



FarmHouse continues scholarship tradition

A house on UNL's East Campus has the lights on at all hours of the day and night. Few cars drive by the house, which is surrounded by blue spruce trees. At a small park across the street, men and women play Frisbee, football and other games. The two-story, tan brick house, at 3601 Apple St., is FarmHouse Fraternity.

FarmHouse originally was founded in 1905 by three men at the University of Missouri in Columbia. The name, FarmHouse — the only non-Greek fraternity name — was chosen because many of the original members were farm/agriculture majors. The UNL chapter was founded in 1911.

Today, 74 years later, FarmHouse's members have changed. They no longer major only in agriculture, but in business, engineering and teaching, as well as many other colleges. But one thing — the house's high Grade Point Average — hasn't changed. FarmHouse has maintained the top fraternity GPA, except for three semesters, since 1911.

How does the house maintain high GPA's?

"It's kind of the way it's always been," Brian Peterson, FarmHouse scholarship chairman, said. "We try to say scholarship is one of the most important things. We want people who are serious about school."

To maintain the high caliber of students, Peterson said, FarmHouse members try to recruit students who have done well in high school. They often rush students who make high school scholarship lists, as well as those referred through alumni.

But getting men to pledge to FarmHouse is only the beginning. Good grades in high school don't necessarily mean good grades in college, Peterson said. So to help the men develop good study habits, the house strives for a "studious atmosphere."

Fraternity members have no mandatory study hours, but "quiet hours," are strictly enforced. From 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. and 1 to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. Sunday through

Thursday, "the stereo shouldn't be heard next door," Peterson said.

In the basement of FarmHouse, the Chapter Room serves as a study area that is as quiet as the library, Peterson said.

The cafeteria is used by students who want to study together or get help from another fraternity member.

FarmHouse also encourages members to help each other. As scholarship chairman, Peterson keeps a file of previous classes that each member has had. When a student is having trouble in a certain course, he can use the file to get help from another member.

Another important rule, Peterson says, is no alcohol. FarmHouse

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allows no alcohol on its property at any time.

"You can't have a drinking atmosphere and study atmosphere at the same time," Peterson said. "The two don't go together."

Rush chairman Rod Penner says the alcohol ban is "not valiant in any way. It's just the rules."

During rush, FarmHouse looks for "dynamic" people, Penner said. And scholastics is only half of the goal — involvement in school activities, communication and personality also are important.

FarmHouse members also take pride in the high number of members involved in activities at UNL and other organizations.

"I just think it's basic," Penner said. "Everything in the house is

pro-choice."

The members are encouraged to go to church, to be social and to get good grades, he said.

"There's just a level of expectation," Penner said. "We don't say it — when everyone is doing it, we don't need to."

By setting an example, members encourage the pledges to do the same (get good grades . . .), Larry Miller, president of FarmHouse, said.

"I would never tell them (members), 'You're expected to do this,'" Miller said. "All we can expect is a person to try hard."

"We all have a lot more respect for a person who uses his potential," Miller said.

Miller thinks quiet hours, the alcohol policy and high standards help maintain the tradition at FarmHouse.

"That's part of the reason I came here," Miller said. "You can come home and you're home."

FarmHouse alumnus and Lincoln attorney Don Stenberg agrees that the rush program helps select students who care about scholarship. He also thinks the FarmHouse atmosphere ensures the tradition of good scholarship.

"There's a work ethic that I think carries over to study," Stenberg said. "When you're living with people who are doing well and achieving — I think that makes it easier (to keep up grades)."

Stenberg, a 1970 graduate, was house president his senior year and also participated in many other activities throughout his college years.

"I think for someone who sees studies as an important part of their college career and would like a leadership position, FarmHouse would be a good experience."

But Stenberg and the current fraternity members say FarmHouse is not all business.

"We do have a good time," Peterson said. "We're not all bookworms." — Lisa Nutting