

BEHIND THE SCENES

What Aggies think about the Texas A&M Greek System

By MEREDITH HENSLEE
THE BATTALION

Standing outside in 100-degree weather in Sunday best, being looked over by potential "brothers" and "sisters," making idle conversation about nothing of importance ... this is what many students think of fraternity or sorority rush. Yet, each semester, thousands of A&M

students continue to join Greek organizations.

Although it is not for everyone, many students find that the benefits of membership in a Greek organization far outweigh the disadvantages.

Melissa Williams, president of Kappa Alpha Theta and a senior management information systems major, explained why she went through rush in the first place.

"I wanted to get to know lots of girls, but also I knew that I wanted to be involved [on campus] and it was a good starting point," Williams said. "I knew that being involved with a sorority would lead to other avenues."

Williams decided to become a member of Theta during recruitment in 1998.

"I felt at home with Theta," Williams said. "I was most like the girls here, so I was able to fit in and not feel awkward."

Some women enter into Greek life and then realize it is not the place for them, or that they do not have the time required to make the most of the benefits Greek involvement has to offer.

Megan Oatman, a senior speech communications major, explained why it was necessary for her to go inactive in her chapter. "They (sororities) are really time consuming if you want to gain the benefits from them that they are designed to bring," Oatman said. "I wasn't able to give that much of my time, so it was best for me to go inactive."

Even though she declared an inactive status in her sorority, she spoke very highly of the advantages of joining.

"It was instant family, great community involvement, good connections and great networking," Oatman said. "The women in my sorority really impacted my life."

Involvement with a fraternity on campus is designed to provide many of the same benefits for men at A&M as sororities do for women.

John Stewart, president of the Interfraternity Council and a junior geography major, said there is an advantage in networking through a fraternity after graduation.

"There are so many men in the business world in every field that have been involved with a fraternity," Stewart said. "That gives you common ground — he knows what you're about."

Despite the positive aspects of fraternity membership, there are those men who find involvement in other groups a better investment of their time.

Paxton Kelso, president of the Singing Cadets and a junior marketing major, said, "I didn't rush because Singing Cadets is my fraternity. If you want to get anything out of an organization,

you need to sell out to it," Kelso said.

Josh Jones, a junior speech communications major, shares the same sentiments as Kelso.

"I partially didn't want to join a fraternity because there are so many things you can get involved in on campus," Jones said. "And I don't think they are necessary in order to network after graduation. There are other organizations you can be involved in that could be more beneficial for that."

Greek life on campus has a diverse reputation among its members and among those not involved in the Greek system.

"I feel that we are classy, reputable young ladies," Williams said of Theta. "We're a very strong chapter, and I know that our national headquarters thinks extremely highly of our particular chapter."

Cathy Craddock, a senior journalism major, never wanted to go through rush, even before she began college.

"None of my friends wanted to [rush], either," Craddock said. However, not being involved does not give her a bad impression of those who choose to become members of fraternities and sororities.

"Although I don't know many people in them, I think that sometimes they get a bad wrap on campus," Craddock said. "I think they are good social organizations and a good way to meet people."

Kyle Easley, former member of the Corps of Cadets and a senior psychology major, said he believes sororities have a better reputation on campus than fraternities.

"I know a lot of ol' Ags see fraternity life as more acceptable for girls than for guys because A&M began as a military-type school," Easley said.

With the addition of women to the University came sororities, something that Easley said was probably more expected than the addition of fraternities.

"For guys it's just different, because there only used to be the Corps," Easley said.

Stereotypes also keep many students away.

"I know that there are those who think a typical woman in a sorority loves to party, never study and is never worried about her grades," Williams said. "But that just shows a lack of understanding of what we're really all about."

Jones said that he can see where some of the stereotypes come from. "To some extent," Jones said, "Greeks seem exclusive on campus; few seem to branch out much."

John Paul Holt, member of Pi Kappa Phi fraternity and a junior marketing major, rushed his sophomore year instead of his freshman year because of the stereotypes.

"I heard a lot of negative things about fraternities my freshman year," Holt said. "But when I actually got to know the guys, I realized that they had more to offer me than any other group on campus I could join."



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