

Report on the Status of Greek and Non-Greek Relations at Gettysburg College

Presented by the Senate Committee on Greek Life

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I. Introduction and Mission Statement

The Senate Committee on Greek Life is an ad hoc committee of the Gettysburg College Student Senate established in the Fall of 2018 and implemented in the Spring of 2019. The committee consists of 9 student body members who submitted a resume outlining their desire to be on the committee and were selected by the Student Senate in conjunction with the Panhellenic Council and the Inter-Fraternal Council. The composition of the committee is as follows: 5 students affiliated with a social Greek organization (Patrick Custer, Josh Getz, Kayla Cooper, Charles Hagen, Katie Troy) and 4 students unaffiliated (Timothy Wilson, Cailin Casey, Marisa Balanda, Giacomo Coppola). There are 2 co-chairs (Patrick Custer and Timothy Wilson) from each of the aforementioned populations. Below is the official mission statement of the committee as outlined by Student Senate:

The purpose of the Senate Committee on Greek Life (SCOGL) is to combine the voices of the Greek and Non-Greek student populations of Gettysburg College in order to better address issues of community that affect both. Primarily, the purpose of the Committee is to study the social environment and interactions between both constituent populations of the campus and divine ways with which to better the Gettysburg College community as a whole.

In order to accomplish its mission, the committee chose to interview as many members of the Gettysburg College community as possible. This included five administrators, nine affiliated students, and nine unaffiliated students. They were asked for their opinions on the current social atmosphere between affiliated and unaffiliated students, which is further discussed in the methods section (see page 4). The committee then discussed the findings and deliberated on how they should be presented. It was determined that the final report should also include recommendations to improve the social climate at Gettysburg College. With the tremendous

progress that has been made in one semester of this committee, it is the hope of current members that the committee will be continued.

Future goals may include identifying the specific institutions and organizations on campus that succeed at bridging the gap between greek and non-greek students, and how other organizations on campus can adopt the practices that lead to their success. For more future goals see page 17.

II. Research Methods

As previously mentioned in the Introduction, throughout the course of the Spring 2019 semester, the ad hoc committee of the Student Senate sat down with a total of twenty-three members of the Gettysburg College campus community. In total, there were interviews done with five administrators, nine affiliated students, and nine unaffiliated students. Faculty members and administrators were chosen based on their previous affiliations, or lack thereof, and on their work with students on campus through their roles and through their own personal prerogative. Most of the students who were interviewed held various leadership positions on campus, including but not limited to President of their Greek Organization, Residence Life Staff, President of clubs, and more.

When tasked with this mission the committee decided to create a list of questions to ask all members of the campus community. After creating the questions, the committee decided to reach out to members of the community to see if they were available to share their opinions on the interactions found on campus. Every Greek Organization was contacted asking to be involved along with other organizations on campus, which included but were not limited to

campus organizations, clubs, and college houses. During this process, every interviewee was tasked with answering the same questions during an open and candid forum with members of the committee. During interviews, it was made clear that the entirety of the conversation would be on the record unless otherwise stated, and that the identities of the interviewees would remain anonymous. There are no direct quotes in order to preserve that anonymity. The remainder of the report and its recommendations are a product of the hard work of the committee members to analyze, synthesize, and summarize the interviews.

See below the questions asked during the interviews:

- 1) What is your position on campus?
- 2) In your opinion, what is the best/worst part of Greek Life?
- 3) What is your perspective on the interaction between Greek and non-Greek students?
- 4) Do you believe there are barriers between these two groups, and if so what are they?
- 5) Do you have any suggestions to combat this?
- 6) Did you know you wanted to go greek/not go greek when you came to Gettysburg?
- 7) Did the school accurately portray the Greek life climate to prospective students?

III. State of Greek and Non-Greek Relations

After conducting interviews, the Committee found that all of the interviewees believed that there was a social divide among greek and non-greek students; however, the severity of the divide differed among interviewees. During the interviews with affiliated students, recurring themes regarding the positive aspects of joining a Greek organization included: the ability to gain a group of friends, the experience of traditional aspects of respective organizations and their

rituals, the networking opportunities afforded through the organization's alumni, the leadership skills learned through organizational executive board positions, and the chance to participate in organized philanthropy.

