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Spring 5-2001

## **Delta Gamma: My Sorority's Impact on my Life**

Katharine Michal Newman  
*University of Tennessee-Knoxville*

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UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM

SENIOR PROJECT - PROSPECTUS

Name: Katie Newman

College: Bus. Admin Department: log. & Trans

Faculty Mentor: Marv Ruzicka

PROJECT TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (Attach not more than one additional page, if necessary):

I will discuss the history of Delta Gamma, the advantages and disadvantages of greek life and my experience through my sorority.

Projected completion date: May 11, 2001

Signed: Katie Newman

I have discussed this research proposal with this student and agree to serve in an advisory role, as faculty mentor, and to certify the acceptability of the completed project.

Signed: Marv Ruzicka Faculty Mentor

Date: May 5, 2001

Return this completed form to The University Honors Program, F101 Melrose Hall, 974-7875, not later than the beginning of your last year in residence.

Appendix E - UNIVERSITY HONORS PROGRAM  
SENIOR PROJECT - APPROVAL

Name: KATIE NEWMAN

College: Business Department: MARKETING, LOGISTICS, & TRANSPORTATION

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Marc Ruzicka

PROJECT TITLE: "DELTA GAMMA: MY SORORITY'S  
IMPACT ON MY LIFE"

I have reviewed this completed senior honors thesis with this student and certify that it is a project commensurate with honors level undergraduate research in this field.

Signed: Dr. Marc Ruzicka, Faculty Mentor

Date: 5/9/2001

General Assessment - please provide a short paragraph that highlights the most significant features of the project.

Comments (Optional):

Ms. Newman did an outstanding job of detailing a young lady's personal growth from a middle-class upbringing where she did not have one close, female friend to the president of an SEC sorority. The project stipulates how Ms. Newman accomplishes this journey by taking the highest moral ground versus her opponents. This report reinforces that a university does more than multiple choice exams and builds sports arenas... a university can also build leaders. Ms. Newman provides a sound history of the Greek system through her research that establishes a SOLID foundation for her paper. In Summary, Ms. Newman will be a role model for many future incoming students at UT that wish to better themselves and make UT a higher quality university.

-Dr. Marc Ruzicka  
5/9/01

**Delta Gamma**  
*My Sorority's Impact on My Life*

Katie Newman  
Senior Honors Project  
May 2001

**Advisor:** Marc E. Ruzicka, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Marketing, Logistics and Transportation

## **Abstract**

In August 1997, I went through recruitment at the University of Tennessee and pledged Delta Gamma Fraternity for women. At the time, I rushed simply because my friends thought it would be an interesting experience. I never believed that pledging a sorority would have such a great impact on my life. In this paper I discuss a brief history of Delta Gamma Fraternity, the advantages and disadvantages of Greek Life and my personal experience as a Greek woman. The amount I have learned about myself and life in the past four years is immeasurable, but hopefully I have been able to portray even a small part of Delta Gamma's impression on my life.

## **Delta Gamma Philosophy**

“Delta Gamma offers to women of all ages a rich heritage, a continuity based on sound and tested principles of personal integrity, personal responsibility and intellectual honesty.

Delta Gamma’s primary purpose is to create an environment for its members in which lasting friendships are established and in which members find the processes, the experiences and the disciplines which will stimulate clear thought. Its aim is to foster an atmosphere in which women will develop a deeper love and consideration for mankind, a more profound understanding of the purpose of life and a basic wisdom upon which to build their lives.

Delta Gamma’s purpose is accomplished through planned collegiate and alumnae programs which provide intellectual motivation, the opportunity for graciousness in daily living, and community awareness which will enrich the lives of members and instill in them a respect for the enduring values to be gained from the Fraternity” (Watchwords, 2-4).

*-The philosophy of Delta Gamma is a constant reminder of the purpose of membership in the sorority. It expresses in a few words the motivation behind all of the time and work I have put into Delta Gamma. I constantly reread the philosophy to remind myself of why I have dedicated my time to Delta Gamma.*

## **Delta Gamma Constitution, Article II: Objects**

“The objects of this Fraternity shall be to foster high ideals of friendship among college women, to promote their educational and cultural interests, to create in them a true sense of social responsibility and to develop in them the best qualities of character.”

