

Dear future Journey of Hope [or Gear Up Florida] cyclist,

Congratulations on accepting the opportunity to commit yourself to a summer full of service to the disability community! You are about to embark on the most challenging yet rewarding experience of your life. The Journey of Hope will truly allow you to better yourself as a man and give you a new perspective on the abilities of the differently abled community.

Despite the amount of personal satisfaction that you will receive from this summer, this is only part of the journey. The physical toll is undoubtedly the most **challenging** feat you will have to overcome. Several times throughout the beginning of my Journey of Hope experience, I questioned my ability to finish the ride. Although my athletic ability is somewhat limited, my lack of training leading up to the summer was clearly showing as I had trouble completing the even the simplest of practice rides. This insufficient conditioning carried into my first three weeks of the trip. Each day, I woke up irritated and unwilling to accept the fact that I was stuck riding my bike for the entire summer. Each night, I would look on my phone for flights home as we went through each destination. I came as close as a click away from giving up this entire experience.

After countless words of encouragement from my team members and jokes made about my dislike of cycling, I finally began to enjoy the trip at the beginning of the fourth week. That week is when my body finally started to become accustomed to the strain I was putting on it. However, by the time I was fully capable of completing each ride, I had already begun to regret all of the rides I was not able to complete at the start of the trip. While every team member was beginning to pass certain mileage goals, I was left thinking about the days that I was unable to finish which would've allow me to enjoy overcoming these same feats.

I write this letter to you all as word of caution and motivation leading up to your summer. The journey to finish the ride starts months before you arrive on the west coast. It started the day you decided to accept this incredible opportunity and continues each day when you decide to ride your bike. You must make the commitment to train heavily in the months leading up to next summer. I say this to you because I do not want you to have the same regrets that I had along the way. Next summer will undeniably be the most impactful summer of your life. You owe it to your coaches and to yourself to put yourself in a position to perform at your best each and every day throughout the journey.

Once again, I would like to congratulate you and thank you for being committed to a summer full of service. The lives and families of the people you will impact, The Ability Experience, Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity, and myself will be forever grateful for your decision.

Yours in Pi Kappa Phi,
2017 Pi Alpha