During those same interviews, recurring themes regarding the negative aspects of joining a Greek organization included: the exclusive nature of the social environment, the negative stereotype of Greek life, the financial responsibility, and the liabilities and dangers of hosting social events. When discussing student to student relations, affiliated students believed that there was no obvious difference or distinction between Greek and Non-Greek members within the classroom. The general sentiment expressed was that the Greek system did not notably interfere with academics in or out of class. However, affiliated students did indicate that Greek organizations often require a substantial time commitment that can disrupt student social relations. This disruption and disjointment was said to be most obvious during sophomore year. When interviewing unaffiliated students, the Committee found that the positive aspects expressed were the same. However, the negative aspects were not.

Unaffiliated students consistently voiced concern about the social exclusion of fraternities, the stressful interactions during the rush process, and the practice of alcohol consumption. The feeling of exclusion most often arises amid conversations about Greek mixers and philanthropy events. Many unaffiliated students felt that closed gatherings heightened a sense of divide between Greek and Non-Greek students. Others voiced concern about the rush process, saying it was stressful and prone to insincerity. Finally, some students felt that Greek organizations held the unique ability to host social events with alcohol and that college houses are unfairly prosecuted by the school for attempting to do the same.

Unaffiliated students voiced similar opinions on community relations as affiliated students. When inside the classroom or when working on projects outside of the classroom, there are no evident barriers. The committee has concluded that barriers most often arise during social situations. It was the consensus from the interviewees that division is most prominent on the weekends and during philanthropy events. The lack of diversity within the Greek system also contributed to the awareness of a distinction between Greek and Non-Greek students. It is the conclusion of the committee that, while it is not always present, the division between students that can arise given a certain set of circumstances creates a negative atmosphere that alienates Greek and Non-Greek community members alike.

IV. Suggestions to Address Student Concerns over Current Campus Social Climate

A. Statistics Presented to Incoming First Years

When touring Gettysburg College as a prospective student, many were told that only 30% of the student population was involved in Greek life. One of the major themes of the committee's conversations with members of the campus community was about this statistic utilized by the Gettysburg College Admissions Office. This statistic regarding the percentage of students involved in a Greek organization, presented to prospective students and their families, includes the first-year class, which may not rush a Greek organization. The first-year class is typically the largest of the four classes on Gettysburg College's campus. Therefore it represents more than one quarter of the student population. If the first-year class is taken out of consideration, the percentage of students involved in Greek organizations jumps to about 50%.

The percentage of Gettysburg students who are eligible to participate in Greek Life should be the percentage used to represent student involvement in Greek Life for prospective

students. Nearly all of those individuals who mentioned the statistic in interviews believed that improvements could be made regarding the transparency of Greek participation on campus. A Non-Greek student stated that they were not aware of the prevalence of Greek Life on Gettysburg's campus until they began classes. Another Non-Greek student believed that the Gettysburg College Admissions Office actively attempts to hide the truth from prospective students.

The Senate Committee on Greek Life can understand why Gettysburg College Admissions' might desire to downplay the presence of Greek Life on campus, but the committee would suggest a reevaluation of how information about Greek participation is disseminated. A Greek student stated that they felt misled by Gettysburg College Admissions and contended that Gettysburg College Admissions should be more forthcoming with accurate statistics.

The Senate Committee on Greek Life recommends that the Gettysburg Office of Admissions give the corrected percentage of Greek participation to prospective students and families. Providing misleading information for prospective students runs the risk of deepening a divide between Greek and non-Greek students once they matriculate into Gettysburg College. Additionally, the Senate Committee on Greek Life recommends that the Office of Student Activities and Greek Life and the Gettysburg College Admissions Office continue conversations in order to make Greek participation on campus more transparent for prospective students and their families. With this transparency, those representing the Admissions Office should highlight the positive benefits of Greek Life on campus while also continuing to describe social opportunities at Gettysburg outside of Greek Life, including GRAB, CAB, student organizations, and many others.

B. The Monopoly Over Weekend Events

While conducting our interviews this semester, we heard multiple opinions regarding the social scene at Gettysburg. Generally, most interviewees saw the biggest barriers between the Greek and non-Greek communities on a social level, specifically with social events on the weekends. The majority of the interviewees agreed that the Gettysburg weekend social scene was dominated by the fraternities since they live in the houses where many social events take place. A common concern that arose among multiple interviewees was that fraternities have the privilege of hosting social events at their houses with a great deal of freedom, while themed college houses and Non-Greek groups on campus do not have those same privileges. Additionally, some interviewees were concerned that fraternities were being too selective in choosing who they allowed to attend their social events.