*-Article II of the Constitution is a motto that all of the members try to follow. It provides an outline for every woman to follow to know that we are living to the high standards created by the founders of our organization.*

## **Delta Gamma Facts**

Motto: “Do Good”

Colors: Bronze, Pink and Blue

Flower: Cream colored Rose

Symbol: Anchor and the Hannah Doll

## History of Delta Gamma

Sororities, as a social institution, are one hundred and fifty years old, beginning soon after the Civil War. During the period of the war, fraternities suffered greatly because so many men withdrew from college to fight. By the time their recovery was well advanced, the secret society idea had spread and taken form in women's groups. The first two women's groups were Alpha Delta Pi (1851) and Phi Mu (1852) at Wesleyan College in Georgia. In 1867, Pi Beta Phi had been founded at Monmouth, Kappa Kappa Gamma in 1870 also at Monmouth, Kappa Alpha Theta in 1870 at DePauw, Alpha Phi in 1872 at Syracuse and in 1874 Gamma Phi Beta also at Syracuse and Sigma Kappa at Colby. It was during this time period that Delta Gamma (DG) was founded.

Mary Comfort Leonard, Eva Webb Dodd and Anna Boyd Ellington founded Delta Gamma on a winter holiday in 1873 at the Lewis School for Women in Oxford, Mississippi. The Lewis School closed in 1889, a few years after Mississippi established a state college for women. By February of 1874, the women had already begun to take in new members. Although the previous mention chapters had already been established, the Delta Gammas did not know about the presence of other sororities until a few years after their founding. Coeducation was becoming more popular during the first decade after Delta Gamma, which would provide the ability for every sorority to flourish.

In 1881, Mississippi established a state college for women, which was certain to create the closing of the Lewis School for Women. The expansion of Delta Gamma was fostered a Phi Delta Theta, George Banta, who would provide

the drive to expand Delta Gamma into the north. George Banta is the only male initiate of Delta Gamma and was awarded this honor because of his dedication to the expansion of Delta Gamma. The collegiate members were the main women in charge of expanding DG to other campuses. The alumnae helped their local chapters. The different chapters corresponded so much that they became extremely close as they began to know the true meaning of sisterhood. It was through this extensive correspondence that the first Delta Gamma convention was held in 1881. Although many conflicts still existed after the Civil War, the northern and southern chapters united at convention. At the second convention in 1883, there were already eleven chapters. This convention established the Anchor Badge as the pin worn by all Delta Gammas and added bronze color to pink and blue as the colors in order to differentiate Delta Gamma from Beta Theta Pi Fraternity. In the early 1890s, a professor at Syracuse coined the term "sorority". The Delta Gamma Fraternity chose to remain a fraternity because of its establishment before this phrase. Some of the other established sororities changed, while only a few remained as Fraternities.

Within the ten years, Delta Gamma produced a journal, the *Anchora* in March 1884. It was only the second of national publication for Greeks. As the expansion began, many national sororities joined together at a National Panhellenic Conference to discuss issues affecting all of the organizations. The official National Panhellenic Council was established in 1902. Throughout the next twenty years, Delta Gamma continued to expand nationally and into Canada. The first Canadian chapter was established at the University of Toronto



in 1913. Delta Gammas began to dedicate their time and money to service oriented projects during these years, especially during World War One. However, it was not until 1936 when Delta Gamma decided upon a national Philanthropy of Aid to the Blind when Ruth Billow, herself a blind DG at Akron, made the request for this adoption.

In 1942, a business meeting, rather than the biennial convention, was held in Chicago because of the World War II. At this meeting, it was decided to move the Fraternity headquarters to Columbus, Ohio. By September of 1942, the headquarters was open. After the war, enrollment in universities increased greatly and with this increase sorority membership grew. Expansion happened rapidly and in 1947 the Gamma Alpha chapter at the University of Tennessee was founded. The ban on building sorority houses was lifted after the war and houses were constructed. In 1950, the first Memorial Fellowships were established for Delta Gammas. Therefore, a Delta Gamma Foundation as a separate entity was also needed. The Foundation also included the current Grants and Loans, Sight Conservation and Aid to the Blind and International Education. During the 1950s, Delta Gamma recognized the need for a larger Central Office, so Roberta Abernathy, Executive Secretary began the search for the perfect location. In 1961, ground was broken at 3250 Riverside Drive in Columbus, Ohio for the Delta Gamma Executive Offices. The building located next to this site was purchased in order to have housing for visitors to the Fraternity.

