

# Dartmouth's faculty supports drive to close Greek houses

By Scott Nelson

The fraternities that helped to inspire the movie *Animal House* with their wild parties and outrageous pranks may be closed because of their raucous behavior.

The Dartmouth College faculty approved by a 67-16 vote a proposal to close the school's 20 fraternities and two sororities. The proposal goes before the board of trustees in February for a final decision.

James Epperson, an English professor who has lead the drive to close the fraternities, claims they encourage alcoholism, misbehavior and values that are contrary to academia.

He and his supporters cite incidents the fraternities were involved in during the past and say problems have steadily escalated in the past five or six years.

## Furniture, pianos burned

Furniture has been burned on the front lawns and pianos burned in the houses, fraternity members have urinated in public at football games, and invited women into their houses to humiliate them, according to Epperson. *The Dartmouth* said about a dozen people were taken to the hospital and treated for alcoholic convulsions last spring during Sink Night, traditionally the year's biggest fraternity party.

One of the screenwriters for *Animal House* was Chris Miller, a 1963 Dartmouth graduate and fraternity member. In a recent appearance at Dartmouth he said some of the incidents in the film are based on his memories of college fraternity life.

## 'Out of control'

"The fraternities here are out of control," Epperson said.

"They have resisted pleas from the dean, faculty, townspeople and fellow students for change."

Ken Beer, president of the Interfraternity Council, denied none of the charges but pointed out that the fraternities were attempting to clean up their act before the Epperson proposal was circulated last spring.

"I think it's just a misunderstanding and the fact that we do have to reappraise ourselves," he said.

"In the past four years there has been no interaction between the faculty and fraternity students," Beer said. "They were

only going on the behavior they have seen and making some generalizations. They don't know what goes on beyond that."

## Survey conducted

Dembro said the paper conducted a survey last spring when the proposal to abolish fraternities was circulated.

The survey found that 42 percent of the students at Dartmouth were dissatisfied with the present fraternities, although 87 percent were opposed to Epperson's proposal.

"I think it's the whole perception that students in fraternities are somehow protected from the standards everyone else has to live by," Dembro said.

Epperson said fraternities started getting wild in 1972, when women were first admitted to Dartmouth. He said the transition from a men's school to a coeducational one was well-received by all but "a group of reactionary knuckleheads."

They hassled, heckled and humiliated women who came to Dartmouth and touched off a wave of outrageous behavior, according to Epperson.

## 'Worse than children'

"They want to be treated like men and then they turn around and act like children, worse than children," he said.

Both Beer and Dembro saw the proposal as a strong mandate condemning the fraternities' past behavior and demanding future reform. But Epperson was more skeptical.

"Attempts at reform have failed for a decade. There is a tradition of violence and destruction that has to be stopped, and frankly I don't see much hope of reform," he said.

Epperson emphasized that he is not against fraternity life as a whole.

"I remember with great affection my days as a fraternity brother at the University of Utah. We had a good time, but we didn't beat up on women or urinate in public.

"I guess I want people to know that this movement is not lead by some crackpot. I had lots of support from students and faculty, and the vote was overwhelming," Epperson said.

"We love this institution and like the students. But this institution stands for civilization. What I and others have seen is barbarism and the two just don't mix."

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