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Last Updated: 5:17 pm | Saturday, January 27, 2007

NKU considers housing for Greek system

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Northern Kentucky University does not have traditional "frat houses" with Greek letters nailed across the faces of stately homes. That could change if plans by NKU's Student Government Association go forward.

The association believes organizing NKU's fraternities and sororities in a system of Greek housing could help with a campus need.

"The issue of Greek housing is at the forefront of our agenda because by servicing that group, we will help to solve a campuswide problem of a lack of student housing," said Liz Osborne, the association's vice president for public relations. "Our reasoning is that it will better serve the students."

Osborne said that demand for on-campus housing was so high at the beginning of this year that there are "approximately 300 students living in a hotel in Wilder."

She sees getting more students living on campus - Greek or otherwise - as a plus for the culture of the university.

"Having more students live on campus would increase the amount of involvement the students have with the university outside of class," she said. "It will help to get rid of our high percentage of PCPs."

PCP is an NKU acronym that stands for "parking lot-class-parking lot students," or students who are on campus for class and not involved in other school activities.

While Greek houses may help with overall student housing, it's also something many Greeks would welcome.

About 600 of NKU's 14,000 students are members of Greek letter organizations, according to NKU's Panhellenic Council. That number is spread across six Inter-Fraternity Council fraternities, five National Panhellenic Conference sororities and two sororities and three fraternities of the National Panhellenic Council, which represents historically black Greek organizations

"Greek housing is definitely something that fraternities and sororities are wanting on campus," said Amanda Turfan, NKU's Panhellenic president. "Greeks do a lot on NKU's campus when it comes to leadership and programming, and by having the opportunity to possibly be getting housing, it feels like all that hard work would be paying off."

Kim Vance, assistant director of student life, who serves as adviser to NKU's Greek community, sees the housing as being good for the university.

"Our Greek community has a very positive relationship with the administration and student and academic affairs," said Vance. "As the campus has continued to grow, they've been a part of that growth. They are seen as a pretty necessary part of a vibrant student life."

Under the existing system, fraternities and sororities meet in three rooms in the University Center or in empty classrooms. This presents two problems. First, the groups have to find classrooms big enough to handle their individual chapters. Second, with many classrooms going high-tech, security concerns dictate that unused classrooms be locked. This provides logistical issues of who has access.

"The lack of space affects all our student organizations but especially the Greek community because it is very active," Vance said.

One negative that Vance noted is cost. Additional Greek housing would have to be paid for by the Greeks themselves.

"It's a lot more economical to be a member of a chapter than at other universities because they have large houses to

support," Vance said. "A majority of them finance a lot or most of their education. They like the idea that the university would pursue a designated space, but they are concerned about the finances."

NKU President James C. Votruba was non-committal to any plans for Greek housing.

"While it is too early to discuss specific plans regarding future enhancements of Greek life at NKU, we will continue to look for ways to enhance and expand Greek programming in a way that supports the goals of both the university and our surrounding community," Votruba said.

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