The late sixties proved to be a time of struggle for the entire Greek system. The groups were on trial for discrimination in membership selection processes. Along with the revolt against the traditional female stereotypes, the times of campus unrest were a struggle for every group. But Delta Gamma continued to grow with the support services offered by the Executive Offices. In 1973, Delta Gamma celebrated its one-hundredth birthday with a year long celebration beginning at the 1972 convention and ending in Oxford, Mississippi.

The eighties proved to be a time of expansion as sorority and fraternity life became more popular. By the end of the 1980's, Delta Gamma had 134 chapters chartered. Within this time the services offered by Executive Offices increased. Chapter members were given notebooks and manuals were created for officers. As the services increased, the need for more space at the Executive Offices was also necessary. In 1991, the construction began and an addition was made to accommodate Executive Offices and the Delta Gamma Foundation.

Philanthropic events were more important than ever to DGs in the 1990s. Art of the Eye, an exhibition on vision began in 1990. This traveling art exhibition showcases works created by artists that are visually impaired. Alumnae chapters and collegiate chapters worked with cities to raise money to have the traveling exhibit visit their towns. In the most recent past, the advancement of technology has helped Delta Gamma immensely. Technology introduced email and the Internet and the development of the Delta Gamma homepage [www.deltagamma.org](http://www.deltagamma.org). Membership records and files were converted to computer databases in order to manage the organization better. Delta Gamma

became the first organization to create a lectureship series in values and ethics. It was first funded by Dorothy Garrett Martin, a Delta Gamma from Akron, and her husband Paul. Some of the notable speakers are Cokie Roberts, Maya Angelo and Barbara Bush.

During the late nineties, all nationals pushed change to increase the values and high standards of each chapter. Traditionally, negative stereotypes of Greeks were addressed and programming was implemented to address issues of alcohol abuse and hazing. In 1997, new member programs changed from a semester long period to a six-week period in order to eliminate hazing. Terminology changed to rid Delta Gamma of traditionally negative wordage associated with hazing and other negative connotations. Lawsuits and deaths pushed all Greek organizations to reevaluate their structuring in order to maintain a solid future and to grow in members. For instance, at the University of Georgia in Athens, an Alpha Tau Omega pledge was killed "while on a fraternity 'road trip,' that involves dropping a blindfolded member at an off-campus site to find his way back to campus," (Fraternity System). This is one of the many events causing nationals to mandate positive change.

### **Benefits of Sorority Life**

The many benefits of sororities are the reasons such a large population of students are involved in the Greek system. The positive aspects of the system are scholarship, leadership skills, networking, social responsibility and friendship.

Throughout the programming and interaction among the members, each individual gains many skills and attributes.

Within each national and local organization, scholarship is recognized as being greatly important. The members and leaders understand the underlying purpose in being at a university, to learn and to excel in scholarship.

Membership for many chapters is first based upon a previous high school or college grade point average (GPA). Those not meeting the required cut off are released from possible membership in chapters. Some exceptions are made for extenuating circumstances, but every chapter recognizes a member not meeting a required GPA is a potential risk in regards to grades. A risk to the chapter is a member that will not make the required GPA and consequently lower the chapter's GPA while causing her future as a college student to be in jeopardy. Individual and chapter scholarship programs are implemented on varying degrees. Study hours, independent and proctored, are a traditional system used to uphold a member's grades. The hours offer individuals the ability to have monitored study hours, which helps them to remain focused on schoolwork. If a member does not meet the required GPA, for example a 2.2 on a 4-point scale, of the chapter during an individual semester, the scholarship director or board enacts a study program along with social penalties. The consequences for low grades act as a deterrent for most chapter members to maintain their grades. The scholarship system within the sororities allows for them to remain consistently above the all women's average at many universities. The competition between chapters on university campuses adds to high scholarship

in chapters. Many Greek systems have competitions and awards for the chapters with high overall GPAs. National headquarters and the chapters gain pride from the scholarship awards and are constantly striving to achieve the highest GPA on campus. Currently at the University of Tennessee, Delta Gamma is ranked fifth among 18 sororities and has a cumulative GPA 0.16 higher than the all women's average.

