

'It was a long time coming:' social Greek life moratorium continues for Baruch students

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Following six months of debate, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost David P. Christy announced that the moratorium on social Greek life will be extended by another three years. The moratorium was scheduled to expire this year.

In an email to students, faculty and staff sent on May 8, Christy wrote that the extension of the moratorium was meant to ensure "the safety, security, and well-being of our students."

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The decision, Christy wrote, was reached following several discussions with senior college administration, including Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Art King, and reviewing information provided by the Undergraduate Student Government.

Freshman Chun Hsien "Michael" Deng's death was also a big reason for extending the moratorium.

"This senseless tragedy resulted in serious criminal charges being filed against a number of Baruch students, and it has now led to guilty pleas and convictions and upended lives and futures," Christy wrote in the email.

The moratorium on pledging and rush activities was put in place for a year at the end of the spring 2014 semester, after Deng died during an unsanctioned hazing incident that took place on Dec. 9, 2013. At the end of spring 2015, the moratorium was extended for three years.

Deng was one of four students who pledged for the Pi Delta Psi fraternity. Over 30 members of the fraternity spent the weekend in Tunkhannock Township, Pennsylvania, where the pledges participated in a ritual called "Glass Ceiling," *The Ticker* reported.

Deng resisted the ritual, which caused the fraternity brothers to be more aggressive with him than with other pledges and hit him repeatedly despite complaints of a headache. When he was knocked unconscious, he did not immediately receive medical attention. Deng was eventually driven to the hospital, but doctors could not revive him. The cause of death was severe head trauma, *The Ticker* reported.

With the moratorium due to ex-

pire at the end of spring 2018, USG led the effort to gauge students' opinion on social Greek life at Baruch.

During the Dec. 5, 2017 senate meeting, USG hosted a social Greek life forum in which students and alumni were able to voice their opinion on the issue. Former social Greek life members testified about the benefits of social Greek life for the Baruch community, while current students wanted to learn more about social Greek life and expressed their desire to join.

Following the forum, Chen was tasked with creating and distributing a survey about social Greek life to the student population. Chen was supposed to gauge student interest in bringing Greek organizations back on campus with the survey but was only given a few months to do so, with school administrators issuing a March 2 deadline for survey results on Jan. 30. However, the survey was not approved for distribution by the CUNY legal office until only eight days before the deadline.

The survey received around 400 results — a little over 2 percent of the college's total population, with 63 percent of the answering students supporting social Greek life on campus.

"It was a long time coming. They would have ended it regardless of what we said in the survey, regardless of how many people voted on the survey. They would have just ended it," Chen said. Even before the survey was launched, Chen said, there was skepticism among USG members that it would have any effect.

"Endangering a student's life is like their number one concern, and they never want that to happen. And they believe that social Greek life, the way it's structured, is there's no guarantee that any

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student will be safe," Chen said of Baruch's administration.

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"There are so many, like, underground things that were going on under the moratorium that gives the administration the impression like, 'Why should we bother even trusting them? We gave them that four years to see they would be better, but it's clear they're not getting better. They're still endangering people's lives,'" Chen said.

Chen also said that he and Representative Sen. Andrew Windsor tried to meet with King to discuss the issue but were ignored.

"We do need to continue the fight. It's something that cannot be overturned in just one year," Chen said.

When asked to comment on the issue, Director of Student Life Damali Smith responded by stating that "...questions can be answered in the email from the Provost."

Christy and King did not respond to requests for comment for this article.