Some administrators suggested that the College create a space that any established group on campus could reserve for social events. This space would enjoy the same privileges that fraternities do and would be regulated in the same way that fraternity social events are (i.e. Having G-force at the front door). The committee suggests that fraternities should either register completely open parties, where they allow anyone to attend up until they reach their house's maximum capacity, or they should register a completely closed event in which there is a list of individuals allowed to attend. The committee also suggests a social survey be sent to the entire student body in which students can vote for or suggest ideas for social events that would be

entertaining to them in hopes that CAB could facilitate more opportunities that appeal to both Greek and Non-Greek students. Finally, the committee believes that co-sponsored social events, such as a registered mixer between a Greek and non-Greek organization, should be included on the Greek evaluation in order to encourage more co-hosted social events between these two communities.

C. Open Philanthropy Events

The theme of non-Greek exclusion was a recurring point of discussion. While there were several areas this topic broached, it was heavily discussed in reference to closed philanthropic events hosted by Greek organizations on campus that permit and encourage student participation but limit that participation to exclusively Greek Students. Some of the most prominent events touched on in the interviews were Alpha Delta Pi's Air-bands, Chi Omega's Chi-O Night Live, Delta Gamma's Anchor Splash, and Sigma Chi's Derby Days.

Each event attempts to bring the campus together, increase student interaction, and encourage group participation; however, the current manner in which these events allow for participation does not include Non-Greek students and thus hinders their ability to bring the campus together and increase student interaction. Even though a majority of Non-Greek students interviewed acknowledged the good that comes from Greek philanthropic efforts on campus, they expressed a lack of interest in attending these events because there is not an opportunity for them to participate in the same manner as their Greek peers. Some events include performances by unaffiliated groups on campus such as a cappella and dance organizations, but this does not provide the same level of involvement for the non-Greek population on campus. From the

information and suggestions gathered in the interviews conducted by this committee, it is our recommendation that Greek organizations open their philanthropic events to include more Non-Greek participation by allowing Non-Greek students to create teams and participate in the same manner as Greek students.

D. The Greek Evaluation

During interviews, individuals cited the school's evaluation process for Greek organizations as a barrier between affiliated and unaffiliated students. Some Greek members believed that the incentive for their organization was to complete as many benchmarks on the evaluation list as possible so that the school would give them a high rating. This results in a "check box" mentality where Greek members are often more concerned with completing the task at hand than with what their members and the larger campus community might enjoy. For example, attendance at education and diversity events is apart of the evaluation, but some members are not always looking to learn from the events when all that is required is their attendance.

The evaluation creates a framework for what needs to be done by a given Greek organization each year. Affiliated students felt that the evaluation tends to burn out members, and while the organization's planning focuses on the evaluation, it leaves little energy, time, or resources for planning other events. Greek life is built on the concept of self governance, which is a critical piece to the success of a chapter. Departmentally driven activities (CPS, GRAB) are more common on campus, but Greek Life, by nature, is student driven. That fact needs to be considered when thinking of solutions to problems the system is facing.

The committee feels that there are multiple potential solutions to this problem. First, increasing the benefit of co-sponsoring events between Greek and Non-Greek organizations on the evaluation would increase interaction and provide more ownership over the student experience. It might yield a stronger emphasis on engaging the rest of the campus. Second, changes to the evaluation that encourage participation and conversation at education and diversity events rather than simply attendance would foster more lively engagement. Third, the committee feels that it would be advantageous to make at least one Non-Greek mixer a necessary part of the evaluation so that affiliated and unaffiliated students can more often come together.

E. Accessibility of Greek Life

Throughout the discussions about the barriers between Greek and Non-Greek students, the committee kept coming back to a central question: what makes Greek-Life inaccessible to some students? This question and its subsequent problems may lack direct influence on student interactions, but it does cultivate an environment of exclusivity that can drive negative sentiments. No student should feel that they are unable to join a Greek organization just like no student should feel that they have to. The first step in the process of combating accessibility issues was identifying the inhibiting factors.

While accessibility barriers can vary, the committee narrowed the list down to three main obstacles. First, the price of Greek Life is simply too high for some students. The committee conducted interviews with multiple people who believe that they would have joined if it were not for fiscal constraints. Extra payments to a Greek organization each semester is not feasible for some of those students who are concerned first and foremost with paying the cost of tuition.

Second, negative perceptions can prevent students from learning about and joining Greek Life. If stereotypes dictate how students view organizations and people, then one can easily fail to see other perspectives and conceptions. Third, Greek organizations that are not representative of the greater student body do not seem accessible. In other words, if Greek organizations lack diversity, then not all members of this campus will feel comfortable or safe joining. Considering these barriers, the Senate Committee on Greek Life recommends multiple approaches to eradicating them.

