating chapters is always a priority of the Executive Council, whenever possible, so we are thrilled with the flourishing Phi Beta Owl Club at William and Mary, with their success over the past year. Similarity, we applaud the persistence and determination of the Delta Omicron Provisional Chapter at Purdue University as they remain committed to growing our Brotherhood on their campus. We strongly look forward to bringing both groups into full chapter status soon, as well as recolonizing our inactive chapters at the Theta (Union College), the Lambda (Columbia University), the Iota (Kenyon College), and the Chi (Cornell University). And this will be only the tip of the iceberg for Psi Upsilon’s growth and expansion as we are dedicated to hiring a staff member and establish a committee focused in this area.

None of this could be done without our staff, Executive Council Members, and Foundation Board of Directors, who live and breathe Psi U on a daily basis. I am honored to work with so many exceptional professionals and Brothers, like Tom Fox, Omicron ’00, who leads the Fraternity’s staff as its Executive Director. If you know the level dedication to Psi Upsilon of Brother Fox, you are either lucky enough to be amongst the leaders of our Brotherhood, or you are unlucky enough to have Tom dive in to help you out of a difficult situation.

I would also like to welcome our new Administrative Assistant, Wendy Alexander, who is here to keep Tom out of any difficult situations, and also Stephan Oechsle, our Director of Chapter Services who joined our team in March. Steve comes to us with extensive student and alumni leadership experience from his fraternity, Phi Kappa Theta, as well as higher education, fraternal volunteerism, and public administration.

Chapter Leadership Coaches will be another initiative for the 2021-2022 academic year that Steve and Tom will be spearheading. We will be seeking alumni connected with or geographically close to our chapters to be trained in the leadership coaching model. With training and Steve’s oversight, these committed alumni will be the conduit from the international office to the chapters, visiting the chapters more frequently and providing more personalized coaching for each individual chapter, than the international staff have ever been capable of.

Through the continued Chapter visits and reports we know of all of the ways that our Brothers remained committed to moral, intellectual and social excellence:

* The Pi Chapter and their alumni lead by Michael Dellon, ’17, raised over $48,000 for the Movember Foundation, making them one of the top ten teams in the United States.
* In total, our chapters raised over $100,000 for philanthropic causes, and volunteered over 3,300 hours to their communities in a year that was not easy to host events or provide service in person.
* The Gamma Tau stayed connected to their members and recruited new members by utilizing their Discord even while they could not be in person. They reached out and connected with other chapters through Discord to keep our Brotherhood well connected.
* The Tau Epsilon exceeded recruitment expectations for even a typical year with their small, direct, conversational approach to recruitment, taking their chapter from 19 to 43 members with a new member class of 24.
* Recruitment during a pandemic sent all of our chapters into uncharted territory, but our chapters persevered and succeeded with 106 initiated over the past summer or beginning of the Fall semester, 115 additional new Brothers in the Fall of 2020, and 222 new members this past Spring semester.
* The Phi Beta wanted to stand out on campus, so they invited all William and Mary students to their alumni career program, and they wanted to show that Psi U cares by partnering with the campus counseling center to help manage stress and anxiety during finals.

Volunteers are the lifeblood of this Fraternity. We look forward to the engagement of those who will answer the call as our Chapter Leadership Coaches, and whole-heartedly thank all of our incredible Chapter Corporation Presidents, as well as all of our Brothers who serve on Chapter alumni boards! Your involvement directly with and on behalf of your Chapters, does an incredible service to Psi Upsilon as well as the future generations that we will bring into our Brotherhood.

I cannot say enough about or thank enough my fellow members of the Executive Council: Christian Brydges, Nu ’95, Vice President; David Hollis, Gamma Tau ’11, Secretary; Timothy Zepp, Chi Delta ’08, Treasurer; Patrick Gilrane, Psi ’83; Jay LaPanne, Delta Nu ’89; Gregory Rupp, Phi ’81; and Jon Szynkowski, Epsilon Nu ’06, who feed the hallowed vestal fires we gather round today.

In addition to our term members, we receive the wise guidance from the Life Members of the Executive Council: Thomas T. Allan IV, Theta Theta ’89; Mark D. Bauer, Omega ’83; David A. B. Brown, Epsilon Phi ’66; Charles M. Hall, Nu Alpha ’71; Richard A. Rasmussen, Upsilon ’72; James A. Swanke, Jr., Rho ’80; and Evan W. Terry, Epsilon Phi ’93, as well as our Honorary Life Members: Bradley R. Corner, Omicron ’72, Murray L. Eskenazi, Lambda ’65, Charles A. Werner, Omega ’55, and William N. Wishard III, Delta Delta ’64. This large number of board members all give so much to Psi Upsilon through their time, talents, and very generous donations.

Speaking of giving, I have been given the opportunity to work with my dear friend and Brother, Alexander C. Senchak, Eta ’06, who leads the Psi Upsilon Foundation, along with its Board of Directors to carry forth the banner of the Psi Upsilon Fraternity. We are all indebted to the Foundation Directors: Matthew J. Eckenrode, Epsilon Nu ’04, Vice Chairman; Patrick J. Gilrane, Psi ’83, Chairman Emeritus; Martin Brayboy, Gamma ’84, Secretary; John F. H. Ong, Gamma ’82, Treasurer; Garrett Gleim, Tau ’01; Doug Jackman, Omega ’89; Gary G. Pan, Eta ’86; and Larry Rakers, Omicron ’86; who truly keep our temple walls still bright.

The Foundation Directors along with the Foundation’s staff, Jonathan M. Chaffin, Gamma Tau ’00, Director of Member Engagement, Bethann Taylor, Director of Administration, and Renee Beck, Donor Relations Manager, have given all of us a strong sense of what it means to be a Brother of Psi Upsilon, through new and expanded programs like the Social Impact Fellowship, Graduate Scholarships, FishFund Scholarships, Speaker Series, the Gilrane Economic Symposium, and on and on.

As, I conclude, I will call upon the most important officers of the Convention, our beloved Songmasters, Murray L. Eskenazi, Lambda ’65 and Eldred Halsey, Delta ’58 to lead us in singing the Rho Owl Song, and I thank them for their years of service serenading our Conventions. As we sing, and throughout this weekend of Convention, think upon the words of this song, the in-between that we all find ourselves in currently, and where we, as the leaders of our Brotherhood, will take our Fraternity into the future!

*Beloved he of lion bold, who, rampant, rose one morn, Awak'ning consternation in the land where he was born… The ancient owl blinked both his eyes and marveled at the roar.*

Let Psi U learn from the Rho once again, and be the lion bold, making others marvel at our roar, being unafraid of any consternation that we may cause!

Yours in the bonds,

Jeremy K. McKeon, Eta ‘08

President, Executive Council

July 23, 2021