Leadership skills are fostered and honed in sororities. The organizations are student run with alumnae advisory boards; therefore, the leadership positions are numerous. In the majority of chapters, every member has the opportunity to become a leader on a variety of levels. Ranging from the president to director of homecoming, members in good standing are able to assume responsibility a leadership role in the sorority's organizational structure. Small committees involving each chapter member are formed to give everyone a sense of ownership. Women with previous leadership skills have the chance to improve these skills. For others, it may be their first time to be in a leadership position. The public speaking, listening to others, and working with boards give women the life skills to be used in future careers.

Networking skills are created or increased with in sororities. In the recruitment process, women learn to create short conversations with the purpose of gaining trust and insight about another woman. The "small talk" skills provide an outlet to interact socially and professionally on campus and in future jobs. Within each sorority, many individuals are involved in other collegiate activities across campus. New members are encouraged by older members to join other

clubs where new personal connections are made. Many student government organizations on campuses are lead by Greeks. The most influential and well-recognized people on campus tend to be involved in Student Government. Greeks meet and influence others with in their daily lives.

Other networking skills are gained as alumnae. The alumnae chapters and connections help women to find jobs and social connections almost everywhere they go across in the United States and Canada. Networking skills are important for any individual. Membership in a sorority provides thousands of connections across the world with a common bond and the desire to support and help ones sorority sisters.

Social responsibility and etiquette are taught to sorority women from the first day of membership as educational programming for the chapter. The importance of social responsibility and good etiquette are an additional life skill for many young women. The importance of maintaining a good public image is crucial to the success of any chapter. Women are pushed to uphold high moral and ethical standards as members of sororities. Etiquette programs are presented to chapters on social and business dining, dating, introductions and conversations. The ability to interact on a professional level complements the leadership and networking skills of each individual. Presentations by members, chapter and Greek advisors, and outside resources on social responsibility of alcohol, drugs and sex exist in many chapters. The education of members is important for society and for the women. Social responsibility in regards to charitable organizations is greatly emphasized in sororities. Each chapter has a

national or local organization that it dedicates time to helping, from children's hospitals to cancer centers to sight impaired individuals. The different projects and fundraisers provide women the habit of donating time and money to worthy causes. The impact of philanthropic activity on society is an excellent benefit of sorority life.

Probably the most important benefit of sorority life is the friendships created. Throughout collegiate and alumnae membership in a sorority, women have the opportunity to find a social circle of friends and best friends. The college women live together in many situations creating a deeper bond among close friends. The sorority provides an automatic 50 to 150 friends or social acquaintances. Programs and events are presented where women bond. Sisterhood retreats, date nights, ropes courses and philanthropic events are just a few of the ways women connect with each other.

## **Disadvantages of Sorority Life**

Along with the advantages to sorority life come disadvantages. The cost of membership, hazing potential, exclusivity of the system, social interactions and scholarship are continued problems in the Greek system. Some of the advantages become disadvantages in different situations. With chapters being composed of a great number of individuals, the varying personalities can cause positive circumstances to become negative. The conflict is necessary to improve and challenge the members of the chapter.

One of the continued complaints about the Greek system is the cost of membership. The expense of membership deters many people from joining a sorority. A common saying is that Greeks pay for their friends. This provides a way to discredit the viability of the sororities. Although one of the many responsibilities of membership is to pay dues, the money allows for philanthropic and social activities to take place. The cost is high to some individuals, but the benefits from paying dues last beyond the cost. For an average chapter member of a sorority that does not have a house, dues are \$650 a year. In addition to dues, some women feel that the cost of maintaining the sorority life of clothes and parties adds to the expensiveness of membership

Hazing is a tradition among sororities. Hazing is defined as “any act or tradition that endangers the physical, mental, or emotional well-being of a new member and/or member; requests, encourages or suggests violation of city, county, state or national law; is mentally or physically degrading; or requires a personal or menial task of a new member and/or member, regardless of location,



intent or consent of the participants," (Watchwords 4-9). Many sororities have the policy of reviewing the membership of a woman or possible expulsion from the sorority in regards to hazing. Hazing corrupts the true meaning of sorority life; it negates the values of loyalty, hope, trust, supportive friendship and compassion. Although hazing seems to have no positive sides to an outsider, it is a constant concern of chapters and national organizations.