Scholarships for Greek Life vary depending on the organization. However, SCOGL recommends that Greek Organizations here on campus endeavor to publicize and discuss the payment opportunities their chapter offers. In dealing with negative perceptions, it is SCOGL's suggestion that Greek organizations conduct more information sessions and that members of campus strive to maintain open minds, judging individuals based on interactions not on rumors or stories. Finally, in order to foster diversity within Greek Life, SCOGL urges all Greek organizations on campus to create a diversity chair within their chapter. For more information on our recommendation for diversity chairs, please see page 16.

F. Interaction Between Panhellenic Council, Inter-Fraternal Council, Student Senate, and the Campus Activity Board

Perceptions form realities, and when students have flawed or negative perceptions, they lose opportunities. In talking with members of our campus community, the committee found that people often felt as though their club, organization, chapter, etc. was misrepresented. This misrepresentation seemed to stop individuals from going to CAB events, participating in Senate, learning more about Panhellenic and IFC, and much more. Rather than attending any of the functions these groups hold and formulating an opinion based off those experiences, students

seem to be disinterested in some of these organizations because of what they hear from others. In order to combat this issue, the Senate Committee on Greek Life recommends that Panhellenic, CAB, IFC, Senate, and other organizations collaborate more often to create co-hosted events.

By bringing these organizations closer together and building a stronger community, the student population can begin to break down the flawed perceptions that can dominate the campus. If we see more emphasis on bringing the student body together, then we will begin to see more healthy dialogue and communication. The committee hopes for increased student interaction and stronger ties between organizations on campus.

G. Co-Sponsoring Events with Non-Greek Organizations

Students noted the desire for more co-sponsored events between Greek and Non-Greek Organizations on campus. Most students interviewed, indicated that there had been a general upward trend of cooperation on campus but would still like to see it increase more. By increasing the number of co-sponsored events between Greek and Non-Greek Organizations, interviewed students felt it would facilitate dialogue and help bring the two populations on campus together. Students articulated how they would not only like to see individual Greek Organizations and clubs co-sponsoring more events, but that they would like to see larger organizations such as the Interfraternity Council, the Panhellenic Council, and Order of Omega working with the Campus Activities Board and Student Senate to co-sponsor events. From the information and suggestions

gathered in the interviews conducted by this committee, it is our recommendation that Greek and Non-Greek organizations partner together to host more co-sponsored events on campus to create another outlet that would allow for more interaction between students.

H. Diversity Chair within Each Greek Organization

After interviews, the committee thought it abundantly clear that regardless of individual participation within a Greek organization, Greek Life can impact the entire campus community. Evidenced by our findings, those impacts are not always positive. One way in which the Senate Committee on Greek Life recognizes that improvements can be made is through an emphasis on equity and inclusion. Several Greek chapters on Gettysburg College's campus currently have leadership positions with the responsibility of focusing on diversity in the Greek system as well as on campus. The Senate Committee on Greek Life recommends that all chapters create such a position.

Greek organizations should also be encouraged to pursue co-sponsored events with diversity clubs. Such events will spark meaningful conversations that will improve Gettysburg Greek Life's diversity as well as strengthen the bonds between all students on campus. The Senate Committee on Greek Life advises Greek organizations and the Office of Student Activities and Greek Life to consult with the Office of Diversity and Inclusion to make Greek Life a safe and positive environment for all students on campus.

V. Recommendations for the Senate Executive Board

The committee's recommendations for the Student Senate and its Executive Board of 2019 are simple and straightforward. First, continue the committee. More work needs to be done, and the problems discussed here cannot be solved in a single report. Second, conduct interviews with more students. Regrettably, the committee did not have the time to talk with more campus community members, and the findings presented in this report may not be indicative of the greater community's sentiments. Third, send out a campus wide survey. The best way to truly obtain a grasp on the student population's opinions would be to send out a well-structured and thoroughly planned survey. Finally, if the committee is to continue it would be advantageous to establish an official administrative liaison that future committee members could use as a valuable resource.

VI. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Senate Committee on Greek Life believes that the interactions between Greek and Non-Greek students and the barriers between the two are not unfixable, but it will be a slow process. This report is a step in beginning that process, but it is just the beginning. All of the issues have not been identified and neither have all of the potential solutions. More work needs to be done to analyze problems and brainstorm creative resolutions. It will take time, but this committee feels that our community is well-equipped to deal with any and all obstacles.