

**CONTACT:** Claire Latch  
618 -554-6359  
e-mail: [clatch@siue.edu](mailto:clatch@siue.edu)

## **To be Greek or not to be**

(EDWARDSVILLE, Ill.) - Greek life sometimes gets a bad reputation on college campuses and throughout communities. At Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Greeks are working hard to revamp that image.

Joining a Greek organization is a tough decision to make. Greeks are thought of as the campus partiers and are not well respected at most universities. At SIUE, being Greek is not all about partying and acting out; it means a lot more to be Greek on SIUE's campus. The Greeks focus on helping the community through philanthropies and service projects.

For many students, becoming part of a sorority or fraternity can be rewarding. Members join for millions of reasons. Some people have moved far from home to go to college and want to meet new people. Others join for the extra-curricular experience they can get from being in an organization. No matter what the reason for joining, many people who go Greek thoroughly enjoy it.

"I joined because I was looking for an organization that offered a good balance between social and philanthropic activities," said Jeremy Dombek, a member of Phi Kappa Psi.

On SIUE's campus Greek life is booming. There are a total of 15 fraternities and sororities on campus. These organizations offer several different advantages to those who are members. Every member can be as active as he or she wants in Greek life.

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Should parents want their children to join a Greek organization? The answer to this question depends on what a parent wants their child to get out of college. The transition to college life can be difficult for students, and joining any type of organization can help them meet new people. Sororities and fraternities offer this on a larger scale. Students have the chance to meet all kinds of new people, even if they decide not to join. Simply going through recruitment can help them interact with people they might otherwise never have the opportunity to meet.

Going Greek also offers leadership skills, scholarship, brotherhood/sisterhood, community involvement, collegiate connections and fun. Members of fraternities and sororities learn a great deal about leadership, and are constantly surrounded by opportunities to enhance their leadership skills. Greek organizations are run by their own executive boards and are able to make decisions based on the rules and regulations of the chapter at the national level.

Despite many stereotypes, Greek men and women are focused on academic excellence. Each chapter has standards that each member must meet in order to stay in the organization. Chapters have study hours and provide extra help for members who are struggling. The brothers and sisters of Greek organizations can become lifelong friends. Members are offered a brotherhood or sisterhood that they may not get from other types of organizations. Greek organizations are also very involved in the community and in charities. According to the Greek life section on SIUE's Web site, Greeks raise on average \$7 million for charity nationally and they volunteer 850,000 hours of community service each year.

One such example is the Haiti relief efforts. With efforts to help the survivors of the earthquake in Haiti growing, the Greeks are doing their part by using different fundraisers to raise money for Haiti. So far, Greeks have raised money by selling videos of the annual step show and giving all of the proceeds to the Haiti relief fund. They have had several blood drives for the American Red Cross to benefit Haiti citizens.

Two sororities on campus are currently conducting a fundraiser to help Haiti. The ladies of Alpha Sigma Tau are working with Alpha Phi to put on a fundraiser to raise money for the Haiti relief efforts. The girls are selling bags of Laffy Taffy in the Morris University Center, which most students visit at least once a day. All of the proceeds from the fundraiser are going to Haiti. This is a perfect example of Greek organizations working together to help the same cause.

It is clear that being Greek means different things to different people. Everyone joins for different reasons and everyone enjoys the Greek life for different reasons.

“I love spending time with my sisters,” said Alyssa Eason, a member of Alpha Sigma Tau. “Some of them have quickly become my best friends, and I always have a good time with them no matter what we are doing.”

The advantages to becoming a member of a sorority or fraternity can be enormous. Students who have the right attitude and are willing to become part of something much bigger than themselves should consider joining a Greek organization.

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