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Depth Story

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Fraternities and sororities at LSU are working to increase diversity but traditions and cultural differences can lead to unintentional self-segregation, according to students.

LSU is home to 41 active fraternities and sororities representing over 6,000 students, which is nearly 23% of LSU's student body, according to LSU Greek Life's annual report.

Each group is represented by a council. The National Pan-Hellenic Council, also known as the Divine Nine, represents the nine historically Black sororities and fraternities. The Panhellenic Council represents 13 sororities, and the Interfraternity Council represents 16 fraternities. The Multicultural Greek Council handles two multicultural sororities and one fraternity.

In recent years, Greek life has been scrutinized nationwide for its apparent lack of diversity within its institutions.

Most notably, the University of Alabama sparked debate on social media for its lack of diversity during its recruitment process, known as rush, resulting in the documentary "Bama Rush" that highlighted the issue. The

University of Alabama's website reported in 2021 that 89% of students participating in sorority rush identified as white.

At LSU, Greek organizations aim to change this narrative by focusing on recruiting a diverse pool of new members. According to a statement on LSU Greek Life's website, "The LSU Fraternity and Sorority Life team is committed to transparency and continued progress in providing a safe, inclusive, and transformative experience for students."

Colyn Lorey, who works as diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) director for Panhellenic sorority Kappa Kappa Gamma, said it starts with educating the active members.

During rush in August, Lorey said she held mini DEI workshops for the members of KKG that touched on important topics to do just that.

"It was important for me to kind of reformat the way we did Greek recruitment this year to be more accessible for hearing-impaired girls as well as girls with all different types of disabilities," Lorey said.

As a member of Greek life, Lorey said she would never want people to be dissuaded from joining a sorority because they didn't think they'd fit in.

Lorey said the collaboration between councils is also strengthening. She said she helped to plan the Walk A Mile in Her Shoes event between Panhellenic and Delta Sigma Theta, a historically Black sorority, in the

efforts to raise awareness and money during Sexual Assault Awareness month.

“Kappa has worked hard this year to turn DEI into a bigger topic and role, especially since it’s such a new position still,” Lorey said.

According to the Panhellenic Conference’s National website, the role of DEI director was introduced to chapters after widespread conversations sparked surrounding racial injustice in the summer of 2020. All 13 sororities in the Panhellenic Council at LSU have DEI directors.

Morgan Causey, risk management and historian chair of historically Black sorority Alpha Kappa Alpha said diversity within her chapter is key to building sisterhood.

“We recognize that we’re all different people who bring different things to the chapter,” Causey said.

Causey said she’s always felt welcomed into LSU’s Greek community, and she said she’s enjoyed holding dual events with sororities in different councils, her favorite being a tea party with Panhellenic sorority Delta Zeta celebrating their shared colors of pink and green.

Causey said the history of the Divine Nine creates a deep sense of pride for its members and is a big factor in drawing people to the organizations.

The nine historically Black sororities and fraternities were founded when Jim Crow Laws enforced racial segregation and limited opportunities were

available for African Americans, according to the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Causey said she always knew she would join a historically Black sorority because of her parents' involvement with their Greek organizations when she was growing up, but she said she recognized not everyone has that same experience.

"We've had girls tell us they didn't know what the Divine Nine was until after they rushed a Panhellenic sorority," she said. "That lack of knowledge can make some people feel displaced."

Luke Laughlin, a junior at LSU and active member of Delta Chi, an Interfraternity Council fraternity said that students' tendency to follow in their families' footsteps leads to the biggest gaps in diversity across the councils.

"Sometimes gaps in diversity happen naturally because each council has such a strong culture and influence," he said. "People gravitate towards people with similar experiences."

Laughlin said it's intimidating for students to do something different from what their parents have done or what seems comfortable when coming to college because it's such a big transition period.

He said the main problem is when students aren't educated about the different organizations before making their decision. Laughlin said students should research the different fraternities so they know what their best fit will be.

Gabrielle Milo, a sophomore at LSU, said she faced that tough decision when she decided to rush either a Panhellenic sorority or follow in her family's footsteps and rush a historically Black sorority.

Milo said she decided to rush a Panhellenic sorority because it fit her lifestyle better.

"It was kind of an unspoken expectation that I would rush a Divine Nine sorority because of my family's history," she said. "But at the end of the day, I found where I belong, and realistically any family understands that."

While LSU is making progress, there is still work that needs to be done. Causey said that as more Greek organizations educate members and continue to collaborate across councils, the closer they get to a "truly inclusive community."

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