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Greek Life: More than just “paying for friends”?

Everyone knows that being a member of a sorority or a fraternity has its benefits- you get a wide range of learning and leadership opportunities, you have more social connections, and even professional networks after graduation. And let’s face it, the parties are pretty cool too. But how does being a part of greek life affect a student’s grades? Many sororities and fraternities have reputations for being filled with unintelligent airheads, when in actuality, that is the farthest from the truth.

What a lot of people do not realize is that being a part of greek life can actually help improve grades and help the student in the long run. Former greek life members have proven that they can succeed even further than at their university. At least 85% of Fortune 500 executives were members of greek life, according to USA Today (Glass). Research shows that being a member of the greek community actually can improve academic performance. A multivariate analysis of the relationship between undergraduate greek life involvement and academic performance was conducted and a secondary analysis of data collected using the Fraternity/Sorority Experience Survey revealed statistically significant relationships between cumulative grade point average and chapter involvement. It was found that chapter involvement, engagement in academic activities, and part-time work were positively associated with academic performance (Long).

To research how academics affected members of greek life done here at UNC Charlotte, an observation was conducted and interview questions were created to get a better understanding of how members of greek life view their academic success. The observation took place in Atkins library, starting around 9:00 pm. About two hours were spent on the third floor of the library, which is where members of greek life usually study. It found that there was a variety of different study habits, from studying quietly in groups, to studying quietly by themselves, to groups quizzing each other out loud.

To get different perspectives on this topic two members of UNC Charlotte greek life were interviewed; a member of one of the top fraternities, Lambda Chi Alpha, and then a sister of my own sorority, another top tier here at UNCC, the Delta Kappa chapter of Chi Omega. The first person interviewed was Frank, a freshman and a pledge brother of Lambda Chi Alpha. One of the most notable pieces of information gathered from his interview was that Lambda Chi requires their pledges to log at least ten library hours a week or else they will be put on social probation (social probation is when you are not allowed to attend any social functions such as parties and formals). To compare a Freshman pledge’s experience to someone who had been a member of greek life for at least two years my big, Kalie, was interviewed. Kalie is a Junior and has been a member of Chi Omega since her Freshman year. “Greek life has made me take responsibility for my academics and has made me hold myself to a higher standard. My sisters depend on me to get good grades but they also support me and help me get there,” Kalie said. “If we are doing bad in a class the executive board will put us on a ‘success plan’ to help us get back to where we need to be.” Chi Omega only requires sisters to log library hours if they have below a C. This goes for every member of Chi Omega, including new members and sisters. Chi Omega, as well as Lambda Chi, will put members with failing grades or insufficient library hours on social probation. This was interesting because Lambda Chi, as well as most of UNC Charlotte’s fraternities, requires all pledges (but only pledges) to log library hours, even if they have all As. However Chi Omega only requires members (but this goes for any member, regardless of status) to log hours if they have below a C. Even though Frank and Kalie are parts of different organizations with different ways of helping with academic success, they both noted that being a part of greek life has helped them improve academically. They both said that being a part of greek life has helped them gain not just social connections, but also has helped improve their grades through study groups, older members who have taken the course and are always willing to help, and the fact that they have to hold themselves to a higher standard as a park of the greek community.

It is obvious that greek life has its benefits, but people need to start giving members of sororities and fraternities more credit. Many studies have been done and it has even been found that on average, members of greek life have a higher Grade Point Average than students who are unaffiliated with greek life (Reifman). Being a member of the greek life community is more than parties and social status. Being a part of a sorority or a fraternity helps members hold themselves to a higher standard, pushes them to be the best they can be academically, and gives them support during and after their years at a university.

Works Cited

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