The Evolution of Greek Life

By Paige Shryock

As students in the SEC, learning and even embracing it, greek life is essential not only to Ole Miss but to the college experience. With fifteen interfraternity organizations and eleven Panhellenic sororities, many students gain familiarity with greek life by finding their perfect fit. In the recent years with Ole Miss’s student body growing, greek life has needed to evolve in order to keep up. The question that many wonder at the end of the day is “How does a chapter come to a university?”

Nearly two years ago many students showed mixed feelings about the announcement for an additional two sororities to colonize at Ole Miss due to the growing popularity. Out of Alpha Gamma Delta, Delta Zeta, Alpha Phi and Alpha Delta Pi, Alpha Delta Pi and Alpha Phi were chosen by Greek life delegates and advisors. Founded in 1872 at Syracuse University, Alpha Phi has nearly 170 collegiate chapters in the United States and over 222,000 members.

A year after Alpha Delta Pi shared their sisterhood with Ole Miss with many great successes, Alpha Phi would begin their own journey with around 700 girls taking interest in becoming a founding sister. Courtney Pflug, a fourth year student, explained her experience in becoming a founding sister. “Going through Alpha Phi recruitment this fall was something that I will never forget. I never went through formal recruitment so I wasn’t sure what to expect. The whole process was very rewarding and I am so proud of how our chapter is turning out. We can truly make it into our own!” Sophomore Bella Whaley also has a very similar take on becoming a member of Alpha Phi. “We get to set and create the traditions for our sorority, which is so much fun! We create our own bylaws, take part in leadership positions, recruit girls year long, and create an image for ourselves that sets up apart from every other sorority. Along with us being a brand new sorority for the Ole Miss campus we also get to build a new sorority house!” Alpha Phi has seemed to bring a positive experience of originality to those who have become members, no matter the age or background.

Michele Dalon took on the role of a Consultant for the organization shortly after graduating from LSU. In this position Dalon become an enthusiast for the women of Alpha Phi while undertaking every detail that would help in the progress of establishing the colonization, whether it was finding women that held the standards of Alpha Phi to organizing bid day and chapter meetings. “Sometimes, it's hard to believe that this chapter is new! The bond that these girls already share is absolutely incredible” Dalon remarked. “We are so thankful to have the Ole Miss Greek community supporting us during the colonization process. We will break ground this coming spring semester. The construction will begin very soon, which is exciting! The house will be done by fall of 2017.” Allowing so many young women to take a hands-on role in the progress and success of its journey, Alpha Phi shows the power individuality and what it means to be a part of the “Ivy League”.

Interfraternity is no different when it comes to this process. “In 2007 when Chi Psi made the decision to go dormant at Ole Miss, we had plans even then to return and to construct a new Lodge (nationally, Chi Psi refers to our houses as Lodges).” Eric Epperson an alumni advisor to the Alpha Gamma Chapter. “The property at the corner of Fraternity Row and Chapel Lane is the site of our original Lodge, and while we closed the doors we retained the lease for the land. Around that time, our alumni association formed a committee to design and manage construction of a new Lodge, and a separate fundraising group was created to raise donations. After a successful fundraising campaign we broke ground on Sept. 19, 2015, and are on track to have the Lodge completed by this coming fall.” Chi Psi also returned to campus in 2013 with a class of 43 new brothers, a true success story. Senior Will Pipes also was able to take an avid role in colonizing period. “Well, what comes to mind is labour of love honestly. A Greek house is the ultimate indication of staying power on this campus. Having a structure that we can call home means a lot, both to myself, having been a part of Chi Psi since our re-founding, and I'm sure to the classes that have come after mine. But it is a lot of hard work that comes from many different directions, beginning with our some of our alumni forming a full on housing corporation to oversee fundraising, construction, and liaising with the University, to myself and my brothers courting potential donors by reflecting the values they want to see in our men. There were a lot of hard questions, interesting conundrums, and surprises from inception to the laying of the foundation you see now, and I'm sure there will be even more during and after construction. But it'll all be worth it to see the Lodge with our letters and having a space that is uniquely Chi Psi in nature.”

An organization that has been able to build their chapter back from the literal ground up in Alpha Delta Pi. ADPI was among Alpha Phi that was voted to colonize at Ole Miss. In just three short years ADPI has been able to build up there chapter be one of the most notable sororities on rebel drive. From having 167 girls out 1,500 that went greek on their first bid day back on Ole Miss in 2014 to the new five million dollar “ADPI Palace”, the dedication of this sisterhood is evident. ADPI took many of the same steps Chi Psi and Alpha Phi are taking currently. “For the charter class they had alumni’s come in and interview everyone who was interested and asked questions on why they wanted to be in sorority and what they were looking to get out of it. Then based on that and GPA, they chose girls. The adpi alumnae really came together, from all different universities and cities, to help us create this charter it definitely wouldn't have happened with their help and guidance. During this beginning period, we also occasionally have leadership consultants who worked for ADPi directly but were also alumni’s. These leaders would come in and stay for a week or so at a time, helping us create a foundation. They were normally women who are recent graduates, but again they come from all different chapters. This helped us create a version of ADPI that was what we wanted.” Spoke Sarah Brumback. “The bond we as sisters have formed over the last three years have been worth every ounce of effort we have put into establishing our chapter.” Say Ann Louise Granger. “ Our alumnae have been so good to us and helped us in more ways than we can ever repay. We're so honored to carry on their legacy. Being a colony member of my sorority has been challenging but vastly more rewarding than I could have ever imagined.”