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TRADITIONS OF SORORITY LIFE

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## Traditions of Sorority Life

Over the decades, people's views of exactly what a sorority is have changed. When sororities first got their start they were clubs for the very intellectual women who were fortunate enough to have a chance at a college education. They then became thought of as groups for intellectual women that also provided them with the proper social activities. Most people today view a sorority as just a group of college girls looking for a good time away from home.

In actuality, a sorority has many good aspects. It is a chance for girls to develop as leaders. They are encouraged to maintain high scholarship abilities. Perhaps one of the most unique aspects is to try and uphold the ideals of womanhood in this ever-changing society. A sorority is all the memories of generations of alumnae, plus the experiences of girls from freshman to seniors. It is an experience like no others.

To expand more on the aspects of a sorority, let us look at some specific purposes: (1) to teach girls to become noble women and help them develop the ability to care for others, (2) to form lasting friendships with girls from all walks of life, (3) to strive for the best grades possible, and (4) to provide a home-type atmosphere to girls while away at school. These things as well as a chance for social recognition, are the reasons most girls join a sorority.

Most sororities are interested in about the same things. They help the community and their schools by participating in community service projects and fund-raisers. Through these projects they help others who are less fortunate. This helps to build character. Rush is another function that all sororities are interested in. There are two types of rush--- formal and open. Formal rush is a series of scheduled parties usually lasting for a week. These parties are governed by the National Panhellenic Council on each campus. These parties last about an hour, and there are four parties a night. The girls have a chance to meet and to get to know each other. The sorority usually performs a short skit or slide show for entertainment. Refreshments are given to the rushees, and they are given the opportunity to ask questions. Formal rush gets to be hectic and quite tedious for all concerned. It takes a lot of time to prepare different skits for each night, perform them four times, and be ever-smiling and cheerful for the entire week of rush. Open rush enables the sororities that did not get quota (the number of pledges a sorority may pledge during rush) to pick up some more girls. Open rush parties are usually things like picnics. They allow the rushees to see the girls as they really are. Last, but certainly not least, is social activities. All sororities have dances and parties for certain events during the semester. These parties may celebrate winning an award or just getting together for some good fun. All sororities have mixers with a fraternity. Mixers are parties that are only open to the members of the sorority

and the fraternity that are mixing. These parties give both sides a chance to form new friendships. Mixers also usually have a theme like the arabian nights or tacky tourists. Half the fun of mixers is seeing how everyone dresses. It is a night of much fun and laughter.

Some traditions within each sorority are their work for their philanthropy, their relations with their parents, and their special dances. Each sorority has a national organization that they raise money for known as their philanthropy. These national organizations in turn help doctors receive medical training in underprivileged countries or help children who are abused or neglected. Sororities raise as much money as possible each year for their philanthropy. In addition, some sororities have a local philanthropy as well. These activities range from taking underprivileged children trick-or-treating on Halloween to being a big sister to someone who needs a friend. Sororities try to maintain good relations with parents. Each year, usually on the school's parents day, the sororities will hold a formal tea or dinner for the parents to attend. This gives the parents a chance to see their daughters and meet their friends. Usually any exciting news or accomplishments are announced at this time. There are several dances that are also tradition. There are two formal dances---a spring formal which is a very formal dance held at a very nice restaurant and a winter formal that is a semi-formal dance held somewhere like the Morgan Building. Another dance that is traditional for all sororities is a pledge-active

dance. A pledge-active dance is a dance that the pledges give for the active members. This marks the end of their pledgeship before they become initiated members.

Another tradition of all sororities is their big sister program. This is probably one of the most important events in their sorority years. Each new member finds a person they feel very close to in the sorority. This special person becomes the new member's big sister. A big sister is a very influential part of the new member's life. Big sisters help their little sisters to adjust to all the new aspects of life. They help their little sisters to gain confidence in themselves. Big sisters help with studies or any other problem that may arise. They are their little sisters best friends and confidants for life.

There is one major difference in all sororities, and that is their ritual. Ritual is a very proper ceremony that takes place at very special moments such as pinning and initiation. Ritual is the one aspect in each sorority that is strictly secret. It is a ceremony written by the founders of each sorority that tells their feelings about the sorority and their reasons for founding the sorority. Each sorority has its ideals and goals that it strives to uphold. Each time ritual is performed, it renews the bond made by all sisters when they joined the sorority. Ritual is what a sorority is all about. It is the strength that is the underlying force behind a sorority.

A sorority is full of traditions. The traditions are important but the most important aspect is what the girls get out of a sorority.

They get so many more opportunities than they normally would. They have a whole group of sisters cheering them on in whatever they decide to do. They are encouraged to become leaders and to take charge of their lives. These girls are also given the support and confidence needed to achieve success in the real world. These girls learn to be dependable, responsible, and trustworthy. They know how to lead others, yet they are capable of following others and not making waves.

A sorority helps girls to grow in so many ways. The bonds made between sisters are not soon forgotten. New bonds are formed every day, and new friendships are made. Girls meet other girls from their same sororities after school, and it is as if they have known each other forever because they share a common bond.

As with every good thing, sororities have their disadvantages. The work schedules can get very hectic, and the extra activities burdensome at times. It is not always easy to be cheerful or help others when you need help yourself, but this is all part of growing up. The advantages by far outweigh the disadvantages. The always constant companionship, the endless things to keep busy with, the lasting friendships, and all the trials and tribulations make a sorority and all of its traditions worthwhile. Being a part of a sorority, and a part of the love that comes with it, is truly an enriching experience. It is an experience that every single college girl should have the chance to find for herself.