Hazing exists in many organizations including college sports teams, job offices and within the police department. This is to introduce a person to the life as an athlete, professional or a cop. It also gives a member the respect and ownership in an organization. The actions provide members the ability to learn about a potential member and the potential member to learn about the organization and the other members. It is hard to gain the respect and appreciation for an organization without the hazing. So many sororities are faced with the question of how to create the effect of hazing without the actions of hazing.

Traditions, good or bad, are hard to remove. The long-standing implementation of actions creates a desire to continue the cycle. On a regular basis, stories are run in papers about hazing events leading to physical injury and sometimes death of Greek members. The bad publicity and danger to the personal well being of Greeks create a need to address hazing at a national level. Plans to remove hazing from sorority life are intact, but it requires the cooperation of advisors and members to eradicate hazing from sorority life.

National organizations must also implement a solution to the problem of lack of respect caused by the removal of hazing.

Another downfall of the Greek system is the tendency to exclude certain individuals. Currently, national organizations based upon the tradition of race are intact. There are traditional white, black, and Hispanic sororities. This separatism provides something for past racial barriers to be supported. Although membership is not based upon race, the intermixing of races in sororities is frowned upon. At the University of Georgia in Fall 2000, a woman was not considered for membership in one sorority simply because she is black (Campus NCAACP). The public knowledge of the situation is a rarity simply because of the traditions involved in sorority life. Other exclusions are based upon the amount of money an individual's family holds, religious beliefs, the type of car a woman drives and other menial reasons. The recruitment period provides an unusual experience for one to be judged upon all of her personality and characteristics within minutes. The rejection by women that are not deemed as socially skilled as the others is highly prevalent.

Social interactions lead to a disadvantage of the Greek system. Binge and underage drinking and late night partying are typical of any collegian, but are widely recognized as a poor attribute of Greek life. Binge drinking includes the abuse of alcohol in an unrestrained and excessive level. Headlines make news nationally about fraternity men and sorority women that die as a result of alcohol poisoning at Greek events. In March of 2001, sororities at Washington University in St. Louis were "slapped a cease and desist order...putting a stop to all their

ordinary activities,” after “a sorority related drinking bout” sent a new member to the hospital (WU Sanctions Sororities). Campus administration continually implements new policies and adds restrictions to Greeks in an effort to curtail the drinking problems. The publicity given to Greek men and women allows for stereotypes to be rampant. Hazing incidents combined with alcohol lead to disastrous events.

Although scholarship programming is a great advantage to sorority life, not all chapters enjoy this benefit. On a few campuses the Greek women have a lower GPA than the all women’s GPA. This problem is caused by an active social life for Greek members. Many times effective scholarship programs are not implemented or time management skills taught to the new members of the fraternities and sororities.

### **Public View of Greek Life**

The public view of Greek life is created through personal interactions with Greeks and from the media. Personal interaction in classroom and workplace settings allow for many people to formulate both good and bad ideas about Greeks. The media presents real life stories and fictional movies and television shows to portray the typical Greek system. The coverage through the media is usually more negative than positive, showcasing the downsides of fraternity and sorority life.

The university community has varying opinions in regards to the Greek system. Typically a large majority of campus leaders are Greeks. The different organizations push their individuals to become active in the entirety of campus

life. Therefore, the administration in some ways looks to the Greeks to be leaders on campus. In other instances, the university looks to Greeks as the problem children. Typically fraternity and sorority parties involve a great deal of binge drinking, which have lead to multiple public relation nightmares for universities and the individual chapters. Students outside of the Greek system sometimes regard the chapters with admiration for the involvement on campus or the commitment to community service. Although, many times the fellow students see fraternities and sororities as exclusionary and the purchasing of friends. The typical partier stereotype is associated with Greeks also. However it is impossible to assume that a typical eighteen to twenty-two years old sorority woman will want to attend a social function that does not involve alcohol.

