

Winter estates they ain't

by Tim Anderson

The stereotype of the Greek house as a rich man's university-based winter estate may not be as valid as it once was, according to Greek officials.

In fact, most houses are finding that with rising dormitory costs, they might become competitive in the student housing battle.

According to the Panhellenic and Inter-Fraternity Council offices, the average sorority member pays \$936 yearly for room and board. Costs in a fraternity house range from \$880 to \$1,080 yearly.

The Board of Regents voted Saturday to raise room and board in the dormitories next year to \$1,020.

However, a difference still exists between living in the dorms and houses.

Sororities, according to the Panhellenic Council, pay on the average \$115 for social dues each year, plus pledge fees (averaging \$20) and initiation fees (averaging \$80), during the freshman year.



Fraternities, showing a wider variety of costs, list dues ranging from \$48 yearly to about \$150. The figures differ mainly because some include pins, fees and special assessments, while others do not.

Panhellenic President Debbie Danberg said she often hears rumors that the houses are having difficulty finding enough money and members, but she never hears anything from the individual houses.

"As near as I can see, there hasn't been a decline in the number of members," Danberg said. "There seems to be the same plateau of numbers going through rush, it's just that they are redistributed."

She explained that in recent years some houses have received more pledges than others, instead of all having the same quotas.

"The loss of members would truly constitute a loss of funds, but there just doesn't seem to be a loss of members," Danberg said.

However, Sigma Kappa, a sorority which will lose its representation on the Panhellenic Council after this semester, is shutting down operations, according to Sigma Kappa vice-president Ellen Luebs.

Luebs said that even now the house is primarily a boarding house. She said negotiations are currently underway to rent the house to the Theta Chi fraternity.

Luebs said that the primary reason for shutting down operations was low membership. The house corporation, consisting of members and alumni, decided to rent the house out rather than sell it, hoping to someday start operations again, she said.

Dave McBride, Interfraternity Council president, said he knows of no fraternity houses in financial trouble and a check with houses seems to back his belief.

Jerry Tritsch, FarmHouse fraternity president, said that FarmHouse members pride themselves on the house's financial shape.

"For the first time in history, however, we don't have our house full," Tritsch said. "We're set up for 70 members and this year we're three short."

Sigma Chi President Jack Schultz said the financial situation at Sigma Chi "looks better than the last couple of years."

Schultz said the "bills have gone up, but everyone seems to be meeting the price."

One way the members are meeting the rising costs, according to Schultz, is another departure from the stereotyped Greek-part-time employment.

"That whole ideology about only rich kids being in fraternities is just not true anymore," Schultz said. "Many of our members are working to put themselves through school."

McBride agrees. "There once may have been a time when you could stereotype houses like that, saying that they pulled in the rich, but not anymore."

"Oh, sure we've still got some rich kids, but we also have members from entirely different financial backgrounds," McBride said.

McBride said studies have been done concerning the socio-economic backgrounds of pledges which show that the smaller fraternities often gain members from small towns. These pledges usually are without any previous Greek background, such as parents or relatives who were members.

The larger and more established houses, McBride said, seemed to get the students from the larger towns who have some Greek background.