

## **GREEK LIFE INFORMATION FOR WHITMAN FAMILIES**

Sending a student to college can be an exciting yet challenging and stressful time for a family. While at Whitman, your student will encounter many opportunities to become involved outside of their classroom experience. It is important that families be educated about the enriching experience that your student will find by being involved in a fraternity or sorority at Whitman.

### **Why should my student join a fraternity or sorority?**

Membership in a fraternity or sorority is a life-changing experience for the students who choose to join. Chapter members develop a unique bond of brotherhood and sisterhood while sharing their values and goals. These friendships last beyond the collegiate years and are nurtured by alumni activities and networking programs that provide opportunities for continued camaraderie, service, and personal development.

- The fraternity and sorority community offers a home away from home and encourages individual development within a smaller group of friends.
- Fraternities and sororities supports students that espouse a common set of values, including brotherhood/sisterhood, academic excellence, character/leadership development, a sense of community, philanthropy and service.
- When your student's college experience is finished, their fraternity or sorority affiliation continues for a lifetime. This lifelong bond encourages continued involvement in the organization at the campus level and across the nation.
- Fraternities and sororities are values-based organizations and are committed to worthwhile endeavors. Members are expected to maintain the high standards set by their national organization, the university, and their chapter.

Fraternity or sorority life can provide your student with an invaluable experience during their time at Whitman. Fraternity and Sorority Life is a Whitman tradition dating to 1913 when the first national sorority (Phi Mu) was founded on campus. Today, approximately 30%-35% of Whitman students are members of our 4 fraternities and 4 sororities.

### **Does being in a fraternity or sorority take a lot of time?**

Students can make their experience as extensive as they might like. Some members spend many hours a week with their chapters participating in intramural athletics, holding an executive office, or attending social functions while others may limit their time to chapter meetings and events. Chapters normally have a weekly membership meeting, meetings for new members, and meetings for the executive board. During their first semester, new members attend a variety of activities to meet other chapter members, learn about the organization's history and values, and develop leadership skills. These events are planned in advance to allow members time for studying, involvement in other organizations, work, and other activities.

### **Who is actually in charge of the fraternity or sorority?**

Fraternalities and sororities are self-governing student organizations; this is a key element in each member's personal development and learning to function as part of a team. Students serve as officers of the organization, develop the standards under which they operate, and hold members accountable to reaching chapter goals and objectives. That being said, fraternities and sororities at Whitman are directly advised by Barbara Maxwell, who serves as the Greek Adviser. Barbara, in coordination with local alumni advisors and international and national headquarters, support and advise activities and programs of recognized fraternities and sororities. Chapters are also accountable to state and local laws in addition to the policies of the College and those of their national or international organization.

**My student will make friends in their residence hall and in their classes. What would be different about fraternity or sorority friends?**

Membership in a fraternity or sorority is a living and learning experience with shared values and objectives. Members learn to work together to develop and accomplish group goals. A common bond of brotherhood/sisterhood is developed among chapter members — a bond that extends to all who share the same heritage, traditions and ritual and who wear the same badge. These friendships last beyond the college years and are nurtured by alumni activities and networking programs that provide opportunities for continued camaraderie, service, and personal development.

**What are the costs of joining a fraternity or sorority?**

For most groups, one-time expenses include the new member and/or initiation fees and possibly the purchase of fraternity/sorority pins or badges. Recurring expenses (semesterly) include chapter or social dues, headquarters fees, and liability insurance payments. Dues payments go toward social events, chapter programming, and operating expenses. The overall total may vary from group to group. Be sure to advise your student to ask about the costs associated with joining a particular group before joining.

**What is Whitman's stance on hazing?**

Whitman seeks to promote a safe environment in which students may participate without compromising their health, safety, or welfare. All student organizations are accountable to policies of the Student Handbook, specifically, our hazing policy (<https://www.whitman.edu/dean-of-students/student-handbook/student-rights-and-responsibilities/hazing>)

However, the College cannot address issues they do not know about. If you suspect your student is being hazed, please contact us immediately at 509-527-5208 or [maxwelba@whitman.edu](mailto:maxwelba@whitman.edu). . Please provide as much information as you can (i.e. who, what, where, when, how) so we have as a place to begin an investigation. A general complaint without divulging your student's fraternity or sorority is not helpful.

### **Will my student's grades suffer if they join a fraternity or sorority?**

Fraternity and sorority grades at Whitman are typically on par with the rest of the college. In general, sororities are more likely to surpass the all-campus grade point average. Most fraternity chapters are at or just below the all-campus grade point average. Please remember that these are averages; academic performance of individual members, of course, will vary.

Many fraternities and sororities have academic achievement as a core value. Some have GPA requirements for remaining in good standing. Chapters typically elect a scholarship chair to coordinate recognition activities for high achievers and to seek help for members who struggle. Upperclassmen also serve as mentors and as a resource for underclassmen in choosing classes, studying, and navigating the campus and the community.

### **Is there research which supports Greek Life as being beneficial to my student?**

Yes, from interviews with more than 30,000 graduates, the Gallup-Purdue Index measured the degree to which graduates have "great jobs," through successful and engaging careers, and if they are leading "great lives," by thriving in their overall well-being. This report details the finding as they relate to membership in a fraternity or sorority during college. You can access this report at: <https://products.gallup.com/170687/fraternities-sororities-understanding-life-outcomes.aspx>