Outside of the campus community, many of the typically views are derived from news stories, television shows and movies. The news stories are more accurate and portray a traditionally negative picture of Greek life. The major stories to make headlines usually involve only a small portion of a chapter or national organization. The thoughtless actions of an individual reflect poorly on the entire national institution. Public relations procedures and officers are active in most chapters to combat a bad public image and to promote the positive aspects of Greek life. While television and movies, such as Animal House, show the party and hazing life as the main components of a sorority or fraternity. In the past the main focus of the Greek system could be defined as the parties, but with the current trends, national headquarters of the different chapters are heading towards emphasizing the positive aspects of Greek life such as scholarship and

philanthropic activities. As an eighteen-year-old freshman in college, students are looking for the opportunity for freedom and rebellion. The question must be addressed by all national organizations, is philanthropic and scholastic activities what a collegian is looking for in a sorority?

At the University of Tennessee (UT), the Greek system provides positive experiences for students. With some of the recent trends across the nation, schools have removed the Greek systems from the campus. At UT, this would be a devastating event. Across campus, sororities and fraternities provide philanthropic events that reflect positively on the university. Greeks are the majority of campus leaders who motivate others to join student organizations and to contribute back to UT. An entire culture of social life would be lost if sororities and fraternities were removed from campus. Alumni would be disappointed and possible remove a portion of their support for the university. The Greek system adds too much for the administration of UT to consider removing it from campus.

### **My Personal Experiences**

Throughout my collegiate years as a Delta Gamma, I have been blessed to learn a great deal from my experience. Leadership skills, conflict resolution, budgeting, public speaking, fairness, standing up for what you believe and friendship are many of the areas in my life I have changed or grown. In DG, I meet new people daily and I represent my chapter in these meetings. I am proud to know that I have improved in college and I learned from all my experiences I encountered.

Prior to college, my closest relationships had been with boys. I always felt more comfortable to be open and honest with guys because our relationships always felt more real. For some reason my relationships with girls were filled with competition, fakeness and dishonesty. I have not an idea why I even decided to join a sorority seeing as how it is filled with women. Maybe I joined simply because other girls were doing it or it was a new challenge for me, as I look back on it I think the greatest pull was for me to find great friends that are women. I have never regretted the decision in my life. I joined Delta Gamma at the University of Tennessee and it has been a perfect fit for me.

The transition from a high school senior to the president of my chapter has been a huge transformation in my life. I succeeded as a Delta Gamma mainly because I knew I had the potential to do so. If one was to look at my personal characteristics, I do not fit the typical sorority stereotype because of my financial background. I pay for my college through scholarships and part-time jobs. My parents provide for me in the best ways they can, but are unable to give me any substantial amount of money. Therefore, it was always a struggle to pay for my dues and the sorority lifestyle. I recognized early on the benefits of being a Delta Gamma. I wanted to be involved in organizations on campus, I needed to be involved with something at UT so that I would find a home in this large student body. I did not fit the stereotype, but I succeeded as a Delta Gamma and became the president because I wanted to accomplish something great in my life. I know being the president of any organization may not be great to some

individuals, but the responsibility of that office provided me the self-confidence to know I can do great things in my life.

My leadership skills were honed in different ways. As a director, vice-president and president of my chapter, I learned the varying degrees of leadership and the importance of the connection between the hierarchies in an organization. In a leadership role, one can never assume to be the most important. Even as the president, one must consult with the advisors, other officers and directors, and the chapter members to make a decision. At the same time, I made resolution based upon my knowledge and expertise as a representative of the chapter in instances where a quick judgment was necessary. The constant goal in working for my sorority was to always work in the best interest of the chapter rather than any selfish goals I had for myself. As a leader, I took on the philosophy to lead by example. In my life I encountered many people preaching things they did not practice and I feel this is hypocritical and fake.

