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Student Affairs: Greek-life

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Abstract

This research paper will cover Greek Life and its relationship to student affairs. I will discuss the primary roles of Greek Life as an organization for students, as well as how it is organized within an institution. Greek Life, as an organization, is one of the more well-known and established student organizations on college campuses. With this reputation comes a heavy amount of scrutiny from the public eye and media. I will finish by examining the positives and negatives of Greek Life as a functional area of student affairs on college campuses.

Student Affairs: Greek-life

Greek-life is a student organization that dates as far back as the early 1800s. It is one of the more prominent and well-known student organizations that exist on college campuses.

Currently, I am a fifth grade, elementary teacher, but throughout my collegiate years, I was a member of a fraternity on campus. At the beginning of every school year, student organizations were invited to set up a kiosk at our campus involvement fair, in hopes to appeal to new members. It always astonished me at how well organized the Greek-life kiosks were, with decorations, pamphlets, and participation from members. I was left asking myself, what is the main component that these Greek-life organizations have that other student-led organizations do not possess? In this research paper I will discuss the role that Greek-life plays for students, as well as how it is established and organized on college campuses. I will also recap some of the important topics discussed from the interview I had with Bruce Gjovig; the Director of the Center for Innovation and Education Foundation at the University of North Dakota. Mr. Gjovig is also a member of the Delta Xi chapter of Delta Tau Delta and serves as an Academic Advisor and sits on the House Corporation.

Role of Greek-life

The role of Greek-life throughout a student's college experience is to provide an overall sense of community and belonging. It is heavily reliant upon how much effort a member puts into the organization, which correlates to how significant the experiences end up being. Joining a Greek organization allows its members the opportunity to create meaningful, life-long friendships. It can also establish networking prospects through their social events and alumni relations. Some members can go onto be given leadership positions within the organization, which may be a helpful experience down the road. Most Greek-life organizations are partnered

with local or national foundations that raise funds for the less fortunate. Not only do acts of service and charity look impressive on a resume, but they also teach a person about themselves and humble them. When interviewing Bruce Gjovig, he said that “Greek-life is about offering experiences and opportunities for students to find their true passions.” One of the student affairs journals I read agrees with this idea and refers to it as finding their personal identity. As McClain, Sampson, Lenz, and Reardon (2015) state, personal identity formation occurs as Greek-life students receive multicultural exposure, engage in reflection, perform self-exploration, and develop core values based on the mottos, morals, and principles of the overall organization. With the variety of races, cultures, and opportunities presented through Greek-life, there are a variety of opportunities to grow as a person throughout your experience.

Organization on Campus

Greek-life organizations have the unique quality of being an independent organization of the institution. Like I have previously stated, Greek-life as an organization has been around for almost two centuries. With that comes a body with an established, self-governing hierarchy, but one that also works closely with the administration of the institution. Each division of Greek-life (fraternity and sorority) has their own council, the IFC (Interfraternity Council) for Fraternities and Panhellenic Council for sororities. Within each organization or house, you will have a breakdown of executive positions and chairs that have specific roles. Organization like Greek-life usually approach the institution with the idea that they would like to start a chapter on that campus. After that, a Greek organization will assemble to draft a charter or document stating that this chapter has been given authorization to initiate their own chapter. Out of all the student-led organizations offered at college, Greek organizations are some of the most complex. Some holding over one hundred members with an annual budget in the tens, even hundreds of

thousands. The intricacy of Greek-life is what mandates the cooperation between these organizations and the institutions that house them.

Positives and Negatives

There are a variety of positive aspects to being a member of a Greek organization, but with that comes negative consequences. Being that I was a member of a fraternity during my years at college, I hold a bias with my opinion of the pros and cons of Greek-life. I will use my own experience to list the positives and negatives, as well as the opinion of an outside source. Personally, some of the benefits that I saw from being involved in Greek-life was the sense of community and loyalty. It brought together people with completely different backgrounds, from all over the world, with the idea of being apart of something bigger than themselves. Being in a fraternity also gave me the opportunity to do a lot of networking through our alumni connections. Throughout my several years in the fraternity I held a variety of positions that gave me valuable experience for the future.

Some of the downfalls of Greek-life are well documented by the media and personal social media accounts. Puskar (2017) states that fraternities around the country have sparked a national conversation about the future of Greek life, once viewed as a ticket to social success and a rite of passage for many college students. There are generalizations made by individuals about Greek-life, but I do admit that stereotypes often come from a bit a truth. Although, never in any situation should a person or event ruin the image of the masses. Some of the negatives to joining Greek-life is the constant opportunities to stay active, which might not seem harmful, until you have an important exam the next morning. Wilks (2020) states that there are often social limitations on what type of people can come around the house and Greek-life members are known for being shallow when choosing members.

Conclusion

There are many roles of Greek-life as an organization for students. It is an organization that is well-known and established on college campuses, with that comes a heavy amount of scrutiny from the public eye and media. There are a variety of positives and negatives of Greek Life as a functional area of student affairs on college campuses.

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