

The Greeks:

Frats, sororities display increase in membership

By DAVID VAN HORN
Daily Collegian Staff Writer

Fraternity and sorority membership is on the upswing, and will continue to rise, according to the presidents of the Inter-Fraternity Council and the Panhellenic Council.

Panhellenic Council President Janet Plavetch said sorority membership is slowly but steadily increasing. The

number of pledges over last year is minimal, she said, but "definitely moving up."

Plavetch said there were 835 sorority members, including pledges, by the end of 1976. So far this year, there are about 850 members and pledges. However, Plavetch said, chapters do not make a distinct cutoff between what determines a member versus a pledge. Often, a

pledge has the same social privileges as any member in a specific chapter.

Plavetch said the decline in sororities from the '60s was caused by the rule change which allowed girls to live off campus.

The 19 chapters located in South, Pollock and Centre Halls provide a "good base of friends," Plavetch said, because the dormitory floor is not full of strangers, but sisters.

"A sorority is a good starting base," she said. The feeling of togetherness grows through participation in various activities, she said, thus the atmosphere is different yet better.

Pam Downs, (10th-home economics education), a pledge at Delta Gamma sorority, said she "wanted to try the Greek way" so she could experience a different side of college life. She said long-lasting friendships and the chance to be involved and have responsibility are the biggest advantages to the sorority system. Downs said she is concerned about the "unfair," inaccurate "big party" image that her sorority has, and pointed out the chapter's high academic standing.

"We don't get as much credit as we deserve," she said.

IFC President Steve DiOrio said that a trend, started in the fall of 1975 at Penn State, indicated an increase in the number of people who are signing up to be fraternity members.

"The Penn State fraternity system felt the initial shock waves of membership decline about three years after it started on the West Coast," DiOrio said. This trend has now reversed itself, he said, and Penn State is "starting to feel the rejuvenation of fraternities," although the University is two to three years behind this rejuvenation cycle compared to the West Coast.

The cause of the decline, DiOrio said, was a general movement away from the status quo groups to a "more independent sphere of influence." Norm groups in the '60s and early '70s were out because people wanted a different style, he said, but now the atmosphere has changed.

"There is not so much a feeling on the part of students that society is bad," DiOrio said, "and there is not as much distrust."

However, he said, now that people are "looking to fraternities as a viable alternative," the decline was a blessing in disguise, a time when fraternities had

to modernize their philosophy to fit into the changing society.

"Fraternities were forced to reevaluate their programs to answer a lot of questions for the good of the system," he said. So now, almost any student can be satisfied by this organization, to "be an individual in an organization," he said.

Don Shanta (5th-political science), a pledge at Alpha Epsilon Pi, said he enjoys the brotherhood offered by a fraternity, while Bob Douglas (4th-civil engineering), at Kappa Sigma, said he likes the social activities available.

Douglas said he liked the idea of having people around to help him with his studies, "but I like to drink beer too." Shanta, however, put scholastics on the top of his list, and de-emphasized parties as a means to "introduce people to the house" and not "to go overboard," he said.

"They are a crazy bunch of people to live with," Shanta said, "and when people do something, it's together." Shanta said he stills feels he has retained his individualism, and Douglas "was interested in an alternate lifestyle" which many have found by joining a fraternity.

A person who is actively interested in fraternities is called a rush, DiOrio said, and is invited to fraternities from the general rush list to meet members and see how he "fits in with their style." After this, a rush may sign a preference card, and when his bid for membership is accepted, he becomes a pledge.

A pledge, DiOrio said, is considered an associate member of a fraternity. The time period from pledge status to full membership depends upon how the individual familiarizes himself with the organization, to know the members so they "can become good brothers."

"The most appealing aspect is the concept of brotherhood," DiOrio said, "but fraternities must attempt to appeal on a concrete level" pertaining to academics, social activities and athletics.

"Fraternities are criticized solely on these levels," DiOrio said, because people outside fraternities "don't know what it means to be a brother."

"Good parts of an organization don't always come out," he said.

DiOrio said he wants the public to respect the lifestyle of fraternities because fraternities respect the lifestyles of others.

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