In order to realize the true potential of my chapter, I had to understand the true potential of myself. I wanted my women to live by the highest standards possible so I began to live with my high moral standards always in mind. Some friends told me that I was the one being fake, but I felt that I had the ability to change myself for the better and require my peers to do so also. As an officer, I chose not to drink any alcohol at any DG functions, because I was underage and after I turned twenty-one because I felt I should be socially responsible. I attended all functions, social or business, and I actively participated in every

Delta Gamma event possible. I tried to uphold all of my membership responsibilities and to publicly show my support for all policies and procedures, regardless of my personal opinion on the validity. Along with leading by example came the ability to deal with "authority." In essence, I was an authoritative figure over my sorority sisters although some of them were older than me. My personal style is to talk with women after we have had the chance to cool down while respecting their opinions and listening to their concerns. I certainly know I did not act in the best way possible at all times, but I tried to do everything in my power to treat women the way I would appreciate being treated. The Golden Rule is evident everywhere in life and has become a personal motto for me.

Conflicts are a constant companion to sororities. With over a hundred women in a chapter, it is impossible to expect times free of conflict. Conflicts are difficult for people, but they are necessary and healthy for relationships and organizations. Problems push individuals to examine situations critically and to work to find solutions to the conflicts. Resolution of disagreements as a leader was completely different from any personal problems I had with someone. The chapter disagreements must be addressed aggressively and with the most tact as possible. The longer problems were around, the more others learned about them and the larger the dilemma became. Some conflicts must be dealt with immediately, but others require time for both parties to calm down. In working with my officers, we consistently took time apart and then came back together in order to solve our problems. This gave everyone the time to think about her arguments and put together everything she wanted to say. Every woman felt it



was necessary to resolve the petty problems with in our executive board so that we could effectively lead our chapter as a unified group. Besides being a leader, I learned to resolve problems with my friends differently too. I am now able to go to my best friend and say when she hurt my feelings and she is able to do the same with me. My friends and I have had the opportunity to experience problems and to make up for them. I have been able to relate to my family on a different level in addition how I am able to communicate with my friends.

As a Delta Gamma, I helped to plan the budget for our chapter and for myself. The vice-president (vp) of finance and the president must sit down to work on the budget for a school year. With a hundred and ten women paying over six hundred dollars a year, we are managing a large amount of money. The vp: finance and I worked together to cut the costs of the some areas of our chapter to move more money to our other areas like our social functions. We knew to make the experience for all members the best it could possibly be, this would be necessary. Another goal in the budgeting area was to decrease all costs in order to lower the overall dues for the individual members. During the planning of the budget process, I began to understand the importance of saving money in every possible way. The cutting of any unnecessary costs could dramatically change the budget of money we were spending. Budgeting of money became extremely important for me as an individual. The money I have is limited because I pay for school through scholarships and a part-time job. The importance of my Delta Gamma membership played a great role on the way that my money was budgeted. At the beginning of each semester, I found it was

crucial to plan my spending in order to maximize the amount of money I spent in all areas. Delta Gamma was my first experience of paying bills. The opportunity allowed me to learn the responsibility of consistent payment and the consequences of my actions if I failed to pay.

My role as a public speaker grew with the responsibilities of my office in Delta Gamma. As the president, I had the greatest role in speaking to members of the chapter, to any visitor to a chapter event or recruitment event. Although I am a sister to each of the women, speaking to such a large group of people proved to be a daunting task at first. I found it was important to thoroughly think out all ideas prior to any presentation whether large or small. Many presentations of policy or procedure had the potential to fail if I had not pondered my thoughts before the speech. Another important aspect of public speaking is simplicity and clarity. People tend to want to sound educated when presenting before an audience, but a production is just as successful if not more with clear, concise ideas using small, powerful words. I have stuttered and been nervous multiple times in front of large audiences, but I have faith that I can present to any size audience with the skills I learned speaking to Delta Gammas.

During my time as a Delta Gamma, I learned about the word "fair." In the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary fair is defined as "marked by impartiality and honesty: free from self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism." My father has always told me that fairness is a virtue I hold highly and during college I really began to see this in myself. As the vice-president of social standards in my chapter, it was my responsibility to uphold the bylaws and standing rules of the Gamma Alpha

chapter. I was the head of the Honor Board, the ruling and governing board of Delta Gamma. However, with the power it is easy to succumb to corruption.

