

*A message from*

# President James Danko

**BUTLER** UNIVERSITY

Dear Butler Community,

On November 12, 1922, seven Black women studying education at Butler University founded the Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority on our campus. Of the country's four historically Black sororities, it is the only one that was founded at a predominantly white institution. This year marks the 100th anniversary of that momentous occasion in our history, and the sorority, City of Indianapolis, and Butler are collaborating on a variety of Centennial Celebration activities.

As a part of the celebration, I am excited to announce that I will bestow the inaugural Ovid Butler Founder's Award—which recognizes and celebrates individuals or organizations who embody our values of innovation, excellence, diversity, equity, and inclusion—to Sigma Gamma Rho International Sorority, Inc. The ceremony will take place during an expanded two-week Founder's Celebration, February 16 at 7:00 PM in the Reilly Room. Molly Ford, Vice President of Employee Brand and Recruitment Marketing at Salesforce and a member of Sigma Gamma Rho, will deliver the Founder's Celebration Keynote Address that evening. The event will be open to the community; I encourage you to save the date.

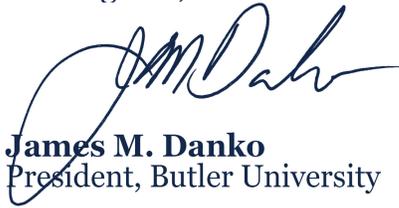
It is fitting that we celebrate the founders of Sigma Gamma Rho during the Founder's Celebration honoring Ovid Butler, a well known attorney and newspaper publisher of his time, and an active supporter of the antislavery movement. In 1855, Ovid founded North Western Christian University (renamed Butler University in his honor) on the values of diversity, inclusivity, and equality. The University admitted women and people of color on an equal basis with white males, a radical stance for the time.

I imagine that Ovid would have taken great pride in knowing that, nearly 70 years after its founding, Butler University provided the inclusive and nurturing environment that inspired seven incredibly brave Black women to found a sorority. There will be several other activities planned during the Founder's Celebration from February 7-18, 2022, including a Sigma Gamma Rho themed

exhibit at Irwin Library, and a student art competition with Shortridge High School (alma mater of four of the sorority's seven founders). Details about all of the Founder's Celebration and Sigma Gamma Rho Centennial Celebration [events are on our website](#) , which will be continually updated as events are added.

As we begin the New Year, I ask that each of you resolve to honor and celebrate the legacy of our founder, Ovid Butler, by living his vision to support those whose access to the highest quality education has been historically denied due to race, gender or circumstance, just as he did in 1855, and just as Butler University did for the founders of Sigma Gamma Rho sorority 100 years ago.

Best regards,



**James M. Danko**  
President, Butler University

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