

PERCEPTIONS

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certain part of Greek life is social life," Merrihew says.

Mixers with fraternity and sorority members are popular functions often hosted by Greek houses.

But Merrihew says that people only pay attention to those activities rather than service-related ones.

"People just notice that more often," he says. "It's not something that we're going to discount."

More than a Greek letter

Greek recruitment officers often have to answer questions about the role of fraternities and sororities.

"(Fraternities and sororities) make the education complete," says Jon Williamson, executive vice president of the North American Interfraternity Conference.

"They form these friendships. They form these bonds that bring people back to campus. They form those great memories. They identify the importance of learning to live and get along with individuals."

According to a pamphlet distributed by the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life, the Greek organizations emphasize four principles: scholarship, community service, campus involvement and sisterhood or brotherhood.

Besides providing a peer support group, fraternities and sororities each have philanthropy projects. Groups volunteer, donate items or hold events and fundraisers.

"We provide thousands of volunteer service hours in communities around the world," says Martha Brown, chairwoman of the

National Panhellenic Conference.

MacLean agrees. "Service is an integral part of being in a Panhellenic Conference sorority on campus," she says. "Greeks assume that everyone knows that, but not everyone knows that."

In terms of academics, each chapter must have a collective semester and cumulative GPA of 2.5.

"There was a belief that Greeks lost their emphasis on academics," Williamson says. "What we know is that is not an accurate statement."

The organizations provide leadership and community involvement.

Merrihew says he's learned a great deal about leadership from his position as IFC president. "I am just an ambitious person and the Greek system has allowed me to keep moving forward," he says.

While the most common stereotypes have existed for decades, leaders say putting the facts on the table might help combat misconceptions.

"My biggest platform is to increase diversity in sororities," MacLean says. She says she wants people to feel welcome in the Greek system regardless of their ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status or interests.

Both MacLean and Merrihew say it's hard to tell whether the stereotypes will disappear, but they hope that action and dialogue will help to better define the role of the Greek system on campus.

"Everyone doesn't have to be pro-Greek," Merrihew says. "Just give us the credit we deserve and try to break down the barrier."

Contact the Features Editor at features@unc.edu.

ENDORSEMENTS

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"We'll be knocking on a pretty good percentage of doors in the city," he said. "And we'll be trying to get out the student vote for the candidates we endorsed."

The group had backed council members Sally Greene and Bill Strom in the 2003 elections, an experience that showed Jensen how important students' legwork can be.

"There aren't really many adults who go out and campaign," he said. "They have families and jobs and

don't have time to go out at five o'clock on a weekday night."

The endorsed candidates welcomed both the support and the students' interest in town affairs.

Raymond said he hoped the endorsement would help him tap the student vote.

"There's a large pool of already-registered student voters," he said, calling it a side effect of last year's national elections.

"The missing piece is to get their interest in local politics," he said.

To awaken students — "the sleeping giant" — Raymond said he will hold weekly Pit-sits start-

ing next week.

Easthom also plans to Pit sit beginning next week or shortly thereafter.

With the support of students, she hopes to spread word about her ideas for improving town-gown relations, she said.

Easthom said candidates appreciate student endorsement, including that of The Daily Tar Heel.

Yet the involvement of a few doesn't necessarily lead to the votes of many. Despite voter registration efforts in 2003, only 329 people aged 18 to 22 actually cast a ballot.

But student votes are as valuable as any, said Strom, whose seat is not up for election this year.

"More than a handful of races (in Chapel Hill) have been determined by less than a hundred votes," he said.

Strom said he appreciated the student group's support of him two years ago.

"I felt like it upped my profile on campus," he said. "It also showed that I had broad appeal in the community."

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LICENSES

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have increased costs you can just pass them on to your customer," said Rosemary Hargrove, owner of The Cotton Boll Creative Sewing Center at 91 S. Elliot Road.

The new plan will decrease town revenues by \$53,000 in the current fiscal year, a shortfall that will be met by dipping into the town's savings.

"We're not conjuring up money, we're taking money in our budget and replacing it," said Mayor Kevin Foy.

The idea of increasing the tax

was originally part of an effort to use ideas from a committee of the town's citizens to limit increases to town property taxes.

One of the suggestions from the citizen's committee was to examine increasing fees.

It was in this context that the tax, named a fee, was increased.

But Town Manager Cal Horton said that technical jargon was less important than the change's impact on businesses.

"It's the size of the checks that is the question before the council this evening," he said.

The new costs, however, caused an outcry, especially for businesses

with gross receipts of more than \$500,000 annually, for whom the tax jumped from \$75 to \$750.

Business leaders emphasized that a tax on gross receipts instead of profits — the type of tax that the state legislature approved in the 1950s — is somewhat impractical.

"Being taxed on a gross when you're losing money is a real stinger," Nelson said.

But business owners praised the council members, who adopted the chamber's plan. The chamber had developed the plan in conjunction with both member and non-member businesses impacted by the increase.

"We are very pleased that the Town Council was willing to reconsider and that they adopted the chamber's proposal," Nelson said.

Foy said that the adoption of the chamber's proposal, instead of the more modest cutbacks proposed by town staff, was a clear signal from the council.

"I think that frankly the council deferred to the chamber as a gesture to the business community that we're willing to work with you."

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COVENANT

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cent are minorities.

University officials said they are doing their best to ensure that these students succeed once they get to UNC. A mentorship program now is in place for Covenant members

who choose to participate. Groups of about 15 students are assigned a mentor from the faculty or staff.

"(We want to) try to personalize the experience as much as possible and make the transition to the University as easy as possible," said Fred Clark, faculty coordinator of the mentorship program.

Freshman Covenant member Ryan Jones, of Sanford, predicted that the mentorship program will help him adjust to Chapel Hill.

"I'm always on the lookout for ... anything that people can hint at to make the transition easier," he said.

Ort said the real value of the Covenant comes from its attention

to student experiences during their entire stint as undergraduates.

"The focus isn't on the money," she said. "We're evaluating ourselves by how many students graduate after their senior year."

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