Power is an amazing feeling and one that is hard to control. It corrupted me many times in believing that my way was the right way and the only way. Some times as a leaders, I was side tracked my own agendas rather than what was best for DG. Because of the support of my officers and friends, I was many times reminded of the Delta Gamma goals and pushed to return to these. Inherently I continued to return to the structure of DG to stay on focus with these goals. Structure is important to any organization regardless of its purpose. I felt it was my duty to enact and uphold all of the policies of my sorority and with this duty came the possibility of punishment for members. In order to live by high standards, honesty, integrity and fairness would play a vital role in my life. At times, the Honor Board had to punish our friends and warn others of their possibility for punishment. Each one of us had to deal with the possibility a friend would be hurt or upset by the judgment of the board, but we mastered the ability to be fair in our interpretation of the bylaws and standing rules. In the two years sitting on the board, we did not expel any one. This was because none of us felt that the policies and procedures were so greatly abused as to warrant the removal of a woman's membership in the sorority. One or two mistakes did not mean that she should have the great repercussion of taking her status as a Delta Gamma away.

The most difficult part of being a leader is to deal with the "bad apples" of the group. About 5% of the women in my chapter are unmotivated to attend

meetings, pay their dues, or be positive about Delta Gamma in any way. It was a constant challenge for me to relate to these women. Some of the time I simply ignored them and hoped they would not cause any great problems. Eventually I realized that this did not work. As an officer, I chose to begin to implement policies that would either push these women to change or to terminate their membership as a Delta Gamma. The policies affected not only this five percent but also the entire chapter. I learned to be fair in dealing with my friends and pushing them to uphold the policies as well as the 5% was being asked to do so. This was a challenging time for the chapter, but it created a cleaning of the house. The officers and I pushed some of the unmotivated members to resign and others to jump on board with our changes. This created a more positive atmosphere within the chapter that benefited everyone.

Along with fairness came the opportunity to stand up for what I believe is right. As a sophomore in the chapter, I ran for the vice president of social standards. Prior to my term, there was not an active Honor Board. One of my goals was to improve the respect of the chapter and Delta Gamma as an organization. To achieve this goal we had to begin to enact rules that had not been followed in the recent past. I was regularly being challenged by members to loosen the restraints on following the rules. I could not do this. It would mean a compromise on the values I believed in to change my stance on certain rules. In order to respect myself, I could not compromise on the established policies and procedures. The semesters I held the standards office were the most

challenging of my life. I was amazed at my ability to be a strong person at a weak point in my life.

Personally the greatest way I have changed and grown as a person is in my friendships with the other Delta Gammas. The women in my chapter are down to earth, funny and love to have an exciting time. Every girl in my sorority is not going to be my best friend, but I know I can trust the majority of the women with my sorrows, secrets and joys – almost every one of them. That is a bold statement to entrust with one hundred and ten different women. I have come to realize that each one of us is vulnerable and needs companions for different things in our lives. These women are always there for me and I hopefully am always there for them. I do realize that all of these women are my sisters, but not all of them are my friends. I do not like every one of my sisters and I know they do not all like me, but we do have a bond that we share. It is amazing to feel such an utter love and compassion for a large group of people. I am privileged to have this experience. The greatest feeling I have learned was from my best friend, Jamelie. She is certainly an amazing woman with many wonderful characteristics. Jamelie has taught me to love unconditionally. It is a funny thing to love your best friend even more because of her annoying characteristics. Things that used to drive me crazy about people, I can now overlook because of her. I realize people have many differing personalities and idiosyncrasies and that is what makes each of us special.

I look forward to my future as a Delta Gamma. In the next year, I will travel around the United States and Canada as a Collegiate Development

Consultant for DG. It is my job to educate, motivate and evaluate other Delta Gamma chapters. I will have the opportunity to speak with hundreds of women about their good and bad experiences. On some campuses, I will talk to Greek advisors, campus administrators and faculty. This opportunity is exciting and also scary. It is scary simply because it is a new life I have never experienced and I am so comfortable at this point in my life. I am passing into another phase in my life, but I know it will be another opportunity to change and grow as a person.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of my senior project is to explain my experience as a Delta Gamma and as a Greek woman. I wish every woman could have the opportunity to be a part of such an amazing organization that helps them to learn about themselves, what ever it may be. I am not saying Greek life is for everyone or is the best way of life, because I know there are many downfalls, but I know it has been an outstanding experience for me.

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