

Beyond the stigma of sororities and frats

The facts surrounding fraternities at Mac and beyond

• CONT'D FROM C1

some postsecondary institutions such as the University of Western Ontario (UWO), do in fact officially recognize fraternities and sororities.

Francis Bueron, a member of the fraternity Phi Gamma Delta at UWO, admitted that he wasn't quite sure why Greek life is more prominent at UWO than at other universities.

However, Bueron mentioned that "there has been a lot of history of these fraternities and sororities being around ... we've had them here on campus for so long that they were bound to be exposed sooner or later."

Aside from this, the experience of joining and being an active member in a fraternity or sorority extends far beyond the occasional drunken riot.

In fact, Bueron said, "I was always under the impression that they were all party and no work. I never knew there was a portion of the fraternity solely dedicated to community involvement ... things

turned around when I realized how much I would be getting out of this experience."

The process of joining a fraternity or sorority is not as simple as some would initially assume.

Just like anything else worthwhile in life, essentially it is something you have to work for.

At the beginning of each term there is a week termed "rush week."

During this week, fraternities and sororities recruit university students.

"Once this week is over ... a bid is sent out to 'rush' that we feel embody the qualities of a true member," said Bueron.

"After these bids are given these individuals are known as pledges. They then undergo an eight week process of learning about the history, ideals and moral standards ... they learn what it really means to call yourself a member," Bueron expanded.

New members, of course, need not be solely first years. Although this is not necessarily how

all fraternities and sororities conduct the joining process, it is at the very least similar to most others.

Yet another stigmatic generalization about joining a fraternity or sorority is the issue of fees.

"I don't want to pay to join" and "I shouldn't have to buy my friends" are often said about Greek life.

However, Vic Kuntzevitsky, current sentinel of Alpha Epsilon Pi, noted that fees are generally for insurance purposes.

"A lot of the fees we have to pay actually go to the international body ... it's an insurance policy. And another part of our dues goes towards covering things.

"We have dinners, we go on road trips, a lot of things we do are subsidized," explained Kuntzevitsky.

Regardless, Seitelbach said "money is never an issue, we do have funds from other places. We'll set up a payment plan so money doesn't get in the way of someone wanting to be a part of it."

Another area of common

concern for most people outside of Greek life is hazing.

Hazing, that is, the initiation many experience upon joining a fraternity or sorority which is often abusive in some way, morally degrading and detrimental to the integrity and wellbeing of the person, is a troublesome issue.

Often movies and the like seem all too encompassing of reality.

Yet, Seitelbach said that "in our chapter we've never had any issues with hazing. We actually have a hotline. So if any pledge has been hazed we call the hotline, international comes over and they shut down our chapter.

"So there are repercussions if we do this. Our rule is that if it's something you're not willing to do in front of your parents then you shouldn't be doing it."

Similarly, Bueron said that "[Phi Gamma Delta] does not haze. Hazing proves to be counterproductive to what we are all about.

"That doesn't mean we don't still bust their chops and give

them a hard time. They just know that they don't have to do anything they don't want to do and we make it clear from the start that's how it is."

Setting aside all negative stereotypes of fraternities and sororities, Greek life can be a meaningful experience.

Not only is the social aspect of Greek life an important characteristic, but also philanthropy, scholarship and personal development, are all central emphases of Greek life.

As Seitelbach said, "It doesn't just offer great leadership qualities and great experience; it also offers us an amazing support system. A lot of us are going to be friends for the rest of our lives."

So, whether or not you're considering membership in a fraternity or sorority, note that sometimes taking a second look, that is beyond the stigma, is often worthwhile.

It may just give you insight into a different side of the university experience that you are currently missing out on.

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@ Convocation Hall, University Hall Room 213

Nov 12: James Street North Art Crawl, 7 p.m.
For more info see www.jamesstreetnorth.ca

Nov 20: Ghost Hunt at the Historic Custom House, 7 - 11 p.m.
For more info see <http://www.hauntedhamilton.com>

Nov 24-28: 17th Canadian Aboriginal Festival,
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